The Power of the Breast and Cane
– How Literary Mother-Figures Challenged Social Constructions of Femininity 1787-1825

by

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Abstract

This study seeks to explore how social constructions of femininity during the Romantic Period were challenged in literature by proto-feminists in such a way as to form a revised feminine ideal of which both radical and conservative women could approve. It is an exploration of both nurturing (the figurative breast) and punitive maternal power (the figurative cane) as portrayed in Mary Wollstonecraft's novellas, *Mary* and *Maria*, Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, and Charlotte Smith's *Celestina*. As these three authors' social circles overlapped, they shared many of the same convictions, facilitating the analysis of the style and method of expressing these ideals.

It is indisputable that women of the period were allotted some authority over their own children. However, the avenues of self-empowerment open to childless women have hitherto been overlooked. According to novels of the time, did women have any power over their own destinies? Did they have any socially acceptable power over men? This study's aim is to discover if maternal authority was posed as an empowering tool for all women by tracing how it is being defined by Wollstonecraft in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* through an evolution from the overtly didactic style of works written for teachers and children (such as her *Original Stories from Real Life*) to the slightly more covert style of her two novellas, *Mary* and *Maria*. The similarity between the treatments of these two very different readers is carried forward through the examination of the other two authors (Opie's *Tales of the Pemberton Family* and *Adeline Mowbray*; and Smith's *Rural Walks* and *Celestina*).

This study has found that all three authors commend the wielding of maternal power to their readers. The maternal voice of these authors and the portrayal of more traditional maternal roles in their didactic works for children and teachers draw parallels between this persuasive style and the style of the works written for adults seeking entertainment (rather than enlightenment). The authors' treatment of these two categories of readers traces the use of maternal power as a tool for influencing the perception of the social status quo and indeed suggests a reification of maternal authority in order to empower the contemporary reader. Through copious examples in all of the texts, maternal power (even punitive power) is shown to be innocuous enough to challenge social constructions of femininity within the confines of prescribed socially acceptable behaviour detailed by the novelists themselves. These novelists therefore offer the reader an alternative interpretation of maternity by liberating the act of mothering from the biological state, in order to examine social maternity and its implications for proto-feminism.

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Introduction

In England, the period leading up to the French Revolution (1789 – 1799) was alive with philosophical idealism and the desire for a change in social norms, and many proto-feminists sought ways in which to influence this in order to empower women.[1] The world of politics belonged to the male-dominated public sphere and respectable women were generally restricted to the private sphere of the home.[2] Women had been acknowledged to have formative influence on their children and feminists utilised this in order to voice their concerns, reworking this idea to imply that through the raising of children (who potentially could be future political leaders) women were responsible for the future of the nation.[3] This responsibility, they argued, required a careful education of future mothers, in order to prepare them for this nationally important role. Indeed, polemicists such as Hannah More (1745 – 1833) argued that it was lack of education for women, rather than the actions of men, which was the obstacle to social improvement.[4] However, it is also worth noting that women diverged radically on their visions of ideal femininity; conservatives such as Sarah Trimmer (1741 – 1810) and Hannah More were in accord with radicals such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 – 1797) and liberals such as Maria Edgeworth (1768 – 1849) and Anna Barbauld (1743 – 1825) when it came to the precepts of education for women for the admirable maternal roles they would perform.[5] This study focuses on motherhood for just this reason, as it was a widely accepted social construct of femininity, as will be explained later.

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[1] I am aware of the anachronistic quality of the word *feminists*, however, it has been used by many other scholars to refer to the group of women under discussion, and it is simply used to describe women of the period, who sought to better the lives and rights of their sex. The term appears in the following texts, to name but a few: Eve Tavor Bannet's *The Domestic Revolution – Enlightenment, Feminism and the Novel*; Barbara Taylor's *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*; Mary Louise Roberts' "The Troubles of a Mere Blank"; and Eleanor Ty's *Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s*. For ease of discussion, I have adopted it as well.

[2] Robert B. Shoemaker, Gender in English Society 1650-1850 (London: Longman, 1998) 305. Furthermore, the Republican mother symbolised the complete offering of the female self in nurture and comfort. Mary Jacobus, First Things (New York: Routledge, 1995) 222.

[3] Harriet Guest, Small Change – Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 220-251.
Mitzi Myers remarks on the Fantasy of the Perfect Mother which is the timeless cultural myth that an "all-powerful mother [is] totally responsible for her children's fate [. . . and that pedagogy thus] link[s] private and public spheres." Mitzi Myers, "Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers," Children's Literature 14 (1986): 37.
The appeal of the maternal form can also be traced to fashion and Karen Harvey comments on the exposure of the breast and the ballooning of skirts, which mimicked the pregnant female form. Karen Harvey, "Sexuality and the Body," Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850, eds. Hannah Barker & Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005) 88.

[4] Kathryn Sutherland, "Writings on education and conduct: arguments for female improvement," Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800, ed. V. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 41, 43.

[5] Alan Richardson, Literature, Education and Romanticism – Reading as Social Practice 1780-1832 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 168.

Social norms were rife with misogynistic stereotypes, which feminists such as Wollstonecraft sought to counter.[6] The two main justifications for women's subordination to men lay in religion and science. John Milton's broadly-read rendering of Adam and his scathing depiction of Eve in *Paradise Lost* (1667) were still the rough models for gender definition. The religious explanation of misogyny lay in Eve's transgression in the Garden of Eden. Her Fall was deemed the cause of man's misery and it was believed that women should suffer for it.[7] Indeed, this example was frequently used to justify the misogynistic control of women for centuries to follow. Furthermore, the pain endured during childbirth was believed to serve as punishment for Eve's indiscretion; however "childbirth could also represent a woman's access to salvation since Mary, the mother of Jesus, had through her maternity raised women from despair."[8] Because of this, women sought to distance themselves from the role of seductress and to embrace, instead, the role of mother, in order to be religiously associated with Mary instead of Eve.[9] Maternity was posed as being contrary to sexuality and promoted respect for women through its care-giving qualities.[10] Equating femininity with maternal characteristics remained as the dominant social definition of womanhood from Rousseau to Freud, which is why this study employs a rather trans-historical analysis of motherhood.[11] By looking after men's needs and by nurturing and enforcing the community's morality, either through the raising of their own children, or through the teaching of other's, women had the opportunity to attempt to right Eve's wrongs, or as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall explain in *Family Fortunes*: "[a] woman's salvation lay in her responsibilities as mother, wife, daughter or sister; through her services to the family she could suppress the dangerous parts of herself, associated with

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[6] Barbara Taylor contends that by the time she began writing *Maria*, Wollstonecraft sought to counter the harmful images of women, such as were created by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in both *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761) and *Emile* (1762). These female characters provoked male sexual fantasy and female narcissistic vanity, thus perpetuating misogyny. Barbara Taylor. Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 76, 86.

[7] L. Davidoff and C. Hall, Family Fortunes (London: Routledge, 1992) 114.

[8] *Ibid* 114.

[9] According to Cora Kaplan, during the period, women were either classified as "virtuous" or "fallen", and the virtuous did their best not to be associated with the fallen. Cora Kaplan, Sea Changes – Culture and Feminism (London: Verso, 1986) 33. This may also explain why both Charlotte Smith and Amelia Opie employed covert tactics to convey the feminist agenda shared with Wollstonecraft, so as to not be tainted by her "fallen" status as a radical thinker. This fear of being linked with Wollstonecraft is expounded on in Patricia Matthew's paper *Biography and Mary Wollstonecraft in Adeline Mowbray and Valperga*. Patricia Matthew, "Biography and Mary Wollstonecraft in Adeline Mowbray and Valperga," Women's Writing 14.3 (2007): 386.

[10] This oppositional principle of sexuality and maternity also appears in modern psychological studies of women's fantasies and dreams. Nancy J. Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 203.
It is further supported by Harvey. Harvey 84.

[11] Elisabeth Badinter, The Myth of Motherhood trans. Roger DeGaris. (London: Souvenir Press, 1980) 206.

her sexuality which linked her back to Eve."[12] These women countered religiously sanctioned misogyny by rejecting the seductress Eve and embracing the maternal Mary.

Women's subordination was further supported by science; indeed it was believed that women's nature made them susceptible to their emotions.[13] Women were frequently portrayed as delicate, swooning creatures, prone to hysteria and vulnerable to a variety of vices born from the inability to control their emotions.[14] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) further supported this belief by pronouncing that "[n]ature herself has decreed that woman, both for herself and her children, should be at the mercy of man's judgment."[15] It was also widely believed that subservience would increase women's "marriageability", which was important as they depended on male patrons for their livelihood.[16] Though frequently seen as a weakness equated with self-sacrifice, their tenderness of feeling rather ironically carried with it the overtones of the above-mentioned moral superiority through natural benevolence.[17] In the words of David Hartley (1705 – 1757) in *Theory of the Human Mind* (published in 1775, after his death), "Goodwill or benevolence when understood in a limited sense, may be deemed that pleasing affection which engages us to promote the welfare of others to the best of our power."[18] And universal benevolence, as defined by William Godwin (1756 – 1836) in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), consists of "the feelings and ideas by which we ought to be governed, in our intercourse with our fellow men, or, in other words, in our moral conduct."[19] It is what a modern reader understands as empathy.[20] So, this so-called weakness could be construed as actually being a strength and, as we can see, Godwin urges people to challenge the barriers between the different classes in order to encourage philanthropic acts and compassion in what may have later evolved into our modern more socialist attitudes to our fellow human beings. (Philanthropic acts run in the same vein as benevolence, but where

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[12] Davidoff & Hall 114.
Furthermore, men may have been willing to concede to women's moral and religious superiority, but this did not grant them better legal rights. Anne Stott, "Women and Religion," Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850 ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005) 103.
[13] G. J. Barker-Benfield, The Culture of Sensibility (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 3.
[14] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile (London: Everyman, 1993) 385; Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft Vol. 5, eds. Janet Todd & Marilyn Butler (London: William Pickering, 1989) 73; Julie Kipp, Romanticism, Maternity, and the Body Politic (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 15.
[15] Rousseau 392.
[16] Shoemaker 131.
[17] Where women's benevolence is praised by such philosophers as David Hume and Adam Smith, the impulse for what Kipp terms altruism to the point of "self-annihilation" is disturbing. Kipp 17.
[18] David Hartley, Theories of the Human Mind, on the Principle of the Association of Ideas (London: J. Johnson, 1775) 307.
[19] William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin Classics, 1985) 377
[20] Godwin explains that when observing another person: "He cries, or the spectacle of his distress importune me, and I am irresistibly impelled to adopt means to remove this importunity." *Ibid* 379.

benevolence is requires personal involvement in acts of charity and altruism, philanthropy extends to more removed acts of human kindness, including charitable donations.) Not all philosophers of the era agreed with these principles. When Edmund Burke (1729 – 1997) published *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), he deemed benevolence to be "the rickety offspring of weakness [. . .] supported by [. . .] prolific imbecility."[21] Unlike Godwin, he was not excited by the climate of change brought on by the French Revolution. Instead, he cautioned the people of Britain, stating that they "will find employment enough for truly patriotic, free, and independent spirit, in guarding what they possess, from violation. [. . . He continues, asserting that he is supportive of change, only in so far as] it should be to preserve."[22] His assumption seems to be that all people are already in possession of something positive worth preserving. Burke does not address the desire for a betterment of circumstances felt most keenly by those who are lacking in basic human rights. The early feminists under scrutiny here subscribed more to Godwin's views of benevolence providing a woman with unimpeachable strength. They also used the positive climate if change inherited from the revolution in France as an impetus to further their cause. Furthermore, once married, provided she had given birth, a woman's status changed noticeably, as she became responsible for the shaping of the next generation. Women's socially reinforced capacity to mother and their supposed natural tendency towards universal benevolence, feminists proclaimed, needed to be refined through education, so as to develop the required ability to reason, in order to control what was believed to be their natural tendency towards overwhelming emotion, which would then turn this into benevolence.

As we can see, motherhood was admired and respected; however, biological motherhood was also a great burden on women.[23] Infant mortality was high and whether the children lived or died, mothers "would have been pregnant and nursing 85 percent of that time."[24] Yet, according to John Gillis' historical study, the expectation of mothers looking after their own and only their own children is fairly recent, and many women performed the role of surrogate or symbolic mother.[25] During the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century (hereafter referred to as the Romantic Period for ease of discussion in order to avoid this unwieldy phrase), biological mothers were frequently not the ones to provide nurture for their children. Older sisters and aunts in tightly-knit families usually took charge and Gillis asserts that "it was expected that all women, whether biological

[21] Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, ed. L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 232.
[22] *Ibid* 248.
[23] Badinter 190.
[24] Davidoff & Hall 338.
[25] John R. Gillis, A World of Their Own Making (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 155.

mothers or not, had a maternal instinct," since maternal qualities were considered to be the primary characteristics of being a woman.[26] Unmarried women had the option of mothering other people's children (especially in the capacity of teacher) or even nurturing adults who needed it. As Gillis explains, "[u]ntil the nineteenth century, children looked beyond their own natural families for mothering."[27] Other women could fulfill a mother's social maternal role and motherhood (both biological and surrogate) was arguably the only socially sanctioned role for women through which to explore their own potentials in life. Evidence of this can be found in many written works and this study aims to explore the literary representation of the authority of the surrogate mother in particular. This indirect form of maternity was often embodied by teachers but also in the form of didactic writing both for children and adults.

The period marked a notable expansion of the new literary form, the novel – "the lowest form of writing" – which reflected many contemporary concerns.[28] (For instance, Samuel Richardson's best-seller novel, *Pamela* (1740), showcases middle-class virtues of industry, morality, and social mobility.)[29] This study will focus primarily on middle- and touch on upper-class women, as the lower classes were generally not part of both the educational schemes discussed here and the general reading public, and also as this study traces the philosophy of Wollstonecraft which targeted the middle class, it seems appropriate to do the same.[30] The rise of the novel, it can be argued, is vital to the empowerment of this stratum of women which is an outgrowth of the formation of a middle-class reading public and, indeed, the gradual wide-spreading of literacy – a development strongly influenced by the growth of capitalism in the late eighteenth century;

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[26] *Ibid* 153.

[27] *Ibid* 152.
Furthermore, "[i]t was not until 1875 that English-speaking people began talking about "true motherhood" as if maternity and motherhood were one and the same." He also states that "[o]lder sisters who brought up their siblings were referred to as 'little mothers'". *Ibid* 155, 165.

[28] It was called this, because it was deemed to not only lack intellectual value as it was merely a form of entertainment, but was also believed to fill the minds of the readers with an unsavoury penchant for melodrama and unrealistic expectations. Fiona Robertson, "Novels," An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832, eds. Iain McCalman et al (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 287.
The power of influence of the novel is also extensively discussed in Margaret Cohen's The Sentimental Education of the Novel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 63, 108.

[29] Clara Tuite, "Domesticity," An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832, eds. Iain McCalman et al (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 129.

[30] Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (London: Pimlico, 2000) 43.
It is worth noting that educational schemes for the poor were very much in evidence through the philanthropic works of Hannah More and Sarah Trimmer, however, I will not be focusing on the education of the poor or charity schools (including most of the extensive writings of Hannah More and Sarah Trimmer), because the target adult reader for reforming social norms can only be found in the middle and upper classes, as they are more equipped to purchase and borrow books, have time to read for pleasure, and have influence through the education of their own children. Richardson 3.
Wollstonecraft states: "I pay particular attention to those in the middle class, because they appear to be in the most untainted state." Wollstonecraft, Vindication, 75.

the reading public was estimated at 1,500,000 in 1780 and rose to 7,000,000 by 1830.[31] When Richardson published *Pamela* and *Clarissa* (1748), possibly to encourage men to treat women more humanely, the popular middle-class sentiment was that women were morally superior to men, due to their natural tendency towards universal benevolence and virtue.[32] Influencing the reader by way of example, novels, it can be argued, taught readers how to behave and what sorts of outcomes (realistic or other) to expect from their actions. Many successful novels imitated Richardson's portrayal of femininity, which transformed women from Milton's vision of demonic seductresses into domestic saints, to be emulated by their avid middle-class female readership. In this manner, it can be argued that novels themselves serve the function of surrogate mothers in how they socialise their readers.

Regarding feminist studies of women's literature of the Romantic Period, a considerable amount has been published on the radical Mary Wollstonecraft and the conservative Jane Austen (1775 – 1817). This study concerns itself with the radical and semi-radical side of this spectrum. Though scrutinised for every minute detail of nuance and political significance, Wollstonecraft's works are inescapable for any feminist study of the period, particularly as a comparison to any works by other woman authors examined.[33] Her irrefutably most renowned feminist work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), has been examined zealously by the most respected minds of the last two centuries and, though it is referenced in this study, it has been the working premise of the current thesis that further analysis of this text cannot compete with established research and furthermore would not add significantly to the subject matter of this study. Instead, the focus has been on the lesser-known works which relate more directly to the subject at hand. Moreover, maternal significance during the Romantic Period has been studied extensively and the focus is usually, as with psychoanalytic approaches, on biological motherhood and how it was portrayed by writers.[34] It was a highly contested subject during the period, reaching into such disparate fields as medicine, philosophy, and politics.[35] The issues of women's rights and marriage have also received considerable critical attention, especially in terms of their portrayal in the works of contemporary authors. However, the focus seems to remain on the claustrophobic nature of women's

[31] John Brewer and Iain McCalman, "Publishing," An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832, eds. Iain McCalman et al (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 197; Robertson 287.
[32] G. J. Barker Benfield, "Sensibility," An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832, eds. Iain McCalman et al (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 110; Caine, Barbara, "Women," An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832, eds. Iain McCalman et al (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 43.
[33] See Janet Todd's collected oeuvre.
[34] Eve Tavor Bannet, The Domestic Revolution – Enlightenment, Feminism and the Novel (London: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000); Vivien Jones, ed., Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000); Kipp etc. Extensive sources can be located in the Bibliography.
[35] Kipp 12.

lives and the feminist political outcry against this, rather than seeking to explain how every-day, less remarkable women adjusted their life-styles in order to successfully exercise as much freedom as they could.[36]

This study aims to address the question of how contemporary feminists urged women of the period to triumph *within* their allocated roles. The fact that some sort of reforming of established social norms was necessary is indisputable. The extensive overtly political writings of authors such as Wollstonecraft attest to this. So far, however, there has been little discussion of how strong women could assert themselves without appearing to challenge the status quo. Many women writers focused less on the literal mother's breast and more on the figurative feeding of children's and surrogate children's minds through the *performed* role of the mother.[37] The use of the figurative cane in order to implement discipline was also a mother-figure's prerogative. As the following chapters on education will testify, both are necessary for the shaping of self-disciplined and respectable adults. Charlotte Turner Smith (1749 – 1806), Mary Wollstonecraft, and Amelia Alderson Opie (1769 – 1853) used the maternal guise as a platform for conveying their specific concerns as women largely subordinated to the domestic sphere, but also as a means for gaining a wider politicised voice.[38] As women of the period obviously were not granted the opportunity to pursue political careers, they had to attempt to influence society through the roles that were open to them.[39] At the time there was a growing interest in the education of women, gradual tolerance of their intellectual pursuits, and a positive view of their moral influence as wives and mothers (a trend which Smith, Wollstonecraft, and Opie utilised).[40] However, Anne Mellor contends that feminists "argued that social reform is a process, not of revolution but of gradual evolution, a process that is furthered by educating the populace."[41] Consequently, this study argues that overtly political writing, such as that of Wollstonecraft, may have met foremost with resistance rather than serious consideration and that the rights which are enjoyed by women today may have "evolved" out of the normalising of unobtrusive liberties as can be found within the constraints of figurative (rather than literal) motherhood.

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[36] The downfall of women who have ruined their lives in the quest for freedom has also been studied extensively in the analysis of novels such as Richardson's *Clarissa*.

[37] Anne Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (New York: Routledge, 1993) 83.
Chodorow asserts from a modern psychoanalytical standpoint that being a mother involves "being a person who socialises and nurtures" rather than simply giving birth. Chodorow 11.

[38] Taylor categorises all three of these authors as radical thinkers, though Opie did not acquire this reputation in her time. Taylor, Mary 176.

[39] Women were "thought to have inferior intellectual abilities," because their sole purpose was thought to be reproductive. Barker-Benfield, Culture 325; Shoemaker 193.

[40] *Ibid* 33. Girls were generally taught by unpaid friends or family-members; governesses were only employed by the most forward-thinking wealthy families. Davidoff & Hall 291.

[41] Anne K. Mellor, "Feminism," An Oxford Guide to Romanticism, ed. Nicholas Roe (New York: Oxford UP, 2005) 188.

The primary example of this observed in this study is the role of teacher, which, many scholars agree, has maternal overtones, thus further intimating that maternity is *not* inherently linked to the act of giving birth.[42] A teacher's students in many ways become her surrogate children and the role of child, as any adult visiting their parental home can attest, is not limited by age. Indeed, many adults have found themselves forced into the role of child at some point in their lives as servants were during the Romantic Period.[43] Becoming a teacher also lent women some power, as, according to Elizabeth Badinter, "[l]ike the mother, the teacher would command respect".[44] Though teaching became one of the few careers open to women of the middle classes, there was no actual teacher training. Many authors wrote guides to ensure quality of education, which opened a niche for feminists to air their polemical precepts, especially for the betterment of girls' futures. This era also issued in the genre of children's fiction, which was designed to educate children and aid them in self-improvement and according to Julia Briggs these educational texts were deliberately written to be "delightful to young readers and their parents."[45] Upon close scrutiny, many of these texts reveal feminocentric agendas and a desire to instigate a change in social norms through the indoctrination of young readers and the manipulation of teachers.[46] Many of these tactics and somewhat radical ideals are identical in a wide range of works from the same authors. Indeed, the works for children and for adults hold many similarities and will be compared for influential tactics and socio-political agendas.

I intend to compare the similarity of the maternal voice across Smith's, Wollstonecraft's, and Opie's didactic texts to their works of fiction, contending that female characters in novels gained authority over other characters by assuming a maternal role, thus forcing weaker characters into the role of child. This, in turn, functions as a powerfully seductive model of self-empowerment for readers to follow. As the central concerns of the works for children and the novels for adults are identical, following a precise chronology was not considered essential in a study where the primary focus is more

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[42] Indeed, the role of teacher was a natural outgrowth of the role of mother and "[t]he only profession a woman could enter without diminishing her 'status' was teaching, which made her a 'spiritual mother.'" Badinter 221, 226.

[43] Kristina Straub, '"In the Posture of Children' Eighteenth Century British Servants and Children," Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800, eds. Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore (London: Routledge, 2006).

[44] She also adds, "[l]ike her, she must first of all set a good example, arousing in the little children in her charge the desire to imitate her." Badinter 229.

[45]Julia Briggs, "'Delightful Task!' Women, Children, and Reading in the Mid-Eighteenth Century." Culturing the Child 1690-1914, ed. Danielle Ruwe (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press Inc, 2005) 71. It is worth noting that "[c]ontinued self-education was permitted to women." Davidoff & Hall 292.

[46] Myers contends that "the little books tidily demonstrate women writers' resourceful exploitation of the available literary and cultural conventions to suit their own ends" and that by analysing these works for children, the modern reader "gain[s] fresh insight into the ways in which women writers both shape and are shaped by their historical milieu." Myers, "Impeccable" 55.

upon tracing thematic concerns within and across overtly didactic texts and others which ostensibly function as mere entertainment. To this end, it was incumbent to examine the works for children before those written for adults. However, when relevant, the evolution of the writers' outlooks on life (when relevant) will be mentioned in the correct chronology. (Both Smith and Opie were part of the Wollstonecraft-Godwin circle and all three women shared many ideals.)[47] Rather than being an act of bullying, the creation of this mother-child dynamic, so I argue, was offered to the female reader as an emancipatory tactic, giving her a means to have some modicum of control over her life. Indeed, I intend to trace the use of the mother-child bond when it is used to establish more complex interpersonal relationships.[48] In order to investigate this, I will attempt to separate biological maternity from socially created maternity, such as can be found in the role of teacher. I argue that maternal roles are as fluid as Judith Butler argues are gender roles.[49] I have taken this one step further by arguing that maternity is a social construct, which is why the trans-historical reference to Butler is apt. The didactic quality of children's literature of the period is indisputable.[50] However, I believe that these three women authors also hoped to obliquely influence their adult readers with their works of fiction. Indeed, novels offered women the chance to sway readers outwith their social sphere, offering what Ros Ballaster calls "opportunities for liberty of speech often denied elsewhere in eighteenth-century culture."[51] Though the influence of these portrayals of femininity is yet to be proven, the fact that Wollstonecraft's texts voice a concern may indicate that some level of influence was detected by her.[52] I propose that Smith, Wollstonecraft, and Opie believed that readers would be likely to change how they viewed the world and how they lived in it, if they were unaware that the status quo had been

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[47] Smith's relationship with William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft is analysed in depth by A. A. Markley. A. A. Markley, "Charlotte Smith, the Godwin Circle, and the Proliferation of Speakers in *The Young Philosopher*", Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism. ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008) 87-99.

[48] This concept is also explored in Kipp's *Romanticism, Maternity, and the Body Politic*.

[49] She argues that gender does not exist separate from its social construction. In her words: "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." The inherent difference between the genders is biological. All other attributes are social constructs, which are high-lighted when men dress and behave like women. Judith Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 1990) 34, 187.
Mary Louise Roberts contends that the Egalitarians, as Wollstonecraft's contemporaries, believed the same. Mary Louise Roberts, "The Troubles of a Mere Blank," Journal of Women's History 16.2 (2004): 184.

[50] Michele Cohen, "Familiar Conversations," Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain – Beliefs, Cultures, Practices. eds. Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Toronto: Ashgate, 2009); Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore, eds. Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800 (London: Routledge, 2006); and Myers, "Impeccable," to name but a few.

[51] Ros Ballaster, "Women and the Rise of the Novel," Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 214.

[52] Furthermore, Elizabeth Carter (a member of the bluestocking group) blamed the elopement of Kitty Hunter with the already married Earl of Pembroke on her mimicry of Rousseau's title-character in his novel, *Julie* (1761). Barker Benfield, "Sensibility" 108.

challenged, because overt calls for reformation (especially during and after the French Revolution) were dismissed as being dangerous to the public order.[53] With this in mind, I shall examine Wollstonecraft's, Opie's, and Smith's texts out of chronological order, from the most blatant to the most concealed, while tracing the mode of expressing identical feminist concerns.

In an overview, chapter 1, ***Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* – a Foundation Text for Establishing a Respectable Polemical yet Didactic Voice**, examines Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life*, which was written specifically for assisting girls in gaining respectability and a small measure of authority. The purpose of the chapter is to establish the background research into the feminist educational philosophy shared by all three authors. The text builds on the opinions of renowned male philosophers, such as John Locke (1632 – 1701) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), to make a case for the liberalisation of women's education. It argues its points conservatively but consistently with a view to improving women for the socially approved role of mother. Chapter 2, ***Original Stories from Real Life* – Targeting Young Readers**, traces how Wollstonecraft addresses a very different sort of reader. As the title of this chapter suggests, *Original Stories* was written not only to guide teachers while educating young women, but also to have the capacity to *replace* the teacher entirely, by having the *author* educate the young reader. It features a strong maternal teacher and is written with an unconcealed didactic voice which has maternal overtones in its concern for the characters' and the readers' welfare. Chapter 3, **Manipulating Maternal Social Stereotypes – the Novellas of Mary Wollstonecraft**, progresses to the medium of adult fiction. In *Mary: a fiction*, the romantic relationship inevitably evolves into a parent-child model throughout the novella, making the comparison to *Original Stories* quite natural. Any assertiveness gained by the heroine takes place in the guise of nurturing surrogate maternal roles. In *Maria or The Wrongs of Woman*, Wollstonecraft directly attacks contemporary laws regarding divorce. In order to give her heroine respectability and authority she has her speak out as a wronged *mother* rather than as a feminist. However, Wollstonecraft's impetuous nature overrides any attempts at subtlety within the text, and I argue that this damages the receptivity of the contemporary reader. Furthermore, having been published posthumously and in the same year in which William Godwin published his infamous biography of his wife, this novella may have met with a truly sceptical

[53] Kevin Gilmartin, Writing Against Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010) 2.

readership.[54] It does, however, employ many of the same tactics for female authority as her work for children.

Chapter 4, ***Tales of the Pemberton Family* – Amelia Opie's Evangelical Endeavour**, examines Opie's didactic work for children. I chose Opie deliberately, as she agreed with Wollstonecraft on many issues, but was a much more conservative person, who seemed very much aware of the value of her reputation. *Tales of the Pemberton Family* functions similarly to Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* in that it is meant as a guide for mothers, mother-figures (including teachers), and children. Its feminist qualities are oblique indeed, especially as Opie had embraced Quakerism which overshadowed her youthful reformative zeal. However, feminist ideals are still traceable through the empowerment of the mothers within the tales, who exhibit great influential power over their charges. Chapter 5, ***Adeline Mowbray or the Mother and Daughter* – an Analysis of Maternal Influence**, reveals Opie's youthful feminist verve in that she traces the formative power of mother-figures over their children through primarily negative examples. (Examples of misdeeds and their consequences feature strongly in didactic writing for children, and the similarity in approach to her adult reader is significant, even though her work for children was written 19 years *after* this novel.) Reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's notorious life, the novel also explores the consequences of naivety and lack of proper maternal guidance, while high-lighting the gravity of maternal power.

Chapter 6, **Charlotte Smith's *Rural Walks* – Developing Respectability**, examines ideals of female education through an author who depended on her income from her writing. The mother-figure in this text teaches not only her own daughters, but also her niece, thus yet again emphasising maternal power yielded over both biological and symbolic children. Though written two years *before* the novel analysed here, the authorial feminist message and tactic of teaching the reader through example and blunt hectoring are the same. The difference is that this text was expected to be didactic, while the novel was designed to entertain. And finally, chapter 7, ***Celestina* – Emancipation Through the Maternal Guise**, traces maternal power not only through the mother-figures in the novel, but also through Celestina, the young heroine. Smith employs unexpected didactic tactics in order to illustrate the validity of feminist beliefs to the reader, while *teaching* them how to become maternally powerful. I contend that the novel has previously been dismissed as pulp fiction (even by Wollstonecraft herself), but that it holds many feminist qualities, while remaining inoffensive to the conservative reader. As with the other two authors,

[54] William Godwin published *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1798.

Smith employs near-identical methods to persuade both her child and adult readers how to succeed within the confines of social norms.

Chapter 1

Thoughts on the Education of Daughters – a Foundation Text for Establishing a Respectable Polemical yet Didactic Voice

Charlotte Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Amelia Opie all shared a near-identical vision of ideal teaching methods and desired results. In order to establish their shared philosophical background, it is worth examining the only text on the theoretical approach to teaching written by one of them: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: with Reflections on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life* (written in 1787). As will become evident, Wollstonecraft's interest in changing social constructions of femininity was clear long before she began writing novellas. As discussed below, her dissatisfaction with the treatment of women in her era and the frivolous roles they were encouraged to adopt was already deep-rooted by the time she turned to fiction. Instead of pursuing marriage, she believed that women should seek to be respected, benevolent and virtuous, and that the most successful route to this would be through acquiring a specific kind of education. At the time, particularly in the middle decades of the century, aristocratic women were concerned with providing their daughters with an education that reflected their own Enlightenment values and principles.[1] This drive demonstrates aspects of protofeminism, in which women were directing their daughters to a future which may have differed from tradition. Barbara Taylor expounds on the development of Wollstonecraft's thought in *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, in which she makes it clear that Wollstonecraft also felt strongly about the spreading of universal benevolence, a sentiment born from the philosophy of the Rational Dissenters, a group of religious reformers who wished to "dissolve all distinctions into a common civic status."[2] Wollstonecraft herself founded a school together with her friend Fanny Blood, in an attempt to become financially independent and in order to act on her passion for attempting to change the status of women.[3] Her *Thoughts* is a product of her experiences as a governess and is very much an exposition of her goals for and frustrations

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[1] Jill Shefrin, "Governess to Their Children," Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800, eds. Andrea Immel & Michael Witmore (London: Routledge, 2006) 182.
The Enlightenment can be defined as the use of critical reasoning to overcome human problems, in order to create a more harmonious, tolerant, and virtuous society. Martin Fitzpatrick, "Enlightenment," An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age, ed. Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford UP,1999) 299.

[2] Taylor 185.

[3] Like Wollstonecraft with Fanny Blood, many unwed women lived and worked together to set up businesses or schools, in order to survive, in what is sometimes called "spinster clustering". O. Hufton, "'Women without men': widows and spinsters in Britain and France in the eighteenth century," Journal of Family History 9 (1984): 361.

with her sex, while exploring methods of parenting and teaching.[4] The text can be viewed as evidence of a pre-revolutionary link between passion and politics, and sentiment and reason.[5] In sub-headings, the range of subjects in *Thoughts* in summary are: the nursery; moral discipline; exterior accomplishments; artificial manners; dress; the fine arts; reading; boarding schools; the temper; unfortunate situation of females, fashionably educated, and left without a fortune; love; matrimony; desultory thoughts; the benefits which arise from disappointments; on the treatment of servants; the observance of Sunday; on the misfortune of fluctuating principles; benevolence; card-playing; the theatre; and public places. (All of these are issues which she addresses in her novellas, albeit more obliquely.) As her first published work, *Thoughts* was written very much in order for Wollstonecraft to successfully begin to establish herself as a respectable authority on education and social politics (as is evident by reviews of her text), while arguing with several prominent voices within the same genre.[6] Because of this, it is both less volatile and not at all infamous like her later-written *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Unlike her *Vindication*, however, it is vital to the subject of this dissertation.

The publication of conduct literature (also referred to as 'advice books') and educational texts were *en vogue* during the Romantic Period. *Thoughts* was one among many of these texts, the most popular of which included Hester Chapone's (1727-1801) *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), Dr John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), and Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797).[7] The purpose of these works was to engage in an ongoing debate between radical and conservative concepts of ideal femininity. They also sought to redefine gender roles, which was of great interest to Wollstonecraft, who was later famously dissatisfied with the roles of women. In her later-written *Vindication* she argues that "reason and

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[4] Janet Todd, Mary Wollstonecraft – a Revolutionary Life (London: Phoenix Press, 2001).
All future biographical references are taken from this text.

[5] This is similar to that which can be traced in the works of Helen Maria Williams (who shares a philosophical outlook with Wollstonecraft) throughout her political commentary in her eight volumes of *Letters from France* (1790-1796).

[6] *The Critical Review* refers to *Thoughts* as being "concise, and sometimes desultory" as well as "occasionally trite and perhaps in a few instances, erroneous"; however, it goes on to state that "in general, they are clear, judicious, and correct. The mind of the author appears to have profited by observation, and a habit of reflection: it seems both well informed, and well regulated." It then proceeds to quote several long passages for their "justness and propriety". "Review of Thoughts on the Education of Daughters", The Critical Review 63. Ed. Tobias Smollett. Edinburgh: Archibald Hamilton, 1787. 287-288.
The English Review agrees that *Thoughts* is "dictated with great judgment" and that Wollstonecraft has "reflected maturely on her subject", going on to say that "she writes with a decision which nothing but attentive observation could inspire; and, while her manner gives authority, her good sense adds irresistible weight to almost all her precepts and remarks"; it is described as "worthy the attention of those who are more immediately concerned in the education of young ladies." "Review of Thoughts on the education of Daughters", The English Review 10. London: H. Murray, 1787.

[7] Iain McCalman et al, eds., An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 464.

experience convince me that the only method of leading women to fulfil their peculiar duties, is to free them from all restraints by allowing them to participate in the inherent rights of mankind."[8] However, in order to avoid being dismissed as a raving sentimentalist (and depicting the embodiment of negative female stereotypes), she needed to pay explicit tribute to respected and well-known writers and philosophers, while appealing rationally to male readers, in order to garner their high opinion. Once respected, her more radical ideals would possibly be more likely to be taken seriously.

Through her text, Wollstonecraft builds on contemporary trains of thought, making accepted methods of practice applicable to women. For instance, she shows awareness of John Locke (1632-1704) directly and Isaac Newton (1642-1727) implicitly. Both helped to establish the concept of Empiricism as a method for arriving at knowledge, supporting the importance of experience and the collection of facts and data, laying the foundations of the era's dominant conceptions of the mental and physical world. She also reveals a strong understanding of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in particular his text *Novum Organum* (1620) in which he proposes that universal law and truth should be concluded through the marriage of gathering empirical data rationally analysing it.[9] These concepts were constantly under discussion and re-evaluation, engaging the wider public in their scrutiny through debating societies, but also through the widely accessible newspapers, circulating libraries, and reading networks, thus spreading to the most remote reaches of the country-side.[10] By applying these social trends to women, Wollstonecraft establishes herself as a reliable source who shows knowledge of contemporary philosophical debate and builds on a gradually evolving voice for women.[11] Overall, women were turning to the written word for guidance during this time of change in definitions of femininity and the gradually more liberated social norms of women's lives, something Wollstonecraft used knowingly to

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[8] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 247.

[9] Roger Scruton, A Short History of Modern Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1981) 25.

[10] Similarly, a sense of correct behaviour and etiquette was furthered by essayists, such as Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Richard Steele (1672-1729), who promoted concepts of sociable politeness at the beginning of the eighteenth century, through the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, as well as through the club and coffee-house culture in London.
John Brewer comments on the trepidation commonly felt about what women were exposing themselves to in libraries, stating that "[t]he received wisdom about circulation libraries was that they were repositories of fictional pap, served up to women of leisure who had little to do but surfeit themselves with romantic nonsense!" John Brewer, The Pleasure of the Imagination – English Culture in the Eighteenth Century (London: Harper Collins, 1997) 179.

[11] As a group, women readers were growing. Because of this, the presumed editor, the enigmatic 'Phoebe Crackenthorpe', of the *Female Tatler* (1709-1710), adapted coffee house discussions to suit a female readership, partly as a response to the *Tatler* and partly as a gossip-column, but also as a paper which aired some issues of particular interest to women. As a more serious publication, the *Female Spectator*, edited by Eliza Haywood from 1744-1746, followed a similar layout to its male-oriented counterpart. Its articles aimed to guide women towards pursuing a better education and adopting respectably moral conduct. Both papers helped to establish a wider female readership, which may have later led to the publication of such successful periodicals as the *Lady's Magazine* (1770-1830).

further her feminist agenda in her later-written *Vindication*, but she had to establish herself as a respect-worthy source first.

Wollstonecraft's text is designed to appeal to two types of intellectual readers interested in this widespread current debate. Like many of her contemporary feminist authors, she engaged with the emotional as well as the rational reader, appealing to both with discussions of the status quo and rational reform.[12] Her examination of parental, and particularly maternal responsibilities, reveals a very modern psychological insight into the human condition, supported by copious biblical references.[13] These serve dually to reflect Wollstonecraft's skill at manipulating her reader's religious convictions and to give authority to her unconventional dictates on female foibles, which society has declared to be the norm. Essentially, she wanted society to acknowledge that women are capable of being rational, virtuous, productive, and valued members of society (a goal also shared by Smith and Opie); she also wanted women to be worthy of this esteem. Her text is a product of the Enlightenment, which was instrumental in reshaping concepts of femininity and ideals of gender relations. As a philosophical movement, it was an outgrowth of the seventeenth century's Scientific Revolution.[14] It spread, as the general populace became more consumer-oriented and the wider extent of literacy aided in developing print culture. The primary premise is that it is environment (including how a child is raised), rather than heredity, which determines a human being's abilities, making it an example of psychology in its infanthood.[15]

Wollstonecraft's (as well as Smith's and Opie's) precepts of reason are shaped by this philosophy as underpinned by the approaches of Locke and Newton, which stressed the importance of reason and analysis to understand the world. It can be argued that this reason-driven approach as well as the concepts developed in the associationist school of psychology, founded by David Hartley (1705-1757), were instrumental in the formation of modern psychology as a discipline and Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) study of behaviour

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[12] She follows what Isobel Armstrong identifies as a trend in women's writing: "First, they used the customary 'feminine' forms and languages, but they turned them to analytical account and used them to think with. Second, they challenged the male philosophical traditions that led to a demeaning discourse of feminine experience and remade those traditions." Isobel Armstrong, "The Gush of the Feminine: How Can we Read Women's Poetry of the Romantic Period?," Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices. eds. Paula R. Feldman & Theresa M. Kelley (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995) 15-16.

[13] Religion gave women a particular note of authority as it was widely believed that women had a more natural perception of God. Taylor, Mary 100.

[14] Also referred to as the "scientific movement", this was a major shift in approach to nature in that supernatural explanations were replaced with scientific explanation and the world was regarded as "the Great Machine". Persons of great influence in this shift include Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Harvey, Gilbert, Descartes, Boyle, and Newton. Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background (London: Penguin Books, 1967) 11.

[15] Ian Britain, "Education," *An* Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832, ed. Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 162.

in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century.[16] Though there is no direct evidence of Wollstonecraft ever having studied Hartley, her understanding of the workings of the human mind suggests that she was familiar with his concepts.[17] Wollstonecraft's advice addresses the preparation of girls for a life of integrity and resourcefulness, while derisively pointing out behaviour which she has deemed irksome and which is counterproductive to her mission to make women respectable and thus more empowered. At times, it serves as a counter-argument and at others as a natural evolution of various precepts evident in both Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (published in 1693) and Mary Astell's (1666-1731) *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694) (two texts with which Wollstonecraft was intimately familiar).[18] As an esteemed authority on education, references to Locke provide Wollstonecraft with respectability, while Astell lends her long-established feminist verve. However, there is also great evidence of her awareness of her temporary idol, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) (in particular *Emile* [1762]), and Edmund Burke (1729-1797) (especially *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757]).[19] It is illuminating to examine Wollstonecraft's text with particular awareness of these precursors, especially in terms of both the sanctioning of mothers or teachers in their part in shaping as well as emancipating and giving sovereignty to the next generation of women from a young age and preparing them for their future maternal roles.[20]

As a respected philosopher, adviser in scientific and political matters to Lord Ashley (Earl of Shaftesbury), and founding father of British Empiricism, Locke wrote *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (published in 1693). It concerns itself with guiding

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[16] Hartley's theory proposes that the mind can be trained to react favourably or unfavourably to certain circumstances, in order to develop desired personality traits in any person. Willey 138.

[17] Taylor, Mary 110.

[18] *Ibid*. Her radical penchant for harshly debunking respected contemporary philosophers (as seen in her *Vindication*) is muted in *Thoughts*.

[19] Barbara Taylor admits that Wollstonecraft was a great admirer of Rousseau for his portrayal of women's morality, however, his insistence that women submit to the men in their lives and the coquettish behaviour of Sophie in *Emile* eventually disenchanted her with her former idol. *Ibid* 73, 91.
Furthermore, much to her chagrin, Sophie, according to Taylor, was the most influential icon of femininity. Barbara Taylor, "Feminists Versus Gallants: Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain," Representations, 87.1 (Summer 2004) 127.
In her later-written *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft comments on the merits of Rousseau, stating: "Who ever drew a more exalted character than Rousseau? though in the lump he constantly endeavoured to degrade the sex." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 246.
Though he has fallen in her estimation, she still alludes to him in most of her writing. Her relationship with him is similar to Opie's relationship with Wollstonecraft. It is one of disappointment mingled with admiration.
The main sentiment which Wollstonecraft has embraced is Rousseau's claim that "[b]ut for her sex, a woman is a man; she has the same organs, the same needs, the same faculties." Rousseau 384.

[20] This is a stance to which modern feminists object, as it confines women to their biological functions, rather than promoting their individuality. Kate Soper, What is Nature? (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 123.
Furthermore, Nancy Chodorow asserts that hormonal input to maternal behaviour is negligible and that maternal characteristics are a result of socialisation. Nancy J. Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering (Berkeley: University of California, 1978) 28-29.

parents in the raising of children (with a primary focus on sons), who will be productive members of society. The text attempts to prepare children for positions in life which will require them to be eloquent, well-informed, and possessing the manners of a gentleman. It also presses the importance of instilling a keen sense of virtue in children, which will guide them through life, lending all their pursuits a direction of liberality of spirit, justice and benevolence.[21] The text addresses the rearing of sons, "which in all things will not so perfectly suit the education of daughters; though, where the difference of sex requires different treatment, 'twill be no hard matter to distinguish."[22] The education of daughters seems to be a mere afterthought in this, which Wollstonecraft rectifies in her work. However, Locke displays a keen understanding of what in the twentieth century is known as 'behavioural psychology', especially in his conviction of the imperative of consistency in parental rule. Many modern scholars comment on the effects of Locke's theory of education on teachers' power of influence over young minds.[23] Locke's ideas are still relevant to modern studies of a similar nature, and Wollstonecraft certainly based many, if not most, of her precepts on his text, in order to establish herself as a sober rational voice promoting a reimagining of idealised femininity.[24]

As a tactic for promoting her agenda for the development of gender equality, Wollstonecraft proclaims that education should establish an inner moral compass in women, so as to make them naturally more virtuous. Indeed, virtue is heralded as the primary goal of all human beings, for the benefit of society, and for the sake of piety, a widespread concept during the period. In *The Machiavellian Moment – Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, J.G.A. Pocock examines the consciousness of the ideal of the classical republic as it was viewed by Machiavelli, among others, during the Renaissance in Italy.[25] These ideals became seminal in political thought during the Romantic Period in England, influencing social change and ideals. The concepts of 'virtue' and 'civic duty' are particularly prominent in the works of Locke, Astell, and Wollstonecraft to require a brief explanation here. Moreover Pocock's text provides further scope for a closer examination of this terminology. His notion of "civic

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[21] Without virtue, people will be unable to make anything useful of themselves; they will be incapable of being good Christians, citizens, or even human beings. John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education, ed. John William Adamson (New York: Dover Publications, 2007) 54.
This fundamental precept is mirrored in Wollstonecraft's writing, lending strength to her feminist aims for establishing respectability and autonomy for women.

[22] *Ibid* 26.

[23] John Cannon, Aristocratic Century: the Peerage of Eighteenth-century England (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 36-37.

[24] John William Adamson, "Introduction," Some Thoughts Concerning Education (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2007); A.C. Fraser, ed., An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Cambridge: Claredon Press, 1880); H. R. Fox Bourne, The Life of John Locke (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing Co. 2003).

[25] J.G.A. Pocock, "Introduction," The Machiavellian Moment – Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003) viii.

duty" appears to be synonymous with Wollstonecraft's notions of "benevolence" which she urges mothers to instil in their daughters. It is a specific form of altruism, which builds on Christian ideals of compassion and generosity of spirit towards others with no view towards self-gratification. The belief in the importance of teaching this to children was widespread even in continental Europe, such as Jeanne Marie Le Prince de Beaumont (1711-1780) whose French works for children were translated into English. De Beaumont's *Magasin des enfans* was reviewed in 1757 by the *Critical Review*, which states: "how much the happiness of society, and the goodness of mankind, depends upon the education of its individuals".[26] It was translated as *The Young Ladies Magazine* in 1760, and featured stories (somewhat similar to the *Spectator*), which however showcased de Beaumont's educational philosophy.[27] It can be argued that de Beaumont had a great influence on the development of educational practice, particularly when it came to the involvement of aristocratic mothers in the raising of their daughters.[28] Like Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts*, de Beaumont's earlier-written works reflect the influence of Locke's theories of the individual and Hartley's understanding of Associationism. Even if Wollstonecraft had not encountered de Beaumont's writings, her concern with spreading benevolence is perhaps taken from fellow Dissenter Anna Letitia Barbauld's (1743-1825) *Lessons for Children* (1778), which incorporates the necessity of instilling this trait in no less than five of her stories.[29] (This concept also frequently becomes linked with a sense of universal maternity.[30]) Pocock comments that "civic does not always accord with personal morality", in other words, benevolence can sometimes be difficult, when people are struggling with their own narcissistic urges.[31] He continues, by explaining that "[m]en regard themselves and their own Advantages; yet if they regard the Publick more, or their own in Subserviency to the Publick, they may justly be esteemed virtuous and good."[32] Therefore, the concept of 'virtue' incorporates the idea of public service as primary in terms of ideal human goals. Furthermore, virtue makes it possible to "repress" those things which cause vice, by taking charge of the "human appetite", in other words, virtue is that which allows people to distinguish between right and wrong.[33] An example of just how virtuous women are expected to be in the early Georgian period can be found in an article by Eliza Haywood (1693?-1756), written for the *Female Spectator*, Volume I, Book I, in

[26] "Review of Magasin des enfans", The Critical Review August 1757, ed. Tobias Smollett (Edinburgh: Archibald Hamilton, 1757) 177
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Shefrin, "Governess" 184.
[29] Anna-Letitia Barbauld, Lessons for Children (London: Longman and Co., 1867) 22, 37, 61, 130, 48.
[30] Gillis 152.
[31] Pocock 472.
[32] *Ibid*, *sic*.
[33] *Ibid* 501.

1744, in which a young lady refuses to marry her betrothed, because she has been kidnapped and raped by a stranger. Though her fiancé is understanding, and wishes to marry her anyway, she displays a keen sense of virtue by refusing to even see him, as she has been tainted by circumstance, and she does not wish to besmirch his life in any way.[34] By training young people to regard civic duty as paramount, self-gratification can be trained out of them, simply through the formation of more altruistic habits. It is a mother's duty to her children to teach them to be both virtuous and benevolent, and by emphasising the importance of these traits, Wollstonecraft is countering the stereotype of erratic women.

One earlier feminist voice promoting the necessity for virtue can be found in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* written by Astell. She argues her case for the necessity of education for women, in order to preserve their usefulness to society as well as developing a fairly radically new definition of feminine beauty, as being an internal intellectual diversity, rather than being based in physical appearance.[35] Her unconventional outspoken opinions established quite a reputation for her during her life, causing her to be satirised in *The Tatler* by Jonathan Swift in 1709 but anthologised in *The Ladies Library* (1714) by Richard Steele.[36] Her opinions regarding human nature become apparent when she states that "we go on in Vice, not because we find satisfaction in it, but because we are unacquainted with the Joys of Virtue."[37] Avidly read by Wollstonecraft's circle of Rational Dissenters, she proposed that women must gain a clear understanding of virtue and the necessity of benevolence, Christian altruism, and responsibility of citizenship, in order to overcome or avoid depravity and sensuality.[38] Astell supports the views that a liberal education is "the most effectual means to direct them [(women)] into, and to secure their progress in the ways of Vertue."[39] So the association between virtue and education for women is not unique to Wollstonecraft. It is a train of argumentation which had been developing for some time and by linking these views to Locke, she establishes herself as a

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[34] Eliza Haywood, "Female Spectator, Volume I, Book I (1744)," Women in the Eighteenth Century – constructions of femininity, ed. Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990) 44.
[35] Mary Astell, A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, parts I & II, ed. Patricia Springborg (Calgary: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002) 51.
[36] *Ibid* 9.
[37] *Ibid* 68, *sic*.
[38] Rational Dissenters were against the established hierarchical structure of the Anglican Church, believing that any individual can commune with God and interpret the scriptures. Astell's popularity with the group is referenced in Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p.110. Astell may have inspired Lady Mary Chudleigh (1656-1710). In her poem titled *The Ladies' Defense* (1701), she expounds on the need for female education in order to attain respect from men and to establish a sisterhood which is independent of men.
[39] *Ibid* 62. Astell's vision of a women's retreat for learning is also later shared with Sarah Scott (1720-1795), who wrote *A Description of Millennium Hall* (1762), in which she conveys a blue-stocking utopian dream of women's freedom from oppressive fathers and husbands, in order that they may pursue a life of learning, piety, and philanthropy.

well-read authority on these matters, while perpetuating the less reputable feminist agendas of Astell.

Rousseau demarcates the roles of the sexes in great detail in *Emile*. He believes that nature divided all human traits into being either masculine or feminine (a concept later adopted by More), that "[a]ll faculties common to both sexes are not equally shared between them, but taken as a whole they are fairly divided."[40] Basic anatomy is the only common ground shared by both men and women. However, the underlying actuality, according to Rousseau, is that women must strive to please men, in order to become efficient and ideal wives and mothers, which gradually alienates Wollstonecraft. Rousseau contends that women have no purpose outwith the role of mother and wife: "She cannot fulfil her purpose in life without his [man's] aid."[41] In other words, she needs man, in order to fulfil her purpose in life, which is to become a mother. Rousseau is far from being against the education of women; however, he believes that a woman's education should solely prepare her for maternity and married life. Women exist, after all, for the pleasure of men:

> A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.[42]

These responsibilities are great. Yet, in spite of the gravity of these responsibilities, he strongly advocates the separation of the education for men and for women. Women exist not to think for themselves or to pursue their own goals, but in order to ease men's lives, to take over the trivial and messy involving aspects of running a house-hold and raising the children. Women exist, so that men have the luxury to get on with important discoveries and ideas.

In contrast, like Astell, Wollstonecraft's goal is to promote respect for women. Within her era, respectable femininity encompasses primarily the maternal function of women and secondarily the role of wife. The role of mother lends a woman high regard as it separates her from the negative stereotype of wanton female sexuality.[43] Rousseau sums it up in *Emile*, when he states that it is "a woman's business to be a mother. [. . .] And do

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[40] Rousseau 391
More states that "[e]ach sex has its proper excellencies, which would be lost were hey melted down into common character by the fusion of the new philosophy." More 8.
[41] Rousseau 92
[42] *Ibid* 393
[43] Thomas H. Ford, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Motherhood of Feminism," Women's Studies Quarterly 37, 3 & 5, Fall/Winter (2009): 190.

not the general laws of nature and morality make provision for this state of things?"[44] Naturally, before becoming a mother, a woman is meant to marry and thus become a wife. Both these roles are shown to be improved through education, an argument which Wollstonecraft uses throughout her writing.[45] Though she agrees with Rousseau in many ways (in terms of the need for education for women), she uses his work selectively and later debunks him quite aggressively in her *Vindication*. Rather than censoring women's education in order to help them to develop into better mothers and wives (which it can be argued has misogynistic undertones), she believes that they should nurture their ability to ascertain the validity of what they are exposed to, or as she puts it: "reason should cultivate and govern those instincts which are implanted in us to render the path of duty pleasant."[46] She likes the fact that Rousseau supports women's education and uses his argument to further her cause, stating that education develops a woman's ability to fulfil the virtuous biological roles encouraged in her by society, in that it would make her more content to do so.[47] She continues, stating that it is "the duty of every rational creature to attend to its offspring." (1) In this manner, she emphasises her agreement with social norms, possibly in order to justify her critique of various aspects of them.

One such widespread belief proves more difficult for Wollstonecraft to accept and can be found in Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), in which he delineates the difference between men and women in terms of their ability to perceive. Men, it seems, are capable of understanding the sublime (which includes the vastness of God and his love and all that impacts the soul) whereas women are merely capable of comprehending the beautiful (that which is pleasing to the senses, including earthly love).[48] Burke's trivialising of women's mental ability coupled with his convictions concerning the diminution of women's souls inspires Wollstonecraft to write more passionate polemical texts including her later work *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1790), in which she argues against his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). In *Thoughts*, while drawing upon Locke's insistence that children "be treated as rational

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[44] Rousseau 389.
[45] *Ibid* 393.
[46] Davidoff & Hall xxvi.
Mary Wollstonecraft, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflection on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life (London: J. Johnson, 1787) 2. All further quotations are from this text.
[47] Rousseau 392.
"[T]he image of the aristocratic mother teaching her own children was becoming part of the iconography of sentiment, as well as of rational or enlightened domesticity." Shefrin, "Governess" 181.
One such famous portrait is of Georgianna, Duchess of Devonshire (an acquaintance of Wollstonecraft's) with her Daughter by Sir Joshua Raynolds (c.1784-86)
[48] Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008) 113.

creatures", Wollstonecraft makes a link between established philosophy and her own precepts, while voicing a modest request that women should be treated with at least as much respect as children, both being "rational creatures."[49] *Thoughts* also functions as a delineation of other qualities in women which Wollstonecraft considers to be desirable and which can be enhanced through an education along with maternal and matrimonial duties. She argues against stereotypes but within the parameters of normalcy in order to present herself as a 'rational creature' rather than as an emotion-driven revolutionary.[50]

Wollstonecraft goes on to counter negative female stereotypes, especially subterfuge, deception, and false mannerisms.[51] She does this by blaming lax parenting (rather than the nature of femininity) for the creation of deceitful children, proclaiming that "principles of truth are innate". (13) Deceitful habits, which include outright lies and coquetry, are habits which are learned at home from servants or parents who provide harmful examples and often refrain from disciplining their children when they try out these vices. She writes pages on her disapproval of women behaving in ways which impair their respectability, especially if they are embracing the role of the trivial female. This is further expounded on in her *Vindication*.[52] Her premise mirrors that of Astell, when she states that "Ignorance is the cause of most Feminine Vices [such as] Pride and Vanity."[53] So, in order to overcome these vices, the education of daughters becomes a battle against triviality. This stereotype of women was widespread and perpetuated by Burke who portrayed women as trivial and men as dignified. His explorations of gender difference are opposed by Wollstonecraft in her assertion that it is nurture, not nature which limits women's abilities and that the pursuit of virtue should be the primary aspiration of both genders.[54] Similarly, at the core of Wollstonecraft's intolerance for silly women lies a deep concern for the dangers of frivolous behaviour undermining the authority of her sex, and she therefore considers some alternatives for feminine behaviour, which do not do this.

Though she eventually becomes less religion-focused in her later writing, in *Thoughts* Wollstonecraft links education to maternity, which in turn is linked to Christian

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[49] Locke 39.
[50] She makes herself heard by adhering to convention, in order to identify herself as belonging to the same social group as the reader. Theories on normalcy are discussed in Soper. Soper 55.
[51] This is one of the many points on which she and More agree. More expresses the imperative need to avoid the development of "absurd affectation." More 2.
[52] "Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings [. . .] which led them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently [. . .] plump into actual vice." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 255.
[53] Astell 62, *sic*.
[54] Burke met with further disapproval from Hannah More (1745-1833), who wrote *Strictures on Female Education* (1799), which, though far more conservative than Wollstonecraft, put forward arguments for a serious and rational curriculum for women, while promoting the status quo of women's status in society as being second to men, as the divinely ordained social order.

duty, benevolence and virtue (though with little reference to heavenly rewards).[55] As Smith, Wollstonecraft, and Opie would agree, teaching arises from an altruistic parental or maternal impulse, which is not necessarily limited to biological offspring. The arrival of the child should arouse maternal instinct, as "[i]ts dependant, helpless state produces an affection, which may properly be termed maternal." (4) By this statement, one might conclude that any affection felt for a helpless person can be deemed to be a maternal impulse, which supports the proposition that, when aiding or guiding the lost and misdirected, many female characters in novels are shown to be acting on a maternal impulse (something which will be discussed at various points in this thesis). Wollstonecraft's text establishes that women need to be taught to be more effective in their roles as wives and mothers, as well as making them more virtuous, so as to make them better Christians and to enhance their souls. This had been supported by Astell's feminist assertion stating that "[d]oubtlessly a truly Christian Life requires a clear Understanding,"[56] and her assertion that women must be educated in order to know how to deliberately be good and honourable, to choose to avoid vice, by recognising it and refusing to be seduced by it. Wollstonecraft builds on this when she proposes that the urge for self-gratification can be manipulated through education to evolve into the derivation of pleasure through performing virtuous deeds, a concept which, as we shall see, is made more vivid by scenarios in both of her novellas. Mothers are in a prime position to inculcate this in their daughters. The side-effect of empowering women through this indulgence of good intentions, selfless love, and the enactment of what is best for others, furthers Wollstonecraft's feminist agenda, seemingly with the intention of not offending contemporary sensibilities, as she is merely writing a tract which aids in the education of daughters.

The Vital Development of Reason

Wollstonecraft challenges contemporary precepts that women are unable to develop reason. Though perpetuated by Rousseau, the concept can also be traced back to John Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost* (1667), which shows Adam to possess higher reason and Eve greater sensitivity.[57] He may vociferously oppose tyranny, support the notion of

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[55] The link to Christian benevolence was a common tactic employed by many contemporary feminists (including Amelia Alderson Opie, to be discussed later), who sought the empowerment to make themselves useful to society. Taylor, Mary 99.
More's *Strictures* are based entirely around the need for women to develop their Christian duty. Her slant on Wollstonecraft's concept of benevolence is focused on "bringing the spirit of the Sunday's devotions into the transactions of the week." More, 72.
Though expressed differently, the sentiment is very similar.

[56] Astell 70, *sic*.

[57] In Rousseau's words, he compares the sexes by stating that "woman observes, man reasons". Rousseau 419.

freedom of choice in marriage and the idea of the wife as the helpmate to the husband, defend regicide, republicanism, and freedom of the press, but he does not endorse the equality of women.[58] His portrayal of Eve as the conniving manipulator was influential throughout the eighteenth century. As reason is equated with virtue, and women are deemed to be wicked due to their inability to reason, Wollstonecraft, among others, can justify the need for female education as a means to counter wickedness. The cult of sentimentality, fostered by Christian benevolence and the religious revivals of the 1740s, became associated with women, who were still (since Milton) identified with emotional receptivity, complementing male rationality. [59] Countering this, and in order to further the development of reason, Wollstonecraft offers instructions to parents (particularly mothers), urging them to seriously address any questions posed by their children. She sees these questions as golden opportunities for teaching, urging that parents take advantage of their child's natural sense of curiosity, as "[i]ts little passions should be engaged." (18) A child's natural proclivities need to be directed and stimulated; a questioning mind is a gift from pupil to teacher and it is the parents' responsibility to "excite their curiosity" on subjects which do not rouse them naturally. (22) Locke also comments on curiosity, stating that it is to be encouraged as it facilitates learning and develops an appetite for knowledge. [60] Wollstonecraft expands this idea with the intention of building her case that girls are capable of being taught to reason. Locke and Wollstonecraft agree that children who have a sense of curiosity expound on what they learn, aided by and developing their sense of reason, which Rousseau agrees is vital, because "[r]eason alone teaches us to know good and evil."[61] In this regard (*Thoughts* insists), girls are no different than boys. All that is necessary for a female child to learn is for a parent to discover how to stimulate her curiosity. One manner of accomplishing this is through discussion. Children's abilities to take part in complex conversation should be furthered (something which is again aided by their engaged curiosity) and Wollstonecraft urges that they must learn to "express the thoughts with facility and propriety." (19) An articulate woman is less likely to be dismissed as being trivial (which is Wollstonecraft's goal for herself in writing *Thoughts*), or if she is, at least she can defend herself. This is a skill, which can only be attained through practice, a conviction mirrored in Locke's text which states pretty much the same thing, and emphasises the importance of ease of self-expression.[62] These skills

[58] Taylor, Mary 105.
[59] Barker-Benfield, Culture 3.
[60] Locke 93.
[61] Rousseau 39.
[62] Locke 154.

are requisite for a young adult to be given authority and to be treated with respect.[63] Both authors agree that parents must interact with their children and enter into debates and conversations with them in order to challenge their precepts and to encourage interpretive thought. This was a radically different approach to parenting.[64] Children should settle for nothing less than truth and fact, and these things must be established through reason. Reminiscent of Hartley's *Theories of the Human Mind, on the Principle of the Association of Ideas* (1775), Wollstonecraft guides parents in this challenge, urging them to teach children to draw their own conclusions from what they perceive, noting both similarities and differences in what they observe. (22)[65] This skill allows children to think critically and to assess information rather than to naively believe everything that they are told. Through discussions with their teachers or mothers, children will further develop their thought processes. The formation of their opinions will rely on information gathered, following the principles of Empiricism as well as Associationism. This will develop their reasoning skills and mode of self-expression, thus gaining them respect, which is paramount for both genders and furthers Wollstonecraft's cause.

Once reason is established (*Thoughts* surmises), it can be further refined through practice while daughters engage in self-education through extensive reading.[66] Wollstonecraft admits that through reading, "[k]nowledge will imperceptibly be acquired," while the child is being entertained. (47) Naturally, it is the parents' responsibility to guide their daughters towards a quality of text which is formative of desirable personality traits (something which offers useful guidance and is not laden with melodrama or what Rousseau would call "suitable") and to open discussions about what is read to further reasoning skills and mental engagement.[67] (Anti-Jacobin and more conservative reformers, such as Hannah More (1745-1833), maintained that the best source for reading material was the Bible, though Wollstonecraft disagreed with this, stating that "religion is best taught by example [and that children] should not be taught reading by so sacred a book.") (53)[68] In her later-compiled *The Female Reader: Or Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse* (1789) she chooses texts "particularly calculated to affect a young hear and improve

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[63] Astell has similar ideas, when she discusses this subject, noting the importance of gathering proof of fact before forming opinions, so as to circumvent the formation of prejudices. Astell 135, *sic*.
[64] Davidoff & Hall 343. There was a marked decrease in corporal punishment and an increase in play.
[65] In her words: "To describe the manner in which ideas are associated with words, beginning from childhood." (22)
This idea possibly springs from reading David Hartley. David Hartley, Theories of the Human Mind, on the Principle of the Association of Ideas (London: J. Johnson, 1775) 104-123 (facsimile).
[66] This is a concept with which Wollstonecraft, as a largely self-educated woman, is intimately familiar. Todd 12.
[67] Rousseau 392.
[68] In her Sunday school, More taught exclusively from the Bible and maintained that education did not necessarily need to "radicalise ordinary readers." Gilmartin 82.

an opening understanding."[69] This collection of works includes essays by Hume, Trimmer, Barbauld and poems by her friend Charlotte Smith and follows the model of Dr. William Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774), a text designed to teach elocution for English Dissenting academics. These positive reading habits could also be taken forward, as many women chose to continue their self-education throughout their lives with the aid of the copious lending libraries, which were springing up all over the country, even though many of these limited women's access.[70] On this subject, a female perspective of gender difference can be traced through the writing of Barbauld, supporting the idea of women's greater capacity for sentiment and feeling, which she agrees must be ruled by the critical use of reason and moral sense, showing that she is in favour of educating women. In her essay *An Enquiry into those Kinds of Distress which excite Agreeable Sensations* (1773) she adheres to Burke's model in *A Philosophical Enquiry* of how emotions of love and pity should be represented appropriately. Her analysis of emotion is almost scientific, warning against the possibly harmful effects of reading sentimental works of fiction. Because of writings like this, Wollstonecraft has specific ideas about what women should be reading and *The Female Reader* is designed to "imprint some useful lessons on the mind" in case the reader has not developed her sense of reason to the extent that she can protect herself from harmful influences.[71]

Having made her statement about how knowledge is acquired through reading, it is not unreasonable to assume that Wollstonecraft carries this awareness of influential authority forward in the creation of her novellas, which support the same premises and ideals as her more polemical texts. (Influencing the reimagining of feminine ideals may have been a prime goal of novelists.[72]) However, she cannot expect to be taken seriously by writing solely works of fiction, as novels in particular carry with them a reputation for corrupting susceptible minds.[73] Wollstonecraft is furthermore wary of the potentially harmful influence of emotive texts and by responsibly acknowledging this in *Thoughts* warns parents that if the mind is not kept occupied, it "must sink into sensuality", much like the family of daughters in *Mary*. (55)[74] So, parents must teach their daughters to keep their minds active so as to avert obsessions with romantic love or inappropriate emotional displays and to counter fits of hysteria or depression with sensible solutions to problems.[75]

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[69] Mary Wollstonecraft, The Female Reader, The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft Vol. 4. Eds. Janet Todd & Marilyn Butler (London: William Pickering, 1989) 55.
[70] Davidoff & Hall 292.
[71] Wollstonecraft, Female 55.
[72] Mellor, "Feminism" 190.
[73] Taylor, Mary 71; Robertson 287.
[74] Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary *and* Maria/Matilda, ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 22.
[75] It is for this reason, that Astell had claimed earlier that her "only design is to improve your Charms and heighten your Value, by suffering you no longer to be cheap and contemptible." Astell 51, *sic*.

This is only achieved through a communal approach as teaching only takes place if children are involved and in order for this to happen, they must take an interest in their education. The level of engagement won through reading entertaining yet desirably seminal texts is invaluable, however before she can successfully pursue this mode of social influence, Wollstonecraft must establish herself as a trustworthy authority on the moulding of young minds through the publication of *Thoughts*.

As an alternative to reading, Wollstonecraft directs mothers to consider the value of the theatre for providing lessons in benevolence, as people who have been raised in a privileged situation will benefit from learning to empathise with what Wollstonecraft calls "fictitious distress" (something which also occurs while reading the right sort of novels). (152)[76] With correct guidance, this will enhance their citizenship and render them more benevolent individuals more able to perform their civic duties. However, Wollstonecraft cautions against solely diverting young women with tales of tragic love, adding that "perhaps their feelings might more profitably be roused, if they were to see sometimes the complicated misery of sickness and poverty, and weep for the beggar instead of the king." (152) So as long as girls do not confine their compassion to romances, and expand their emotional education to include a wide range of ailments associated with (what presumably to them are) foreign situations in life, the theatre provides them with an arena to practice their compassion as part of their maturation process. This development of compassion could also be seen as a development of maternal nurture of others. It may also serve to prepare them for privation in life as well as expanding their sense of civic duty. A general awareness of the hardships endured by the less fortunate (endorsed both by Astell and Locke) is part of the zeitgeist of the period through the culture of sensibility and the plight of the beggar and the necessity of teaching benevolence for the lower echelons of society can be found in many novels of the period, including those discussed later in this thesis.[77] This social issue is also heavily featured in Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* (1778), which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. The culture of sensibility grew out of Locke's understanding of psychology.[78] It was a multi-faceted literary, medical, ethical, and social concept during the era which featured in countless discussions and was

[76] She elaborates: "Young persons, who are happily situated, do well to enter into fictitious distress; and if they have any judicious person to direct their judgment, it may be improved while their hearts are melted. Yet I would not have them confine their compassion to the distresses occasioned by love; and perhaps their feelings might more profitably be roused, if they were to see sometimes the complicated misery of sickness and poverty, and weep for the beggar instead of the king." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 152.
[77] Astell 158; Locke 86.
[78] It is also featured in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility" 102.

also rendered in many works of art.[79] This level of empathy was said to be heightened by exposure to poetry, music, and painting, the emotional engagement with which brought the individual closer to God.[80] This phenomenon is of a feminist concern, according to Barbara Taylor in *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, as "religious belief became increasingly aligned with the feminine and both came under the rule of sentiment," lending women a level of moral authority.[81] Women were believed to have an "innate piety", which lent strength to the feminist cause.[82] As young women are engaging emotionally with other people's distress (whether it be fictitious or not) they learn to choose what situations they wish to seek out in life and what to avoid. (This concept is prevalent in all of the didactic works examined in this dissertation.) They learn to think of rational solutions to life's adversities, growing in wisdom, without being hardened by actual misfortunes. Wollstonecraft explains that, "[w]hile we are looking into another's mind, and forming their temper, we are insensibly correcting our own; and every act of benevolence which we exert to our fellow-creatures, does ourselves the most essential services." (66) In this sense, benevolence is lauded not only as a Christian virtue, but, as More would also describe it, as a tool for self-education and an aid in the quest for the development of reason, in accordance with other educational texts, such as Samuel Richardson's (1689-1761) *Familiar Letters on Important Occasions* (1741).[83] By concerning themselves with other people's problems, they develop solutions to their own. Part of being a good Christian is showing benevolence in the form of teaching and mothering, as well as continuing to expand the mind through exposing it to and taking in new information and knowledge, a habit which might come naturally to the reader of novels which illustrate example scenarios of this activity.[84]

The respectability gained through the cult of sensibility must, according to Wollstonecraft, be controlled and "like any other good quality, must be cultivated". (64) Daughters must be taught to shrink from harming others as well as from harming their own reputations. They must develop high expectations of themselves. Locke states that the

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[79] Some examples of this are in the sketch titled *A Lady and her Children Relieving a Cottager* by William Redmore Bigg (1781) and William Wordsworth's poems such as *The Old Cumberland Beggar* (1798) and *Alice Fell* (1802).

[80] Taylor, Mary 59.

[81] *Ibid* 97.

[82] *Ibid* 100.

[83] Astell 204, *sic*.
Samuel Richardson, "Familiar Letters on Important Occasions," Women in the Eighteenth Century – Constructions of Femininity, ed. Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990) 36.
More calls benevolence the "beauty of holiness" and asserts that "there is no quality in the female character which more raises is tone." More 34.
More also states that this "true good nature [. . .] is compounded of kindness, forbearance, forgiveness, and self-denial." *Ibid* 31.

[84] The dangers of harmful examples and the power of admirable examples can be seen in exploration of the final two novels examined in later chapters, or as Wollstonecraft puts it: "example will best enforce precept."

best motivation for this is to teach them to "have a tenderness only of shame and for reputation [. . . and to accustom them] to reflection on their own actions."[85] Wollstonecraft builds on this concept with her desire to instil in young women a need to be respectable, as this lends them credence, courage, and fortitude. All in all, through education, the development of reason benefits the development of both religious love and charity, which curb irritability and self-absorption and make for a more respectable grown woman, who is more likely to have her opinion sought. Sensibility turned inward and evolving into self-absorption and self-pity was believed to be a female vice, although it is also frequently equated with youth. Novels before the French Revolution (1789 – 1799) were playing-fields for women readers to explore extreme emotions vicariously through the characters they were reading about with guilty pleasure. Because of the bloody chaotic nature of the revolution, however, these indulgences took on an overtone of danger in their unrestrained extremes, which also represents a major obstacle to respectability for women. Wollstonecraft was already alarmed in *Thoughts* by the dangers of unchecked reading and through her suggestions for parenting skills, "[t]he turbulent passions may be kept down till reason begins to dawn." (8) (*sic*) Here reason is presented as the antidote for unrestricted feelings. In *The Female Reader*, she elaborates that "whatever tends to impress habits of order on the expanding mind may be reckoned the most beneficial part of education."[86] She has built this precept on a similar feminist conviction voiced by Astell, who contends that if daughters are raised and educated well, then "the Passions did not move the Mind, but the Mind the Passions."[87] So, education is shown to teach how to control emotion with reason. By teaching daughters that melodrama is undesirable, the seed for the aspiration for a calm and rational approach to life is sown. In order for this to truly take hold, Wollstonecraft adds that "we must keep them out of the way of bad examples." (14) Swooning hysterical women such as Richardson's Pamela in his eponymous novel (1740), Sarah Fielding's Ophelia in *The History of Ophelia* (1760), or the later-written Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) must be avoided. Daughters must be discouraged from seeking attention at all costs. They must be modest, until they develop the reasoning skills to add sensibly to a conversation.[88] This, however, cannot be achieved through rote learning. Memorising well-known authors' opinions (as was the most common form of education) is pointless without understanding

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(68)
[85] Locke 89, 110.
[86] Wollstonecraft, Reader 55.
[87] Astell 221, *sic*.
[88] Anne-Therese De Lambert agrees in her conduct text, titled *Advice of a Mother to her Daughter* (1727). Anne-Therese De Lambert, "Advice of a Mother to her Daughter," The Young Lady's Pocket Library, or Parental Monitor, ed. Vivien Jones (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995) 140-143.

the text.[89] Scholars may be surprised to discover that this is one of the few points on which the conservative Hannah More's later-written *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) disagrees with Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts*. In an effort to avoid the development of brazenness, she asserts, "[k]knowledge that is *burnt in* [. . .] is seldom obtrusive, rarely impertinent."[90] With this, she means that memorisation, preferably from the Bible, will prevent women from asserting themselves in what she believes to be an unfeminine manner. (Unlike Wollstonecraft, More has little faith in women's mental abilities as critical thinkers: "They are less disposed to consider the compositions they read, as materials on which to ground objections and answers, than as helps to faith and rules of life."[91] However, both women assiduously agree on the need for a better education for women, one which will develop their benevolence, morality, and integrity.) Even though Wollstonecraft believes that a "relish for reading, or any of the fine arts, should be cultivated very early in life", in order to avoid giving in to vice by keeping the mind occupied, the material gleaned from this should be absorbed conceptually, so as to add to the young woman's overall perceptions of the world. (48) Melodrama may be entertaining in literature, however "[t]hose productions which give a wrong account of the human passions, and the various accidents of life, ought not be read before the judgment is formed, or at least exercised." (48)[92] Young women should be able to differentiate between realistic and sensationalised accounts of life, before they indulge in this sort of reading. Without this sort of judgement, Wollstonecraft claims that this is "one great cause of the affectation of young women." (50) The uneducated mind may see novels of this sort as excellent examples of lives of hardship (engaging the young reader's sympathies), as well as of desirable feminine behaviour, in order to establish desired methods for women to take charge of their own destinies.

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[89] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 25.

[90] Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, with a View of the Principles and Conduct prevalent among Females of Rank and Fortune (Danvers: General Books, 2009) 20.
Though More is primarily focused on Christianity and on teaching girls (and indeed boys) how to be better Christians, her religious verve overlaps with Wollstonecraft's quest for instilling benevolence in youngsters. Both women claim that educating women will make them better wives and mothers. The difference there is very subtle. Wollstonecraft's approach in *Thoughts*, arguably her most conservative text, is not to offend conservative readers by keeping quiet about her goals to prepare women for roles *beyond* motherhood, whereas More sees a need to prepare women for their *ultimate goal* of motherhood. Scholars seeking to contrast a conservative More with a radical Wollstonecraft must consult the latter's more inflammatory texts, such as *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. All that can be revealed in a comparison with *Thoughts* is a tedious rewording of extremely *similar* viewpoints.

[91] *Ibid* 12.

[92] This idea mirrors Samuel Johnson's (1709-1784) *Rambler, Number 4* (1750), in which he laments the effects of novels on young minds: "They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account." Samuel Johnson, "Rambler, Number 4,".The Works of Samuel Johnson in Nine Volumes, Vol 2 (London: FQ Books, 2010) 208.

Wollstonecraft is addressing an issue which is of widespread concern. Many writers of conduct literature are anxious about the effects of novels on young readers. By harnessing this influential tool, feminist authors of this period had the power to counter the effects of melodramatic fiction by writing stories of a more positively formative quality. Naive women should be sheltered from disreputably formative fiction as well as from actual examples of sensual-driven lifestyles.[93] Wollstonecraft sought to counter this later in *The Female Reader*. Similarly concerned, in her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, addressed to a Young Lady* (1773) Hester Chapone (1727-1801) recommends that young women should read poetry, rather than novels, in order to improve and direct their imaginations, to gear them towards the pursuit of virtue and benevolence, although others argued that novels were more able to be persuasive, as fictitious scenarios of trials and tribulations are more emotive.[94] Wollstonecraft contends that there is no safe genre and before judgement is formed, young minds require guidance in all of their reading. Without guidance, Wollstonecraft warns, "[w]hat a painful train of reflections do then arise in the mind, and convictions of the vice and folly of the world are prematurely forced on it." (159) Young women's minds are ruined by exposure to public pleasures, if they are not guided properly by an adult, much like Adeline Mowbray in Amelia Opie's eponymous novel (1805) (as will be discussed later) or Lydia Bennet was in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, so that they understand how to ascribe acceptable behaviour to the appropriate class and to choose what examples to emulate, based on their own situation in life. They must learn to discipline themselves and curb their impulses. Until they mature enough to do so, they must be closely observed and taught how to behave in public, especially as Wollstonecraft warns that "affectation, though despised, is very contagious." (159) If they do not, early feminists feared, they might lose respect and open themselves to ridicule. Later, in her *Letters on Education* (1790), which Wollstonecraft reviewed enthusiastically, Catharine Macaulay comments on Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) unflattering portrayal of women in his poetry, but warns young women to be aware of possibly deserving to be satirised, rather than crying out in outrage over his texts.[95] So, mothers must lead by example and help their daughters to understand the behaviour of heroines in novels and people they may encounter. They must be taught to employ their ability to reason and to ascribe undesirable behaviour appropriately to the purpose of entertainment, or the

[93] James Fordyce, "Sermons to Young Women," Women in the Eighteenth Century – constructions of femininity, ed. Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990) 176.
[94] Hester Chapone, "Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, addressed to a Young Lady" Women in the Eighteenth Century – constructions of femininity, ed. Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990) 106; Mellor, "Feminism" 190.
[95] Todd, Mary 179; Catherine Macaulay, "Letters on Education – part one, letter xxiv – Chastity," Women in the Eighteenth Century – constructions of femininity, ed. Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990) 116.

lamentable lack of education and breeding, rather than allowing them to be seduced by the vice of melodramatic attention-seeking and thus impinging on their respectability.

Thoughts also concerns itself with matrimony. The pursuit of love can open the way for vice, if reason is not employed, which may have the lamentable effect of young women losing respectability. Love, naturally, is something which would occupy the minds of young women, in their quest for a potential husband and provider, as well as the sensually seductive desire for the expression of unrestrained passion. This is why Wollstonecraft proclaims that "[w]hatever tends to make a person in some measure independent of the senses, is a prop to virtue." (26) Passions must not be permitted to sway decisions; "the human mind must ever be employed." (48) Education is posed as the best opportunity to ensure this and to avert undue prejudice. Unchecked love or fancy can lead to many missteps in a young woman's life, which may ruin her prospects entirely, as happens in countless novels of the time, including Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray – or Mother and Daughter* (1805), which will be examined later. Lack of guidance may lead to vanity, which, according to Wollstonecraft, might give an impression of loose morals; she may begin "dressing herself in a way to attract languishing glances, [which does not] give us the most advantageous opinion of the purity of her mind." (40) The preoccupation with self-love distracts young women from the need for respectability, replacing it with a desire for flattery.[96] This vice in turn can easily be used by self-serving men, who entice them into affairs, thus ruining their lives. As Wollstonecraft states, "[a] woman, who has beauty without sentiment, is in great danger of being seduced." (75) Without the ability to assess her suitors, she may succumb to flattery and compromise her reputation. In this scenario, education is posed as a means of averting the ruination of daughters, by teaching them to harness their passions and to always employ reason before taking action (an argument which should appeal to concerned parents of either sex). And even if they manage to retain their respectability through sheer chance and marry, "[l]ove unsupported by esteem, must soon expire, or lead to depravity", as in her first novella, *Mary* (which will be discussed later). (83) They still require a highly developed ability to reason, in order to earn and maintain the respect of their husbands. Here the word "depravity" is left open to interpretation. The reader may assume it refers to a variety of situations, including unwanted sexual advances, the husband's disregard for his wife's wishes, and possibly even extramarital affairs. In any case, it is clear that Wollstonecraft is concerned with the married futures of naive young women, who do not choose their husbands with critical forethought.

[96] This is in direct contrast with Rousseau, who applauds self-love as a healthy interest in preserving one's own life: "Self-love is always good, always in accordance with the order of nature." Rousseau 208.

The obsession with romanticised fantasies of love also needs to be curbed by reason. If not, Wollstonecraft warns that "[p]ainful feelings are prolonged beyond their natural course, to gratify our desire of appearing heroines, and we deceive ourselves as well as others." (86) Young impressionable women languish and wallow in sometimes imaginary pain, or even fall ill, rather than approaching life's disappointments with courage, playing into the negative stereotype of the melodramatic female. They believe their femininity is enhanced by this self-imposed martyrdom, because inferior fiction tells them so, and they become obsessed with their own passions and are left at the mercy of their lover's ability to gratify their vanity. According to Wollstonecraft, they leave themselves vulnerable to depression. Restraint is the key to good physical and mental health; "[h]ealth of mind, as well as of body, must in general be obtained by patient submission to self-denial, and disagreeable operations". (65) Her argument is lent authority when she takes this concept from Locke, who states: "It seems plain to me, that the principle of all virtue and excellency lies in a power of denying our selves the satisfaction of our own desires, where reason does not authorize them."[97] The ability to turn away from something desirable must be cultivated, in order for a person to have the power of choice and thus choose to be virtuous. Children should learn to assess whether something they crave is beneficial to their health, before deciding whether to indulge this perceived need. While they are too young to assess this for themselves, it is up to the parents, to determine this: "the less reason they have of their own, the more are they to be under the absolute power and restraint of those, in whose hands they are."[98] Who is this figure of authority? It is usually the mother or a suitable surrogate, because Wollstonecraft was challenging misogynistic readers (particularly in her novels, which will be discussed later) or anyone scornful of femininity with an irrefutably authoritative, yet virtuous role for women: the role of mother. This narrow band of acceptable female authority necessitates Wollstonecraft's use of mothers as the driving force behind her polemical text. Young women's need for guidance also explains ignorant women being under the control of their husbands. Locke indicates that the level of guidance and dictatorship exerted should vary from child to child, according to their requirements and mental maturity. He cautions parents against indulging their children's cravings. Self-denial must be taught and reasoned assessment of the need for an object as well. This stifling of desires then paves the path to virtue, untroubled by greed and sensual vice. Both authors agree that vice can

[97] Locke 31.
[98] *Ibid* 32.

only be restrained if the mind has been trained to reason with powerful passions and to conquer them.[99]

Wollstonecraft, however, also has the unusual idea of harnessing the pursuit of pleasure, not as a path to depravity, but as a stimulus for learning. Pleasure is a tool which must be wielded by someone who is governed by reason, otherwise there is a danger of being manipulated by an untrustworthy source. She suggests that "[o]ur pursuits and pleasures should have the same tendency, and every thing concur to prepare us for a state of purity and happiness." (160) If learning is made desirable, then the act of learning and the pursuit of pleasure become synonymous, which is her ideal. An idea which can be extrapolated from this is the neo-classical ideal of creating novels which are simultaneously a pleasure to read *and* instructive, something which Wollstonecraft attempted with her novellas. So, according to *Thoughts* the pursuit of pleasure can be harnessed and used in order to further education.[100] Children in particular are driven by their playful natures and mindlessly pursue their pleasures. Parents need to accept this and use it to motivate them to learn and teachers and authors who wish to instruct should do the same.[101] For the retraining of poor behaviour, novels can offer examples of remedying past mistakes as the heroines frequently undergo this ordeal. Therefore, mothers in particular (as they are in charge of raising the children in most situations) must develop a keen sense of judgement and analysis of what they witness in order to avoid perpetuating poor behaviour. Mothers must also be educated in knowledge and charisma and be made aware that "exercise of either mind or body will not at first be entered on, but with a view to pleasure." (22) Learning should be made to be a fun activity, much as novels as possible tools for learning are made pleasurable to read. With this level of wisdom, women in the maternal capacity enact a role of high integrity. This defines femininity in such a way, as to establish a moral high ground, or a pre-emptive strike against vice through education, and Wollstonecraft presents women (and obliquely herself) as the best candidates for this honourable responsibility, particularly when they are in the roles of mothers.

In *Thoughts* Wollstonecraft poses education as a means to make women better at the roles assigned to them by society, in other words, the roles of wife and mother, roles which can only be fulfilled with the help of a man who is willing to marry them. Rousseau

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[99] The eponymous heroine of *Mary* manages to do with her lover.
[100] Astell agrees. Astell 211, *sic*.
[101] Conversely, punishment must also be handled with care. Children, Wollstonecraft states, need to understand that there is an essential difference between mischief and malice. Confusing one with the other and exacting contrition can have dire effects on the personality of the child. Unjust discipline of children, who are pursuing harmless, yet irksome pleasures, furthers dishonesty, as they are likely to lie about what they have done, which is the true vice. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 15.

explains this by stating that "she will always be in subjection to a man, or to a man's judgement, and she will never be free to set her own opinion above his."[102] When a woman applies her abilities to reason (developed through education) to evaluate the worthiness of a potential husband, it makes for a less naive wife and also gives her dignity of character. This, according to Wollstonecraft, will help her to be resigned to her lot in life. Education will "sanctify the sorrows, and dignify the character of virtue." (92) With the ability to reason, a wife will be able to work through any disappointments in life or with her marriage, by making her more resourceful, creative, and more worldly through her empathetic reading. She will understand that she is not alone in her misery and take comfort from the fact that other women endure far worse than she, and survive to find contentment. A similar argument was made earlier by Anne-Therese de Lambert (1647-1733) in her widely read work of conduct literature, entitled *Advice of a Mother to her Daughter* (1727), in which she suggests that the ability to reason gives a woman the key to intellectual and spiritual freedom.[103] This poses a strong argument for Wollstonecraft to build on for women to read novels which depict realistic relationships and which warn them not to marry too young, but to complete an education first. Regarding immature women, "should they be so fortunate as to get a good husband, they will not set a proper value on him; he will be found much inferior to the lovers described in novels, and their want of knowledge makes them frequently disgusted with the man, when the fault is in human nature." (94) It is normal for people to be somewhat unrefined in their habits, especially in the privacy of their homes. Here Wollstonecraft calls the reader's attention to the disparity between life and fiction (which beautifies the mundane), while emphasising the importance of daughters being taught to identify the difference by their mothers or teachers. Romance between man and woman is frequently misrepresented in novels, as several writers of the time identified and warned against in conduct literature.[104] This level of awareness comes from education and life experience. It is wisdom born from the ability to reason.

When it comes to choosing a husband (*Thoughts* warns), an immature woman will likely select one for the wrong reasons. She lacks the maturity to choose based on reason and not passion, especially if she is an avid reader of un-vetted sentimental fiction and has not had the benefit of sober guidance from her mother. If she has chosen solely what her heart dictates to be the best lover, she may later find that she "is obliged to keep her children out of their father's company, that their morals may not be injured by his

[102] Rousseau 399.
[103] Lambert 161.
[104] Anne-Therese De Lambert conveyed a similar sentiment in her earlier-written text. *Ibid* 156.

conversation." (96) With this assertion, Wollstonecraft may be revealing her own dissatisfaction with men from her experience as a child. Her own father subjected her to crass manners and even domestic violence, and this statement exposes a longing for a different past.[105] She uses her negative experience as a springboard to urge her readers to avoid this situation with their own daughters, to give them the education that her own mother lacked and to choose husbands who would make good fathers. In a way, she is taking a maternally protective and guiding stance with her readers. Her train of thought is furthered as she reveals her mother's shortcomings with regards to wisdom, when she asks the reader: "Can they improve a child's understanding, when they are scarcely out of the state of childhood themselves?" (96) Her young mother was unprepared for the barbarity of her father and ill-equipped to raise and educate Wollstonecraft and her siblings. De Beaumont also "argued passionately for the importance of trained and knowledgeable teachers, and for parental (particularly maternal) involvement in education and childrearing, irrespective of rank" in her *Lettres diverses et critique* (written after she came to England.[106] This is also the opinion of her contemporary, Mrs. Thomas Slack in her introduction of her text, *Pleasing Instructor* (1756), though this text is written exclusively for the education of boys.[107] However, Wollstonecraft urges her reader to think kindly of this short-coming, when it occurs, asserting that "a thinking person can very readily make allowance for those faults which arise from want of reflection and education." (119) Once again, benevolence is the primary force behind her ideal of feminine judgement and the maternal voice of her narrative. She is also urging both male and female readers not to treat uneducated women with disdain, as they are ignorant and unable to perform their duties as wives and mothers proficiently, through no fault of their own.[108]

Striving for Respectability

Wollstonecraft continues her argument supporting the cause for women's education by linking it to training for the respectable roles of wife and mother, as is, according to Rousseau "the law of nature."[109] She calls this women's "duties", or in her words: "[t]o prepare a woman to fulfil the important duties of a wife and mother, are certainly the objects that should be in view during the early period of life." (58) She is aware of her

[105] Her parents' marriage imprinted on the young Mary's mind that marital relationships are an ongoing power-struggle which women inevitably lose, filling her with contempt for marriage and women who aspire to it. Her father's lack of financial success and his disrespectful treatment of her mother gave Wollstonecraft a degree of disdain for the societal norm of the superior status of men, coupled with a longing for a father-figure who would fulfil her need for a mentor and protector.
[106] Shefrin, "Governess" 191.
[107] *Ibid* iii.
[108] This is a sentiment expressed less kindly in her novellas in especially in her later-written *Vindication* in which she states that such a woman "was born only to procreate and rot." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 132.
[109] Rousseau 385.

social norms, and hones her argument to the purpose of appealing to her conservative readers while proposing a fairly subtle reimagining of women's roles. Wollstonecraft may have mimicked De Beaumont, whose educational regime is made palatable to the more traditional-minded contemporary reader, as it merely makes it possible for a young woman to employ "rational domesticity" rather than pursuing revolutionary ideals.[110] Wollstonecraft reassures the sceptical (possibly misogynistic) reader by making herself out to be conventional and non-threatening to the status quo. She indicates that "[n]o employment of the mind is a sufficient excuse for neglecting the domestic duties, and I cannot conceive that they are incompatible. A woman may fit herself to be the companion and friend of a man of sense, and yet know how to take care of his family." (56)[111] Her argument for educating women is not to cause change and upheaval (she claims), but to better compliance with these roles. Acting on her proposal would make for happier more contented wives and mothers who, instead of balking at fulfilling their duties, would possibly enjoy them. She also argues against the contemporary supposition that education and domestic skills are mutually exclusive, emphasising that education will add to rather than detract from the attractiveness of potential wives, as they will be "fit" to be "companions" to their husbands.[112] This lays the groundwork for the concept of equality and friendship in marriage, which was beginning to be held as the ideal by people such as Francis Place, who praises the camaraderie, afforded him by his wife.[113] The Puritan philosophy had furthered this, maintaining the father figure as the head of the household, but also defining the wife as her husband's partner, supporting the concept of a partnership in marriage, where women have souls equal to men's in the eyes of God. Wollstonecraft's contemporary, Barbauld, essayist, editor, pamphleteer, poet, and teacher, was against schools for girls, as she believed rather than being educated, girls should focus on becoming good wives and companions.[114] Though she stands by the earlier mentioned Dissenter's idea of women's capability of passionate religious love, she is ardently against anything else which is contrary to social convention, insisting that it is women's primary

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[110] *Ibid* 199.

[111] More takes this one step further when she states that "to woman moral excellence is the grand object: of education; and of moral excellence, domestic life is to women the proper sphere." More 50.
In her *Vindication* Wollstonecraft expresses a similar sentiment: "whatever tends to incapacitate the maternal character, takes a woman out of her sphere." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 248.

[112] Davidoff & Hall 289.
According to Lawrence Stone, the ideal of companionate marriage was developed by non-conformist middle-class couples of the 17th Century and perpetuated by the writings of Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774). Richard Steele (1672-1729) enjoyed a companionate marriage. Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage (London: Penguin Books, 1979) 234.

[113] Tanya Evans, "Women, Marriage and the Family," Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850, eds. Hannah Barker & Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005) 67.

[114] Taylor, Mary 46.

goal to please the opposite sex.[115] She mocks bluestockings as aspiring to be tyrannical dictators of men in her later-written poem *The Rights of Woman* (1795), when all of their woes could so easily be assuaged through marriage based on mutual love. By emphasising the maternal role, Wollstonecraft is softening her radical ideas for the more conventional reader, though not enough to leave an impression on Barbauld, who publicly opposed Wollstonecraft's ideas.[116]

Wollstonecraft argued against women relying on marriage for stability and respectability. She wanted women to take an active role in the formation of their lives and the lives of their children, believing that daughters must be respectable and educated in order to fulfil the duties of their roles of mother, as "virtues are best learned at home, if a mother will give up her time and thoughts to the task; but if she cannot, they should be sent to school". (60) With this suggestion, Wollstonecraft is stressing the importance of education over solely affectionate parenting or rearing which, in her opinion, is worth even less if performed by servants. Her reaction is against mothers unknowingly wielding negatively influential power over their children. Home schooling seems to have been preferred, in general, especially as a girl was more likely to attain a broader and more liberal education at home, than what she would have been exposed to in schools, which still focused on preparing girls for domestic duties and included such subjects as "dance", which were superfluous to Wollstonecraft.[117] She also wants to safeguard young minds from the ill effects of naive mothers, such as her own. In such a case, boarding school is preferable. The task of instilling virtue in children is time-consuming and requires a great amount of care, self-awareness, "thought" and involvement. (59) The word-choice of "thought" re-emphasises Wollstonecraft's convictions that effective mothers must be able, through education, to *think* critically for themselves.[118] Wollstonecraft returns to the notion of duty, by delineating the short-comings of the teacher-child bond, stating that children feel regard and affection naturally only for their mothers. (59) The teacher-figure is only effective if children tolerate being taught. This requires either that they love or respect this person, who can never be a complete mother substitute. Locke frequently states in his text that consistency and strong guidance breeds *love and reverence*, which is required for both his and Wollstonecraft's ideal teacher and parent relationship with a child. Effective teachers, he believes, become a kind of surrogate parent and they must be

[115] *Ibid* 110, 183.
[116] *Ibid* 108.
[117] Davidoff & Hall 290.
[118] Regarding maternal duty she is far less aggressive than Astell who infers that lackadaisical mothering is due to narcissism and misplaced pride, rather than lack of ability and education. Astell 60, *sic*.

able to lead by good example.[119] Both Locke and Wollstonecraft comment on the link between the role of a teacher and that of a parent, be it either the father or mother. (In either case, children must show respect.[120]) Wollstonecraft's ideal is to have an educated mother filling this role who can perform her duty by being able to teach her children while retaining and passing on respect.

Part of teaching a daughter to be respectable includes concern for her pastoral care, according to *Thoughts*. This requires the mother to be concerned with her child's happiness and appropriateness of emotional expression, *above* her own needs. In other words, "[t]he forming of the temper ought to be the continual thought, and the first task of a parent or teacher." (61) In this instance, Wollstonecraft sees fit to put both mothers and teachers on a par, which is noteworthy for discussions found later in this dissertation. (She is also painting a picture of this role as being selfless and perhaps even self-sacrificing.) An important aspect of pastoral care is to further an understanding and contentment with the roles which the daughters will play in society, when they are no longer children living in their parents' care. This includes appropriate expressions of feminist assertiveness and conservative deference, examples of which will be discussed in the novels featured later in this dissertation. Wollstonecraft agrees with Rousseau, when she adds that "[a] constant attention to the management of the temper produces gentleness and humility." (62)[121] This is not to be confused with "weaknesses of mind, which often pass for good nature." (63) An intelligent, well-informed "gentleness" is respectable, while "weaknesses of mind" are at best pitiable and at worst treated with disdain. Again, Wollstonecraft's aim appears to be a measure of self-empowerment. She warns the reader that, "[s]he who submits, with out conviction, to a parent or husband, will as unreasonably tyrannise over her servants; for slavish fear and tyranny go together." (63) Here she once more shows an understanding of psychology (or perhaps more accurately, an outgrowth of Hartley's Associationism), explaining the reactionary nature of those who are made to feel powerless. Their only recourse is to make those who have even less power suffer. Perhaps it is this helplessness, which leads to woman's stereotypical "cunning" (according to Rousseau in his novel *Emile*) in an attempt to control tyrannical men in order to regain some sense of command over her life.[122] As an Enlightenment author encouraging the use of reason, Rousseau also addressed the question of gender roles, especially in *Emile*, which was published in Britain in 1762. The text supports the assertion that children are born innocent, only to be corrupted by society and that they must learn to think rationally in order to combat these

[119] Locke 70.
[120] From this it can be inferred that any woman who performs a maternal role garners respect.
[121] "What is most wanted in a woman is gentleness." Rousseau 399.
[122] *Ibid* 387.

negative influences.[123] Childhood experiences, influences, and education were thus cast as the shaping chisel of the adult character, changing the manner in which British society viewed both education and parenting practice. Unguided, as More later agrees, children would never come to pursue virtue.[124] It can be argued that this change in attitude inadvertently led to the empowerment of women in their maternal roles, as this role now took on a new importance and prominence, making them responsible for the morality of society, through their skills or ineptitude to raise and educate children. (It also implies that all people regardless of class or background can be positively influenced by the correct maternal figure.) Wollstonecraft uses this in *Thoughts*, while building on Locke's previously mentioned conviction that people untrained in reason are at the mercy of their superiors, be they parents or husbands. A wife, who has no sense of self-respect, garners no respect from her husband (or her children, probably). This, in turn, makes her feel powerless, which causes her to lash out at her 'inferiors' such as servants, if she has not learned to control her emotions with reason. Women require a certain level of courage and fortitude through self-respect, in order to be effectual wives and mothers. And, once more, novels (provided they show realistic scenarios) offer ideal examples of behaviour, which develops or destroys respectability.

Throughout most of her writing Wollstonecraft voices great disdain for artificial manners. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* is no exception, as she links genuine expressions of emotion to respectability. She urges mothers to encourage young women to "[l]et the manners arise from the mind, and let there be no disguise for the genuine emotion of the heart." (24) Rather than asking young women to express themselves inappropriately, this simply argues against false emotions or insincerity. She continues this idea by suggesting that if girls do not react to works of art, to "persuade them to be silent, and not feign raptures they do not feel; for nothing can be more ridiculous." (42) This sentiment is made even more obvious by her scathing portrayal of the before-mentioned family of daughters in *Mary*.[125] Aside from being irritated by this sort of behaviour, Wollstonecraft appears to have altruistic motives, as she attempts to (rather maternally) shield young women from appearing foolish and thus detracting from the dignity of her sex. She presents several seemingly innocuous scenarios, where young women could

[123] This premise can also be found earlier in James Talbot's (1664-1708) manual for charity schools, *The Christian Schoolmaster* (1707), in which he stresses the susceptibility of impressionable young minds and that teachers must take care in how they guide their charges, as they are responsible for the development of their moral fibre. James Talbot, The Christian Schoolmaster (London: Gale Ecco Print Edition, 2010).
[124] Ten years after the publication of *Thoughts*, writers such as Hannah More (1745-1833) in her *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex with Suggestions for its Improvement* (1798) went so far as to warn against the absence of education, which might allow children to sink into their innate depravity. More 2.
[125] Wollstonecraft, Mary 22.

acquire this vice. The card table is one such arena for developing dishonest skills, in order to win, or as Wollstonecraft states, "too frequently little arts are practiced which debase the character." (146) In this context, deceit is frequently hidden under coquettish demeanour, which in itself has a negative effect on a woman's respectability. However, Wollstonecraft expresses concern especially for this sort of vice, as it is not taken seriously and frequently goes unpunished, or worse, is encouraged by people being amused by it. Irresponsible sentimental novels could also teach this sort of behaviour, making women appear ridiculous and unworthy of respect.

Like this, the enhancement of beauty is another form of artifice which is seductive by its very nature, as it elicits favourable responses from the opposite sex. On the subject of makeup (in *Thoughts*), she firstly questions the effects on a person's health, and then continues to define it as an agent of subterfuge. Wollstonecraft shows agreement with the statute of Parliament (1770), which declared that women were not permitted to trick men into marrying them with the deceitful use of perfumes, makeup, wigs, false teeth, iron stays or hoops, high heels, or padded hips, or they would be tried as witches and the marriage will be nullified.[126] When coupled with artificial manners, it surely compromises the virtue of a woman and Wollstonecraft warns, "if caught by it a man marries a woman thus disguised, he may chance not to be satisfied with her real person." (39) These alterations are posed as means to manipulate men into marriage, which is a dishonourable act.[127] Vanity destroys virtue, and is thus shown to be contrary to Christian ideals. Along similar lines, obsession with clothing, which can be another outcome of being too focused on enticing a husband, "gives rise to envy, and contests for trifling superiority, which do not render a woman very respectable to the other sex" (according to Wollstonecraft). (37) It may make for a more beguiling picture, but it also creates competition and strife between women, while thwarting attempts to form an honest relationship with a potential husband, again, a problem shown in greater vividness in *Mary*. A marriage cannot be based on friendship, if the wife is not held in high esteem by her husband. Wollstonecraft's axiom reads as follows: "Simplicity of Dress, and unaffected manners, should go together. They demand respect, and will be admired by people of taste, even when love is out of the question." (41) Honesty and a genuine demeanour should be among the first lessons instilled by mothers on daughters, as this will promote a virtuous life and make it possible for a woman to have an equanimous marriage, even if it lacks passion or romance. Here,

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[126] Barbara W. Swords, "'Woman's Place' in Jane Austen's England," Jane Austen Society of North America 10 (1988): 77.

[127] Astell focused on similar problems with female obsessions with beauty. She wished for young women to focus their attentions away from outward to inner beauty, "from a corruptible Body to an immortal Mind [. . . in order to avoid the creation of a] deformed soul." Astell 51, *sic*.

education, as a tool to enhance virtue, becomes something which protects men from the wiles of women (appealing to the male reader) and women from embracing Rousseau's or Milton's stereotypes (appealing to the female reader). It also warns women that respectability makes for a better guarantee of happiness in marriage. Like Wollstonecraft, Locke had earlier warned against false mimicry, stating that a "natural unfashionableness being much better than apish, affected postures."[128] His preference is also based on appearing respectable. Furthermore, artificial manners are shown to be counterproductive in the performance of a woman's duty as a mother, as her daughters would be inclined to imitate her appalling behaviour, thus perpetuating it, much as readers of questionable sentimental fiction mimic the affected antics of ridiculous heroines.

With reputations intact and esteem garnered through manners of self-representation, *Thoughts* asserts that young women will be freed by education and respectability, so that they can pursue a Christian life of virtue and pass on their wisdom to their own daughters. Wollstonecraft explains that "[t]he most shining abilities, and the most amiable dispositions of the mind, require culture, and a proper situation, not only to ripen and improve them, but to guard them against the perversions of vice, and the contagious influence of bad examples." (147) Regardless of innate ability, every person needs guidance and to be taught how to think rationally and this then helps them to make informed decisions and to live useful lives. She lends her argument authority when she agrees with Locke's cautioning against what he calls "the infection of bad company," (or any harmful examples) which can teach them to abandon reason or to be beguiled by artificial manners.[129] Both note that servants can frequently have a bad influence on children, especially with wild tales of goblins and spirits, which may entertain and awe a child and possibly keep them biddable, but will also teach them irrational fears, and it is difficult to rid children of these later. These fears can later impede a child in acting kindly towards the less fortunate, especially if they are misshapen or deformed, but who nevertheless depend on their benevolence. It is better if a child is raised by its actual parents, so as to avoid what both authors associate with the influences of lower classes, which can make the pursuit of a virtuous life more difficult. Mothers also must be educated, in order to avoid becoming debilitating models for their daughters to inadvertently emulate.[130] (Here Wollstonecraft agrees with Rousseau when he states that women should be "faithful", "modest, devoted, retiring", have a "good conscience" and a

[128] Locke 165.
[129] *Ibid* 71.
[130] Astell had also commented on this, when she argued against public opinion regarding the frivolity of educating women, claiming that education benefits "all the Concerns of Life." Astell 202.

"good reputation", and be "chaste".[131]) Education is beneficial to all of these roles, which society must agree are necessary every day of a woman's life, as a Christian, a mother and a wife.

In her rhetoric, Wollstonecraft also equates the intellect with the soul, and argues that "as women are here allowed to have souls, the soul ought to be attended to." (93) The terms "mind" and "soul" are frequently used interchangeably and the notion that women had souls was only a recently resolved debate, which granted women this level of humanity.[132] This is why Astell (as well as Wollstonecraft), had frequently alluded to this status with such fervour: "For since GOD has given Women as well as Men intelligent Souls, why should they be forbidden to improve them?"[133] Denying women an education is posed as being contrary to God's wishes, as well as making the aspiration to live a virtuous life more difficult, as More would agree.[134] The social aspect of women's rights, which is under the control of men, is overthrown by the religious credence lent to their arguments through the implied authority of God. Furthermore, on this subject, Wollstonecraft indicates that women, in their imperfection, need the resourcefulness gleaned from their education, in order to remain virtuous in despondent times: "[r]eason must often be called in to fill up the vacuums of life; [. . .] and tricks are played off to raise tenderness, even while they are forfeiting esteem." (99) Boredom leads to irritability, which then leads to cunning in order to solicit affection, if the mind is not kept occupied. Women who have not learned to use their minds actively become needy and conniving (again adhering to the stereotypes of Rousseau and Milton), which undermines their respectability. (Rousseau only poses one alternative to women's undesirable propensity for cunning and that is the "habitual restraint produces a docility which woman requires all her life long, for she will always be in subjection to a man, or to a man's judgment, and she will never be free to set her own opinion above his".[135]) This interferes with their abilities to perform their duties as wife and mother, which are their primary functions along with spreading virtue and teaching universal benevolence. The last is their public "duty", the "precedency of moral obligation," which must always be at the forefront of their minds. (141) Women are responsible for spreading virtue, by example and through teaching. This is shown to be virtually impossible by Wollstonecraft, without an education which inculcates the values of respectability, virtue and benevolence.

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[131] Rousseau 389.
[132] Davidoff & Hall 219.
[133] Astell 80, *sic*.
[134] "Study, therefore, is to be considered as the means of lengthening the mind, and of fitting it for higher duties." More 5.
[135] Rousseau 399.

Women's capacity for positively influencing society (though many argued the contrary) is not an idea unique to Wollstonecraft. (Richardson's *Pamela* [1740] proposes by example that women can reform lascivious rapists with their virtue and purity. [136]) By mid-century such renowned philosophers and essayists as Hume support the concept of the virtuous woman presenting a beneficially guiding example to men, even going so far as to state: "What better school for manners than the company of virtuous women"?[137] Here women are portrayed once more as unofficial teachers or mothers, guiding the male sex. As can be deduced from this and other writings by Hume, women can be a refining influence on society, signifying contemporary ideas of both masculinity and femininity. He expounds further on gender difference in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), ascribing the analytical mind to masculinity and the conscience to femininity.[138] For both genders, passions must be overruled by virtue, a concept on which Adam Smith elaborates in *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759), in which he claims that "Humanity is the virtue of a woman, generosity of a man."[139] "Humanity" can be linked to nurture and civic duty or benevolence. So, as we can see, Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts* was written at a time when at least some of its readers would have been receptive to and supportive of the idea of women spreading benevolence within the maternal role.

Reimagining Social Constructions of Femininity

Wollstonecraft's views on the need for social transformation are fairly unvarying throughout her texts. Her convictions seem to argue with an unidentified yet constant contrary voice, which may emulate the voice of some of her contemporary societal norms. She gives herself credence by adhering to both religious precepts and social convictions that "the main business of our lives is to learn to be virtuous." (77) She does not shy from the banal truths, which present her as a well-grounded liberal thinker. She agrees with Locke when he stated the necessity for "that general good-will and regard for all people."[140] She successfully entered in a respected dialogue with other didactic writers (it can be assumed) as both Catharine Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790) and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) express some similar convictions.[141] More importantly, the underlying precepts in *Thoughts* are also to be found

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[136] Samuel Richardson, Pamela – or Virtue Rewarded (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).
[137] David Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" taken from G. Kelly, "Bluestocking Feminism," Women, Writing and the Public Sphere (1700-1830), eds. Eger et al (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 166.
[138] Scruton 122; Taylor, Mary 157.
[139] Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, ed. D. D. Raphael & A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976) 190.
[140] Locke 111.
[141] Macaulay's text covers similar topics, including advice on choosing suitable books for children, the vices of lying and coquetry, as well as devoting an entire chapter to the importance of teaching benevolence.

throughout the works of Charlotte Smith and Amelia Opie examined later in this dissertation. Wollstonecraft firmly believes that every person contains an element of the divine, and that women are men's equals in this regard. This liberal sentiment, if embraced, should incite compassion and benevolence for the less fortunate, who also carry this "spark". (4) Through this Christian precept, she encourages kindness and citizenship, which she also furthers in her text for children and her novellas. This benevolent quality is then posed as being a particularly motherly trait, as "maternal tenderness arises quite as much from *habit* as instinct. It is possible, she convinces the reader, to acquire the affection of a parent for an adopted child." (4) (*my italics*) So, a woman, who habitually has nursed weak or helpless people, or who embraces her sense of social responsibility, might perceive these maternal feelings for anyone, regardless of age, or whether they are her biological children or not. The decision to mother someone who requires mothering she calls a "rational affection". (101) So, female characters in novels, who display this sort of behaviour, are not only being feminine, but also rational, even if their behaviour lends them a certain amount of authority over men and over their own destinies. In Wollstonecraft's text, this power is made palatable to male readers (and to conservative female readers) by making it out to be both feminine and necessary for the welfare of women and indeed society as a whole. As she states, "In a comfortable situation, a cultivated mind is necessary to render a woman contented; and in a miserable one, it is her only consolation." (101) So, marriage benefits from the education of the wife, as she is both more "contented" in her everyday chores, and more capable of facing adversity and trials. It is given credence by what Locke calls a "brawniness [. . .] of mind, [which] is the best armour we can have against the common evils and accidents of life," teaching resourcefulness and forbearance.[142] Not only does it make a person more competent, but it also makes for a better grasp of reality.

Rather than denying the stereotype of the emotion-driven woman, Wollstonecraft presents the struggle with passion as a constant in *Thoughts*, and she cautions her readers that "[u]niversal benevolence is the first duty, and we should be careful not to let any passion so engross our thoughts, as to prevent us from practicing it." (91) Her own benevolence takes shape in her writing, which may be interpreted as offering maternal guidance to her readers. The facility with which passions are tamed depends, according to Wollstonecraft, on the quality of education, which trains the ability to reason. She lends her work credibility when she develops Locke's work, when he stated that men are usually

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More's work focuses on the necessity of governing sensibility with reason as well as warning against the loss of respectability when pursuing a life of triviality.

[142] Locke 89.

"what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education."[143] He shows strong convictions that people are shaped by how they are nurtured or 'bred' and that the success of a child is wholly dependent on how it is raised by its parents and teachers, which makes them completely responsible for the child's level of future contributions to society. Wollstonecraft's premise builds on this, urging the reader to be supportive of women's education, as it will render them more capable wives and mothers (not her only vision of appropriate female roles, but one which appealed to a wider readership and one which reflects the sort of influence discussed in this thesis), and ensure that their lives will be governed by virtue. All children, both male and female, have the ability to have a positive impact on society, provided that they are shown the way. After having proven herself to be a person of sound reason and educated reflection in *Thoughts*, Wollstonecraft was free to spread this influence to a wider readership through her work of children's fiction and her novellas.[144]

[143] *Ibid* 25.

[144] Though her most well-known work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) written after both *Mary: a fiction* (1788) and *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788) re-established her as a radical thinker, this dissertation concerns itself with more subtle forms of manipulation of the reader.

Chapter 2
Original Stories from Real Life
– Targeting Young Readers

As well as writing philosophical conduct literature, women writers could push for a reimagining of social norms in a manner which did not impinge on their respectability by writing moral and religious children's fiction.[1] This is an ideological, yet less overtly political form of writing, which would have been consulted even by those less liberal-minded Britons who found women political writers troubling.[2] *Original Stories from Real Life with Conversations, Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness*, written by Mary Wollstonecraft and published in 1788, provides young women with something respectable to read, while concerning itself with the task of teaching children to be curious and observant of the world around them, instilling a sense of benevolence and virtue.[3] As an example of the popular genre of moral fiction for children, it functions as, what Vivien Jones calls, a "guide [. . .] to success – and survival", which helps to teach young women to "discipline themselves into acceptable forms of femininity in order to achieve and maintain respectability".[4] Wollstonecraft wrote these stories after her short stint as a governess with the Kingsborough family in Ireland in 1787 and they were met with much approval from the public.[5] She was influenced by the times, in which the change in husband-wife dynamic brought about the ideal of partnership marriage (changing from the upper class attitude of accepting whosoever is chosen by parents, to the bourgeois ideal of choosing a partner, who will be a helpmate and friend)

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[1] Richardson, Literature 167.
Writing such things as fairy tales or even the Newbery stories for children met with disapproval from such writers as Catharine Macaulay, who in her *Letters on Education* (1790) claimed that both forms of writing have potentially harmful effects on children. Macaulay 33.
Fairy tales (and indeed fantastical stories in general) were also shunned by both rationalists (citing Locke and Rousseau) and Christian moralists, such as Sarah Trimmer. Richardson, Literature 113.

[2] Taylor, Mary 181.
Also, writing for children would help to avoid being accused of "linguistic manliness". *Ibid* 194

[3] Vivien Jones, Ed, "Introduction," The Young Lady's Pocket Library, or Parental Monitor (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995) iii.

[4] *Ibid* vi.
"The fiction of the period is filled with stories of girls whose mothers (or governesses in the role of mothers) are role models of rational domesticity." (The primary lessons on the curriculum are "virtue and reason.") Shefrin, "Governess" 183.

[5] The *Monthly Review* admires its "excellent principles and morals" as well as its "judicious and engaging manner". "Review of Original Stories", Monthly Review 79 (Ralph Griffiths: London, 1788) 271-272.
The *Analytical Review* calls it "the production of a mind that can think and feel [. . .] calculated to convey instruction in the most pleasing form". "Review of Original Stories", Analytical Review 2 (Joseph Johnson: London, 1788) 478-479.

which also altered the treatment and method of raising of children.[6] Children's texts are significant in what they reveal about authorial concerns and intentions and should be examined as Mitzi Myers states as "a historically constituted locale within a complex web of power relationships and signifying practices, something we have to come at through words written by somebody at a particular moment for a particular purpose."[7] Childhood was becoming recognised as a separate stage of life, which required nurture and guidance, and children gradually were valued in their own right.[8] The practise of raising children was very much a current topic, as can be deduced by the sheer quantity of guidance literature written on the subject. Because of this, the responsibility of raising children carried with it a significant amount of authoritative power and influence, and it can be argued that the "purpose" behind writing some of this literature was not only to improve the quality of education and socialisation of children, but also to place this power and authority into specific hands, such as the writer's as well as mothers' or mother-figures'. This empowerment would have greatly appealed to Wollstonecraft in her quest for equal standing for women, as she confirms in her later written *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792): "As the rearing of children, that is, the laying a foundation of sound health both of body and mind in the rising generation, has justly been insisted on as the peculiar destination of woman, the ignorance that incapacitates them must be contrary to the order of things."[9] As discussed in the previous chapter, motherhood and gender roles were examined by writers, such as Rousseau, and mothering was identified as a vital role in the development of the next generation and the morality of society, though children and childhood experiences (including the formal and informal education received in childhood) have a difficult-to-document effect on social, cultural, and intellectual history.[10] The study of actual texts written for children, their distribution patterns and popularity begins to clarify our understanding of how adults hoped to shape children's acquisition of knowledge and values.[11] This ideological shift may also be due to the change in politics

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[6] Lambert 147; Dr. John Gregory, "A Father's Legacy to his Daughters," The Young Lady's Pocket Library, or Parental Monitor (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995) 44.
[7] Mitzi Myers, "Erotics of Pedagogy: Historical Interventions, Literary Representations, the 'Gift of Education' and Agency of Children," Children's Literature 23 (1995): 3.
[8] Davidoff & Hall 343.
[9] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 261.
[10] Immel 10.
Wollstonecraft's awareness of Rousseau influences her prescriptive attitude towards female education, as his somewhat misogynistic rendering of Sophie in *Emile* carries clout through his popularity as a great philosopher, though she counters his precepts more directly later in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Taylor, Mary 86.
He calls Rousseau's Sophie "grossly unnatural." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 93.
[11] Immel 10.

and economics created by the expanding British Empire.[12] Colonisation encouraged social mobility, and a fastidious upbringing was shown to prepare the next generation for positions in society beyond those known by parents. The Augustan ideology was remarked on by political commentators and medical professionals, linking adult behaviour to childhood upbringing.[13] People in general became more aware of the psychological cause and effect of human behaviour, influenced by scenarios in conduct literature and novels, and works by philosophers such as Locke and Hartley, as discussed previously.[14]

In the context of somewhat contrived yet purportedly real life situations encountered by a governess and her two charges, designed to appeal to readers who are children and to be used as a teaching tool, furthering her Utopian thrust, *Original Stories* portrays Wollstonecraft's ideals laid out in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*.[15] The structure is similar to Charlotte Smith's *Rural Walks* (1795) and Amelia Opie's *Tales of the Pemberton Family* (1825), which will be discussed later. An examination of *Original Stories* lays the groundwork for further analysis of Wollstonecraft's two novellas for adults, as her method of influencing her readers as to the particulars of correct behaviour and moral standing is quite similar. Like so many other works of formative fiction, it concerns itself with the shaping of "proper womanhood", but unlike the texts in *The Young Lady's Pocket Library, or Parental Monitor*, Wollstonecraft does not necessarily define this as being "chaste, modest, dutiful, and self-effacing".[16] In fact, in her later-written introduction of *The Female Reader* (1789), she calls women like this mindless toys who are completely at the mercy of their masters, "and though we do not see the wires we discern that they are mere puppets."[17] She argues against the contradictory premise that women are simultaneously naturally virtuous, and in desperate need of instruction in order to overcome Eve's negative influence, by being perhaps surprisingly in complete accord with More, asserting that virtue and benevolence, like any other skill, must be taught.[18]

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[12] Ruth Perry, "Colonising the breast: sexuality and maternity in eighteenth-century England," Journal of the History of Sexuality 2 (1991) 204-234.
[13] Evans, Women's History 68.
[14] Also, gender roles were beginning to be seen as learned behaviour patterns. Taylor, Mary 88; Willey 138.
[15] However, it is less driven by conventional Christian ideals, as Wollstonecraft ceased church attendance by the close of 1787, preferring the free-thinking Rational Dissenters, which denied the divinity of Christ, though she still believed that the most emancipated woman was driven by her love of God. Taylor, Mary 95, 140.
Many books for children were used in actual lessons, where children were expected to memorise and read passages aloud. M.O. Grenby, "Delightful Instruction? Assessing Children's Use of Educational Books in the Long Eighteenth Century," Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain, eds. Mary Hilton & Jill Shefrin (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009) 194.
[16] Jones, Young vii.
[17] Wollstonecraft, Reader 58.
[18] In her later-written *Strictures*, More asserts that the purpose of educating women is "to bring the improvement which [her studies] furnish, to the rectification of her principles and the formation of her habits [. . .] to regulate her mind." More 1.

This text, much like *Thoughts*, shows a keen awareness of the philosophies of Locke and Astell, as well as establishing the role of teacher as a surrogate mother-figure. One modern scholar (Cynthia J. Koepp) has made a study of yet another widely influential text: *Spectacle de la nature* (1732) by Abbe Noël-Antoine Pluche (1688-1761) was hugely popular in England, and had twenty-two editions published in English before 1800.[19] Though largely disregarded and considered by twentieth century historians to be a work of reductionist mediocrity, upon closer examination Koepp believes that it can be considered to be part of the foundation of pedagogical literature.[20] It certainly shares several similarities with *Original Stories* and indeed with *Thoughts* and awareness of it helps to identify the accepted pattern for children's literature and how Wollstonecraft uses this to further her cause.[21] Regardless, the study of educational texts and methods provides the modern reader with unique insights into the politics, ideology, social history, and literary representation of the period, which will prove useful in the analysis of Wollstonecraft's works for adults.[22]

In *Original Stories* the governess, Mrs. Mason (acknowledged by scholar Mitzi Myers as a character who furthers Wollstonecraft's feminist thrust), takes over the actual rearing of Mary (age fourteen) and Caroline (age twelve), as well as their education.[23] The name of "Mason" one can only assume is deliberately chosen, as teachers form the minds of their pupils much as a mason chisels sculptures out of stone. In *Impeccable Governesses*, Myers indicates that "Mason discredits the stereotype of femininity as arrested development to offer an alternative model of enlightened womanhood."[24] In her formative role, Mrs. Mason represents the contemporary idolised images of Whig figures of femininity, such as Lucy Hutchinson (1620-1681) Rachel Russell (1636-1723), or Hester Chapone (1727-1801), who through their writing celebrated patriotic republican motherhood within the domestic realm, and who were committed to the education of children and the potential for moral influence within the family home.[25] Macaulay and Barbauld were similarly idolised and portrayed as Roman matrons, mimicking images of

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[19] Cynthia J. Koepp, "Curiosity, Science, and Experiential Learning in the Eighteenth Century – reading the *Spectacle de la nature*," Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800, eds. Andrea Immel & Michael Witmore (London: Routledge, 2006) 154. His text is also believed to have been emulated and even in parts pirated by such renowned authors as Oliver Goldsmith and Priscilla Wakefield. *Ibid* 179. Rousseau himself used Pluche's text when he tutored Mably's nephews. *Ibid* 178.

[20] *Ibid* 154.

[21] This includes the necessity for engaging a child's curiosity, shared by Locke and Astell, as mentioned in the previous chapter. *Ibid* 155.

[22] Richardson, Literature 2.

[23] According to Myers, she embodies "*enlightened maternal affection* so central to Wollstonecraft's feminist agenda in the *Rights*." Myers, "Impeccable Governesses" 40.
She personifies order, and in Wollstonecraft's words, "[t]o give an example of order, the soul of virtue, some austerity of behaviour must be adopted." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 136.

[24] Myers, "Impeccable Governesses" 48.

[25] Shoemaker 33.

Liberty.[26] In other words, Mrs. Mason embodies what Myers calls "a new mode of female heroism – in rationality, self-command, and autonomy".[27] Like these representative figures, it is Mrs. Mason's calling in life to rescue these two children from ignorance and a life of callousness and self-indulgence. Her role is also similar to the countess leading the lessons in *Spectacle de la nature*, as is the style of writing, which is in the form of a dialogue between teacher and students, which Pluche believed to be more engaging for the reader.[28] (The use of dialogue is also later adopted by both Amelia Opie and Charlotte Smith in their works for children, as will be discussed later.) A reader who is familiar with further texts by Wollstonecraft might be struck by the idea that she has taken this maternal didactic role upon herself regarding her readers and that her aim in writing *Original Stories* may have been to obtain some of the subsequent respect and authority for herself.[29]

Methodology

The tales are loosely woven around the moral convictions which Wollstonecraft wishes to instil in the next generation. Unlike Trimmer or More who believed the traditional Christian view that children are born with a corrupt nature and have evil intentions, Wollstonecraft followed Locke's and Rousseau's conviction discussed in the previous chapter that children are brought into the world pliable as wax to be moulded by their teachers and mothers into the intended shape.[30] In an attempt to facilitate this formative act of learning, she endeavours to make it entertaining, in other words, "she wished to teach imperceptibly, by rendering it amusing."[31] She takes this notion from Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), which, as discussed earlier, offers extensive advice on how to educate children in order to prepare them for a virtuous and honourable life. In the text, he states that learning should be made fun, so as to encourage children.[32] He notes the marked improvement by the use of this inducement. As will be discussed later, Wollstonecraft employs this approach also in her novellas, as they function as a form of entertainment, while forcing the reader to consider her views. Mrs. Mason's

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[26] Barbauld was far more conservative than Wollstonecraft, publicly opposing her and insisting that women should focus on being pleasing and not to disrupt the status quo. Taylor, Mary 182-183.
[27] Myers, "Impeccable Governesses" 31-59.
[28] Koepp 175, 159.
Wollstonecraft's unusually forceful expression of feminism through the mother- or surrogate mother-figure who teaches virtue and rationality to children is also to be found in Jeanne Marie Le Prince de Beaumont's *Magasin des enfans* (1756) through the first years of the nineteenth century. Shefrin, "Governess" 183.
[29] After all, "[m]otherhood, in which social reproduction is tied to sexual reproduction, offers a comparatively limited potential for social transformation." Ford 199.
[30] Richardson, Literature 14, 10.
More suggests that girls be instilled with "an invariable desire of pleasing God, and a constant fear of offending him" in order to curb this. More 64.
[31] Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories from Real Life (Washington: Woodstock Facsimile, 2001) 1. *All further references are from this text.*
[32] Locke 115.

method of teaching involves a deflection of her criticism of her charges' past actions, by way of providing examples of the consequences of undesirable behaviour in the form of her stories, which was a commonly used tactic.[33] As Mrs. Mason explains to Caroline and Mary, "I usually endeavour to recollect some persons of my acquaintance, who have suffered by the faults, or follies, I wish you to avoid." (42) As her criticism is softened for the girls, Wollstonecraft's is mitigated through the presentation of the child-teacher relationship, allowing her tutelage of her reader to remain oblique. This, it could be argued, is Wollstonecraft's tactic for challenging social norms. She presents scenarios with actions and consequences, encouraging the reader to feel empathy for the characters and their situations, while engaging their intellect, in the form of urging analysis of these actions and possibly having what readers learn applied to their own lives.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons for children is self-discipline and the control of passion with reason.[34] *Original Stories* presents scenarios which might aid a teacher or mother in this challenge. Mrs. Mason also does not punish or praise retrospectively. Instead, she allows her charges to continue with their previously acquired poor behaviour, and then responds to these incidents as they occur. Wollstonecraft recommends similar tactics in *Thoughts* when she states: "Expect not to do all yourself; experience must enable the child to assist you; you can only lay the foundation, or prevent bad propensities from settling into habits."[35] Teaching only takes place if the child is involved and learns to critique her own behaviour, initially just after it occurs, and, as she progresses, before she decides to act. This encourages the child to evaluate impulses, before giving in to them, gradually teaching them independence of thought from their mothers or teachers. This imperative triumph of reason over passion can be further traced through Mrs. Mason's actions throughout the text.[36] Wollstonecraft possibly developed this concept from Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), in which she discusses the need for women's education, although the subject is raised in many examples of conduct literature, including Anne-Therese de Lambert's *Advice of a Mother to her Daughter* (1727).[37] According to Astell, "we must never oppose Commotion with Commotion, nor be in Passion our selves if we wou'd reform another's, else we lose many good Opportunities and seem to seek the gratification of our own humour rather than our Neighbours good."[38] By erupting with anger, a teacher ceases to be useful to her charges, as it diminishes their respect, and she merely gratifies herself in her outburst. Impassioned

[33] Mellor, "Feminism" 190.
[34] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 8.
[35] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 68.
[36] The strengthening of reason is also paramount to Pluche in his text. Koepp 163
[37] Lambert 139.
[38] Astell 229, *sic.*

punishment is neither effective, nor an act of benevolence, as all actions of the teacher or mother-surrogate should be. It is self-indulgent and offers a bad example, from which impressionable minds should be protected.[39] This philosophy of leading by example is especially noteworthy in Mrs. Mason's disciplinary actions towards the girls: "She was never in a passion, but her quiet steady displeasure made them feel so little in their own eyes, they wished her to smile that they might be something; for all their consequence seemed to arise from her approbation." (52) Her punishment is controlled and subtle, and having made her charges somewhat dependent on her approval, the absence of this is sufficient to render the girls mortified by their misbehaviour in this idyllic portrayal of teacher-pupil relationship. Locke proposed something similar in *Some Thoughts*, when he states that the ideal punishment will "shame them out of their faults [. . .] and make them in love with the pleasure of being well thought on. [. . .] They will be in love with all the ways of virtue."[40] Both he and Wollstonecraft show the power of influence, without recourse to violence or passion (something which female characters in novels will be shown to emulate in later chapters). They also show the importance of seeking a respectable authority-figure's approval and to accept guidance for correct behaviour. People need to be sensitive to what is acceptable, much as Wollstonecraft shows some sensitivity for social norms in this text, even though she is urging reform. This deference for others is also reflected in the teaching of benevolence towards all and "[a]s a model of political virtue, Christian altruism was readily applicable to women."[41] Mrs. Mason's rewards are equally lacking in ostentation, as "she was ever ready to smile on those whom she obliged; for she loved all her fellow creatures, and love lightens obligation." (64) She expresses a sense of caring through this approval. Her praise is never overt and always implied, and she is grateful for her charges' good behaviour. Her love for "all her fellow creatures" also reflects contemporary ideals of maternity or maternal figures, positing that they shape the next generation through love and nurture (the figurative breast), which, Wollstonecraft contends, must include discipline (the figurative cane).[42] By stressing the importance of these qualities, Wollstonecraft is implying that she herself is imbued with them, lending her an air of respectability and authority.

[39] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 4; Locke 71.
[40] *Ibid* 41.
[41] The need to teach benevolence and indeed to make children feel useful to others is also introduced by Pluche. Koepp 175; Taylor, Mary 219
[42] Davidoff & Hall 335.

Benevolence and Virtue

As in *Thoughts*, Wollstonecraft expresses the importance of universal benevolence and virtue.[43] In *Original Stories*, she believes she can, by "teaching virtue, explain the nature of vice." (v) By explaining how vice evolves from relatively innocent negligence, such as laziness or a simple lack of vigilance, she proposes (like Locke) a fairly simple antidote: the heedful pursuit of virtue.[44] She begins this by having Mrs. Mason alert her charges to the development of their own benevolence (or, what the modern reader might equate with empathy), by signalling them to notice the distress of a mother-bird, whose nest has been robbed in an incident which is very similar to one in Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* (1778).[45] (Natural history was frequently referenced, in order to provide subjects for religious and moral analogies, rather than evaluating it for scientific merit.[46]) Having their eyes opened to the frantic actions of the bird makes the girls more aware of their surroundings (building on a teaching concept employed by Rousseau), while awakening in them a desire to aid all living things, which are in distress, thus learning that this distress is similar to what they would feel under similar circumstances.[47] They also learn to treat their surroundings with greater care, lest they cause any living thing harm. She urges them to strive to be good children, telling them that virtue (or doing what is right) "is, first, to avoid hurting any thing; and then, to contrive to give as much pleasure as you can." (v) She gives this weight by linking it to religion, telling them that they should be "resembling God, by doing good." (6) Here, the focus is redirected from within to the external world, replacing narcissism with benevolence, in the desire to be fit for heaven after death.[48] By aligning herself with Christian convictions, Wollstonecraft is endowing herself with contemporarily accepted feminine superiority over men. Her characters follow Astell's precepts, when she states that being good and honourable inadvertently does not count as being a good and honourable person. In her words, "without a good Understanding, we

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[43] Taylor, Mary 95.
[44] Locke 41.
[45] Barbauld's tale is made even more dramatic by having the fledglings die in the child's care, which makes it a particularly painful lesson in her text: "they were all dead. When she saw this she cried, and found she had been very cruel". Barbauld 150-151.
The use of nature as a template for educating children was also introduced by Pluche in his *Spectacle de la nature* (1732), and this layout for lessons for children was also used by Charlotte Smith in her *Rural Walks*, which will be discussed later. Koepp 156.
[46] Davidoff & Hall 291.
[47] This awareness of their surroundings followed by the impetus to act in order to aid another may be an outgrowth of Rousseau's ideals in *Emile*, when he urges teachers to teach both awareness and self-awareness, or in is words: "life is not breath, but action, the use of our senses, our mind, our faculties, every part of ourselves which makes us conscious of our being." Rousseau 11.
He later elaborates on women's inability to interpret their surroundings for themselves, which Wollstonecraft's lessons seem to try to disprove. According to Rousseau, a "woman's reason is practical, and therefore she soon arrives a given conclusion, but she fails to discover it for herself. [. . .] [M]an teaches the woman what to see, while she teaches him what to do." *Ibid* 407.
[48] Women were believed to be more religiously inclined than men. Taylor, Mary 100.

can scarce be *truly*, but never *eminently* Good; being liable to a thousand seductions and mistakes."[49] Education is a way of "bettering their condition in the next Life" (though Wollstonecraft's sense of benevolence is less focused on heavenly rewards and more on honouring the spark of the divine within each living thing).[50] It is so very important to act according to religious precepts deliberately and with forethought. Education, as Macaulay would agree in *Letters on Education* (1790), would facilitate the development and maintenance of a young woman's chastity and was lauded as a guarantee for morality, in a world which was only just moving away from the notion that all women are governed by their sensuality and appetite, inherited from Eve, for seduction.[51] It is posed as a means to facilitate this transformation from passion-driven to intellect-driven and that this ability to transform is a gift from God. Wollstonecraft expresses this by stating that "man is allowed to ennoble his nature, by cultivating his mind and enlarging his heart. He feels disinterested love; every part of the creation affords an exercise for virtue, and virtue is ever the truest source of pleasure." (11) In this sense, the quest for virtue is made more enticing by showing it to be both a religious duty and a gratifying endeavour. The persuasiveness of Wollstonecraft's convictions is strengthened for the child reader through the powerful fictitious rendering of the scenario of the revered teacher lecturing the obsequious children. It can be argued that this image encourages the child reader to emulate the children's respectful attitudes by directing their deference towards the author who is *their* teacher.

Much as in *Thoughts*, in *Original Stories* Wollstonecraft furthers her most valued cause: the spreading of virtuous action and universal benevolence. Mrs. Mason explains to Caroline and Mary that virtue is the one thing which separates people from animals and that it is maintained through reason and self-discipline. Though she urges her charges to treat animals with motherly nurturing care, she explains that animals are incapable of reason and "[i]f you caress and feed them, they will love you, as children do, without knowing why." (15) They may show affection; however, with them it is a reflex. They care for their young, because they are programmed by nature to do so. They show affection to people, because they have learned that this will secure them their rewards.[52] However, unlike children, they are not able to learn to be benevolent or generous without this expectation of reward.[53] So, the best way to prove that one is better than animals is to "be tender-hearted" and to feel the "emotions of humanity", which are compassion and

[49] Astell 77, *sic*.
[50] *Ibid* 211, *sic*.
[51] Macaulay 112; Shoemaker 33.
[52] Kate Soper agrees. Soper 41.
[53] Animals have no morality. *Ibid* 54.

benevolence. (16 & 9)[54] This then needs to be practiced until it is second nature. She then goes on to explain that "a child is inferior to a man; because reason is in its infancy, and it is reason which exalts a man above a brute; and the cultivation of it raises the wise man above the ignorant; for wisdom is only another name for virtue." (105) Through this reasoning, Wollstonecraft blurs the lines between thought and feeling, separating emotion from passion only by its deliberateness and lowered intensity.[55] Emotion which is governed by the desire to be virtuous is sanctioned, whereas emotion which stems from impulse must be evaluated before it is expressed, to ensure that it is not driven by pleasure-seeking behaviour. Wollstonecraft's primary goal is to help women to behave in such a manner as to disprove negative female stereotypes. Passion-driven action as a definition of childish behaviour may also offer an explanation for why characters in novels might assume maternal roles to their peers, when they are acting immaturely. Wollstonecraft's novellas follow this precept, displaying scenarios which imply that it is right for female characters to guide and mother those who are less educated or less in control of their passions, as Maria does with Jemima in *Maria*, which will be discussed later. This also expresses Wollstonecraft's desire to see women taking an active part in shaping future generations.[56]

The Pursuit of Truth

Wollstonecraft wishes to change women's behaviour so that they are seen to be respectable and worthy of honour. In *Original Stories* Mrs. Mason's instilling of virtue in Caroline and Mary has many benefits. The main focus is to be deserving of God's approval, however, she also acknowledges the importance of garnering the commendation of people on earth, for various reasons, including the girls' amicability and marriageability, for even if they learn to be maternal, they can only fulfil society's accepted roles (endorsed by Rousseau) of femininity if they marry and become wives and mothers.[57] John Gregory cautions his female readers in *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) to keep their knowledgeableness carefully hidden, especially from prospective suitors, so as to not put them off.[58] In Wollstonecraft's text, preparation for future marriage can be traced through Mrs. Mason benevolently wishing for her charges to be treated with respect and therefore

[54] Wollstonecraft addresses this in *Thoughts* as well. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 152.
[55] This is an outgrowth of her argument in *Thoughts*. *Ibid* 83.
[56] Ford 197.
[57] Carol Percy, "Learning and Virtue: English Grammar and the Eighteenth-Century Girl's School," Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain, eds. Mary Hilton & Jill Shefrin (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009) 79; Rousseau 393.
[58] However, blue-stocking works, such as Elizabeth Montagu's *Essays on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769), Catharine Macaulay's *History of England* (1763-83), and Hester Mulso Chapone's *Letters on the Improvements of the Mind* (1773), gained recognition and contributed to the gradual acknowledgement of women's intellectual abilities. Cohen, "Familiar Conversations" 103.

showing the necessity of their development of honour. She defines this by explaining that it "consists in respecting yourself; in doing as you would be done by; and the foundation of honour is Truth." (39) As mentioned in *Thoughts*, this includes primarily taking responsibility for wrong-doings and admitting to one's limitations, both being virtuous habits.[59] Self-aggrandising is cited as a common vice, as is the avoidance of punishment when it truly is deserved. She states that being truthful is the best way to pursue virtue, and "[i]f your character for this scrupulous attention is once fixed, your acquaintance will be courted; and those who are not particularly pleased with you, will, at least, respect your honourable principle." (40) There is an element of maternal concern for the girls' safety in this, as women are still quite powerless in the Eighteenth Century (as is the character, Maria, in Wollstonecraft's eponymous novella). This respect lends a young woman a measure of power over her own destiny, however small, and may keep potential predatory people from causing her harm. It may also encourage the pursuit of desirable suitors, who will look after their welfare after marriage. Respect moreover comes hand in hand with having people consult esteemed women's opinions and preferences regarding any life-altering decisions, such as marrying women off as a lucrative business venture, as in Wollstonecraft's *Mary* (in which Mary's father marries her to a wealthy acquaintance, in order to settle his debts), or having suitors respect a woman's rejection.[60] Truth is then linked back to virtue and the desire to be a good Christian, as "goodness arises from a quick perception of truth, and actions conformable to the conviction." (143) The pursuit of truth renders a woman more fit for heaven, as well as making her honourable. Child-like authenticity is treasured greatly by Wollstonecraft, which may have contributed to her desire to write *Original Stories* for children, in order to urge them to preserve this quality, rather than to replace it with affected manners.[61] This sentiment also demonstrates a direct link in argument between *Original Stories* and *Thoughts*, with the primary difference being the targeted reader. Also, as the author of a work of moral fiction for children, Wollstonecraft assumes a role of respectable authority, what More later calls "moral excellence", even if it is maternal.[62]

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[59] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 141.
[60] Wollstonecraft, Mary 13.
[61] Childhood innocence was also revered by William Wordsworth, who wrote many poems about children's quasi-divine nature, such as *My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold* (1802). Richardson, Literature 11; Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 159.
Taylor, Mary 134.
[62] More states that "to women moral excellence is the grand object: of education; and of moral excellence, domestic life is to woman the proper sphere." More 50
Though written earlier than More's *Strictures*, Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* seem to follow a similar philosophical outlook. However, Wollstonecraft is interpreting the "proper sphere" as including playing maternal roles for unrelated people.

Overcoming Vice

Original Stories presents vice (primarily narcissistic self-righteousness) as something which can be conquered by anyone with sufficient fortitude, and this can be made easier when they are inspired by the desire to be benevolent.[63] The accessibility of redemption from vice may induce a child reader to admit to their own faults, as they have potential to be remedied and that the power to do this lies in their own hands. With this, Wollstonecraft is consistent in her creed for self-empowerment for women.[64] The key to overcoming past habits, is to become aware of their wickedness and to have the desire to rectify them, as "reason, with difficulty, conquers settled habits". (iii) This is shown to be an arduous venture, as patterns of behaviour established in infanthood, as most modern psychologists would agree, become second nature.[65] The reprogramming of these can be painful, however, Wollstonecraft asserts that "if we suffer, we grow humbler and wiser." (17) The same can be said of life's trials. Vice finds room to settle into habit, if someone can afford to be indolent and inattentive for extended periods of time. (A multitude of examples of this will be discussed in later chapters.) The fortitude required to overcome difficult situations can lead to virtuous habits, as the mind must be active to seek out solutions to problems.[66] Although Wollstonecraft assures the reader that anyone can prevail over their vices, the driving force required to succeed can be daunting. She proposes that the desire to better oneself can be bolstered by the desire to help others to defeat their weaknesses by redirecting the focus onto others. In her tales, Mrs. Mason shows that compassion arises from noting similarities in other people's distress to one's own, as with the earlier-mentioned mother-bird. Several stories focus on poverty and loss in order to exemplify this, possibly enticing the child reader to mimic the actions of the child characters with whom they are meant to empathise, contrary to Rousseau's belief in children's nature.[67] Any selfish girl can overcome her self-indulgent vices (such as gluttony or idleness) if "her understanding took the lead, and she practiced virtue." (81) Like Barbauld in *Lessons for Children*, Wollstonecraft simplifies this into the act of being "useful" to others, which in turn is shown to be satisfying and the best cure for frustration and depression. (109)[68] This also renders a woman's act of being maternally powerful as a

[63] Writers such as More and Opie contended that reason was insufficient for overcoming vice without the backing of religious convictions. Taylor, Mary 101.
[64] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 62.
[65] Frank Bruno, Psychological Symptoms (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993) 20.
[66] This is a reiteration of a similar premise in *Thoughts*. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 92.
[67] Wollstonecraft clearly believed in children being affected by what they read, unlike Rousseau, who maintained that children are too unsophisticated to emulate or internalise what they read; they can merely memorise the words. Richardson, Literature 131.
[68] The dialogue between mother/teacher and child in *Lessons for Children* draws the child's attention away from his own boredom and redirects it at the needs of a poor child: "Here is a poor little boy at the door, he has no money at all, nor anything to eat. Shall we give him a penny?" Barbauld 22

desire for a purpose which benefits society. It almost functions as evidence that a virtuously powerful woman not only is anything other than masculine, but her seizure of power is motivated by altruistic benevolence, thus making it socially acceptable.

Along with making oneself useful, in order to overcome vice, Mrs. Mason recommends taking responsibility for past wrongs, which makes a woman more honourable. This must not be taken lightly, as "we must not acknowledge that we have offended, without trying to avoid doing so in future. We are to deal with our fellow-creatures as we expect to be dealt with." (127) The key to overcoming vice is to change our behaviour, which is what renders it difficult, as human beings are creatures of habit, but it is not impossible, provided that one is taught how to reason. Reason is a great moderator of behaviour, whereas passion throws a personality from peak to abyss and back again. Reason may teach a child to be courteous to strangers, as it may depend on that person's good will in the future, but virtue will teach it that it is the correct course of action. The greatest "[w]isdom consists in avoiding extremes", by controlling emotions through reason. (97) This precept is a constant throughout Wollstonecraft's texts. It is both an inoffensive and an empowering notion, which would appeal to any reader and makes the writer seem judicious.[69]

Consequences of not overcoming Vice

Vice is self-perpetuating. When people do not believe that change is possible and necessary, they pass on their negative habits to those around them and especially to the next generation, should they take on a parental role for someone. In one of the fables recounted in *Original Stories*, a girl is narcissistically obsessed with her own well-being: "she loved no one but herself; and the consequence was, she never inspired love." (33)[70] The reciprocity of actions is made clear here, inspiring the child reader and Mary and Caroline to treat others as they would be treated. Furthermore, the imitative quality of human behaviour is also shown to be present in the mother-child or teacher-child relationship.[71] This also obliquely emphasises the power given to the teacher or mother-figure, in that children will learn to behave in the same manner as they observe. The consequences of poor parenting become apparent in one of the stories which Mrs. Mason tells her charges, regarding a man who tortured animals: "When he became a father, he not only neglected to educate his children, and set them a good example, but he taught them to be cruel while he tormented them: the consequence was, that they neglected him when he

[69] Wollstonecraft would most likely have been more respected, had she acted in accordance with her convictions.
[70] This is a comprehensive example of what Wollstonecraft addresses in *Thoughts* when she rails against superficiality and vanity. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 40.
[71] Wollstonecraft warns against the dangers of exposing children to undesirable examples. *Ibid* 13.

was old and feeble; and he died in a ditch." (18) This is a typical example of the consequences Mrs. Mason lays out for undesirable behaviour. The first incident appeals to the empathy or benevolence of Caroline and Mary, that their neglect to correct their actions affects others and not just themselves. The second incident portrays a frightening spectre of dying alone, in poverty, as a dire warning, appealing to their sense of self-preservation and the need to be cared for and loved. Both serve to urge them to be kind in general, but especially to those who are less powerful than they, be it due to size or station in life. With these stories, *Original Stories* teaches awareness of others and how people's actions affect those around them. Wollstonecraft's understanding of childhood fears and vices makes these threatened consequences particularly persuasive for the child reader. Her understanding of the propensity for mimicry in human nature points towards an awareness of the power of influence of a vivid story over her readers.[72]

The need to control the passions (a topic thoroughly addressed in *Thoughts*, as previously mentioned) is shown in a story about a girl who is perpetually indulged by her mother and by the servants.[73] She never learns to be aware of the feelings of others, and if a whim is ignored, she has a tantrum. Wollstonecraft comments on this loss of control, by pointing out that "reason only serves to render your folly more conspicuous and inexcusable. Anger, is a little despicable vice: its selfish emotions banish compassion, and undermine every virtue." (30) As human beings become more capable of reason as they mature, the absence of reason being employed to curb the temper renders the person who gives in to it childish or possibly animalistic and in abject need of maternal guidance. There is no excuse for this sort of behaviour, and the subject becomes incapable of empathy or generosity. All of her focus is directed inwardly. Like Caroline, who is frequently in a temper, the character in the story, "without any real misfortune, [. . .] was continually miserable." (34) Mrs. Mason cites her lack of control as the source of the misery. The modern reader might discern that there is a link between the loss of control and powerlessness, which can frequently have a depressive affect on the emotions.[74] As Wollstonecraft strives to empower women, by endeavouring to make them respectable, an explosive temper would be counterproductive. Furthermore, incessant self-indulgence is unhealthy, whether the temper is provoked or not. As Wollstonecraft points out in *Thoughts*, "earthly pleasures will not fill the mind, or support it when they have not the sanction of reason, or are too much depended on."[75] Physical pleasures can be taken away

[72] The awareness of this influential power concerned many during the period and will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Taylor, Mary 72.
[73] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 8.
[74] Bruno 77.
[75] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 91.

and cannot be relied upon, whereas, the ability to think is always present. Mary is a character who frequently eats more than she should, out of greed. Mrs. Mason allows her to do this on one occasion (where her main story becomes the parable from which the child reader is to learn, mimicking a near-identical scenario in Barbauld's *Lessons for Children*), in order to call attention to her discomfort afterwards.[76] She rather callously tells her that "pain follows immoderate indulgence; it is always the case, though sometimes felt not so immediately." (80) By this, she is saying that the pain is not always physical. For example, the overindulgence of buying presents for oneself may later cause 'pain' through the absence of money. There are two further reasons why people should strive to not overindulge. The first is that "if we exceed moderation, the mind will be oppressed, and soon become the slave of the body, or both grow listless and inactive." (78) In other words, one should not allow the body to dictate the actions, without consulting the mind. This is for the sake of self-empowerment, but also for the good of society, as the lusts of the body may lead to more unsavoury vices, which Wollstonecraft does not refer to in this text, but contemporary texts are full of the repercussions of imprudent marriages, including that of Lydia Bennet in Jane Austen's later-written *Pride and Prejudice*. Secondly, "those who think much of gratifying their appetites, will at last act meanly in order to indulge them." (79) In order to remain generous to others, their needs must be given a higher level of importance than one's own, so as to allow for benevolent actions. The text teaches young women to think for themselves, developing both their reason and judgement, requisite skills which are addressed in works of conduct literature, such as in Anne-Therese, Marchioness de Lambert's *Advice of a Mother to her Daughter* (1727).[77] Selfishness and an unquestioning attitude towards one's own actions lead to a permissiveness of vice, which becomes difficult to put right. Here, *Original Stories* once more functions as a maternally guiding voice to the child reader.

Another vice which is proposed to be common to women is vanity. Wollstonecraft, through the voice of Mrs. Mason believes that this vice is a symptom of stupidity. She comments that it is most commonly found in woman of little mental capacity, or, if this is not the case, then it surfaces at the cost of a woman's mental development. Mrs. Mason tells of a young woman, whose "ingenuity slept, whilst she tried to render her person more alluring." (60) She was so preoccupied with decorating her person that her mind became inactive, thus making her susceptible to her passions, and shutting out the possibility of virtuous actions. This builds on Astell's comments, when she proclaims that

[76] In Barbauld's text Harry greedily consumes almost an entire cake, only to "look pale" feel "very ill". The doctor is sent for and he feeds him "bitter stuff". Barbauld 126-127.
[77] Lambert 159-160.

> she who is so top full of her outward excellencies, so careful that every look, every motion, every thing about her shou'd appear in Form, as she employs her Thoughts to a very pitiful use, so is she almost past hopes of recovery, at least so long as she continues this humour, and does not grow a little less concern'd for her body that she may attend her Mind.[78]

This female problem impedes the intellect. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft shows that the personality appears to suffer, as "when the main pursuit is trivial, the character will of course become insignificant." (99) In order to develop as a human being and to pursue virtue and benevolence, vanity must be overcome. It also hampers the respectability of women, as, while they are preening and making men late for appointments, they either rouse men's anger or the type of condescending indulgence which is usually reserved for a pet with annoying habits. Mrs. Mason explains that "[w]hen we frequently make allowance for another in trifling matters, notions of inferiority take root in the mind, and too often produce contempt." (101) A woman who is governed by her own vanity will find it difficult to achieve any sort of equality within her marital relationship, and will certainly not be respected by her husband. By linking her lessons to "marriageability", the text becomes relevant to the young female reader, even if she wishes to follow convention implicitly.[79] Wollstonecraft demonstrates the value of her feminist precepts for living an ordinary life in contemporary society. The text is a tool for teachers to use. As a book to be read for pleasure, it becomes the maternal voice of the teacher to her child readers.

Wollstonecraft Posited as a Maternal Authority

Original Stories is more than a guide for parents or teachers to aid them in turning children into virtuous Christians and respectable adults. As Adam Smith (1723-1790) commented as he digressed from his analysis of the economy, in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations* (1776), girls' education is better thought through and more useful than boys', as it prepares them for their future lives.[80] Early feminists who chose to attempt to influence young minds, tried to further changes in social norms in order to liberate young women from restrictive social norms to prepare them for a life which allows them more power of choice than those led by their mothers.[81] Indeed it is one of the few forms of female power available within the contemporary patriarchy.[82] The narrative of *Original Stories* functions like a Russian doll. At the centre, concealed

[78] Astell 125, *sic*.
[79] Shoemaker 310.
[80] Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, eds. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976) 781.
[81] The public would thus reap the benefits of their private virtues, even while these women conformed to a "gender-specific civic ideal" of assuming a familial role to strangers. Taylor, Mary 220-221.
[82] Ford 200.

beneath layers of narrative, lies the obscured target for Wollstonecraft's reimagining of social norms: the reader.[83] This target is obscured by Caroline and Mary, who are hidden beneath Mrs. Mason in the guise of potential mother or educator. Wollstonecraft, as the writer, becomes the reader's mother-figure or educator and is the forgotten outer layer, whose opinions are voiced by Mrs. Mason. In *Original Stories* when Mrs. Mason tells the girls: "I every day set you an example", it is not reaching too far to surmise that this example is set by Wollstonecraft for the benefit of her reader. (40)[84] Indeed, like Sarah Fielding's (1710-1768) *The Governess* (1749), *Original Stories* is designed to function as a framework for lessons led by a mother or teacher, as well as actively teaching the reader directly. In her later-written *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft later justifies her right to be influential, as "[w]omen are supposed to possess more sensibility, and even humanity, than men, and their strong attachments and instantaneous emotions of compassion are given as proofs".[85] In a way, it can be argued that this superiority of virtue gives women the right to the power of influence over others, and the most socially acceptable role to take on, in order to perform this, is the role of mother or teacher. Women were commonly seen as nurturers, and writing enabled the empowering "shift that allowed women to be seen as authorities on the education of children, both as authors and as the dominant character in juvenile fiction."[86] The effects of this powerful writing filled some conservatives with trepidation. Writers such as Trimmer voiced concern that fiction for children was being used to indoctrinate children with radical ideals, going so far as to later state in *The Guardian of Education* (1802-1806) that it was "endeavouring to corrupt the minds of the rising generation".[87] It is only a small step in this line of argument to infer that women writers also gained authority in adult fiction, by assuming the nurturing role to anyone who needs it, regardless of their age and Wollstonecraft pursued this, driven by her utopian thrust, through her writing.[88]

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[83] From her adamance it is clear that she did not subscribe to Rousseau's belief that children are only capable of taking in words when reading, and fail to take in nuance and meaning: "The child retains the words, the ideas are reflected off of him." Rousseau 95.
Children learn best from experience: "let him run about, let him struggle and fall again and again, the oftener the better; he will learn all the sooner to pick himself up." *Ibid* 49.
[84] Cohen, Sentimental Education 63.
[85] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 260.
[86] Shefrin, "Governess" 202.
[87] Sarah Trimmer, The Guardian of Education I.2, (London: J. Hatchard and F. C. & J. Rivington, 1802) 245.
[88] Taylor, Mary 225.

Chapter 3
Manipulating Maternal Social Stereotypes – the Novellas of Mary Wollstonecraft

Highly autobiographical, Mary Wollstonecraft's novellas illustrate the socially accepted form of maternal femininity and were written to appeal to the average reader of fiction in the new form of the novel.[1] She uses the appeal of the novel to a wide readership in an attempt to invite a reimagining of social norms and she shows her awareness of this influential power explicitly in her *Vindication* (written between her two novellas) when she states that confined women are "necessarily dependent on the novelists for amusement."[2] This dependency would have guaranteed wide exposure to the ideas contained within these novels. In the new literary format of the novel, women authors increased proportionally to men until the 1820s, and though Wollstonecraft voices concern regarding the subject-matter of many novels, she is in favour of "those works which exercise the understanding and regulate the imagination."[3] (The reader can only assume that her own novellas are meant to perform this service as well.) The typical eighteenth-century reader was fairly well-educated, cultured, and had a strong sense of social obligation. By the 1780s, documentation suggests that this reader was more and more likely to be a woman.[4] By writing for the female reader, possible solutions to issues related to women's rights and social restrictions could be posed through novels, and these solutions could then be discussed in social gatherings, furthering the urgency for a change in social norms. The effecting power of the novel also works on the subliminal level for the less critical or discerning reader, influencing through examples of behaviour which the reader may find herself driven to imitate. Though Wollstonecraft prefers to appeal to the reader's sense of reason, her novellas (as opposed to her political tracts) employ

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[1] Novels addressed a wide audience of readers. Watt 48.
[2] Brewer, "Publishing" 206.
Wollstonecraft, Vindication 256.
[3] P. Garside, J. Raven & R. Schöwerling eds., The English Novel, 1770-1829: A Bibliographic Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).
Wollstonecraft, Vindication 256.
[4] Stephen Behrendt, "The Romantic Reader," A Companion to Romanticism, ed. Duncan Wu (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) 91.

emotional appeal as a rhetorical tool, ironically, while stressing the need for women to employ reason to control their passions. This is a successful tactic, as readers continued to respond strongly to sentimental appeal and self-improvement texts were in popular demand.[5] *Mary* in particular focuses on a character whose positive traits are acquired entirely through her own efforts and hard work. Robert Shoemaker comments on the power of the novel in *Gender in English Society 1650-1850*, stating that "it was through the exercise of moral and domestic virtues that female characters exerted influence over the wider society," which is why Wollstonecraft's novellas circle domestic plot-lines and virtuous behaviour.[6] Mary's virtue is never called into question, which is why her sometimes rash behaviour is excused and seems less threatening to the status quo of social norms. Though the extent of social influence of novels is uncertain, Shoemaker contends that "it would be absurd to argue that such images had no influence whatsoever."[7] The issues frequently overlap with those later aired in her second *Vindication*, but the targeted readership is different as it obliquely affects readers seeking to be entertained, rather than intellectually stimulated.

Both of Wollstonecraft's novellas depict fictitiously enhanced renderings of her parents' unhappy marriage, which left her with the impression that marital relationships are simply another excuse for men to abuse their power over women. Her mother's lackadaisical attitude towards parenting, coupled with her youth and lack of education, made her what Wollstonecraft as an adult would deem to be an unfit mother. This may have contributed to her treatment of maternal traits as being something which all women should emulate. Indeed it can be argued that she herself embraces these traits in the authorial voice within her texts in order to win her readers' trust and to engender what Jacqueline Pearson deems to be a willingness to submit to her superior wisdom of experience.[8] Her father's domestic cruelty (born from frustrations with his lack of financial success) and his insolent treatment of her mother may have left Wollstonecraft with a longing for a father-figure who would fulfil her need for a mentor and protector.

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[5] *Ibid* 99.
[6] Shoemaker 311.
[7] *Ibid*
[8] Authors need to establish authority in order to ensure that their opinions are taken seriously, even if readers initially disagree with them. Jacqueline Pearson, Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 17.

A husband might satisfy this need. However, her parents' relationship filled her with contempt for marriage and women who aspire to it, so making a conventional partnership seems to be an impossibility to her. It also confused the pubescent Mary about what she wanted from adult relationships, if anything, other than respectful companionship and affection. Women fulfilled this role quite well, especially her friend and companion, Fanny Blood. Any men she bonded with were best cast in the surrogate father role as teachers and imparters of wisdom. This then changed when she began sexual relationships with men. She remained adverse to marriage, but conflicted about the appeal of heterosexual and intense physical relationships. Her most successful and least turbulent was with William Godwin, which ended only with her death due to complications after childbirth.

Wollstonecraft's novellas feature her socio-political views consistently; however her opinion of the power which stems from women adopting a maternal role changes radically from her first novel, *Mary: A Fiction* (written 1788), to her incomplete second, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (posthumously published in 1798). In *Mary*, the romantic relationship between man and woman is asexual and based on a parent-child model, where the prescribed parental role shifts from father-figure to mother-figure, as the power dynamic changes with the circumstances. In *Maria*, the heroine's mother-role is both biological and sociological and though it lends credence to some of her rebellious actions, it fails to protect her legally from the abuses of her spouse, thus alerting the reader to the limitations of maternal power. Furthermore, *Maria* reflects the influence of the French Revolution (1789-1799) on Wollstonecraft's philosophy regarding women's rights for individual freedom. Throughout these novellas, she utilises the stereotypical yet desirable maternal role of women to justify the need for emancipation and to both explain and excuse the behaviour of her characters, which could be otherwise classified as scandalous. All young ladies, it was presumed, would strive to become wives and mothers. Any who had other ambitions were labelled deviants by prescriptive literature, the law and much of society.[9] They were taught to defer to male authority at home, from their mothers, in their family-culture, and from their education. This legal, social, and

[9] S. Mendelson & P. Crawford, Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 165.

political power-dynamic was made to feel natural.[10] Working within and redefining these parameters, while struggling to remain somewhat inoffensive to the conventional reader, Wollstonecraft's protagonists are characterised as being maternal in that they are intensely nurturing, benevolent and virtuous beings, who fight social norms for the right to be (what Wollstonecraft believes to be the definition of) women.

Mary: A Fiction

Mary is an intelligent self-educated young woman who desperately wishes to surrender to her maternal instincts to love and nurture somebody.[11] Wollstonecraft's *Mary* shares similarities between the heroine's love for Henry, who in some ways performs the role of teacher for her, with Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Eloise: Letters of Two Lovers, Inhabitants of a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps* (1761). Mary is married off to a virtual stranger in order to alleviate her father's debts, as marriage invited a sharing of resources and sometimes included a settlement between the involved parties' parents.[12] Like Rousseau's text, the heroine, Mary, agrees to marry the man chosen for her by her reprehensible father, but unlike her parallel character, she is married in name only. In order to avoid her husband after her mother passes away, Mary spends more time with her good friend Ann whose illness forces the two women to travel to Portugal's milder climate. Mary defies convention, by leaving her husband behind and in her travels meets Henry, who is also dying of consumption. As she finds him intellectually superior and instructive, she falls in love with him, following Wollstonecraft's own trend of behaviour.[13] In the novella, after Ann's death, Mary escapes from Henry, in order to conform to socially established notions of virtuous propriety, and she returns to England. Henry's mother begs her to nurse him on his death-bed (unlike Rousseau's Eloise, who abandons her own lover and becomes a model wife and mother). After Henry's demise,

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[10] Judith Bennett, "Feminism and history," Gender and History 1.3 (1989) 251-72.

[11] Indeed, Barbara Taylor's research indicates that the purpose of the novella was to illustrate Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea that genius educates itself, though applied to women, rather than men. Taylor, Mary 73. Furthermore, Roberts indicates that the feminist aim of the novella was to present the reader with a woman who has the ability to think for herself. Roberts 182.
Rousseau goes so far as to say that "nature means them [women] to think." Rousseau 392.

[12] Evans, "Women" 59.

[13] As in *Mary*, she benefited from the intellectually stimulating companionship of Richard Price (famed liberal author) in her youth. This stimulation continued in Joseph Johnson's (her friend and publisher) circle, which included William Blake, Dr. George Fordyce, and revolutionary theorist Tom Paine. Todd 216.

Mary is relieved to discover that she too is dying. She sees her imminent death as a form of release from a world in which love is used to imprison women through marriage, and where social regulations prevent women from enjoying and pursuing intellectual stimulation and what she defines as true virtue: to live a life expressing maternal benevolence towards others. The narrative is also devoted to expressing the frustration felt by a woman who thirsts for knowledge and intellectual challenges, pointing out the shortcomings of a society in which this character trait is strongly discouraged. Throughout the novella, love (especially romantic love) is defined as springing from intellectual stimulation, and it implies that it is a particularly female drive to nurture loved ones, thus conforming to maternal ideals of femininity. As love evolves out of an intellectual stimulus, Wollstonecraft obliquely implies that in order for women to be feminine, they must be mentally challenged, following principles in both *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and the later-written *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that women must be educated in order to become effective mothers or mother-figures.[14] And if femininity is defined as being maternal, then it is reasonable to assume that in order to be feminine, women must be educated.

A Mother's Influence

Even ineffective mothers have power. Mary's mother inadvertently shapes her. She reacts to her mother's neglect and self-indulgence by turning to rationalism as an act of rebellion. Ironically, this is in itself an emotion-driven act. Unhappiness drives her to analyse the situation, one which mirrors Wollstonecraft's home-life in that the mother's time and attention are entirely taken up by the first-born son.[15] Mary's mother's favouritism towards her brother is explained but not pardoned:

> Her children all died in their infancy, except the first two, and she began to grow fond of the son, as he was remarkably handsome. For years she divided her time

[14] Ford asserts that the use of the mother-figure as the iconic feminine in what he calls Wollstonecraft's *feminist misogyny* is "in fact the precondition for her feminist breakthrough." Ford 191.
See Chapter 1 for further discussion of *Thoughts*.
Wollstonecraft links femininity to motherhood in her *Vindication* when she states that women are "[c]onnected with men as daughters, wives, and mothers, [and] their moral character may be estimated by their manner of fulfilling hose simple duties." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 95.
[15] Taylor surmises that this mother is loosely based on Wollstonecraft's employer, Lady Kingsborough, though the biographical similarities to Wollstonecraft's mother are indisputable. Taylor, Mary 71; Roberts 178.

> between the sofa, and the card-table. She thought not of death, though on the borders of the grave; nor did any of the duties of her station occur to her as necessary. Her children were left in the nursery; and when Mary, the little blushing girl, appeared, she would send the awkward thing away. (7)

Having no tasks to fulfil, she feels despondent, and is therefore languishing.[16] Her diversions are mindless and self-indulgent, but in perfect keeping with what society expects of her. The description of her is unforgiving and harsh, not only because she is frivolous, but because she has no interest in her children. In this manner, she is depicted as being an aberration, something remarkable *unfeminine*, as it was assumed to be natural for women to be nurturing and maternal.[17] With this, Wollstonecraft is implying that all women who behave in this manner are unnatural. Instead of mimicking her mother's example and becoming self-absorbed, though being neglected and lonely, Mary, driven by her intellect rather than emotional self-pity, searches for some sort of justification of her existence and "[h]er sensibility prompted her to search for an object to love." (8)[18] Here (as in *Thoughts*) her emotions are guided by her reason which urges her to be nurturing and to become something very different from her mother.[19] This unfulfilled basic human need to love and be loved promotes her to become that which she yearns for her mother to be. This longing becomes a gate-way to seeking knowledge. The two needs (intimacy and self-improvement) become melded into a single desire: to nurture someone who stimulates the intellect and pays attention to her, and so, "[n]eglected in every respect, and left to the operations of her own mind, she considered every thing that came under her inspection, and learned to think." (7) This suggests that intelligence can be inherent and does not need to be taught and that girls can augment their in-born cleverness by pursuing knowledge themselves, rather than being formed by others. In this manner, Mary's maternal neglect is instrumental in freeing her from the social

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[16] This concern about the pointlessness of female existence is also raised in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, when she calls these women "[w]eak, artificial beings, raised above the common wants and affections of their race, in a premature unnatural manner, undermine the very foundation of virtue, and spread corruption through the whole mass of society". Wollstonecraft, Vindication 75.

[17] Shoemaker 123.

[18] Later, Wollstonecraft elaborates in *Vindication* that "unless the mind have uncommon vigour, womanish follies will stick to the character throughout life," retrospectively underscoring the unique strength of Mary's character. Wollstonecraft, Vindication 248.

[19] "The turbulent passions may be kept down till reason begins to dawn." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 8.

constraints of traditional female education (thus underscoring even the inadvertent power of the mother-figure). She is free to express that which comes naturally to her. Divested of needlework and dance, she is at liberty to peruse texts and to question social circumstances, an act from which most girls her age are discouraged, portraying the same ideology as in *Thoughts*.[20] By portraying Mary's character in a sympathetic light and by making it perfectly understandable to the reader why she is behaving in this manner, which is naturally feminine rather than socially instilled, Wollstonecraft is altering how the reader thinks about Mary's counter-cultural thoughts and actions.[21]

Mary personifies pure emotion, untainted by societal restrictions or falseness. As Wollstonecraft admires this, she portrays Mary as negotiating these emotions, guided by both reason and benevolence (as she is urged to do through her religious principles and in her reading, thus countering the stigma of the learned woman).[22] She

> was continually in dread lest he [her father] should frighten her mother to death; her [mother's] sickness called forth all Mary's tenderness, and exercised her compassion so continually, that it became more than a match for self-love, and was the governing propensity of her heart through life. She was violent in her temper; but she saw her father's faults, and would weep when obliged to compare his temper with her own. (8)

Her selfless benevolence for her mother meshes with maternal social conventions of femininity, in contrast with her temper and her father's irrational outbursts shame her into controlling her own temper with moderating rationalisations. However, as she states in both *Thoughts* (1787) and *Original Stories* (1788), Wollstonecraft has deemed vices of this sort to be surmountable, if a person applies self-discipline coupled with a self-critical awareness. In the novella, Mary is inherently maternal and loving, and thus likable to the reader of the romantic period, in spite of any objections to her unconventional desire for

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[20] "Girls learn something of music, drawing, and geography; but they do not know enough to engage their attention, and render it an employment of the mind." *Ibid* 25.

[21] Novel-reading produces "the most powerful vicarious identification of readers with the feelings of fictional characters." Watt 206.

[22] In *Thoughs*, Wollstonecraft urges young women to "[l]et the manners arise from the mind, and let there be no disguise for the genuine emotion of the heart." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 24.
By having her heroine expand her virtue and benevolence through reading, Wollstonecraft is countering the stigma of the learned woman, as the accusation of being knowledgeable or well-read carried with it the brand of unattractive masculinity. Pearson 15.

intellectual self-improvement, which is excused by her desires to conquer her vices.[23] Her intellect is also employed in order to overcome some unfeminine and distasteful traits, such as her temper, which she has inherited from her father, the supposed superior parent, all, it can be argued, in the pursuit of virtue. By bestowing indisputable character weaknesses on both parents, Wollstonecraft is implying fair treatment of the sexes. She objects equally to

> her mother's lukewarm manner of performing her religious duties, [which] filled her [Mary] with anguish; and when she observed her father's vices, the unbidden tears would flow. She was miserable when beggars were driven from the gate without being relieved; if she could do it unperceived, she would give them her own breakfast, and feel gratified, when, in consequence of it, she was pinched by hunger. (9)

These benevolent maternal (or Christian) tendencies of self-sacrifice emerge from intellectually analysing and rejecting the example set by her own home-life. Also, the mother acts as a character foil to Mary's strong maternal qualities, emphasising that the delicately feeble biological mother is less maternal in action than the strong and intellectual Mary. In this way, it can be argued that intellect is posed as enhancing feminine acts of charity.[24] In spite of being guided by her feelings to improve herself, Mary takes control of her emotions and intellectualises them, rather than allowing them to dictate her actions, indeed "[h]er understanding was strong and clear, when not clouded by her feelings." (9) With this control her socially untainted emotions are focused outward on benevolent action rather than on vanity or self-indulgence. It reads as a response to Rousseau's premise that women are driven by their emotions rather than their intellect, when he states that "[w]oman is also endowed with boundless passions; God has given her modesty to restrain them."[25] Wollstonecraft contends that it is intellect, not modesty, which endows women with the ability to rule their passions and that the passions are not inherently harmful. She disagrees with widespread definitions of femininity, as posed in Rousseau's *Emile*, in which he states that "[a] perfect man and a

[23] Likable characters have a powerful influence on the reader. Watt 206; Bannet 10.
[24] It was both common and lauded that middle and upper-class ladies performed charitable acts for the good of the community. Amanda Vickery, The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England (London: Yale UP, 1998) 292.
[25] Rousseau 386.

perfect woman should no more be alike in mind than in face."[26] In his novelised guide to raising children, he delineates sexual difference, dividing men and women into being intellectually and emotionally-driven, respectively. According to Wollstonecraft, women are men's equals "in mind." She acknowledges the presence of strong emotion and its negating effect on reason; however, Mary serves as an example of someone who is in control of her emotions, and is intelligent despite her sex turning her emotions into a feminine asset. Wollstonecraft's portrayal of the ineffective mother has a similar effect on her heroine, as Jane Austen's mother-figure later has on Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Both heroines cannot rely on their mothers for sound advice or a respectable role-model and therefore must decide for themselves what it means to be a woman, and how nurturing fits into this role, a concern which Wollstonecraft addresses in many of her other works as well.[27] Both mothers serve as a warning to the reader of what becomes of uneducated women. Not only are they ineffectual mothers, they are indeed a harmful influence on their daughters (as Mrs. Bennet is on Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*) unless the daughters have the strength of character to educate and socialise themselves through extensive reading, underscoring the influential power of the novel. In *The First Women (Psycho) analysts*, Laura Mandell surmises that this power stems both from the writer's ability to express her opinions with "impact" and to establish a sense of "fraternité" with her reader.[28] Regardless, with this scenario, Wollstonecraft is inclining towards social assumptions of benevolence being part of the feminine makeup, while emphasising that reason can make this trait a deliberate act rather than an emotional impulse.

Mary's Maternal Qualities

In spite of her mother's poor example, Mary adopts the maternal qualities of nurturing and aiding, which lend her life purpose, making them desirable to the reader.

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[26] *Ibid* 385.

[27] Wollstonecraft's stance is that mothers need to be of strong character, as "the weakest have it in their power to do most mischief." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 12. In other words, weak mothers pass on the skills of subterfuge and cunning, which damage virtue and honesty. Her simple explanation for the cause of frivolity in ineffectual mothers is later also covered in her *Vindication*, when she states that "women, whose minds are not enlarged by cultivation [. . .] are very unfit to manage a family." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 135.

[28] Laura Mandell, "The First Women (Psycho)analysts; or, The Friends of Feminist History," Modern Language Quarterly, 65.1 (March 2004): 71.

Her maternal benevolence benefits society. She has developed this through rationalising her emotions. One of the first incidents of this maternal development is traumatic and life-altering:

> A little girl who attended in the nursery fell sick. Mary paid her great attention; contrary to her wish, she was sent out of the house to her mother, a poor woman, whom necessity obliged to leave her sick child while she earned her daily bread. The poor wretch, in a fit of delirium stabbed herself, and Mary saw her dead body, and heard the dismal account; and so strongly did it impress her imagination, that every night of her life the bleeding corpse presented itself to her when she first began to slumber. Tortured by it, she at last made a vow, that if she was ever mistress of a family she would herself watch over every part of it. The impression that this accident made was indelible. (8)

Mary's reaction is in sharp contrast to her own mother's indifference to losing her children. Of course this incident is much more violent than most child-deaths, but Wollstonecraft's portrayal of Mary's nurturing of a total stranger stands in contrast to her mother's neglect, making her appear to be desirably feminine. The unfortunate child's suicidal reaction to maternal neglect also serves as an example of how Mary herself could have reacted to her own mother's indifference, had she not relied on her intellect, which gives her the strength to persevere. Mary's vow to nurture others could be interpreted as an intellectual reaction to her cold upbringing, as she does not want others to suffer as she has. She continues this trend by aiding a poor fisherman family, where "she learned the luxury of doing good." (11) Her benevolent actions are a "luxury" as this behaviour is not expected of her and it gives her great comfort by providing her with a purpose for her existence.[29] By intellectualising her emotional response to poverty, Mary becomes capable of aiding others, rather than succumbing to debilitating self-pity. Her benevolence becomes a strength and facilitates her usefulness to society, and her hardships imply to the reader that there is no excuse for selfishness. By her example, the reader is powerfully urged to emulate her maternal nurture towards others. The novella becomes a social commentary that, though sensibility may be a female prerogative, it can

[29] This phenomenon is recognised by modern psychologists and is strongly linked to maternal nurture. Chodorow refers to this as women's attempt to "re-experience the sense of dual unity they had with their mother." Chodorow 199-200.

be a strength, when mediated by intellect. Instead of being a weakness, it benefits both society and the individual experiencing it: "Her benevolence, indeed, knew no bounds; the distress of others carried her out of herself; and she rested not till she had relieved or comforted them." (11) Rather than succumbing to her neglect and loneliness, she distracts herself from self-pity by focusing all of her attentions on the needs of others, a premise which is also present in *Thoughts* as well as *Original Stories*. Here Wollstonecraft is adhering to the burgeoning literary convention, as female characters were increasingly described in terms of their domesticity, sentimentality and maternal nurture.[30] This trend continues throughout the text when Mary nurses a woman rescued from drowning and "the late transaction had gratified her benevolence, and stole her out of herself." (37) These maternal actions empower her by giving her a purpose in life and a reason for living, even after she loses both of her parents and all whom she loves. By embracing a maternal role, she is made attractive to the reader as someone who is driven to be useful to society in a manner, which is also conventionally acceptable as Wollstonecraft's myriad illustrations provide the reader with positive examples to emulate, as Bannet would concur.[31]

Benevolence or Sentimentality?

Arguing against Rousseau and other stereotypes of the frivolous female, Wollstonecraft underscores the awareness of social duty and citizenship, which motivates benevolent acts. Benevolence (perceived as a particularly maternal trait) is born from choosing to not be judgemental and to allow all actions to be driven by kindness and empathy. This can be seen as both a Christian and a maternal trait or as the natural instinct to nurture. In the novel, Mary searches for a sense of purpose in her relationship with her sickly friend, Ann (once again mirroring Wollstonecraft's relationship with Fanny Blood, who died in 1785, three years before Wollstonecraft published *Mary*). Having no other outlet for her need to mother, Mary's love for her friend becomes somewhat obsessive: "She would then imagine that she looked sickly or unhappy, and then all her tenderness would return like a torrent, and bear away all reflection. In this manner was her sensibility called forth." (10) Here sensibility is defined as springing

[30] Shoemaker 7.
[31] Her novella is a "powerful instrument of social change." Bannet 10.

from the naturally maternal feminine need to nurture. It is rendered as the antithesis to reason, and indeed makes rational thought challenging. It, however, is also posed as an attractive trait in a woman, which would even appeal to Rousseau and his followers. Wollstonecraft is not doing away with what her contemporary culture would define as femininity. She is, however, criticising the indulgence of it and the absence of any intellectual pursuits, which might balance this overweighing sentimentality and may compose it, so that it may become sedate benevolence.[32] In some ways, she appears to be re-defining sentimental depictions of benevolence, which in earlier, more misogynistic contexts, would be presented as negative examples of excessive female weakness. She urges the reader to follow Mary's example and express maternal compassion through charity. Mary is described in this way, as "to pity and relieve were the same thing to her." (25) Self-indulgence and wallowing are discouraged as being counterproductive. In an attempt to overcome the harsh realities of life, Mary distracts herself in two ways: through intellectual reading and charity. In this fashion, "the exercise of her understanding would frequently make her forget her griefs, when nothing else could, except benevolence." (43) Intellectual pursuits keep the emotions from overwhelming the desire to live, when everything is going wrong. They also serve to make Mary maternally feminine (and therefore respectable) as opposed to being sentimental (and therefore both useless and contemptible).

An undisciplined mind will seek easier distraction from emotional pain through pleasure-seeking which is widely considered to be a vice.[33] These pursuits (such as gambling, shopping and drinking) are not only self-indulgent, but also contribute to the negative stereotype of women being silly creatures who are both too delicate to assist in any way with life's trials, but also lack the emotional and intellectual depth required to even notice poverty and disease. Women who fit this stereotype make it difficult for men to respect them, and Wollstonecraft treats them with the utmost scorn in all of her texts.[34] In *Mary*, she describes a mother and her two daughters with great contempt:

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[32] Indeed, in *Thoughts*, she addresses the weakness of character born from dependence on earthly pleasures which never quite fill the spiritual void, unless they are appreciated and moderated by reason. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 91.

[33] *Ibid* 146.

[34] For example, she comments that "It is very absurd to see a woman, whose brow time has marked with wrinkles, aping the manners of a girl in her teens", which is how the mother behaves. *Ibid* 28. She also

> They were pretty, and hurrying from one party of pleasure to another, occasioned the disorder which required change of air. The mother, if we except her being near twenty years older, was just the same creature; and these additional years only served to make her more tenaciously adhere to her habits of folly, and decide with stupid gravity, some trivial points of ceremony, as a matter of the last importance; of which she was a competent judge, from having lived in the fashionable world so long: that world to which the ignorant look up as we do to the sun. (22)

In the novella, ladies of fashion are scathingly depicted and commented upon, as are those who aspire to emulate them and "look up as we do to the sun."[35] The attributes which society deems important and feminine are silly and laughable.[36] Wollstonecraft's scornful depiction of these women (the truly un-maternal mother in particular) serves to underscore her disapproval of women of this sort, and any reader who identifies with these characters may indirectly also feel this scorn directed at them, possibly leading to self-analysis and the desire to change. This is the antithesis to benevolence: self-absorption and a subsequent worthless life.

Heartless women who lack maternal qualities lead meaningless lives, unlike Mary who nurtures others. This is something which the shallow characters do not understand. Their frivolity does not contribute to society and the family has no ability or desire to assist Mary when her friend's health is failing. When Mary laments: "'I cannot live without her! – I have no other friend; if I lose her, what a desart will the world be to me." "No other friend," re-echoed they, "have you not a husband?"' (23) (*sic*) Here what warrants comment, is not so much the supposition that Mary's husband should be her best friend (which was the new ideal on the horizon of the Zeitgeist), but the complete

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discusses this in her *Vindication*, (as mentioned above) describing these women as "[w]eak, artificial beings, raised above the common wants and affections of their race, in a premature unnatural manner, undermine the very foundation of virtue, and spread corruption through the whole mass of society." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 75. Even though she holds her in high regard, Wollstonecraft also deliberately mocks Anna Letitia Barbauld's poem *To a Lady with some Painted Flowers* (1773) in her *Vindication* for portraying women as being fragile and in need of protection. *Ibid.*

[35] This is evidence of what Ford calls "the patriarchal trap" which Wollstonecraft "only half perceived", as her lack of patience for these females is born from a misogyny which precludes any compassion she may have for their uneducated narrow-mindedness. Ford 194.

[36] This issue also troubled Astell, as she mentioned in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. Astell 62.

lack of sympathy for the pain which Mary is feeling.[37] Her friend is dying and without someone to love, she has no purpose. In *First Things*, Mary Jacobus links this kind of emotional frailty to women defining themselves through their relationships with others, a tendency which is furthered by women defining themselves in terms of their maternal roles towards others. In her analysis of *A Short Residence in Sweden* (published in 1796, eight years after *Mary*), she explains Wollstonecraft's actions stating that "[l]ove and travel keep Wollstonecraft from fading in the face of a loss which is not so much loss of the loved object, or even loss of desire, as loss of meaning."[38] Wollstonecraft's loss of Gilbert Imlay (her American lover in 1795 and the father of her first daughter, Fanny) erases all meaning from her life, pushing her to attempt suicide. The "love" referred to here, keeping her from "fading," is Wollstonecraft's love for her daughter. In contrast, in the novella, Mary does not love her husband. It is the loss of her friend Ann, which causes her loss of self. Yet, in the absence of any other form of constructive employment, Wollstonecraft's premise in the novella is that women need to make themselves useful by expressing caring love, a tactic which she later employs herself in order to survive the loss of her lover. This definition of femaleness gradually becomes convention, as can be traced in the widespread portrayals of femininity in novels, characterising women in terms of their maternal qualities, which included pity, tenderness, and benevolence.[39] It is noteworthy that novels did serve to influence a reification of more liberal social norms, though it is difficult to determine to which extent, however it appears that Wollstonecraft was aware of this, as discussed above.[40]

Mary explores an ongoing battle between the merits of sensibility and the dangers of it leading to self-indulgence. Sensibility enhances intellect, if it is prevented from overcoming it. When controlled, it is a positive attribute, leading to benevolent and femininely maternal actions. Mary's passions also drive her to better herself, urging her

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[37] Evans, "Women" 62. Wollstonecraft classifies these sorts of women as the scourge of the earth. In *Vindication*, she states: "strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves – the only way women can rise in the world – by marriage" Wollstonecraft. Vindication 76.

[38] Jacobus 67.

[39] Shoemaker 126.

[40] They were considered to be the lowest form of writing. Robertson 287.
Novels were feared for their power of influence. Elizabeth Carter (a member of the bluestocking group) blamed the elopement of Kitty Hunter with the already married Earl of Pembroke on her mimicry of Rousseau's title-character in his novel, *Julie* (1761). Barker Benfield, "Sensibility" 108.

to become more informed through reading: "she entered with such spirit into whatever she read, and the emotions thereby raised were so strong, that it soon became a part of her mind." (11) In this instance emotions are linked to a type of intelligence or agent to intelligence and ironically voices what it can be assumed Wollstonecraft hopes to enact in her own readers, a conviction similarly voiced in *Thoughts*.[41] In a way, the text is self-aware of its influential potential. However, Wollstonecraft warns the reader repeatedly of how important it is to "obtain" "dominion over passions," so that they do not overthrow the intellect. (29) She wants readers to engage intellectually with the text, while resorting to what she considers to be the more underhanded manipulation of her readers' emotional engagement with the characters.[42] She does dedicate long segments to the benefits of sensibility and its merits:

> Sensibility is the most exquisite feeling of which the human soul is susceptible: when it pervades us, we feel happy; and could it last unmixed, we might form some conjecture of the bliss of those paradisiacal days, when the obedient passions were under the dominion of reason, and the impulses of the heart did not need correction. (43)

In this instance, controlled sensibility is linked to the essence of God and is essential to living a full life, however, it must be tamed, so that it adds to rather than detracts from reason. Rampant sensibility destroys blindly that which the intellect could appreciate. By linking controlled sensibility to God, Wollstonecraft's definition of the maternally benevolent woman is made synonymous with being a good Christian. Her rhetoric engages the reader by presenting a fictitious case of a clever caring woman, whose intelligence adds to her femininity by controlling her passions, and focusing her empathy into acts of benevolence, or selfless kindness, which empowers her by giving her life purpose.

The Purity of Maternal Love

Love, in this text, is defined as assuming the parental role to the loved one, as Mary does for Ann and, later, Henry, and as Henry does for his mother and for Mary.

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[41] Reading influences the reader's understanding as "whoever weighs one subject will turn to others, and new ideas will rush into the mind." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 27.

[42] By manipulating the readers' emotions, she is reaching a far greater audience than through intellectual argumentation alone. Ford 203.

Mary's friendship with Ann is driven by her need to mother and to give her life meaning. Ann's frail health becomes a blessing, as it puts her in a child-like state of dependence on her friend. Mary's "[c]ontinual attention to her health, and the tender office of a nurse, have created an affection very like a maternal one." (18) So, in lieu of having children of her own, Mary has no need for her husband's services in this regard, as the role of child has already been taken by her friend, proving that maternity is not essentially biological. It also establishes a discernable pattern of maternal surrogacy adopted by female characters in fiction, serving to establish them as socially acceptable feminine women, allowing them to display assertive self-empowered behaviour in a non-threatening manner. With this sentiment, displayed by Mary, Wollstonecraft is following contemporary culture, where "women came to be defined more in terms of their maternal functions than their sexuality."[43] In this case, this state of surrogate maternity is portrayed as being captivating, as Henry remarks to Mary: "I would give the world for your picture, with the expression I have seen in your face, when you have been supporting your friend." (24) With this, the definition of what is attractive and feminine is equated with benevolently aiding the weak, which incidentally puts the maternal figure in a position of power.[44] This power is attractive, which serves Wollstonecraft's goal of presenting female emancipation as not only palatable, but desirable. Mary, in turn, is attracted to Henry, as in the novel heterosexual love is born from intellectual stimulation culminating in one of the two assuming a parental role. (18) This is seen in her relationship with Henry, who alternately plays the part of surrogate parent and surrogate son to her as he assumes control and relinquishes power depending on the circumstances. She initially notices him because, though he is her senior and thus may fulfil her need for a parent, he also awakens her maternal instincts. He is somewhat fragile and "this melancholy would of itself have attracted Mary's notice". (24) Frailty is attractive, because she can assume a maternal role for him, giving her both power and a sense of purpose. His intellect is equally attractive, as he can cultivate her mind in turn. Under his parental guidance she can blossom and make herself available to new experiences and

[43] Shoemaker 126.
[44] Mandell asserts that the reduction of all of woman-kind to the role of mother indicates the oppressed state of women, however she concedes (with Judith Butler's support) that the psyche can rise above this oppression by manipulating the implications of this role, which is what Wollstonecraft is doing here. Mandell 71, 75.

knowledge, while exercising a maternal role when he is weak, thus keeping her from becoming subservient to him.

Mary's ventures focus on two warring needs: the search for surrogate parents and to find a purpose for herself. She is experiencing loss for that which she never had: a loving mother. Her behaviour mirrors, what Judith Butler describes as an act of becoming that which was lost: "The melancholic refuses the loss of the object, and internalization becomes a strategy of magically resuscitating the lost object, not only because the loss is painful, but because the ambivalence felt toward the object requires that the object be retained until differences are settled."[45] Mary's longing for a good mother inspires her to become that which she wanted as a child, thus assuaging her pain while providing her with a sense of purpose. She is able to assume the role of mother up to a point, besting her own mother's abilities to perform this role almost in a reactionary manner, much as perhaps Wollstonecraft, as the author, is performing for the reader by writing this indirectly polemical tale.[46] However, this is not sustainable after Ann's death, which is why she needs Henry and "his affection was her only support; without this dear prop she had sunk into the grave of her lost – long-loved friend." (34) This shows a power-dynamic, in which he has an advantage over her and establishes her dependence on him, and once again foreshadows Jacobus' insights into Wollstonecraft's own later behaviour after losing the love of Gilbert Imlay, when she states that she is experiencing "loss of meaning."[47] Wollstonecraft implies that women need someone to love, in order to have a purpose in life. It could be argued that Mary later flees from Henry's love, because in his (desirable) caring role, he has power over her.[48] She also comments on the debilitating quality of this power-dynamic later in *Vindication*.[49] Her desire to be parented in her grief gives way to the desire for emancipation. She is in danger of becoming like the flippant females she so despises once she has surrendered the

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[45] Butler, Gender 83.
[46] Ford contends that "[f]or Wollstonecraft, different practices of reading produce different kinds of reader. A shift in textual apprehension makes different ways of acting possible. Reading can, then, be understood as a kind of midwifery" (or maternal surrogacy). Ford 198.
[47] Jacobus 67.
[48] Henry asks Mary "[i]f she would rely on him as if he was her father; and that the tenderest father could not more anxiously interest himself in the fate of a darling child, than he did in her's." (30) *sic*.
[49] "Weakness may excite tenderness, and gratify the arrogant pride of man, but the lordly caresses of a protector will not gratify a noble mind that pants for and desires to be respected." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 98.

parental role to him. She only returns when she can resume her maternal role, reversing the power-dynamic by establishing herself as the parent-figure to his child-like dependence in his sickly state.

Maternal love is posed as a female strength, which conquers all earthly discomforts, as the terminally ill Henry implies to Mary: "I am very far from well; but it matters not, [. . .] my mother is a tender nurse, and I shall sometimes see thee." (45) In terms of power-dynamic, his statement may indicate a desire to be dominated by women. Here he is blessed with two maternal figures, his biological mother and Mary, his surrogate, who vies for exclusive maternal rights: "Mary felt for the first time in her life, envy; she wished involuntarily, that all the comfort he received should be from her." (45) Here, the two women competing for the same man do not contend for his sexual attention, but for his filial love. Both strive to become his preferred mother-figure. The maternal role is the only role in which Mary feels comfortable claiming Henry's focus, as through it she can retain her sense of purpose and freedom. She curbs her selfishness, as "[s]he loved him better than herself," as all mothers and mother-figures should. (51) Wollstonecraft's ambivalence towards heterosexual love at this time in her life is further reflected in Mary's exclamation: "I cannot live without loving – and love leads to madness." (49) Perhaps the "madness" referred to here is the voluntary surrender of freedom, in other words, the desire to marry and become beholden to the loved one. Wollstonecraft's premise here is that love leads to complete surrender, which ends the power struggle between the sexes, however never to the woman's advantage. The "madness" is the result of the surrender, in other words, the relinquishing of the self, a sense of identity, and thus sanity.[50] In *Mary* Wollstonecraft expresses a fear of heterosexual love as being tantamount to voluntary enslavement and the surrender of sanity. This includes a condemnation of marriage (which is further developed in *Maria*). When Mary proclaims that she has no intention of ever living with her husband, a family in England asks her how she intends to support herself, Mary struggles internally for a moment, before declaring: "I will work [. . .] do any thing rather than be a slave." (40) In this instance, the only acknowledged attraction to marriage is monetary comfort, but at

[50] Taylor surmises that this moment in the novella is strongly linked to Wollstonecraft's state later in life after being abandoned by her lover, Gilbert Imlay. Taylor, Mary 121.
If this is the case, the "madness" could also refer to Wollstonecraft's suicide attempt.

what cost? Even when Mary admits to her love for Henry, the thought of marriage repulses her, because of this power dynamic, which leaves women at the disadvantage. The only resolution offered by the author is in Mary contracting the disease which kills him. Rather than fearing her inevitable demise, she takes comfort from it: "She thought she was hastening to that world *where there is neither marrying*, nor giving in marriage." (53) By echoing scripture, she is appealing to orthodoxy to reinforce her point.[51] She wishes to be an individual and not belong to anyone. By having the most common dominant social position be responsible for her heroine's suffering, Wollstonecraft has written an example of what Margaret Cohen calls the "sentimental social novel".[52] Women should not surrender themselves to men, nor should they be given away as property. She is reflecting the Augustan ideology discussed in David Hume's *The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth* (1754) with a masculine republican ideal, as well as Catharine Macaulay's *History of England* (1763-83), in which she portrays the natural love of freedom to be innate in both men and women. (This, among other works, gained her the respect of Wollstonecraft, who wrote to her, telling her that she deserved to be held up as an example to her sex.[53]) In the novella form, Wollstonecraft's work is part of what Harriet Guest calls "the increasing emphasis on the private virtues as the basis of public and social morality", emphasising once more the authority given to women as the enforcers of "private virtues".[54] The final thought Wollstonecraft leaves with the reader is that women are people and should treat themselves and be treated by others as such, and the best way for women to be self-empowered, useful and feminine is to be maternal, even if they have no children.

Maria: or The Wrongs of Woman

Maria tells the tale of the eponymous heroine, who is unjustly incarcerated in a mad-house by her nefarious husband, as punishment for leaving him. At the opening of

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[51] Reference to Matthew 22:30 "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Incidentally, this also mimics Julie's death at the end of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise*.

[52] The purpose of these novels was to engage the readers' sentiment, manipulating their sense of injustice through emotive writing, in order to urge society to change these practices. Cohen, Sentimental 132.

[53] Macaulay 203, 208, 215.
In her *Vindication* (published after Macaulay's death) she states that Macaulay held "the greatest abilities, undoubtedly, that this country has ever produced." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 174.

[54] Guest 237.

the novella, she has recently given birth to a daughter, who is immediately taken from her and who later is reported to have died. Maria combats insanity by writing covert epistles to a fellow inmate, Henry Darnford, and by befriending one of her care-takers, Jemima.[55] She also keeps a journal, designed to enlighten her daughter and make her aware of social injustice towards women.[56] Incidentally, this mimics Lady Pennington's *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters in a Letter*, published as a work of conduct literature in 1761, and mimicking the widely accepted tradition of women's writing solely for the good of their children.[57] A romance proceeds from a strong intellectual friendship between Maria and Darnford and they eventually escape, only to face a court charging her with adultery.[58] Wollstonecraft states that she wrote this novella because of "the desire of exhibiting the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society."[59] Though incomplete, the text highlights the disparate nature of domestic law regarding men and women, leading Maria to proclaim: "Why was I not born a man, or why was I born at all?" (105) Though dealing with the legal entrapment of marriage, this subject is not significant to the purpose of this discussion which will analyse the portrayal of maternity and its ascribed status and

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[55] Taylor contends that *Maria* was in part inspired by Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), but that Wollstonecraft planned to indicate through the ending that women are not enslaved by sexual passion and that maternal love and nurture takes precedence. Taylor, Mary 74-75.

[56] Jane Spencer remarks that "the mother's educational role serves within the fiction as the source of her [Wollstonecraft's] identity as a writer." Jane Spencer, "Of Use to Her Daughter: Maternal Authority and Early Women Novelists," Living by the Pen: Early British Women Writers, ed. Dale Spender (New York: Teachers College, 1992) 206.
Taylor further comments on the fact that the novella concerns itself less with women's rights and more with "the experience of *being* female" and with all of the debilitating prejudices associated with this. Taylor, Mary 55.
Myers' discussion of Wollstonecraft's pedagogical texts indicates that Wollstonecraft's primary concern remained educational reform throughout *all* of her writing, as this incident in the novella attests. Myers, "Impeccable Governesses" 36.

[57] Ford notes that this is a clever tactic employed by the author, as by writing as a mother to her daughter this precludes the narrative voice from "becoming a feminist agent", as Wollstonecraft's feminism is hiding behind the voice of a concerned mother. Ford 192.

[58] Wollstonecraft's notes on this incomplete work indicate that she intended for Darnford to abandon Maria eventually and for Jemima to save her from suicide by presenting her with the believed to be dead daughter, depicting him as the perfect example of "hypermasculinity": someone brash, forceful, untrustworthy, who ultimately disappoints. Claudia Johnson, "Mary Wollstonecraft – Styles of Radical Maternity," Inventing Maternity – Politics, Science and Literature 1650-1865, eds. Susan Greenfield & Carol Barash (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999) 166.
Taylor indicates that Darnford is modelled on Imlay. Taylor, Mary 136.

[59] Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary and Maria/Matilda, ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 59.
Taylor adds that "[p]oliticised fiction was a particularly apt vehicle for feminists, given women's high profile in novel writing." Taylor, Mary 132.

authority as it is depicted in the novella. The power gleaned through maternity, both surrogate and biological, is exposed as being socially, but not legally enforced.

Femininity defined as Maternal Feelings or Benevolence

Wollstonecraft builds sympathy for her protagonist by appealing to contemporary conventions of femininity, preparing the reader emotionally to disagree with the legal decisions later in the plot.[60] By underscoring Maria's maternal feelings, she deflects from her social *faux pas* of leaving her husband. She distracts herself from her own misery by thinking of her baby:

> Her infant's image was continually floating on Maria's sight, and the first smile of intelligence remembered, as none but a mother, an unhappy mother, can conceive. She heard her half speaking half cooing, and felt the little twinkling fingers on her burning bosom – *a bosom bursting with the nutriment for which this cherished child might now be pining in vain*. From a stranger she could indeed receive the maternal aliment, Maria was grieved at the thought – but who would watch her with a mother's tenderness, a mother's self-denial? (61) (*emphasis mine*)

This reflects Wollstonecraft's contemporarily conventional pro-breast-feeding and anti-nurse-maid sentiments.[61] It is designed to resonate with her reader thus engendering sympathy, as well as defining the female body as a vessel for nurturing infants, as opposed to a vessel for pleasure, emphasising that this is the true function of a woman's body and that it should be viewed in this way.[62] This belief is not unique to Wollstonecraft. Indeed Richardson introduces this issue in his novel *Pamela* (1740) when the eponymous heroine argues that her duties to her husband should not interfere

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[60] Ford argues that by appealing as a mother, Wollstonecraft's narrative persona reaches out to an alternative readership and "through invoking this nonfamilial audience, Maria's critique of partiality is liberated for a different collective political subject." Ford 195.

[61] It can be argued that the representation of physical maternity drives Wollstonecraft's argument, however details of this are beyond the scope of this study. More on this subject can be found in Susan Greenfield's text, in particular chapter 3 in its entirety. Susan Greenfield, Mothering Daughters – Novels and the Politics of Family Romance (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2002).
Wollstonecraft frequently links the need for women's independent thought and strength of mind and body to the preparation for effective motherhood. In her earlier-written *Vindication* she actually states that in order "[t]o be a good mother – a woman must have sense, and that independent mind which few women possess who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 222.
She also adds that "by exercise of their bodies and minds women would acquire that mental activity so necessary in the maternal character." *Ibid* 250.

[62] Jacobus 222; Shoemaker 126.

with her duties as a mother, which are spiritually ordained.[63] Wollstonecraft is also passionately portraying Maria as a dutiful mother and indeed the very picture of the ideal woman, as portrayed in her *Vindication*.[64] With this maternal image and word-choice, judgement of Maria's eventual affair is meant to be moderated.[65] The narrator's dissatisfaction with social conventions of misogyny is juxtaposed with maternal concern, thus inviting a sceptical reader to consider the issues without taking umbrage. Maria's daughter is kidnapped by her husband and "she mourned for her child, lamented she was a daughter, and anticipated the aggravated ills of life that her sex rendered almost inevitable." (61)[66] Pitying a new-born for being alive is poignant, in that it emphasises the severity of the issue.[67] The first half of the novella focuses on Maria and how she is grievously wronged as a mother, rather than as a woman. Similarly, Maria gains the sympathy and camaraderie of Jemima, her keeper,

> when told that her child, only four months old, had been torn from her, even while she was discharging the tenderest maternal office, the woman awoke in a bosom long estranged from *feminine emotions*, and Jemima determined to alleviate all in her power, without hazarding the loss of place, the suffering of a wretched mother, apparently injured, and certainly unhappy. (64) (*sic*) (emphasis mine)

The language of sensibility evident in the emotive word-choice of "suffering" and "wretched" is in stark contrast with Wollstonecraft's earlier writing style in her *Vindication* which ridiculed this sort of writing.[68] Maria has been morally wronged; this

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[63] Richardson, Pamela 34, 36.
Even with these convictions, Pamela eventually submits to her husband, showing, according to Toni Bowers, that men have the arrogance to allow their pleasures to take precedence over even God's plans for women. Toni Bowers, "A Point of Conscience," Inventing Maternity – Politics, Science and Literature 1650-1865, eds. Susan Greenfield & Carol Barush (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999) 148.
[64] "I have then viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children, and discharging the duties of her station with perhaps merely a servant-maid to take off her hands the servile part of the household business." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 213.
[65] Also, Wollstonecraft's passion about the unjust subjugation of women comes through as an example of what she explained in *Thoughts*, stating that "the warmth with which we engage in any business increases its importance, and our not entering into them has the contrary effect." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 123.
[66] This mirrors Wollstonecraft's sentiment, which she conveys to Imlay in a letter, after her daughter, Fanny, was born. Taylor, Mary 122.
[67] This also emphasises that, though she may legally be forced to return to him, he has kept her from performing her primary function which is to mother her child. Gillian Skinner, "Women's status as legal and civic subjects," Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 92.
[68] Guest remarks on this tender use of language, which she contrasts with Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* and ascribes to the effects of the Terror in France. Guest 291.

appeals to the reader's pathos as it awakens Jemima's "feminine emotions", bonding the women, transcending class difference.[69] In this case, "feminine emotions" are strongly linked to benevolence and the sentimental power of the text is designed to resonate strongly within readers, which according to Eve Tavor Bannet makes novels strongly influential by providing the reader with examples to emulate.[70] The more powerful this emotional link between reader and written character is, the more likely the reader is to unconsciously emulate the thoughts and actions of the character. By defining them thus, Wollstonecraft is inviting the female reader to establish empathy with Maria and so to continue feeling kindly towards her marital problems and her later affair with Henry Darnford. This renders the novella a serviceable platform for Wollstonecraft to outline the need for social change, her character having the right to object to social convention, as a wronged mother attempting to look after the best interests of her daughter.

Though physiologically a mother, Maria also portrays maternal nurture for others. Through her "maternal tenderness," her concern for her daughter evolves through benevolent feelings for Jemima's misfortunes to a general concern for all woman-kind: "Thinking of Jemima's peculiar fate and her own, she was led to consider the oppressed state of woman, and to lament that she had given birth to a daughter." (65 & 92)[71] This authorial intrusion voices Wollstonecraft's concern with both the rights of women and their social constraints with a benevolent or maternal slant. By having Maria voice her opinions as life experiences, they are defined as words of wisdom for the next generation, rather than radical notions of reformation of social norms. Maria appears to be driven by virtuous convictions of right and wrong. This lament also echoes an excerpt from *A Short Residence in Sweden,* when Wollstonecraft voices her concerns for her daughter

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In her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft professes that emotive writing is insulting to women's intelligence and urges authors "rather to address the head than the heart." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 96.
This is corroborated by Johnson, who remarks that Wollstonecraft was disheartened by the severity of the conservative reaction to the French Revolution in England, which is reflected in her writing. Johnson, "Mary Wollstonecraft" 162.

[69] This denotes an extreme shift from Wollstonecraft's earlier convictions of the harmful influence of servants, whom she depicts as being faintly subhuman and certainly irreconcilable with her ideals of womanhood in both *Thoughts* and *Vindication*.

[70] Bannet 10.

[71] Jemima was the illegitimate offspring of a master and his servant. Her mother died shortly after her birth and her father put her in service as a young girl, where her master beat and raped her. While pregnant herself, she was thrown out after the mistress of the house witnessed her being raped yet again. She aborted her child and turned to prostitution. Eventually she finds employment at the asylum where Maria is being held.

Fanny's future: "I feel more than a mother's fondness and anxiety, when I reflect on the dependent and oppressed state of her sex. I dread lest she should be forced to sacrifice her heart to her principles, or principles to her heart. [. . .] I dread to unfold her mind, lest it should render her unfit for the world she is to inhabit – Hapless woman! what fate is thine!"[72] Wollstonecraft voices a maternal concern in *Maria* for the helplessness of the female sex. It comes across as the character's fear for her daughter rather than Wollstonecraft's own anger, as it does in *Thoughts* and *Vindication*, appealing to a different kind of reader, who may have been put off by her revolutionary sentiments in her earlier texts. Maria voices her concerns to Jemima about her absent daughter: "let me but prepare her body and mind to encounter the ills which await her sex, and I will teach her to consider you as her second mother, and herself as the prop of your age." (92) By asking for Jemima's assistance in this manner, she is bribing her with the promise of family and indeed is restructuring the typical heterosexual familial configuration with female-centric one.[73] Those who perform maternal offices engender loyalty in their children, which assures reciprocal love and nurturing in old age. By redirecting this loyalty, which a child feels for its mother, to the one who performs the maternal role, Wollstonecraft is making a general statement about women's influential position in society when performing maternal functions, albeit with limitations (as are exposed later in the novella). If a woman takes on a maternal position, she engenders protective feelings from those whom she mothers. Wollstonecraft still adheres to social conventions of femininity being linked to the roles of wife and mother, but the position of mother has scope for developing a sort of respected authoritative voice.[74] She works within this model, because too radical notions are dismissed by readers out of hand, as this novella is, in spite of her efforts, according to the contemporary *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*.[75] Even conforming to society in this manner, she is met with disapproval for

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[72] Mary Wollstonecraft, A Short Residence in Sweden (London: Penguin Books, 1987) 97.
[73] Wollstonecraft ultimately destroys the dream of an equal partnership between men and women, showing with this tale that the only relationship where a woman is on equal terms with her partner, is if the relationship is with another woman. Johnson, "Mary Wollstonecraft" 169.
[74] Shoemaker 51.
[75] Like so many people who fancy themselves superior to an author, this reviewer (most likely James Mill) sees only what he expects to see when reading Wollstonecraft's *Maria*, due, presumably to prejudices formed by reading Godwin's biography of his wife which was published the same year (1798) as this review. With an air of moral indignation, *Maria* is dismissed as a work which promotes infidelity rather than remarking on the powerlessness of the heroine after her husband has attempted to prostitute her and

her ideas of reform, by such writers as Hannah More, who later indirectly refers to her in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) as an unfeminine deviant or "second-hand author", engaging in "literary warfare [. . .] which provoked so much rancour, so many volumes, and so little wit; so much vanity, so much flattery, and so much invective, [and] produced no lasting effect."[76] Regardless, Wollstonecraft further exemplifies emphasis on maternal qualities through the charity Maria displays for her former wet-nurse: "I had two matrasses on my bed; what did I want with two, when such a worthy creature must lie on the ground?" (100) (*sic*) Mothering engenders permanent loyalty from children, who will care for the mother-figure when she is no longer able to care for herself. With this loyalty comes respect and, consequently, a willingness to be influenced, as a trusting reader may be influenced through emotional engagement with the characters in novels. (It has been argued that the purpose of writing novelistic prose is to impose the author's ideals on the unsuspecting reader.[77]) Furthermore, the role of mother, as in *Mary*, offers a sense of purpose and she refers to her daughter as "my only comfort" and "she could not sit still – her child was ever before her." (134 & 139) By portraying her heroine in this fashion, Wollstonecraft is stressing Maria's identification with her role as a mother and thus taking away from her role as a deserting wife and later adulteress. The reader is left pitying the distressed mother, rather than condemning the wanton mistress, remaining receptive to Wollstonecraft's criticism of social norms. As well as this, Maria's more radical notions are expressed as merely wanting what is best for her child, which precludes the reader's criticism.

The Consequences of Uninformed Mothering

The results of poor mothering are severe. Maria's own mother mirrors the mother in *Mary* and Wollstonecraft's own in that she favours her eldest son, much to the disadvantage of her other children: "Such indeed was my mother's extravagant partiality, that, in comparison with her affection for him, she might be said not to love the rest of

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has taken away her child. (The child is never mentioned in the synopsis.) According to the review, "the *restrictions upon adultery* constitute, in Maria's opinion, A MOST FLAGRANT WRONG TO WOMEN. Such is the moral tendency of this work, and such are the lessons which may be learned from the writings of Mrs. Wollstonecraft." "Review of Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman", Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine July 1798 (London: J. Whittle, 1798): 93.

[76] More 8.

[77] Jon Klancher, "Prose," An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age – British Culture 1776-1832, eds. Iain McCalman et al (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 280.

her children." (95) This contrasts with Maria's own maternal ability to love and nurture, even when this is focused on people other than her own child. The favouritism not only damages those children who are neglected, but the overzealous attention paid to one child is detrimental to his personality (something also mentioned in her *Vindication*), as in the case of Maria's brother: "Extreme indulgence had rendered him so selfish, that he only thought to himself" and his severe lack of empathy drove him to torture his sisters and even animals. (95)[78] Tormenting animals is one of the worst behaviours, worthy of extreme punishment, according to Wollstonecraft.[79] His mother's coddling rendered him defunct, and he vents most of his frustrations on Maria, who is chided for criticising her brother's behaviour, when she seeks assistance from her parents. (98) Similar negative results of poor mothering are exposed in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788), in which Delamere is led by his mother to believe that he is entitled to anything he desires, resulting in his attempted rape of the heroine, and again, nearly fifty years later, in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), in the manner in which Mrs. Reed's spoils her son, who in turn beats Jane senseless. Maria's mother showers her son with love, attention, and affection, but does not teach him benevolence or civility. She does not instruct him, and is therefore not an effective mother. This may explain why Maria is so driven to teach her own child later in the text. However, even the lack of instruction showcases the powerful effect which mothers have on their children's world view, as it teaches them, by example, how to be both callous and indolent, calling the female readers' attention to their own level of power and social responsibility within society.

Maternal Concerns

Maria writes journal entries in order that "[t]hey might perhaps instruct her daughter, and shield her from the misery, the tyranny, her mother knew not how to avoid", much as the novella is meant to instruct the reader. (66) The implication is that Maria's own mother was ignorant and failed to teach her what she needed to know, in order to negotiate life successfully and to survive. The novella is autobiographical in this reflection of maternal concerns for a daughter. The entries in the journal serve as a

[78] Wollstonecraft warns against this in her *Vindication*, as well, in which a spoiled young adult "whom a fond weak mother had indulged, and who consequently was averse to everything like application" grows up to be a useless member of society. Wollstonecraft, Vindication 257.
[79] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 15; Wollstonecraft, Original 15.

platform for Wollstonecraft to air her grievances against social convention, regarding the lack of equality for women. By posing these arguments as cautionary epistles, the radical ideas are softened and made more palatable to the sceptical or conservative reader. Maria asks her daughter to gain life experience while she is free to do so, in order to "acquire sufficient fortitude to pursue [her] own happiness." (95) This statement questions the notion that all women will find happiness in marriage and motherhood, and urges women to discover for themselves what makes them happy. The need for "fortitude" indicates that life is not without disillusionment and disappointment and implies that we have only ourselves to rely on. The novella proves that relying on a husband to provide for the wife's well-being is foolish.[80] Wollstonecraft goes on to compare the socialisation of men and women, in that men are "never taught, like women, to restrain the most natural, and acquire, instead of the bewitching frankness of nature, a factitious property of behaviour." (73) The juxtaposition of "bewitching frankness" indicates the almost supernatural quality which Wollstonecraft ascribes to honesty.[81] She believes it to be more powerful than deception or feminine wiles. With this she laments the necessity for feminine wiles to ensure a woman's happiness, as genuine opinions and rational discussion when erupting from a woman are not taken seriously, and indeed the frankness of the narrative only gains gravitas through the maternally concerned voice of the narrator. She is arguing against Rousseau's premise that "nature has endowed woman with a power of stimulating man's passions in excess of man's power of satisfying those passions" and that woman is "cunning" in her manipulation of men and that this is the only way in which she has any power.[82] Here, as in her other works, Wollstonecraft contends that women should not be deceitful or manipulative, but genuine so that they might be respected for their intellects rather than being forced to resort to manipulation in order to exercise an element of control over their surroundings. She wants women to be virtuous and honourable.[83] Maria begs her daughter through her journal to "always

[80] Maria's husband attempts to prostitute her and takes away her child.
[81] Taylor refers to Maria's maternal feelings as "the mark of an authentic, uncorrupted femininity." Taylor, Mary 243.
[82] Rousseau 387. William Blake wrote "the weak in courage is strong in cunning" in *Proverbs of Hell*, chapter X, section 81 in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, published in 1790. Wollstonecraft's earlier endorsement of "fortitude" combats the lack of courage.
[83] This is an issue of great import to her and she stresses this in both *Thoughts* and *Vindication*. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 146; Wollstonecraft, Vindication 97.

appear what you are, and you will not pass through existence without enjoying its genuine blessings, love and respect." (95) The idealism of this statement is slightly naive, as "love and respect" are never guaranteed, especially when defying social norms. In her maternal role and as a teacher to her daughter, Maria urges her to have strength of character and mind, which allows her to make choices driven by reason, thus gaining freedom, even if it costs her status. (111) Sovereignty and self-respect should be women's prime concern, and by voicing this in the maternal guise, Wollstonecraft's ideas for reformed social norms are here posed as sensible heart-felt lessons passed on from a loving mother to her daughter. She is also urging the pursuit of virtue, which is honourable.

Women Mastering Emotion through Reason

Maria attempts to vouch for women's ability to reason (a precept which Wollstonecraft advocates in all of her previous writing), in order to counter contemporary stereotypes in which women were, according to Shoemaker, "thought to have inferior intellectual abilities" and are "considered less rational than men."[84] The act of leaving her husband calls Maria's sanity into question (because she must be mad to desire to leave her only means of financial support), which is why she continually attempts to convince both the reader and other characters of her ability to think and act rationally. (66) She is arguing that the act of leaving her husband stemmed from a rational decision, although Wollstonecraft herself concedes that drastic action usually follows oppression.[85] Furthermore, Wollstonecraft argues that the ability to reason is coupled with the ability to distinguish right from wrong, proclaiming the level of her own virtue: "A sense of right seems to result from the simplest act of reason, and to preside over the faculties of the mind, like the master-sense of feeling." (64) She counters any argument that women are ruled by their emotions, not by denying that women have strong emotions, but by arguing that they can be carefully mastered. By admitting that this is difficult, Wollstonecraft invites the sceptical reader to believe that it can be done, if pursued vigilantly, by

[84] Shoemaker 193, 192.
[85] Maria's husband withheld her pin-money and even offered her to his friend as a prostitute. The issue of pin-money was heavily debated as to whether it strengthened or weakened the bond between husband and wife, as it gave the wife a certain amount of financial freedom. Skinner 95.
In *Thoughts* Wollstonecraft comments that "smothered flames will blaze out with more violence for having been kept down," which explains Maria's actions. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 68.

referring to this as "the struggles of the understanding to trace or govern the strong emotions of the heart." (77) This battle between emotion and reason, the merits of which are made clear in *Thoughts*, is also featured in *Original Stories*. If the reader is still unwavering, she argues that the ability to reason and to control her emotions was taught by a man, Maria's uncle. In a paternalistic world, this lends her character credence: "He inculcated, with great warmth, self-respect, and a lofty consciousness of acting right, independent of the censure or applause of the world; nay, he almost taught me to brave, and even despise its censure, when convinced of the rectitude of my own intentions." (97)[86] By having Maria's mentor be a man, Wollstonecraft is obliquely addressing any possible internalised misogyny in her readers, as male wisdom at the time held greater credence than any opinion offered by a woman. Mirroring Locke's ideals of how to educate children, this is given as a reason why Maria is acting in a manner which is contrary to social norms.[87] She was taught by a respected man to think for herself and to evaluate and judge according to her own interpretation of a situation, rather than blindly following convention. By giving Maria a reasoning, strongly moral character, she is posed as a good mother-figure and someone who is offering virtuous sound advice.[88]

Wollstonecraft poses the view that the uncontrolled indulgence of emotions may result in madness, as Mary states about love in the earlier novella.[89] She voices this opinion through Jemima, Maria's keeper and confidante at the madhouse where she is held. She comments that indulging in self-pity or melancholy thoughts produces two possible reactions: incoherence and lethargy or what she calls "the restless activity of a disturbed imagination." (64) Wollstonecraft furthers this idea by stating "how difficult it was for women to avoid growing romantic, who have not active duties or pursuits." (69) In other words, she offers a reason for the stereotype of the hysterical woman as being

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[86] William Blake wrote "the weak in courage is strong in cunning" in *Proverbs of Hell*, chapter X, section 81 in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, published in 1790. Maria is "brave", therefore she has no need for "cunning".

[87] Locke 105.

[88] She only loses control of her feelings when it comes to Darnford, which causes her to lose credibility with the reader and the judge in the trial. With this, Wollstonecraft is linking the loss of emotional control with the loss of power and authority, similar to the moment in *Mary* when the heroine states that "love leads to madness." Wollstonecraft, Mary 49

[89] *Ibid.*
Cohen also comments on the common cause for madness in novels of the time being the emotional stresses of forbidden love or love thwarted by parents and guardians. Cohen, Sentimental 132.

her socially induced inactivity. She also equates "romantic" thoughts with naivety and self-delusion, which when confronted with harsh reality might lead to an emotional breakdown and subsequent madness. This argument is similar to that mentioned in *Thoughts*, voicing concern over the skewed sense of reality instilled in readers of romantic novels, if they do not have the reasoning skills to interpret overly emotion-taxing scenarios.[90] Without the ability to reason, women fall victim to their emotions. The mind needs to be challenged and a person needs to feel useful in order to keep sane. In case the reader believes that educating women heightens their potential for madness, she states: "it was a vulgar error to suppose that people of abilities were the most apt to lose the command of reason." (73) This stereotype is born from the dissatisfaction with the strictures of domestic life, experienced by women who have a broader sense of the world, gleaned through education. Jemima comments on the decline of other women inmates in the asylum, stating that "the passion only appeared strong and disproportioned, because the judgment was weak and unexercised; and that they gained strength by the decay of reason." (73) By not being able to "exercise" their judgement, women give in to their imaginations and are ruled by their emotions and their ability to reason crumbles. In this manner, Maria's journals are ideal guides for preparing her daughter for a sane yet self-empowered life. She urges her child (as Wollstonecraft obliquely urges the reader) to go through life aware of her passions, which should be governed by reason.[91] In this manner, both writers are being exemplary mother-figures and teachers.

Expectations of Nurture in Marriage

The discussion of marriage in the novella is harshly judgemental indeed. In an overview, Jemima is heard to say that "the world [is] a vast prison, and women born slaves." (64) Though Britain did not abolish the slave trade until 1807 and the institution of slavery until 1833, William Wilberforce, as a Member of Parliament, was already speaking out against slavery by 1788, and had gained quite a following, so referring to women as "slaves" would elicit an emotive response from many readers. Moreover, the institutionalisation of a relationship truly aggravates her and the link between marriage

[90] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 55.
[91] Ford notes that, although Wollstonecraft's maternal role towards her reader is indisputable, her argument also functions beyond this emotive tactic. Ford 203-204.

and slavery is further established, because she equates marriage with the subjugation of women. One of the purposes of this novella is to showcase dysfunctional marriages and to enlighten the reader about the gendered inequality and the legal powerlessness of women caught within this institution, as is documented in Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England.*[92] It also presents some discrepancies in social expectation. Domestically, powerlessness is portrayed as a socially acceptable convention in the descriptions of Maria's family life before her marriage. Her father was to be obeyed by the entire household, especially by her mother. As a wife, it was her obligation to do so, especially as Maria's father claimed to have married her for love, and she was forbidden "to question his absolute authority." (95) By mentioning that Maria's parents married for love, Wollstonecraft is pointing out to the romantic reader that love does not guarantee respect or happiness (as it does in many examples of romantic fiction) and even though Maria's mother has gained authority through being a mother biologically, this doesn't guarantee her a voice within her marriage. A woman's love for a man is equivalent to her complete surrender of power to him, or so Wollstonecraft implies. She is also inviting the naive reader to consider their own possible disillusionment, as the contemporary ideal of marriage was that of a bond forged by love rather than obligation.[93] Because this is not necessarily the case, this lament is carried on to Maria's own marriage, and her character comments: "I could not sometimes help regretting my early marriage; and that, in my haste to escape from a temporary dependence, and expand my newly fledged wings, in an unknown sky, I had been caught in a trap, and caged for life." (108)[94] The naive expectation is that of freedom from parental rules and restrictions. The image is of a bird who escapes one cage only to find itself in another is reminiscent of the trapped starling in Laurence Sterne's (1713-1768) *A*

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[92] According to Blackstone, "the courts of law will still permit a husband to restrain a wife of her liberty, in case of any gross misbehaviour." W. Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books vol.1 (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1793) 442.
Skinner asserts that there is a link between this legal powerlessness and women's exclusion from citizenship. Skinner 91.
Though marriage endows women with a certain level of freedom (carrying with it the expectation of economic survival and mutual support), the expectation of this freedom is greater than what it actually is, which is why Wollstonecraft depicts the married state as being so bleak. Lynn Abrams, The Making of Modern Woman (London: Longman, 2002) 69-70.

[93] Shoemaker 111.

[94] She also warns against early marriage in *Thoughts*, stating that "[e]arly marriages are, in my opinion, a stop to improvement." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 93.

Sentimental Journey through France and Italy (1768). Indeed, Wollstonecraft repeats the image and humanises it: "Marriage had bastilled me for life." (115) With information about the Bastille, the powerlessness of its inmates, and its appalling conditions widely known through the Zeitgeist, this image would have had a truly dramatic effect on her readers, painting marriage as a state of deprivation and suffering, urging its inmates to revolt.

The power-dynamic in marriage could sometimes change in favour of the woman, if she embraced a maternal role, though there was no guarantee. Throughout the novella, Wollstonecraft presents the power-struggle between the husband depicted as the protector and the wife being portrayed as his maternally authoritative moral guide. This emphasises a discrepancy in social supremacy. The harsh reality is that some husbands do not protect their wives and there certainly is a social problem, if a master-slave relationship (as mentioned by Jemima) can be mistaken for one of protector and protected, as the fictional scenario warns the reader.[95] And even if the protective husband condescends to be kind to his wife, the power-dynamic is still counterproductive in establishing a sense of authority for the effective mothering of her children. Because of this nebulous assignment of power, Davidoff and Hall find that "some mothers seemed to feel that their helplessness denied them their son's respect."[96] Mothers have no authority to raise their sons and in turn, this helplessness is then adopted by their daughters. The female need for a "protector" and a breadwinner is also demeaning. When Maria initially runs away from her husband, she is met with recrimination by women who have internalised this misogyny by normalising it. She is told that women must be "submissive" to their husbands, so that they, in turn, provide for them, as it is impossible for women to earn the money respectfully in order to provide for themselves. (130) And yet, within this "submissive" demeanour, women must calm their husband's temperaments, should they lose control in the privacy of their homes, as "education and circumstances lead men to think and act with less delicacy, than the preservation of order in society demands from women." (142) Here Wollstonecraft is pointing out a discrepancy in social convention. Women are too much under the influence of their

[95] Her husband was "termed her natural protector (though he never was so, but in name)." (117)
[96] Davidoff & Hall 341.

emotions to be considered rational creatures, yet they are responsible for their husbands' self-control in trying times, enacting the role of mother to their childishness, while depending on them financially and legally. Indeed, much to Wollstonecraft's frustration as also expressed in her *Vindication*, a woman's responsibility for the refining of her husband is even delineated in conduct literature, such as in John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774).[97]

There are several outcomes to keeping women powerless. Wollstonecraft contends that the devious stereotype of women only becomes reality, because women's rhetoric is not taken seriously: "By allowing women but one way of rising in the world, the fostering the libertinism of men, society makes monsters of them, and then their ignoble vices are brought forward as a proof of inferiority of intellect." (103) Women gain power by manipulating the morality of men, because no other alternatives are open to them which is a darker aspect of mothering. This refers back to Rousseau's notion of the "cunning" woman. He even stated that "[c]unning is a natural gift of woman, and so convinced am I that all our natural inclinations are right, that I would cultivate this among others, only guarding against its abuse."[98] In other words, manipulation is a woman's prerogative; however, the abuse of power is not. Wollstonecraft indicates that this is not a natural female trait, but that social convention *forces* them to be influential in this manner by disempowering them and then defines them by their wicked actions. Women are not given the opportunity to rise through their intellectual abilities. These are ignored; therefore manipulation is the only recourse which gains them an iota of power over their own lives. This is further compounded by the inequality of social expectation and absolution:

> A man would only be expected to maintain; yes, barely grant a subsistence, to a woman rendered odious by habitual intoxication; but who would expect him, or think it possible to love her? And unless "youth, and genial years were flown," it would be thought equally unreasonable to insist, [under penalty of] forfeiting

[97] Gregory states that women are "designed to soften our [men's] hearts and polish our manners." Gregory 3.
Wollstonecraft laments the discrepancy in social expectations earlier in *Vindication*: "Women are therefore to be considered either as moral beings, or so weak that they must be entirely subjected to the superior faculties of men." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 95.
[98] Rousseau 400.

> almost every thing reckoned valuable in life, that he should not love another: whilst woman, weak in reason, impotent in will, is required to moralize, sentimentalize herself to stone, and pine her life away, labouring to reform her imbruted mate. (114)

The argument here is that men who are shackled through matrimonial bonds to a woman who gives in to vices, such as drinking, have a right to seek comfort and companionship elsewhere, according to social convention.[99] In contrast, women must suffer loneliness and are forced to engage with their inebriated spouses, and indeed are held responsible for the transformation of these men, in their maternal wisdom, from useless and offensive louts to productive and respectable members of society, revealing the social double-standard, as well as the burdens of maternal responsibility.[100] As women become more and more responsible for the private sphere and with society's convictions of their positive moral influence on their house-holds, Shoemaker notes that "conduct books from the late eighteenth century advised women to take a more active role in improving their husbands, who in their daily lives were exposed to the corruption of the public world."[101] However, it would be difficult to perform this duty without coming across as a shrew, as Wollstonecraft has changed her opinion from her previous novella, in which men seem to *want* to be guided by women who are being maternal. Wollstonecraft's detailed example serves to remind the court (and the reader) that if the roles of Maria and her husband were reversed, society would expect him to desert her in search of his own happiness and indeed that she requires greater legal power (as also indicated in *Vindication*) in order to

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[99] The poet Lady Mary Chudleigh articulates concerns in her poem *To the Ladies* (1703) about the inequality of the marriage relationship, stressing the socially expected and reprehensible subservient nature of the wife's role and the husband's tyranny, the same sentiment, which is later expounded on in Wollstonecraft's *Maria*. Chudleigh's poem is believed to be a response to the minister John Sprint's published sermon *The Bride-Woman's Counselor* (1700). Though written so much earlier than *Maria*, both this text and Chudleigh's response may serve to signal to readers of Wollstonecraft to what social conventions she is reacting. The time-period between 1670 and 1857 has recorded only 325 divorces, and of these, only four were initiated by the wives. The most common cause for divorce was a wife's infidelity. Vickery 73.

[100] Like Maria, many women objected to being mistreated to the extent that there are legal records of this. In 1785, Mary Taylor told the courts that her husband treated her with "inhumanity", visited prostitutes, and did not provide her with enough money to run her household. It seems that women believed themselves to have the right to adequate funds of this nature, protection from outsiders as well as their husbands, and to be consulted on matters of family finances. Indeed violence against women was judged to be unmanly in the nineteenth century, and evidence of neglect of husbandly duties. Evans, "Women" 65.

[101] Shoemaker 121.

perform her social duty as the moral guide for those under her care.[102] She is also showing the limitations of maternal power.

The Powerful Influence of Writing

Women are posed as virtuous moral authorities, when they are being properly maternal and indeed Wollstonecraft supports the idea that their maternal role should take precedence over the role of wife.[103] It is the husband's responsibility to ensure that they can do this. When Maria's child is said to have died, the implication is that this occurred due to the husband's order to remove her from Maria.[104] So, Maria cannot comply with social conventions; she cannot be the kind of woman whom she should be because of her husband: "If I am unfortunately united to an unprincipled man, am I for ever to be shut out from fulfilling the duties of a wife and mother?" (143) The implication is that all she wants is to be a good "wife and mother" in order to conform to social ideals of maternal femininity, but she cannot while married to this tyrant. In a way, Wollstonecraft is putting the level of power assigned to a mother-figure to the test. Convention dictates that the role of mother is vital to the future of society, but how much legal backing do women actually have in order to fulfil this role without the support of her husband?

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[102] Wives were considered to be the property of their husbands, and lovers could be sued by wealthy husbands for trespassing on private property. Husbands could also sell their wives at auction in some rural parts of England, if they grew tired of them, though this was more common among the lower-classes. Indeed wives' obedience could legally be reinforced by husbands through domestic violence. This sort of conflict was heightened by the change in the roles of the sexes, as well as the preconceptions of marriage enforced in women by romantic fiction. Evans, "Women" 64.
(Further information on the sale of wives can be found in any edition of E. P. Thompson's *Customs in Common* and S. P. Menefree's *Wives for Sale: An Ethnographic Study of British Popular Divorce*.)
Wollstonecraft suggests: "Make women rational creatures and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives and mothers." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 250.

[103] When her husband has a child with the maid, Maria concedes, "though I could excuse the birth, I could not the desertion of this unfortunate babe." (143)
By showing maternal concern as opposed to jealousy or contempt for the bastard child of her husband, Maria is establishing herself as a benevolent person, eliciting sympathy from the reader for her plight and condemning the maid both for having illicit sex and for being a bad mother. This is a similar scenario as in Richardson's *Pamela*, in which the heroine adopts the illegitimate child of her husband.

[104] Women's struggle for custodial rights of their children was only resolved in 1839 with the *Infant Custody Act*, which stipulated that a mother had legal rights over her children until the age of seven. Women only started to gain control over their property in 1870 with the *Married Women's Property Acts*, which were expanded in 1886. Evans, "Women" 66.

As Wollstonecraft contends in her *Vindication*, the role of mother fills a woman's life with usefulness.[105] Because of this, she mitigates Maria's shocking behaviour by appealing to the reader's (as in the novel, Maria appeals to the court's) emotions: "I have no child to go to, and liberty has lost its sweets." (139) Maria has lost her conventional function in life, by losing her daughter.[106] By conveying maternal anguish over this, the implication is that her life has lost all direction, and indeed she has no significant role to fulfil in society. Maternity gives women a life-purpose.[107] If she, however, is prevented from nurturing those in her care, she is what Jacobus would call "the 'dead' or melancholic mother."[108] This mother is emotionally deficient to the extent that no mothering takes place. Oppressed women are symbolically dead or emotionally absent, which results in "the condition of being unmothered, when maternal depression and oppression coincide."[109] The restrictions placed on women's freedom to educate themselves, seek mental and emotional stimulation, and to pursue life, cripple their abilities to be effective mothers, as does the role of lover. When a woman's attention is taken away from nurturing, or when a heterosexual relationship like the one in the previous novella between Mary and Henry shifts from being platonic to having sexual overtones, the woman surrenders her authority to her lover. Wollstonecraft expounds on this (regarding Darnford), stating that Maria "wished to be only alive to love; she wished to forget the anguish she felt whenever she thought of her child." (140) By linking this need to the loss of her child, Maria explains her affair as being driven by loss both of her child and her maternal purpose, as she "wished only to be alive to love."[110] Jacobus

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[105] A woman "lives to see the virtues which she endeavoured to plant on principles, fixed into habits, to see her children attain a strength of character sufficient to enable them to endure adversity without forgetting their mother's example." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 119.

[106] Mandell asserts that by losing this symbiotic relationship, she has lost her personal power. Mandell 91.

[107] Perhaps like her heroines Wollstonecraft seeks to give her own life a further meaningful purpose by maternally guiding her readers?

[108] Jacobus 79.

[109] *Ibid* 80.

[110] Maria's fallibility is Wollstonecraft's way of warning the reader about the power-dynamic of romantic love and the dangers of subjugating oneself to an untrustworthy man, as Darnford (according to Wollstonecraft's notes) later leaves her. In a way, according to Johnson, the novella indicates that there are no trustworthy men and that the only safe relationship is between women. Johnson, "Mary Wollstonecraft" 164.

Incidentally, this is Wollstonecraft's engagement with the legal issues surrounding the Harwicke Marriage Act of 1753, which was designed to prevent clandestine elopements between fortune hunters and heiresses by voiding any legal rights which *women* had to enforce paternal support, should they fall pregnant after a marriage which did not sport the correct witnesses. Bannet 94, 105; Skinner 94.

refers to this transference of love from someone who is absent or deceased to whoever is physically present, when she analyses Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence*, stating that "The tearful relation of mother to child [. . .] is Wollstonecraft's imaginary substitute for her relation to a cold and unfeeling lover."[111] In the novella, the lover replaces the loss of the child (as in *Mary* the lover replaces the friend), whereas in reality, as mentioned earlier, Wollstonecraft's daughter, Fanny, replaced her lover, Gilbert Imlay. In both cases, it is stressed that women need someone to love and nurture, but a woman only has power if she is being maternal. Maria continues her explanation of her desire for divorce and her affair, stating that she does not wish to break with social convention and wishes to marry Darnford, even though "[m]arriage, as at present constituted, she considered as leading to immorality." (141)[112] The "immorality" she speaks of is the loss of power which may force her to be underhanded and "cunning."[113] The court decides that the "conduct of the lady did not appear that of a person sane of mind." (145)[114] With this verdict, Wollstonecraft is venting her despair at society's inability to be swayed by reason as well as their lack of benevolent compassion, making her protagonist out to be society's superior, while demonstrating that the moral authority gained through the maternal role is not enforced legally and indeed void should the child die or should the mother-figure subvert herself by having unsanctioned relations with a man.[115] Wollstonecraft

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While Wollstonecraft argued that the answer was not to enforce marriage, but to allow women to work in order to support themselves and never have to depend on a man for their livelihood, the novella nevertheless underscores the impotence which women have should they be left with child by a man who took advantage of their good nature. Bannet 108.

[111] Jacobus 72.

[112] Her willingness to marry Darnford reveals a character weakness (designed to make the reader sympathise with her), if compared to Wollstonecraft's convictions in *Thoughts*, where she cautions the reader: "if we are too anxious to gain the approbation of the world, we must often forfeit our own." Maria is sacrificing her sense of self-respect in order to adhere to social convention. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 31.

[113] Though the ability to be "cunning" is empowering, it is also degrading as the need for it underscores women's virtual slavery within relationships, as their opinions and objections are not heard when voiced in direct speech. Bannet 203.

[114] This expresses a prejudice earlier expressed in Richardson's *Pamela*, in which Mr. B. states that it is generally assumed that a wife shares the opinions of her husband, therefore Maria's actions clearly depict a state of madness, as she does not conform to this. Richardson, Pamela 33-34.

[115] Maria is shown to suffer from what in 1765 Sir William Blackstone observes in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being, or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage." Blackstone 441-442.
Wollstonecraft agreed in *Thoughts* that "[a] woman cannot reasonably be unhappy, if she is attached to a man of sense and goodness, though he may not be all she could wish." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 84. However, the marriage in *Maria* depicts extreme neglect and abuse which is designed to stimulate the reader to question the lack of power and legal support which women have in these circumstances.

dramatically shows the extent to which women are negated as human beings in society. Social convention has established that women as mother-figures only have power over those in her care and not over themselves, and that they therefore must manipulate others, in order to fulfil their own needs.[116]

In both of her novellas Wollstonecraft struggles with making the socially sanctioned role of mother a tool for authority for all women. In *Mary* Wollstonecraft endows her heroine with a universal maternity, even though she has no biological children. This characteristic gives her the attribute of moral authority in the eyes of the reader. However, this does not give her the power to refuse to marry the man her father has chosen. She takes control of her life through drastic actions and ultimately by embracing death. After maturing and gaining life experience, Wollstonecraft further unpacks her ambivalence towards romantic relationships with *Maria*, airing "the desire of exhibiting the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society." (59) Her primary appeal is not what the cynical reader might mistake for free love, but for freedom of choice regarding the dissolution of the legal bond of marriage. What is of particular interest to this study is her analysis of the power-shift which takes place in women when their chosen role changes from mother-figure to lover or spouse. Wollstonecraft has replaced the virtual parent-child relationship of her previous novella with an actual sexual one. Motherhood in *Maria* is also physiological as well as virtual (between Jemima and Maria, for example).[117] She wants to refigure the power-dynamic between men and women by encouraging her readers to demand better. By having Maria's husband attempting to prostitute her to one of his friends, she exposes the extent of helplessness of women when they are seen as mere sexual beings by their husbands, a sentiment also expressed in her second *Vindication.*[118] Wollstonecraft

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Her criticism of the public's lack of compassion is also covered in *Thoughts*, when she states that "the unhappy should be considered as objects of compassion, rather than blame." *Ibid* 107.

[116] As she states in *Thoughts*: "A woman should have so proper a pride, as not easily to forget a deliberate affront." *Ibid* 98.

[117] Maria's relationship with Jemima has intimate familial overtones, where they are sometimes mothers, sometimes sisters to each other. Johnson, "Mary Wollstonecraft" 170.
This is an example of what Ford calls Wollstonecraft's "nonmaternal form of female solidarity, of a cross-generational feminist community lying beyond shared biology." Ford 191.

[118] She states that "men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 73.

contends that the only respect and authority a woman can gain is through the maternal role. Combining the plea for legal equality with the plea for equal respect of intellect, Wollstonecraft highlights the connection between the two, as well as exposing the futility of seeking one without the other.[119] Her goal is for women to not be forced to rely on sympathy in legal matters, but on reason and for them to maintain an occasional maternal role with their spouses, in order to be treated with respect. Wollstonecraft makes her requests to empower women more palatable to contemporary readers in two ways: by appealing to readers' reason, stating that this would enable women to be better mother-figures and teachers; and by appealing to the readers' emotions, as both of her heroines are struggling to fulfil maternal roles (which is after all what women are meant to be doing, according to her contemporary social convention). In both cases, she is arguing (as in her other works) that her feminist radical ideals would aid women to conform to these social standards. By expressing her concerns through the medium of fiction, she is engaging with and influencing a different type of reader.[120] These strictures are cleverly manipulated to become possible tools of emancipation and social change, as women are permitted to be opinionated and forceful during the act of mothering (or while expressing maternal concerns), while being portrayed as victims of an unjust social structure.[121] One thing is certain, Wollstonecraft wrote in a variety of forms for the edification of a wide readership so as to change the status of women in her society.[122]

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[119] In court, "women could only get sympathy by portraying themselves as passive and dutiful wives." Shoemaker 107. Her call for gender equality, according to Cohen, is what signals this as a sentimental social novel. Cohen, Sentimental 136.

[120] Watt 198.
One could also surmise that the anxiety expressed about the possible affects of novel-reading is in itself proof of its influential power. Pearson 196.

[121] The melodramatic victim status is another frequent emotive tool used in the sentimental social novel. Cohen, Sentimental 140.

[122] As she states in her most renowned work: "From every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women [. . .] but if it be against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character, and which raises females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind, all those who view them with a philosophic eye must, I should think, wish with me that they may every day grow more and more masculine." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 74.
If we assume that Wollstonecraft practiced her convictions, then it is fair to assume that her writing was in itself an act of benevolence. As she states in *Thoughts*: "Love and compassion are the most delightful feelings of the soul, and to exert them to all that breathe is the will of the benevolent heart." And "[a] benevolent person must ever wish to see those around them comfortable and try to be the cause of that comfort." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 115, 120.

Scholars have commented that Wollstonecraft wrote with the conviction that she was actively influencing an egalitarian change in society, calling her attempts “realistically utopian”. Mandell 70, 71.

Chapter 4
Tales of the Pemberton Family
– Amelia Opie's Evangelical Endeavour

Authors who feel the urge to positively influence society through publication frequently target children as well as adult readers.[1] In order to trace the similarity in maternal attitude towards the reader, regardless of age, as well as the powerful portrayal of maternal characters, it makes sense arguably to evaluate the text written for a child-reader *before* evaluating one written for an adult reader, even though it may have been written chronologically after the novel for adults.[2] Amelia Opie's *Tales of the Pemberton Family: for the use of Children* (1825), like Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* but more conservative, is a text which functions as a cross between a 'how to' guide for parents and a tale which provides a moral example for children while offering scope for young people to evaluate and develop a moral code.[3] It concerns itself with socialisation and offering advice on teaching children to be virtuous and benevolent citizens.[4] It reflects the influence of Quaker ideals on Opie, as she focused on philanthropic and evangelical work after the death of her husband in 1807.[5] Like More, Opie saw her writing as an ideal medium for the spreading of

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[1] Indeed, Stott argues that contemporary "well-meaning lady philanthropists had transformed themselves into quasi-political campaigners." Stott 113.

[2] Myers contends that these works for children "capture emergent notions of the family, women, children, and pedagogy, and they clearly outline an evolving concept of motherhood", which is why they are relevant to this study. Myers, "Impeccable" 55.

[3] Unlike Wollstonecraft, Opie utilises her text for the spreading of her religious convictions as well. According to Michael Mascuch it has become indisputable that the Protestant Reformation was spread primarily through the written word which led the way in the trend for the reimagining of social norms to be pursued in a similar fashion. Michael Mascuch, "The Godly Child's 'Power and Evidence' in the Word—Orality and Literacy in the Ministry of Sarah Wight," Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800, eds. Andrea Immel & Michael Witmore (London: Routledge, 2006) 103. Brian Cummings, The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grade (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.
Opie follows this evangelical trend with a forceful religious bent, much like many other women who negotiated the oppositional forces of liberation and constraint offered by actively pursuing philanthropy within the confines of religious principles. Abrams 35.

[4] Her focus seems to remain on the domestic realm throughout her various writings, commenting on the wider effects of the quality of a person's upbringing. Cecilia Lucy Brightwell, Memorials of the life of Amelia Opie, selected and arranged from her letters, diaries, and other manuscripts (Norwich: Fletcher & Alexander, 1854) 79.
Her character is attributed as being "pure Christian benevolence; charity in its highest sense", explaining her motivation for writing in a maternally influential manner. *Ibid* vi.

[5] *Ibid* 134.
Though the Society of Friends offered a more equal relationship between men and women in the 17th Century, by the 18th Century, the more traditional spheres were re-established, though women still were

benevolence and virtue.[6] However, by writing for children, Opie heightens her prestige as a writer and gains "maternal and pedagogical power" because she is conforming to a domestically ideological role as a surrogate maternal authorial voice whose call for a reimagining of social norms is publically acknowledged.[7]

Opie uses a forcefully didactic voice in her *Tales* through Lady Pemberton who guides her sons, Edward and Henry, during several challenging situations.[8] Lord Pemberton plays a less prominent role than his wife in the raising of their sons, though he is modelled on Opie's own father.[9] He serves as a peripheral example of what young men should aspire to be, in other words, gentle, benevolent, kind, virtuous, hard-working, and with an eye for spotting distressed people and aiding them. Rather than featuring an employed governess, Lady Pemberton is the primary teacher of her children in the text, as was common in households of the landed gentry at the time.[10] She is like her husband in every respect, which could be interpreted as a feminist point, in the lack of differentiation between masculine and feminine moral and intellectual abilities. It is through Lady Pemberton's voice that the reader learns about the meanings of benevolence and virtue, as well as the importance of

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actively taking part in philanthropic work. Lillian Lewis Shiman, Women and Leadership in Nineteenth-Century England (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 19.
Some Quakers, such as Priscilla Wakefield were instrumental in promoting reputable employment for women and indeed could be classified as 'feminist', though Opie is more conservative than Wakefield. Jones, Women and Literature 39.
Opie's view of acceptable female roles is more in accordance with Hannah More's precepts of keeping women in the home and not in the workplace. *Ibid* 41.

[6] She wrote to her friend, Mrs. Fry, that she had met people who "think it [her writing] must do good". *Ibid* 190.
Her goals mimic those of Hannah More, who was less concerned with realism in her writing, and more with writing influential "propaganda for the poor." Gilmartin 72.
Opie also shows some possible influence from Elizabeth Carter's (1717-1806) *Progress of the Female Mind* (1764), in which, according to Guest, she tried to "direct the spirit and taste of the world." Guest 140.
Opie was very much concerned with all of humanity's morality and spirituality.

[7] Richardson, Literature 167.

[8] Opie was not a feminist, though she was well acquainted with Wollstonecraft and others of her circle, which may explain why none of the children in *Tales* are female; her main concern was the spreading of benevolence. Brightwell 41.
Her overtly righteous tone accords with the contemporary role assigned to women as the moral and religious guides of their families. She adopts the role of "social motherhood" to her readers, whom she inculcates with her precepts. Abrams 104.
Lady Pemberton is also enacting what Wollstonecraft calls "the duty of every rational creature" by attentively raising her children. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 1.

[9] Brightwell's description of Dr. Alderson is very like Opie's characterisation of Lord Pemberton. Brightwell 3, 78.

[10] Approximately a quarter of the aristocracy and a third of the landed gentry were educated at home. Britain 166.

education.[11] Though Opie made both of the children male, it is Lady Pemberton's maternal guidance which is imbued with authority and wisdom, making her a powerful yet feminine character. *Tales* has strong feminist overtones in spite of itself and in it the mother-figure shapes the lives of those in her care.

Education is shown to be a liberating force, something which keeps women in particular from being powerless and having their survival dependent on fate or the men in their lives, much as Adeline Mowbray in Opie's earlier-written eponymous novel survives by becoming a teacher. The care with which children are raised is shown to be vital in developing them into useful citizens and good Christians regardless of gender. This belief is shared by several women authors, both conservative and radical.[12] These skills then benefit the children and society in general, as Wollstonecraft comments in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (written in 1792), "as they grow up the cares of life are lessened by their grateful attention" to their lessons.[13] In other words, an education prepares children for hardship, making them more able to cope with it. An education provides a young person with skills, which may later be life-saving. All of these thoughts appear to have an impact on Opie's instructive work and her philosophy which was also heavily influenced by Quakerism. The text offers advice on how and what to teach, while providing the reader with positive examples of how both parents and children should approach the undertaking of an education, while providing the reader with a warning of what may become of uneducated children; and the mother-figure seems to be central to all of this.

How to Teach

Opie recommends several methods of teaching exemplified by Lady Pemberton. Though leading by example for this, as for many other aspects of life,

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[11] For instance, because Mrs. Nugent (a poverty-stricken gentle-woman) was well educated, she can become a school teacher, with Lady Pemberton's assistance. Lady Pemberton tells her that she is fortunate enough to be able to make herself useful to others, while having the power to seek employment, because she has received an education. Amelia Opie, Tales of the Pemberton Family for the Use of Children (London: Harvey & Darton, 1825) 38. *All future references taken from this text.*

[12] For example, Astell believes that educating is "our Christian Course" in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (written in 1694). Being educated, she suggests, makes for more benevolent, more Christian citizens, and the furthering of this is the duty of every Christian. Astell 204.
More asserts that education is required in order to "qualify [women] for the practical purposes of life." More 1.
Wollstonecraft states that "women whose minds are not enlarged by cultivation [. . .] are very unfit to manage a family." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 135.

[13] *Ibid* 119.

Lady Pemberton cites her Uncle Frederic, a clergyman, as an ideal model of a teacher, as "he had such a happy art of mixing instruction with his play, that I often felt wiser when he left us, without knowing how I became so." (73)[14] The concept of easing lessons by making them enjoyable is not new, as both Wollstonecraft and Locke attest in their texts on education.[15] This fun, however, must not go unchecked. A good teacher and mother must have the wisdom to identify unacceptable behaviour, which may adversely affect a child later in life. Presented by Opie as maternally-driven and indeed an ideal mother, Lady Pemberton explains her methods of monitoring behaviour: "I am not a severe judge; but I always punish the slightest withholding of the truth." (14) The text mirrors Wollstonecraft's (among other) ideals when lying is shown as the easiest path to vice and is not to be tolerated, but detecting a lie is not simple.[16] It is shown to be especially difficult if a child has been praised for something he hasn't done, reflecting Opie's personal concerns.[17] She remarks that the most admirable praise is due to the child who admits that he is not responsible for a lauded great deed. This behaviour is honourable and virtuous. For parents, Opie advises severity and consistency regarding this vice, and when things do not progress according to plan, she states through Lady Pemberton that it is vital (when there are setbacks) to persevere and to redouble the efforts and to trust in God's plan. (8) A combination of patience and faith are the best guide for parenting.

An effective mother must also be aware of her own prejudices and propensities towards favouritism, otherwise these tendencies will undermine her authority.[18] These weaknesses are only human, but must be challenged and a good mother must be honest with herself in this regard. Wollstonecraft comments in her *Vindication*, that "[t]he management of the temper, the first, and most important

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[14] Uncle Frederic is most likely modelled on Opie's good Quaker friend, J.J. Gurney who was well-loved in his community. Brightwell 170.

[15] Locke 57, 115. This text offers a clear guide of what must be included in a curriculum. Wollstonecraft, Original 1. This series of stories guide children in learning necessary life lessons.

[16] Locke 103; Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 14.

[17] One significant character flaw directed Opie towards Quakerism. J. J. Gurney warned her against her own pride and vanity regarding her wit and her writing, calling it her "worldly spirit" with a desire to be "universally *liked*, *admired*, and *flattered*." This shamed her into converting in 1814, and this may be why she is so harsh towards children who call attention to themselves, especially undeservedly. Gurney led her to believe that not only was she undeserving of the acclaim, but he warned her that basking in her success would damage her soul by making her "forgetful of God" and make her unfit for heaven. Brightwell 171, 170.

[18] According to Richardson, "[i]n the moral tale, the child is taught to regulate its behaviour according to an ethical code clearly established by the author; although the child *protagonist* may at times be called upon to make an *independent* judgement, it is always made clear to the child *reader* which choice is the correct one." Richardson, Literature 142.

branch of education, requires the sober steady eye of reason."[19] By challenging her own prejudgements of her sons, Lady Pemberton is proving to the reader that she has "the sober steady eye of reason." She is not allowing her feelings for her sons to dictate how she treats them. This qualifies her (by Wollstonecraft's standards) as a monitor and shaper of their temperaments. For instance, Lady Pemberton demonstrates More's beliefs that children are born savage and rely on the character-shaping influence of their parents, when she worries about sending her boys to the fair, away from her watchful eye in order to test her theory that Edward is benevolent and Henry is self-indulgent. (5)[20] She is confronting her own prejudices, as well as challenging what she has taught her sons, in order to discern if she has taught them well, or if they need further lessons. She gives both her sons a small amount of money, in order to test how they will choose to spend it. With this she is following Wollstonecraft's proposed method of teaching benevolence in *Thoughts*, in which she suggests that girls be given money for clothes or trinkets, in order to teach them to spend money wisely, while giving them the opportunity to offer monetary relief to a poor stranger.[21] Through this, "[a] mother can easily, without seeming to do it, observe how they spend it, and direct them accordingly."[22] As it turns out, Lady Pemberton discovers that Henry is a glutton, and Edward is a generous boy, as she expected. She reprimands Henry gently, by showing him his loss of opportunity to aid the impoverished Nugent family. Opie demonstrates the correct level of chastisement, following Locke's premise in his *Some Thoughts*, in which he states that "you should make them sensible, by the mildness of your carriage, and the composure, even in your correction of them, that what you do is reasonable in you, and useful and necessary for them."[23] Respected teachers (and indeed all women who are behaving in a maternal manner) are made reputable through the mastery of their

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[19] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 137.

[20] Opie is demonstrating awareness of More's beliefs. In extreme contrast with Wollstonecraft, More believed that it is "a fundamental error to consider children as innocent beings whose little weaknesses may perhaps want some correction, rather than as beings who bring into the world a corrupt nature and evil dispositions." More 64.
More follows the "traditional Christian" view (the most common view) on children being born evil, whereas Wollstonecraft follows Locke's "environmentalist" view that children are shaped entirely by their upbringing. Richardson, Literature 10.
Lady Pemberton tests her sons' progression from their natural "corrupt dispositions" to children who enact benevolence and virtue.

[21] Incidentally, Maria Edgeworth employs a nearly identical scenario of giving money to children as a test of character in her story, "The Birthday Present" in *The Parent's Assistant* (1796). Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant (London: BiblioBazaar, 2007) 167-182.

[22] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 140.

[23] Locke 65.

passions. An effective teacher must occasionally set her charges free in order to test how well they do. The most effective teachers must acknowledge that they are not infallible. They must constantly be on the lookout for their own short-comings, as we shall see Mrs. Woodville admit to Adeline in Opie's earlier-written novel, *Adeline Mowbray*. This self-questioning should not be confused with self-doubt. It is merely the "steady eye of reason" directed inward.

The greatest skill a teacher can possess is recognising opportunities for life-lessons in the everyday. The teacher must then seize the moment and creatively make it relevant to the children. When Lord Pemberton makes a positive example of Herbert Mildmay (a young man whom they meet by chance), Lady Pemberton then praises her husband to her sons, calling their attention (and the reader's who may be a prospective teacher) to his exemplary actions as a father: "Admire, dear boys [. . .] the quickness with which an affectionate parent seizes every opportunity of endeavouring to serve his children; and also remember, through life, how often trifling incidents are made by an all-wise Providence, the means of essential service." (55) Life lessons are to be found in the mundane; if they are recognised, effective teachers must then explain them to their charges. This model of teaching is identical to Wollstonecraft's in *Original Stories.* Ideally, a child taught to see this will then continue learning lessons throughout life, even long after they have left their parental home. Lady Pemberton then warns her boys, "if ever you feel tempted to prefer your own indulgence to the good of others, call to mind Herbert Mildmay." (56) Herbert Mildmay's example is positive, because he sacrifices his pleasure of viewing a balloon launch, in order to care for his injured dog (the only incident which follows Wollstonecraft's suggestion in *Thoughts* that children's interests can most easily be engaged with stories of animals).[24] This is a lesson in selflessness and benevolence, something which Opie stresses as being paramount. He is held up as an example to Henry and Edward (as well as the reader) of correct compassionate behaviour. Lord Pemberton aids him in his quest to cure the dog, and then rewards him for his benevolence by inviting him to join the Pembertons at the balloon launch. He then further takes him under his wing and offers him the opportunity to study at college. This urges readers to mimic him and also reward such selfless behaviour when they encounter it and indeed to feel proud of themselves should they have executed such an

[24] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 143.

act. Opie builds on Wollstonecraft's premise in *Thoughts*, when she states that "[w]hatever contributes to make us compassionate and resolute is of the utmost consequence."[25] Herbert feels compassion and empathy for the dog, which makes him act in a benevolent manner. He shows resoluteness in his decision to bear censure from his friends, who deem his behaviour to be silly. It is important for children to have a clear idea of correct behaviour and what earns their parents' approval. Children's desire for parental approval gives parents great power. The gravity of the responsibility which accompanies this power is strengthened by Opie's frequent links between good parenting and winning a child the approval of God. As will be explored in a later chapter, in *Adeline Mowbray* this power is shown to be terrible, causing the downfall of Adeline when she emulates her mother after her grandmother's death.

Good teachers and parents must also challenge their charges with examples of poor behaviour. The negative example provided by Opie is that of Henry and Edward's cousin, Merrick Morrison, who is aspiring to become a clergy-man, as it strikes him as being an easy living. He is convinced that once his obligations on Sundays are met, he can indulge in hunting and other sport for the remainder of his time, and schemes to avoid writing his own sermons by planning to hire a cleric. Merrick is held up as an example of a lazy pleasure-seeking narcissist; a life-style which Opie holds in contempt.[26] Rather than fear a bad example, when Lady Pemberton feels obliged to invite Merrick Morrison into her home, she tells her husband, "[W]e must risk a degree of moral infection for our boys, on an occasion like this; and surely the power of the strict religious training which they have received, will enable them to resist, for so short a time, the influence of an idle companion?" (58) This is yet another test of how well the children have been taught, which is a technique that is in dispute with Wollstonecraft in *Thoughts*, in which she warns parent to keep their children away from what she calls "bad examples" or what Locke calls "the infection of bad company".[27] The Pemberton parents, through example and lessons, have taught their children to enjoy being useful and employed. In order to test this, the boys, following Merrick's example, "were allowed to be idle the whole morning and evening too; for their parents were not sorry to let them know,

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[25] *Ibid* 110.
[26] Indeed this sort of behaviour is contrary to general Quaker beliefs. Gil Skidmore, ed, Strength in Weakness – writings by Eighteenth Century Quaker women (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
[27] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 14; Locke 71.

by experience, that a day of idleness is not a day of entire satisfaction; but that happiness consists of a due proportion of useful employment and rational relaxation." (61) Henry and Edward's restlessness and unhappiness with this experience renders them incredulous at Merrick's preferred life-style. Again, playing the part of the teacher of benevolence, Lady Pemberton does not allow her sons to criticise their indolent cousin, as "she wished to discourage every tendency in them to detraction and satire." (62) She wants them to pity him, and to help him to become more useful to others and less obsessed with pleasure.[28] Opie is thus demonstrating what social historians Davidoff and Hall observe concerning contemporary conventions more generally regarding maternal responsibilities towards any young people in their household; "[i]n addition to providing meals, clean linen and tidy rooms, women were responsible for the moral and emotional development of these young people."[29] So mother figures had great influence on young relations, as well as their own children. Opie speaks through Lady Pemberton, regarding undesirable people, stating that "we should always endeavour to amend their faults, instead of sneering at them." (64) Through this, she teaches the precepts of patience, tolerance, and kindness linked to Christian charity and benevolence, which bestows a form of maternal power.[30] As will emerge later, superiority gleaned from an education is shown to be a form of misguided vanity in her earlier-written novel, *Adeline Mowbray*. Perhaps Opie's perception on evangelising changed when she embraced Quakerism.[31] This lesson would not have presented itself, had Lady Pemberton not allowed her sons to be exposed to such an undesirable example of humanity. By enacting this, she has gained moral authority by proving herself to be a superior Christian and indeed a truly benevolent human being.

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[28] She enacts what Astell voices in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, when she states that "[w]e do not expect that all who come into this Society will be perfect, but we will endeavour to make them and our selves so as much as may be." Astell 236.

[29] Davidoff, L. and C. Hall 282.

[30] According to Susan Mumm, "Women who gave money or time to good works exercised power relative to their social standing, economic affluence and organisational expertise." Susan Mumm, "Women and philanthropic cultures," Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940, eds. Sue Morgan and Jacqueline deVries (London: Routledge, 2010) 64.

[31] Indeed, Gurney's Quaker influence inspired Opie to publish *Valentine's Eve* in 1816, which stipulates that religion is the best source for moral guidance for action. Brightwell 177.
Furthermore, Quaker women sometimes preached, though this practice was discouraged by the late 18th Century; Opie may have been influenced by her new-found faith's history of female religiosity. Shiman 24.

What Should Be Taught

While alerting her adult reader to methods of instruction, Opie also stresses the importance of teaching benevolence, in order to ensure a high level of compassion and effective citizenship in children. The Pemberton family are shown to have "eyes quick to discern distress, and hearts to feel for it." (44) This Christian empathy, leads to a life of virtue, if it is developed, nurtured, and then acted on, reflecting Opie's priorities at this late stage in her life.[32] Lady Pemberton states the importance of acting on benevolent feelings, even if it is challenging, stating that "Christian love can always find means to do what Christian duty requires." (90) Doing what is right is frequently challenging. However, if the desire to do the correct thing is not enough to motivate, she reminds her boys that "this life is a preparation for the next." (101) If nothing else, benevolence secures an afterlife in heaven, and at a time when child mortality was quite high, this guarantee carries clout. Generosity and a caring nature should however not make a person arrogant. Lady Pemberton warns her sons against developing a sense of superiority after performing a charitable act.[33] They should also never criticise or look down on other people's stupidity. Both their reward and the judgement of others should be left to God. (104) Though they may use the possible promise of heaven as an inspiration for their actions, they are not to judge whether they will go to heaven, as this must be left in God's hands, voicing Opie's Quaker influence.[34] All they can do is their best to ensure this while being grateful that their trials are not as severe as their neighbours'. Their actions should make them proud, but not vain, as Lady Pemberton states: "the only true pleasures are those which please on recollection." (1) Memories of actions should never fill the person with shame, but only with joy and children should behave accordingly. They must be in

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[32] In 1824 Opie commented that her life would be better lived, "by devoting [her]self entirely to his [Christ's] service." Brightwell 193.
This devotion is strongly shown in *Tales*. As Opie became more influenced by Quakerism, she tried to follow her "inner voice of conscience over worldly authority" and became more proactive in her acts of benevolence. Claire Midgley, "Women, religion and reform," Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940, eds. Sue Morgan and Jacqueline deVries (London: Routledge, 2010) 141.

[33] This issue of self-congratulatory feelings as a vice creeps into the text frequently, as Opie considered this to be her own greatest weakness and, as mentioned before, was arguably what made her turn to Quakerism. Again, she is in accordance with Elizabeth Carter (1717 – 1806), scholar and member of the Bluestocking group, who valued "the naked heart stripped of the external accomplishments of learning or social position." Guest 141.

[34] This influence started to become apparent in her earlier-written novel, *Adeline Mowbray*, in which the Quaker (also called Mrs. Pemberton) by way of example urges the reader not to condemn people who have acted rashly, but to help them to find their way back to an honourable path in life. Amelia Opie, Adeline Mowbray, eds. Shelley King & John B. Pierce (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 254.

control of their tempers, so that every act they perform is deliberate and thought through.

Against extreme reactions to mistakes, Lady Pemberton preaches moderation, rather than abstinence of pleasures. When Henry gorges himself on ice-cream, only to make himself sick, she tells him: "it was in the selfish excess in which you indulged; it is that want of self-government which you are to renounce." (13) In accordance with Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, self-control is one of the most important lessons, so that children learn to take responsibility for their actions.[35] In theory, it would also reduce violent behaviour. (In her *Original Stories* Wollstonecraft, however, presents the reader with examples of bad behaviour much like Henry's moment of gluttony. She also provides the reader with a child's painful consequences of overeating.)[36] Self-restraint is related to self-denial, as it denies the desire to act out impulsively, as Opie learned to do, much to the chagrin of her friends, as she became enamoured of the Quaker life-style.[37] In contrast with Wollstonecraft's portrayal of learning to empathise with the "distress of others", according to Lady Pemberton, "self-denial is the foundation of all true generosity." (24)[38] The key difference between Opie's approach and Wollstonecraft's is that Wollstonecraft encourages her readers to redirect their energy outwardly in order to benefit society, whereas Opie encourages complete repression of all impulses. Wollstonecraft's suggestions are not only healthier, but they are also more beneficial to society and therefore teach a more effective expression of benevolence. Opie's argument that people should martyr themselves for the good of humanity is, one can

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[35] Wollstonecraft, Original 34.
[36] *Ibid* 80.
[37] By 1828 Opie became more exclusive in her choice of company, hurting some of her oldest friends in the process. Her long-standing friend, Lady Cork, writes to her on this matter, advising her that "good people, mixing with the world, are of infinitely more use than when they confine themselves to one set", playing on her Quaker sentiments of needing to be useful. Brightwell 215.
Similarly, her friend, Lady Charleville, also voiced her anguish at the apparent loss of her friend in a letter in 1828. *Ibid* 216.
In contrast, in 1829 Southey comments in a letter on Opie's femininity and exemplary personality, which, he states has not been altered by her conversion to the Society of Friends. He praises her vivacity, humour, talent for writing, and her filial dedication. He elaborates that by joining, she was not "gaining by it any increase of sincerity and frankness; for with these, nature had endued her, and society, even that of the great, had not corrupted them." He states that to her face, he would like to say: "Thou art the woman!" *Ibid* 242.
It is, however, necessary to add that Opie was not as close to Southey, as she was to those friends who mourned the change in her character.
[38] In Wollstonecraft's novella, Mary's "benevolence, indeed, knew no bounds; the distress of others carried her out of herself; and she rested not till she had relieved or comforted them." Wollstonecraft, Mary 11.

only assume, less attractive to the general reader than Wollstonecraft's idea that generosity of spirit is pleasurable. Opie's religious fervour may limit the spectrum of readers she can influence with this text. For example, by choosing to not spend all of his money on himself, Edward is able to help a poverty-stricken family, whereas Henry has nothing to give them.[39] Although already benevolent in spirit, Henry cannot act on his generous intentions, as he has not learned enough self-restraint to deny himself unhealthy levels of self-gratification. It takes both skills to enact Christian benevolence, which is the parental goal, according to Opie.[40] This is also somewhat in accordance with Wollstonecraft in *Thoughts*, though she urges parents to teach their children to see evidence of God in all beings, rather than focusing on heavenly rewards. She firmly believes that every person contains an element of the divine, "that every human creature has some spark of goodness" from God.[41] This liberal sentiment, if embraced, should incite compassion and benevolence for the less fortunate, much as what Opie is pressing parents to do through her text.

Children need to be taught to defer to their betters. They need to show what Wollstonecraft calls "a proper submission to superiors" in *Thoughts*.[42] As such, they need to trust their parents' better judgement, as stated in Locke's work on the rearing of children.[43] It is a parent's duty to see that this trust is not misplaced, which may have disastrous consequences, as we shall see in *Adeline Mowbray*. A poverty-stricken young widow (Mrs. Nugent) tells her tale of how she disobeyed her parents and married a young officer of whom her parents disapproved, providing an example of fellow Quaker, Priscilla Wakefield's (1751 – 1832) educational precepts written in 1798.[44] Strongly influenced by religious fervour, Opie's narrative rather harshly

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[39] Lady Pemberton has achieved with Edward what Locke calls "the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education": virtue. Locke 54. Edward is also an example of Locke's comment on "children having made it easy to themselves to part with what they have, good-nature may be settled in them into an habit, and they may take pleasure, and pique themselves in being kind, liberal, and civil to others." *Ibid* 87.

[40] Opie's writing is an example of the belief that "ethical values might be enacted through linking domestic sociability to involvement in social and moral reform." Midgley 142.

[41] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 150.
This sentiment is also alluded to in Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, in which she states that "when we consider that we are but several Parts of one great Whole, and are by Nature so connected to each other that whenever one part suffers, the rest must suffer with it, either by Compassion or else by being punish'd for the want of it." Astell 211, *sic.*

[42] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 21.

[43] Locke 81, 82.

[44] Priscilla Wakefield insists that children must obey their fathers while they are still living under their roofs. Priscilla Wakefield, Reflections on the present condition of the female sex; with suggestions for its improvement (London: J. Johnson, 1798) 36.

comments that "her disobedience was soon punished," implying that God punished her for going against her parents' wishes. (30)[45] Her husband develops unhealthy spending habits, which cause his death and her poverty.[46] These are the proposed consequences of disobeying superiors.[47] Her parents had the wisdom to foresee this disaster, and Mrs. Nugent chose to ignore their guidance. Only through her education can she later support herself.[48] Submission to one's fate, be it decreed by parents, teachers, nobility, or God, can be interpreted as an acceptance of hardship. It is implied that this is necessary for survival, as it forbids despair (as agreed by Wollstonecraft).[49] Opie comments that, as "no state is good, in this world, which is not a preparation for the next", a virtuous life-style should be at the forefront of all motivations. (39) Part of this is the courage to not give up, but to work within the parameters of circumstance. Though this is sound advice, it lacks an element of Wollstonecraft's argument which is grounded in reality. It does not address the urgency of immediate action to remedy current adversity. It is also hard to imagine that Opie's superior attitude engenders amity from her readers. As the authorial maternal voice she is not displaying the benevolence she is endorsing which strongly decreases the impetus of her argument, thus destabilising her authority. Instead, in accordance with Opie's Quaker sympathies, Lady Pemberton explains to her sons that "a time of worldly pleasures may be called one's BETTER DAYS, but that a time of trial and suffering may deserve the name of one's BEST DAYS." (40) The Quakers believe that suffering brings one closer to God, making unfortunate people appear attractive to their betters, as they are made more holy through their calm acceptance

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As a fellow Quaker, Wakefield's opinions are relevant to the analysis of Opie's *Tales*, though she is more radical in her feminist agenda than Opie.

[45] Here Opie is harshly judging another's weakness proving her previous statement about leaving all judgement to God to be hypocritical. Opie, Tales 104.

[46] According to Wakefield's theories, Mrs. Nugent fails her husband as a wife, as she does not seem to have the power to guide him to stop gambling. Wakefield 31.

[47] In 1824 (one year before publishing *Tales*) Opie wrote in a letter: "I feel my reliance on my Saviour grow stronger every day, and a sort of loathing of worldly society, which I must strive against." Brightwell 193.
Though "worldly society" most certainly refers to anything liberal and revolutionary, Mrs. Nugent's disregard for her parents' advice can be classified as defying social order.

[48] Sutherland remarks on how Quakers such as Wakefield endorsed female education as a means to self-sufficiency. Sutherland 39.
Incidentally, Alannah Tomkins identifies poverty as a feminist issue, deeming it to be socially reinforced helplessness. Alannah Tomkins, "Women and Poverty," Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850, ed. Hannah Barker & Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005) 152-173.

[49] Wollstonecraft adds to this by offering positivity to her reader by stating: "In the school of adversity we learn knowledge as well as virtue." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 112.
Her turn of phrase acknowledges hardship without diminishing it.

of their adversity, something with which Opie struggled throughout her life.[50] Though Opie's advice is sound, there is a tone of intolerance of weakness, which is contrary to her creed of benevolence.[51] Trying times also force people to learn to defer to their betters, in order to avoid these tribulations in the future.

Correct Behaviour of Parents

Opie provides positive empowered examples of parental behaviour in her adult characters. A good mother must at all times be concerned for the welfare of her children, and indeed any powerful mother-figure should guide those who have been rendered child-like or inferior by circumstances.[52] When Lady Pemberton allows her sons to go to the fair, "their wise and pious mother felt rather anxious concerning the result of this visit to the fair, blaming herself for having trusted them into its busy tempting scenes, unaided by her careful eye, and unadmonished by her prudence." (5) She never ceases to take responsibility for her offspring. By describing her as "wise and pious", Opie is, perhaps clumsily, signalling the reader that these are desirable qualities in a parent, while her "anxious" state indicates her level of involvement with them.[53] Lady Pemberton loves her children and provides them with a good example. Both of the Pemberton parents are conscious of behaving in such a way that their children can emulate their behaviour. They feel obliged to take in Merrick, whose family is ill, and who may set a negative example for the children, as his "education and habits were far from being what they approved. But they could not do otherwise consistent with their sense of social duty." (58) Consistency is vital in a good example. Children lose respect for their parents, if they are fickle in their

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[50] Even in the later years of her life, Opie struggled with what she perceived to be her own imperfections. In a letter to her friend, Sarah Rose, in 1832 she wrote: "How I wish I were, what I am not, and fear I never may be *weaned* from the pleasures of this life, and given only to preparation for another! I sometimes reprove myself for the happiness I feel; and my hearth so perfect!" Brightwell 290.
It seems that Opie regretted her own good fortune and comfort, as she perceived this to keep her from getting closer to God.

[51] Yes, triumph over adversity can retrospectively be viewed as a boon, however sympathetic support is more likely to harmonise with someone and motivate them to positive action than any advice which intimates even the slightest air of smug superiority. (Brightwell comments that under the influence of her Quaker friends Opie began to see any hardships she experienced as opportunities to strengthen her faith by 1819. *Ibid* 185.)

[52] Wakefield insists that maternal concern occurs naturally only with a woman's own children, which signals that Lady Pemberton is special in her maternal tendencies toward Merrick and Herbert, though Opie is implying that all people should behave in this fashion. Wakefield 39.

[53] It can be argued that Opie is in slight danger of alienating her readers by simply telling them to think of Lady Pemberton as "wise and pious", rather than proving this to them with her prose. As Pearson warns, "The reader brings opinions of her own to the text, and is not always prepared to accept the authority of the author." Pearson 17.

benevolence or waver in their convictions when situations are less than ideal, much as we shall see Adeline Mowbray losing respect (but not love) for her mother and thus ignoring her advice on marriage in the eponymous later-discussed novel. Their principles must not be compromised.

Besides the Pemberton parents, Opie presents Lady Pemberton's Uncle Frederic (loosely based on Opie's Quaker friend J. J. Gurney) as the most respected ideal of humanity. He embodies Christian benevolence and virtue in his actions. As a clergyman, he performs his duties with remarkable selflessness, and Lady Pemberton comments, using him as an example to her boys and Merrick, that "to be good to the poor, means something more than to give them food for their bodies: it means giving them food for their souls also [. . .] to instruct his flock in the knowledge *of their Saviour*." (72) Lady Pemberton wishes Merrick to take her Uncle Frederic as an example, but Opie seems to be urging all parents to take his example as well.[54] An education is (in the text) consistently shown to be the best way to learn Christian benevolence.[55] It is paramount in people who want to be benevolent human beings. Education strengthens the power and the will to govern passion and desire and is requisite for the formation of good Christians. Opie offers an example of this, as the poorly-educated pleasure-seeker, Merrick has not learned to govern his bodily desires, and therefore is incapable of benevolent action or even impulses. There is also a conceivable parallel between the social structure of the role of a clergyman to his congregation and parents to their children. The authority figures share a sense of nurture and responsibility for the intellectual and physical well-being of their charges, guiding them with selfless love.[56] For example, Uncle Frederic is unafraid of visiting sick people: "at the call of christian love and duty, he and his congenial soul could conquer human fear." (90) (*sic*) He does not fear for his life during an epidemic. Like a good parent, he is preoccupied with the welfare of his charges. His own wellbeing comes second, as he is exemplifying true benevolence.

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[54] This is what Bannet calls a "well-established discursive and pedagogical practice, which taught by offering constructed and embodied ideals of conduct for readers' imitation." Bannet 10.
Once more, where *Tales* loses effectiveness when compared to *Adeline Mowbray* is in its engagement being overshadowed by Opie's didactic voice. She fails to make her examples "entertaining", which according to Bannet is vital. *Ibid.*

[55] Astell agreed when she wrote *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, when she proclaims that it is indisputable that reason must govern passion and desire in order for a person to be given authority or even friendship. Astell 144.

[56] Opie offers an implied link between the intellect and the soul, mirroring Astell's precepts in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, in which she frequently refers to what she calls "intelligent Souls". *Ibid* 80.

Another encouragement of benevolent action is the manner in which Lord and Lady Pemberton handle their encounter with Herbert Mildmay. Upon discovering his sensitivity regarding his wounded dog, Lady Pemberton takes the opportunity to teach her own boys her values, by rewarding him for his humanity and empathy for the injured dog, and his decision to put the suffering animal's needs above his pleasure of seeing the balloon launch. Both she and her husband also punish the older boys who refused to help Herbert and who laughed at his "humanity" regarding the dog, by making them jealous of the elevated seat which they offer him at the launch. (44) The behaviour of Herbert's friends is shown to be sub-human, indicating that Opie is eager to instil a deeper level of compassion in her readers, following the example of many of her contemporary social reformers.[57] Lady Pemberton remarks to her sons, that "even in this world, a kind action and generous self-denial are sometimes rewarded." (48) By commenting that this only happens "sometimes" (unlike in many contemporary novels), she is encouraging them to not become discouraged when they are not rewarded in this life, as the ultimate reward will be in heaven.[58] Regardless, this should not affect their benevolent actions, as they should be motivated by the desire to do what is right (or virtuous), rather than what assures them recompense. Herbert is further rewarded with a picnic at the Pemberton estate, while his heartless friends look on with envy as they walk past, uninvited. When he is asked by them how he manoeuvred himself into this position of luxury, Lady Pemberton interjects bluntly in his stead: "He got it by being a humane, generous boy, — he got it by doing his duty to a suffering animal, — by an act of self denial, — he gave up his own pleasure to shorten the pain of a poor dog; and the very means by which he seemed to

[57] She is imitating the efforts of such social reformers as Anna Barbauld, Maria Edgeworth, Sarah Trimmer, and Wollstonecraft, who "sought to instruct their child readers in such "progressive" issues as kindness to animals, the anti-slavery cause, charity toward beggars and other unfortunates, respect for hard-working labourers, the Sunday School movement, and toleration of those who are physically different from oneself." Richardson, Literature 127.
Trimmer in particular was concerned about trite children's fiction, such as *Goody Two-Shoes*, which she feared promoted hard-heartedness and was therefore a dangerous book. *Ibid* 128.
[58] This could possibly be countering false expectations engendered by novel-reading. This subject was of great concern to many, including Wollstonecraft (as discussed earlier) and Charlotte Lennox in her novel *The Female Quixote* in which the heroine proceeds to ruin her life by insisting on behaving as a character in one of the novels she reads. Jones, Women and Literature 208.
Opie's heroine in *Adeline Mowbray* is also misled by her unguided reading. Opie herself becomes more and more disenchanted with novels and agrees with a friend in 1836, who in a letter refers to novels as "sad trash." Brightwell 336.

lose all chance of his amusement, secured it to him in greater abundance." (51)[59] He also "secured himself valuable friends for life." (52) The lesson to her own sons is clear: selflessness is rewarded by their parents, whose approval matters to them. The reader is also alerted to Opie's convictions that benevolence is the most important quality in a human being, though her style takes on a sermon-like quality in her overt expression of moral idealism. Opie's acquaintances commented on the tedious nature of her evangelising, once she converted to Quakerism, indicating that her persuasive power may have actually been diminished by this. Her novels were both compelling and engaging, as were her lively discussions, before her religious conversion.[60] So, though she embraced a life-style which led her to believe that she was living her life in the most benevolent and virtuous fashion, she lost some of the power of influence by setting aside her vivaciousness.[61] If Opie's convictions aren't clear enough in Lady Pemberton's lecture, then Lord Pemberton adds to them by taking Herbert under his wing, as "he had discovered in him some power of mind; and he was sure that he had evinced real excellence of heart." (52) Opie's values are clearly stated.[62] The most important aspect of intelligence is the expression of empathy and benevolence and these qualities must be nurtured in children.[63]

Correct Behaviour of Children

Opie also outlines desirable behaviour in children. Model children have both the curiosity and the confidence to ask questions. Parents must also take care to welcome these questions, and to develop a rapport with their children, to further learning. Henry and Edward are model examples and they demonstrate the influential

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[59] This is an excellent example of "over-coding", as children's authors overstepped their authorial control during this period, making the reading of their stories quite cumbersome. Richardson, Literature 145.

[60] Indeed, Patrick Parrinder remarks that novels are perhaps the most persuasive form of teaching, as "what they teach is intimate, immediate and not to be found on any approved syllabus." Patrick Parrinder, Nation and Novel – The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006) 13.

[61] According Opie's biography, in 1819, Mr. William Hayley wrote about Opie's power of influence through her writing, stating that her works "afford a copious supply of pleasure and instruction to the literary world." Brightwell 179.
By eliminating the pleasure aspect of her works for her readers, she is losing the power of influence.

[62] The story of Herbert Mildmay exemplifies some of Astell's principles (though she focuses on the education of girls), when she states: "Our own Heart which is indeed one of the best Books we can Study, especially in respect of Morality, and one principal Reason why we're no better Proficients in useful Knowledge, is because we don't duly consult it." Astell 216. *sic*
Like Astell, Opie associates intelligence with benevolence by linking Herbert's "power of mind" to his "excellence of heart."

[63] These qualities, we shall see, are completely lacking in Mrs. Mowbray in *Adeline Mowbray*.

power of dialogue when they discuss their confusion about something their mother tried to teach them: "'Well then, what could she mean? Suppose we ask her.' – 'So we will; and the sooner the better.'" (2)[64] Children must be engaged with what they are learning, and desire the approval of their parents so that they actively pursue knowledge and understanding.[65] They must also feel comfortable when asking their parents for guidance and advice. It is up to the parents to ensure that they do. Indeed it signals the parents to expect and encourage questions. They must also follow Wollstonecraft's edict that parents must offer reasonable answers to any questions posed by children, so as to engage their desire to learn.[66]

Some character traits are also recommended to readers of the text, who are children. Opie provides scope for comforting thoughts and rewards in a religious context.[67] Being grateful for kindness of others is one such trait (which Opie discovered to be lacking in some adults as well).[68] Uncle Frederic's adopted daughter provides an example, as she "contributed by her grateful attentions, and exemplary conduct to the comfort of her benefactors." (87) She adds to the lives of her adoptive parents, by performing little tasks, appropriate to her abilities, such as making tea and tidying. In her way, her selflessness and concern with correct behaviour make her virtuous. She wishes to add to the happiness around her. Opie stresses that it is important to raise children to be virtuous, primarily in order to render death less frightening, though Wakefield's expression of similar sentiment is less morbid.[69] Child mortality was high. Lady Pemberton comments on this, when recounting a time

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[64] Opie is employing a tactic which Richardson has identified as "narrative and editorial intrusion" through character dialogue, which keeps readers fully informed about how they should be acting. Richardson, Literature 148.

[65] As a moral tale, *Tales* teaches child-readers to regulate their behaviour "according to an ethical code established by the author"; though the child protagonist of the story may be tested by circumstance forcing him to make a decision, the writer will make it clear to the child-reader what the correct choice is. *Ibid* 142.

[66] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 18.

[67] Childhood was considered to be synonymous with ignorance of Christian doctrine, which created a link between educational materials and religious teaching. Mascuch 109.

[68] Opie herself received little gratitude for her maternal attentions later in 1827, pursuing what she perceives to be her Christian duty, when she began reading religious tracts or segments of the Bible to her servants, and also to inmates in prison. She comments: I "was satisfied with the manner of two of them; but have no faith in their amendment." Brightwell 208.
Her charitable work in effect infantilises and subordinates the recipients, which may alienate them. Mumm 66.
By writing about how children ought to behave, she is perhaps displaying some naivety regarding the thankless task of evangelising to the unfortunate whom she later attended, revealing her own ignorance of how she is sabotaging her own power.

[69] Wakefield believes that "whatever, therefore, conduces to reform their morals, will increase their comforts, and improve their condition." Wakefield 180.

when the little girl was very ill, "how sweet and comforting it was to them to think that they had snatched her away from the path of danger and temptation; formed her young mind to virtue, and fitted her to appear before her God and Saviour." (88) Good behaviour engenders rewards both for the children and the parents and thus is motivated both by the moderate desire for self-gratification (of the assurance of heavenly reward) and generosity, which wins them the approval of their parents.[70]

Opie's Ambition

Tales of the Pemberton Family for the Use of Children reads like a behavioural guide for both parents and children. When Lady Pemberton expounds on the virtues of her Uncle Frederic, she is implying that there is a congruency between his duties and those of parents (as well as the duties of authors). The clergyman's congregation is parallel to the parent's children (and the authors' readers). The duties of a Christian clergyman are that

> he must teach, or cause others to teach, the ignorant, and have schools for that purpose. He must be willing to resign the world and its amusements, and give up his time to instruct the poor and the sick. He must preach frequently in public; must, in private, daily exhort his own family, and all who need his labours. He must be willing to deny himself, that he may assist others; he must be a father to the fatherless; he must watch and pray by the bed of the infected and the dying; and he must not turn away from the sick and the suffering, till he has put every human means in action to succour and save them. (92)

All people, it is implied, should follow this model to some degree as Opie herself did, but parents in particular should emulate this.[71] With this, she stresses the level of selflessness and responsibility which is required of effective parents, and which she expected of herself in her later years (when she wrote *Tales of the Pemberton Family*).[72] There are incentives for this martyrdom. When Uncle Frederic dies, his congregation misses him terribly, as they couldn't help loving him. (97) This is the earthly reward for his behaviour and which Opie perhaps expected for her benevolent actions as well (though she was remembered by her friends primarily for her wit,

[70] This is in accordance both with Locke and Wollstonecraft, as discussed in previous chapters.
[71] Opie worked extensively to further the comfort, faith, and education of the unfortunate. Brightwell 208
[72] *Ibid* 367.

vivacity, and charisma).[73] In this way, self-sacrifice is equated with guaranteed love and respect, which is an interesting maxim to consider, especially when applied to Opie's earlier novel, *Adeline Mowbray*.[74]

Opie makes her readers aware of the levels of responsibility and power which accompany the act of raising children and indeed citizenship (the act of mothering everyone).[75] What Opie fails to see is the innate resistance readers feel to being taught when authors impose their own ideals on them; in order to assure success, authors need to engender the readers' desire to be reformed by being knowledgeable but not too superior.[76] Contrary to the rewards for dutiful parenting, Merrick's dreadful example is shown as a warning of what happens when parents neglect to raise their children with care, in that "[i]t proves what a blessing it is to children to be well taught." (103) Without parental guidance, the Pemberton children would have been susceptible to his bad example.[77] As women are the primary teachers of children, the state of the future generation is their responsibility, as it can be contended that Opie rather maternally feels that it was hers.[78] With this terrible responsibility comes self-empowerment. The level of maternal power and influence is shown when Herbert Mildmay's mother is then later credited for his fine behaviour, when Lord Pemberton tells her: "You praise yourself, Madam [. . .] while thus praising your son; for if you had not done your duty by him, he would not so readily have fulfilled his." (53) She is credited with his sensitivity, humanity, and benevolence. Although her *Tales* probably had a narrower readership than her novel *Adeline Mowbray* (the one fictional work for which Opie has come to be largely

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[73] *Ibid* v-vi.
[74] The novel ends with the heroine deciding to die because she does not wish to be a negative example for her daughter to follow (to be further discussed in the following chapter).
[75] She is taking seriously what Midgley calls "middle-class women's role as guardians of morality". Midgley 142.
[76] *Ibid*.
[77] An important aspect of this is also in Lady Pemberton's response to her sons' shock at Merrick's behaviour. Instead of scorning him, Lady Pemberton urges her charges to pity him and to discover for themselves that pleasure-seeking is less satisfying than benevolence. Thus, an uneducated child is shown to become an incurable narcissist, as is later shown in the character of Mrs. Mowbray, in *Adeline Mowbray*. This establishes a further link between Lady Pemberton and the author, as Opie had a very well developed sense of benevolence: "She wept over the misdeeds of others, and rejoiced when they acted well and nobly." She "*would* not believe an evil report. There was really nothing which roused her anger so much as for any one to spread a report to the disadvantage of another; it seemed an offence done to herself." Brightwell 368.
[78] It may seem odd to hold Opie up as an example of a maternal figure, as she died childless and was widowed early in life, but she very much sought to be an active guiding force in her community, as previously mentioned. This also empowered her, due to her acts of maternal philanthropy, or what Abrams calls "woman's mission." Abrams 125.

remembered) nonetheless a contemporary reader would have come away with the message that respect, love, and some degree of social power can be gained through the maternal role. In particular these *Tales* had the potential to empower any female readers willing to follow Opie's carefully measured model of the ideal maternal role.[79]

[79] Richardson remarks that the overly simplistic moral codes of children's fiction were off-putting to many readers, who relished not only the entertainment factor of complex character problems, but also found that questions of social hierarchical reform resonated strongly with many middle-class readers, who made up the majority of the reading public. Richardson, Literature 214.

Chapter 5
Adeline Mowbray or the Mother and Daughter
– an Analysis of Maternal Influence

Adeline Mowbray – or the Mother and Daughter (published in 1804), by Amelia Opie, is a novel which follows a trend of the Romantic Period, in which there were an increasing number of novels written for the female reader, by women who wished to influence a reimagining of social norms, for the betterment of their sex.[1] The novels read by women of the Romantic Period usually took on one of two specific forms: the courtship novel or, according to Anne Mellor, "the education of a young woman who overcomes her character flaws."[2] Both offered scope for reimagining social norms, as the author had the opportunity to create female characters whose actions the reader would either emulate or shun, depending on the level of empathy or antipathy created by the author.[3] *Adeline Mowbray* is the latter, drawing on elements of the philosophical novel, especially Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* as well as the convention of the domestic tale. Though published twenty-one years before her *Tales*, Opie's awareness of maternal power will be shown to remain unwavering throughout her life. She creates within the reader a great sense of benevolence towards the heroine, rendering her flaws (all of which

[1] In his essay, *The Romantic Reader*, which explores the questions of what people read in the Romantic Period, as well as how they were likely to interpret and respond to what they read, Behrendt comments that "[w]omen readers, already numerous at the beginning of the period, became ever more so, and the expansion of the reading matter both for and by women did much to effect significant social change." Behrendt notes that the act of reading novels engages and influences the reader on both a conscious and subconscious level, which imperceptibly alters the way in which the reader perceives reality. The reader's understanding of the world is changed subtly. Behrendt 94.
Furthermore, Spencer remarks that novels were the choice medium for many feminists, as "it presented them with a paradigm for their own literary authority." Spencer 202.
Opie's desire for influencing social change was later voiced most directly in a letter to Gurney, in which she states "I believe simple moral tales the very best mode of instructing the young and the poor." 23 Feb 1844, Gurney MSS.
She referred to all of her novels as 'simple tales'.

[2] Mellor, "Feminism" 191.

[3] Modern analyses of this novel has focused primarily on it as a courtship novel – analysing its comments on the subject of marriage, including the most in-depth, which is Roxanne Eberle's text, copiously cited here. Roxanne Eberle, "Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*: Diverting the Libertine Gaze; or the Liberation of a Fallen Woman," Studies in the Novel, 26 (1994) 121-152.
However, as Matthew supports, "although *Adeline Mowbray* takes its central theme from Wollstonecraft's experiment in marriage with Godwin, its full title announces its central focus, one that is not simply about the practice of motherhood but the legacies it leaves for children." Matthew 390.

are blamed on her mother) understandable and her virtues (many of which have maternal overtones) desirable. The novel is in many ways an exposition of Wollstonecraft's laudable and reprehensible actions and beliefs, as it was written after her death, at a time when there was great interest in her notorious life.[4] Reading this text as a mere satire of Wollstonecraft's relationship with Godwin is overly simplistic, as Roxanne Eberle agrees.[5] It is also very much a work designed to influence the reader, as it explores the role and the power of mothers over society through the raising of their children.[6] Opie's feminism is considerably less radical than Wollstonecraft's, perhaps as there was what Cora Kaplan calls a "conservative turn in English gender politics from the late 1790s, in which a domestic, maternalistic rhetoric supplants the idea of female autonomy and equality."[7] By adopting a maternal voice through her novel, Opie obliquely advises her

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[4] Opie was acquainted with Wollstonecraft, who died in 1797; Godwin's biography of her caused great scandal and arguably ruined what was left of her reputation. By drawing a comparison between Wollstonecraft and Adeline Mowbray (though Opie also draws parallels between Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Editha Mowbray*), Opie is inviting the reader to think more kindly of Wollstonecraft's shocking actions. Her attitude towards Wollstonecraft is ambivalent, as she both admired and pitied her.
Modern critics who read *Adeline Mowbray* as a simple satire of Wollstonecraft's life include the following two:
Claire Tomalin, The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) 236.
Patricia Matthew, "Biography and Mary Wollstonecraft in *Adeline Mowbray* and *Valperga*," Women's Writing 14.3 (2007): 382-398.
Eberle also comments on the similarities between Opie's novel and Wollstonecraft's life with Godwin, but her analysis of the text examines it beyond this facile reading. She remarks that "Adeline challenges society's ability to make a clear-cut decision as to who is morally unworthy." Eberle 131.
* This is supported by Matthew, who points out that "in *Adeline Mowbray*, Wollstonecraft's principle and personality, or, rather, a caricature of her personality is split between the mother and daughter." Matthew 389.
If satirising Wollstonecraft was Opie's aim, then *Adeline Mowbray* would be conforming to the trend of anti-Jacobin fiction which emerged after the French Revolution, according to Gilmartin. Gilmartin 152.
The comparison to Adeline is compassionate towards Wollstonecraft, as Adeline is "an essentially feminine and nurturing woman in spite of her heterodox views, a far cry from the cruel contemporary caricature of Wollstonecraft as a 'hyena in petticoats'." Cora Kaplan, "Imagining Empire: history, fantasy, and literature," At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World, eds. Catherine Hall & Sonya Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 197.
It is worth noting that Barbara Taylor reads the exposition of Wollstonecraft in *Adeline Mowbray* as "publicly mocking". Taylor, *Mary* 182.
[5] She refers to it more as a "negotiation between a radical past and a conservative present." Eberle 125.
[6] See footnote 1.
[7] Kaplan, "Imagining" 197.
Other critics have dismissed *Adeline Mowbray* as a "striking example of the insidious spread of reaction [. . .] which demonstrates how fully liberals now came back into the conformist fold." Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1975) 121.
Furthermore, Eberle even more unkindly calls Opie "a frightened reactionary, yet another Regency woman writer who abandoned revolutionary philosophy to protect her reputation", because she softened overtly radical philosophising after 1789. Eberle 122.

reader how best to influence the general public and puts forth her ideals as the most desirable direction for change. Indeed, the maternal tone was perhaps the least offensive and the safest tone to adopt when addressing suggestions for a reformation of social norms, as, according to Eberle "any statement of feminine self-assertion [. . .] could be interpreted as both treasonous and licentious" and Opie prided herself particularly in her propriety and morality.[8] In her analysis of Opie's novels, Joanne Tong remarks that "Opie sought to avoid the novel's associations with frivolous, romantic, and even morally corrupting reading."[9] However, Opie's sense of citizenship drove her to write them anyway, as she desired to spread a sense of benevolence even before her conversion to Quakerism, while furthering her cause.[10] In her analysis of the text, Carol Howard decrees that "Opie inclines towards popular, if reactionary tales of reformation and repentance" as promoted by More, but that "her fiction clearly betrays a lingering affection for the proponents of the now dormant liberal philosophy".[11] Her novel clearly shows the conflict between these competing ideologies. Furthermore, in order to explore Opie's understanding of maternal influence, it is necessary to closely examine the three female generations of the same family: Mrs. Woodville (Adeline's grandmother), Mrs. Editha Mowbray (Adeline's mother) and naturally Adeline Mowbray herself.[12] The

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However, writers like Opie, in the wake of Godwin's biography of Wollstonecraft, had to try a different tactic than their tempestuous idol, as Eleanor Ty surmises: "Rather than using polemics and confrontation, they employed more indirect means of examining the legitimacy of masculine authority, the prescribed ideal of the docile female, or the proper kind of education for women." Eleanor Ty, Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 20. This is also supported by Claudia Johnson**.** Claudia Johnson, "The Novel of Crisis," Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988): 1-27.

[8] Eberle 123.

[9] Joanne Tong, "The Return of the Prodigal Daughter: finding the family in Amelia Opie's Novels," Studies in the Novel 36 (2004): 465.
Pearson observes that many people were concerned with the dangers of novels "in teaching false expectations." Pearson 83.

[10] Brightwell 50.

[11] Carol Howard, "*The story of the pineapple*; Sentimental abolitionalism and moral motherhood in Amelia Opie's Adeline Mowbray," Studies in the Novel 30.3 (1998): 357.

[12] In Eberle's words: "The world of Opie's novel is particularly determined – for better or worse – by the actions of its women." Eberle 128.
Though the novel to a certain extent supports the notion of obedience to authority figures, Matthew comments that "[t]he tale is complicated, however, by a series of ineffectual mothers. Mrs. Woodville is too ignorant to be a wise guide for her precocious daughter; Editha is too ambitious to attend to hers; and Adeline is too naive to be trusted to protect hers." Matthew 390.

extent to which these women affect each other offers great insight into Opie's understanding and censure of maternal female power.[13]

Mrs. Woodville: influence of the disempowered mother

Mrs. Woodville (Adeline's grandmother) is an effective mother-figure to Adeline (a trend of surrogacy which Bannet claims to be prevalent in contemporary fiction), even though she performed this role below Opie's standard for her own daughter.[14] She is negligent in raising her daughter (Mrs. Editha Mowbray), because her daughter is a "genius," and she "must not be managed in a common way."[15] She is intimidated by Editha's quick mind and boundless curiosity. Her solution to this problem is simply to not "manage" her at all. She leaves Editha to her own devices, to bury herself in literary and scientific tomes, believing her to be above a normal upbringing. She sees no need to educate Editha in the ways of the world, in practical, social, or nursing skills, as she sees herself as being intellectually inferior to her daughter, and thus believes that she is incapable of having anything useful to offer her. This attitude, in turn, allows her daughter to develop irreverence towards her. Though she regrets her daughter's lack of social skills and the lack of a close connection with her, as they have no common interests (lamenting, "[W]e never gossiped together in our lives [and I] "was vexed when my daughter declared she wanted all her time for her studies, and would not visit any body." (12)), she never thinks for a moment that this circumstance is of her own creation. She neglects her duties as a mother because of her own timidity. There is no closeness between Mrs. Woodville and Mrs. Mowbray and their bond is unnaturally weak, lacking what Badinter defines as the role of the mother being the "child's teacher as well as his source of inspiration, his counselor, and his confidante."[16] Mrs. Woodville never taught

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[13] As the editors state in the *Introduction*, putting the novel in a biographical and social context, "significant aspects of female identity can be examined in the light of this filial connection." Shelley King & John B. Pierce, eds, "Introduction," Adeline Mowbray (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) xi.
These aspects urge the female reader to adjust her own behaviour and expectations of life accordingly and, in order to fully comprehend the level of influence belonging to the maternal figure, it is necessary to trace the triumphs and failures of all of the maternal figures in the novel.

[14] Bannet discusses how the need for an effective parent-figure would drive heroines in contemporary novels to seek surrogates, or what she calls "alternative modes of relation between the generations." Bannet 75.

[15] Amelia Opie, Adeline Mowbray. Eds. Shelley King & John B. Pierce. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999, 9. All further references taken from this edition.

[16] Badinter 227.

Mrs. Mowbray the importance of conversing with strangers, and forming a connection with other people, in fact she doesn't even know how or desire to form a close bond with Adeline, an absence of skill which later causes her great problems.

Conversely, Mrs. Woodville is the representative of 'good sense' in Adeline's upbringing.[17] Though she is the primary influence on Adeline's development, Adeline reacts typically upon her death by attempting to emulate her mother to her own downfall.[18] Adeline could not have survived without her grandmother and as Mrs. Woodville is the person raising her, looking after her welfare, teaching her practical skills (such as social skills, reading, cooking, keeping accounts, and nursing the ill); she plays the part of and essentially is her mother.[19] Mrs. Woodville herself was raised "with all the ideals of economy and housewifery [. . . which was the convention and in accordance with Sarah Fielding's curriculum, and] influenced the education of the daughters of citizens." (9)[20] She does not suffer from intimidation, as Adeline is no "genius" like her mother. Opie suggests that these skills are essential in any woman's upbringing, regardless of that woman's level of intelligence. They are required for women to succeed in their culture at this moment in time. They are also frequently Adeline's saving grace throughout the novel, occasionally keeping people from condemning her for going against convention, thus highlighting them as essential feminine traits to the

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[17] Shelley King and John Pierce mention this in the introduction to the text. Shelley & Pierce xii.

[18] This behavioural pattern accords with Gillis' observation, in his text titled *A World of Their Own Making*, which traces the evolution of the norms of family life and the roles played within this construct throughout history, that in this period "natural mothers gave pride of place to social mothers in a world where a child's survival often depended on having a variety of nurturers." Gillis 12.

[19] Indeed she is her only parental figure, as Adeline's father dies when she is ten. (5)
Richardson comments on this type of curriculum, stating that "[i]f the ideology of the home and the *proper lady* simultaneously gave women a more credible public voice and excluded them from active participation in the public sphere, valorised women as guardians of education and devalued their bodies and desires as potentially dangerous strongholds of the irrational, however, these same contradictions also engender a productive and implicitly critical tension throughout women's writing of the period." Richardson, Literature 169-170.
This "tension" is partly what is being explored in *Adeline Mowbray*.

[20] Opie comments in her journal that domestic chores are a blessed distraction from the cares of the world and that she experiences satisfaction through the solving of simple household tasks and problems. Brightwell 92.
Mrs. Woodville seems to be following the curriculum recommended by Sarah Fielding in *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy* in which a Mrs. Teachum instructs her little charges in the matters of reading, writing, working and all "proper forms of behaviour", and definitely not in the application of reason. Sarah Fielding, The Governess; or, Little Female Academy (London: A. Millar, 1749) 1.

contemporary reader, which incidentally also give Adeline some measure of authority, through their maternal overtones.

As Mrs. Woodville lies dying, her success and her failure as a mother-figure are made clear to the reader. Adeline benevolently nurses her, keeps her comfortable, entertained, and fed, something which Editha Mowbray is incapable of getting right. Opie reveals her beliefs on raising children through Mrs. Woodville's reflections, as she confesses affectionately to Adeline: "Ah! child, in a lucky hour I made bold to interfere, and teach you what your mother was always too clever to learn. Wise was I to think one genius enough in a family, – else, what should I have done now?" (11) She dared to "interfere" with Adeline's upbringing, as she judged her to be less "clever" than her mother (and that she thereby would benefit from what in her mind is meagre knowledge of the world), and because Mrs. Mowbray was neglecting her child because of her intellectual pursuits. Mrs. Woodville however does not feel responsible for how her daughter developed. She considers herself to have neglected Adeline and "lamented in her dying moments, that she had nothing valuable in money to leave, in order to show Adeline how sensible she was of her affectionate attentions." (13) She doesn't congratulate herself in how well she taught Adeline the value of empathy and nurture, or what Opie's contemporaries would have dubbed "benevolence". She attributes it to her good nature. She is calmed by her confidence that Mrs. Mowbray will look after her daughter and share in her inheritance, even though there is no indication that Mrs. Mowbray ever thinks of her daughter or anyone other than herself, because through Mrs. Woodville's negligence she never learned how to be benevolent. Overall, Mrs. Woodville serves as an example of someone who nearly knows how to be an effectual mother through her 'good sense', but who lacks the confidence and education to fill this role for her own daughter. She represents half of the qualities required in a good mother figure (those of domestic and practical skills), whereas Mrs. Mowbray represents the potential for the other half (those of intellectual expansion).[21] Both lack vital components of the mother role, as is revealed throughout the novel, but if mothers are culpable for their children's development, then all of the poor decisions and heart-ache in the novel

[21] Opie's ideas of the ideal mother were later clearly portrayed by Mrs. Pemberton in *Tales of the Pemberton Family*.

can be traced back to Mrs. Woodville's mothering skills which shaped Editha Mowbray into the narcissistic social pariah and Adeline into the naive, misguided, yet loving child. In a way, the novel functions as a warning of how insufficient maternal guidance destroys the lives of children.

Editha Mowbray: the result of a neglectful upbringing

Editha Mowbray (Adeline's biological mother) serves cynically as the example of the 'genius.'[22] She is posed as a warning figure of what Opie believes to be the product of negligent mothering and is doomed to perpetuate this fault in the neglect of her own daughter.[23] As an only child, she is used to being the centre of her parents' attention, as well as being their sole heiress, "[c]onsequently, one of the first lessons which Editha Woodville learnt was that of egotism, and to consider it as the chief duty of all who approached her, to study the gratification of her whims and caprices." (3)[24] By referring to this character development as a "first lesson" Opie is emphasising that narcissism is taught by overindulgent parents. Mrs. Mowbray serves as a warning to potential parents of what kind of insensitive horrible child can be formed by misguided expressions of love. Reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's concerns, she is never disciplined or directed by her parents.[25] She enjoys studying a plethora of subjects, and "had it been directed to proper objects, [this] would have been the charm of [her] life." (3) Her parents' indulgence is shown to be neglect, and as she has no guidance in her studies, and "whatever was bold and uncommon seemed new and wise." (4) She does not learn to think critically about what she is reading and therefore has little sense of right or wrong, something against which Wollstonecraft cautions.[26] Demonstrating the powerful influence of reading, she naively believes anything in print, provided that it is rendered in a sufficiently entertaining manner. She exemplifies Wollstonecraft's argument in her

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[22] King & Pierce xii.
[23] If the text is read as an analysis of Wollstonecraft's life-choices, then it appears that Opie believed Wollstonecraft to be the product of negligent mothering as well, inviting compassion for her from the reader.
[24] She is an example of what Wollstonecraft calls one of "those who have lived on the vain applause of others." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 158.
[25] Wollstonecraft warns against precisely this sort of parenting, when she states that "foolish and indiscriminate praises which are bestowed on them only produce vanity." *Ibid* 26.
[26] Wollstonecraft warns that "[t]hose productions which give a wrong account of the human passions, and the various accidents of life, ought not be read before the judgment is formed, or at least exercised." *Ibid* 50.

second *Vindication* that "reason is absolutely necessary to enable a woman to perform any duty properly".[27] She lacks the skills to interpret or judge what she is learning and is incapable of raising her daughter. As Mrs. Woodville laments above, she neglects her family in her pursuits of information, because Mrs. Woodville failed to teach her the value of human interaction.

In the novel, narcissism is shown to destroy the maternal urge. Instead of educating Adeline as a mother should, she spends all of Adeline's youth writing her own tracts on education, hoping to become a model which other mothers will emulate and "be prevailed upon, though with graceful reluctance, to publish her system, without a name, for the benefit of society." (5) This impulse, which could be misconstrued as being altruistically maternally driven, is in actuality an expression of self-importance. She is neglecting what Wollstonecraft deems to be "her task in life."[28] The desire to publish "without a name" is the only hint of modesty in Mrs. Mowbray's endeavour. However, the day-dreams and the act of writing keep her from her duty of raising her daughter. She exemplifies the contemporary misconception, noted by Badinter, that "[a] woman can never be a mother and anything else at the same time. Motherhood is a fulltime profession", which she is completely incapable of fulfilling.[29] She tries to manage Adeline's education, but is frequently distracted by her own thoughts. She is also fairly consistently a poor role-model. When she decides to teach Adeline moderation by restricting her diet, she does not lead by example, as "she herself was too much used to the indulgencies of the palate to be able to set her in reality an example of temperance." (6)[30] If Adeline were to emulate her mother at this juncture, rather than her surrogate mother (her grandmother), she would never have learned restraint. Mrs. Mowbray's ideals have no basis in reality. For example, when Adeline is still small, she encounters a theory that children do not require shoes. She refuses Adeline footwear, until she cuts

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[27] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 134.
Opie takes this one step further, believing in the necessity of teaching reason in order to govern sensibility, as she discerned that people who experienced madness were "victims of their sensibility" (much like in Wollstonecraft's *Maria*, when she states that "the passion only appeared strong and disproportioned, because the judgment was weak and unexercised; and that they gained strength by the decay of reason, as the shadows lengthen during the sun's decline."). Brightwell 15; Wollstonecraft, Maria 73.
[28] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 119.
[29] Badinter 220.
[30] Howard stipulates that "[t]he watchwords of moral motherhood are sense and moderation", of which Mrs. Mowbray has neither. Howard 369.

her foot and bleeds all over the carpet, at which point she is forced to lay her idealism aside, faced with the harsh realities of life. It is this level of contrary evidence, which is required for her to question her own idealism. At least she allows her ideals to be disproved by life, unlike Adeline later in the novel. However, as a mother, rather than being a powerful figure of respect, she is someone to be ridiculed by the reader and certainly *not* emulated. Through the example of this character, Opie may be urging readers also to think critically of their own convictions, as well as encouraging them to elevate the needs of their children above their own.

Mrs. Mowbray's lack of maternal expression is not due to an aberrant nature, but to a lack of socialisation. She was never taught how to be maternal. When Adeline succumbs to illness, as a child, Mrs. Mowbray discovers her dormant maternal feelings, initiating the bond with her daughter which ultimately causes the latter's downfall: "all her vanities, all her systems, were forgotten in the danger of Adeline." (8)[31] Mrs. Mowbray is not innately callous, once she understands that her child is in danger, however, believing herself to be irrefutably superior to everyone, she does not respect anyone else's judgement as to what can be construed as a threat. She was taught to disregard the interpretations of others by her parents, who, "because she talked on subjects which they could not understand, looked up to her as a superior being." (8) Opie sums it up with a certain level of derision, when she states that Mrs. Mowbray "was the spoiled child of rich parents." (8) In a way, this character summation serves to emphasise Mrs. Mowbray's juvenility throughout the text. In her actions, she frequently remains child-like, especially when held in contrast to Adeline's maturity. When Mrs. Woodville is lying on her deathbed, Mrs. Mowbray is incapable of offering comfort.[32] In this way, the kindly-meant actions of her mother, allowing her to pursue her interests and neglecting to socialise her in conventional skills, have actually done her a great disservice. Mrs. Woodville's indulgence has made her daughter helpless, and none of the

[31] This singular moment of expressed nurture for her daughter leaves such an impression on Adeline, that she spends her life yearning for a second performance, to such an extent, Tong argues, that Adeline longs for death. Tong 475.
This is supported by Adeline's near-death statement to her mother: "I have seen that fond and anxious look before [. . .] but in happier times! and it assures me that you love me still." (268)

[32] "[W]atch and weep was all Mrs. Mowbray did: with every possible wish to be useful, she had so long given way to habits of abstraction, and neglectful of everyday occupations, that she was rather a hindrance than a help in the sick-room." (11)

education Mrs. Mowbray has given herself has aided or enhanced her life-skills. Furthermore, "jealous of waiting on herself and wanting to be cheated into being waited upon," her priorities are completely back to front. (11) Her narcissism has destroyed any innate benevolence she may have had. When Adeline displays great skill in nursing Mrs. Woodville, Mrs. Mowbray accepts her daughter's superiority and leaves her to it, "though not unmoved." (11) So, she battles with her own helplessness, struggles with something like jealousy for the attention given her mother, and is touched and possibly a little envious of Adeline's skills. In all three cases, she has not been prepared to cope with life's adversities, and through her upbringing is perfectly content to observe those who have been deemed her inferiors excelling in the face of life's trials. Actively living life is beneath her. She is almost displaying a strange kind of snobbery, emphasising to the reader the results of ineffectual mothering, as delineated by both Locke and Wollstonecraft.[33]

Though Opie supports the education of women and expresses frustration with social norms, she strongly believes that mothers need to teach their daughters how to adapt to social norms. Mrs. Editha Mowbray fails to do the latter, however she provides Opie with the means to voice her dissatisfaction with the restrictiveness of the parameters of the role of females in her contemporary society. Mrs. Mowbray, as a "genius," "disliked the usual occupations of her sex." (9) The roles open to women are not intellectually challenging, which Opie's actions in her own life suggest frustrated her.[34] Mrs. Mowbray despairs at the simplicity of her parents, and without an iota of respect, attempts to "teach" them "to think", by trying to awaken their interests in learning the names of stars and reading ancient philosophy. (12) With this Opie begins to distinguish between the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to reason. Yet, instead of showing

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[33] As mentioned in earlier chapters, both Locke and Wollstonecraft subscribe to the 'blank slate' theory of child development, believing that undesirable habits and personality traits are taught, not inherent. In Locke's words, men are usually "what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education." Locke 25. Wollstonecraft puts it slightly differently: "Children very early contract the manners of those about them" Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 4.
This is sometimes referred to as the "environmentalist approach" to child-rearing. Richardson, Literature 11.

[34] As a young woman she enjoyed observing trials at the Old Bailey. She used these experiences to challenge her own sense of right and wrong, to understand the law and human behaviour. She expanded her own sense of benevolence and developing her sense of citizenship by empathising with all sorts of people. Brightwell 50.

compassion for someone who finds it hard to fit into social parameters, she seems to deliberately make Mrs. Mowbray out to be ridiculous, as she confuses one with the other perhaps in order to further illustrate what is required of a young person's education, in other words the development of the ability to reason.[35] Mrs. Mowbray does not govern her search for knowledge with reason, nor does she evaluate that which she learns. Also, her lack of socialisation manifests itself not as intellectual superiority (as she thinks) but as a display of unapproachable aggression, which makes her incapable of negotiating social situations successfully. She lacks what Opie deems to be the most important side-effect of intelligence, as voiced in her later-written *Tales* in the example of Herbert Mildmay: the feelings and expression of empathy and benevolence.[36] Rather than paying social visits, and gossiping with ladies over tea (as would befit her station), she challenges everyone (perhaps as Wollstonecraft might have), in an almost violently forceful manner, and "[b]efore she secluded herself from society in order to study education, she had been the terror of the ladies in the neighbourhood." (15)[37] By attempting continuously to display her superior knowledgeableness, she antagonises people, because "[s]he wanted to convert every drawing-room into an arena for the mind, and all her guests into intellectual gladiators." (15) Here, Opie's word-choice is particularly satirical, as Mrs. Mowbray seems to envisage herself as some sort of warrior of truth, like Wollstonecraft, whom she both admires and rejects.[38] But even so, her

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[35] Locke explains the need for reason, stating that "the less reason they have of their own, the more are they to be under the absolute power and restraint of those, in whose hands they are." Locke 32.
In other words, Mrs. Mowbray is under the power of what she is reading, because she does not possess the ability to question what she is learning. Wollstonecraft explains that "reason is indeed the heaven-lighted lamp in man, and may safely be trusted when not entirely depended on; but when it pretends to discover what is beyond its ken, it certainly stretches the line too far, and runs into absurdity." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 132.

[36] Opie, Tales 52.

[37] Todd comments on Opie's youthful admiration of Wollstonecraft to the extent of referring to her as "Cleopatra". Todd 382.
This admiration evolved into disappointment, and after Wollstonecraft's death, pity mingled with disdain, but still retaining a shadow of admiration. The powerful queenly rendering of Mrs. Mowbray may well be a jab at Wollstonecraft's social skills, especially as she had no patience for frivolity or inane chatter and believed "that she could change others with her words. *Ibid* 19.

[38] Taylor calls these parodies of Wollstonecraft "feminist characters with battle-axe manners and extremist views." Taylor, Mary 248.
Opie's admiration of Wollstonecraft is perhaps most indisputable in one of her letters to her friend, in which she states, "You and the *Lakes of Cumberland* have exceeded my expectations," showing her love for Wollstonecraft to border on the sublime. Ralph Wardle, ed, Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984) 389.

sparring is one-sided, as she has so little respect for the thoughts and feelings of others, that her dialogues inevitably become monologues. In their rural village, she has terrorised the entire community into avoiding her unpleasant company, which she interprets as being signs of their veneration. Once she leaves her secure surroundings, she continues to crave recognition, which she cannot achieve in London.[39] Her disappointment in this makes her vulnerable, which is how Sir Patrick (her second husband who marries her in order to gain control of her fortune and have his way with Adeline) preys on her by exploiting it. Her poor social skills coupled with her self-absorption which had been nurtured by Mrs. Woodville make her appear "arrogant and offensive" to London society. (17) This also makes it easier for him to exploit her, as she has alienated herself from society, thereby eliminating any varied views of his character. Therefore, poor parenting exposes daughters to the dangers of a fortune-hunter, especially as Mrs. Mowbray has not learned the essentials of forming attachments with others, who might advise or protect her. By not learning to negotiate the social world in a conventional manner, she is vulnerable to its predators, and Opie holds her mother responsible for this.

As a mother, Mrs. Mowbray's authority relies entirely on Adeline's willingness to listen. She has lost her power primarily by allowing her daughter to be raised by Mrs. Woodville, but also through her displays of incompetence and hypocrisy. Though she lacks social skills and is unaware of other people in general, Mrs. Mowbray still differentiates between idealism and social norms. However, she fails to teach Adeline the imperative need "that the opinions which she had expressed were better confined, in the present dark state of the public mind, to a select and discriminating circle." (31) Parental pride is evident in Mrs. Mowbray; however, it is coupled with a self-congratulatory narcissism. She attributes her daughter's "eloquence" to "her example", even though she was a conspicuously absent parent. (28) She hypocritically disapproves of Adeline's flouting of convention when it comes to marriage, even though she agrees in sentiment. She is aware that society carries its own frequently harsh judgement,

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Richardson declares this caricature as an act of Opie distancing herself from Wollstonecraft's radicalism, however, it is more complicated than that, as she praises other aspects of her counter-cultural character at other points in the novel. Richardson, Literature 189.

[39] She wants to be seen as the "great heiress – or the great genius – or the great beauty", all of which are possible in their rural village. (16)

especially of behaviour which is contrary to the norm. Mrs. Mowbray herself is frequently indiscreet in voicing her free-thinking opinions (due to her own negligent upbringing), however, though this limits her social circle, unlike Adeline, it does not expose her to ruin as she is financially independent and lives by the accepted social code. Adeline relies on the good opinion of others, not just for companionship but also for her financial welfare.[40] Opie's implication is that Mrs. Mowbray has potentially ruined her daughter's life through her narcissism which has kept her from both learning and teaching the common sense (arguably also absent in Wollstonecraft) required to negotiate public life and live in accordance with social norms.[41] Opie makes an implicit link between how well a person is taught reflecting on how well that person teaches others. Motherhood, or the maternal role, perpetuates estimable or detestable behaviour for several generations, offering the potential for a reformation of social norms. When Adeline voices her intention to live by her unconventional ideals, Mrs. Mowbray's disapproval shows awareness of social convention and the need to abide by societal rules. (40) This also exposes her hypocrisy, as she herself flouts convention in her demeanour when interacting with others, to her own social detriment. She does however differentiate between her actions (which are conventional in both of her marriages) and words (which defy convention).[42] Being concerned by Adeline's determination to live by her contrary ideals, Mrs. Mowbray attempts to reassert her maternal control. However, since she is preoccupied with her new husband (Sir Patrick) and since she has lost all maternal power of influence over Adeline, her disciplinary actions have no impact. She forbids Adeline to read novels some of which may have educated Adeline in the consequences of both poor and positive decisions, convinced that "such reading was improper for her daughter" (56), rather than protecting her from her own poor example.[43]

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[40] Mrs. Mowbray does not provide for Adeline as Mrs. Woodville had hoped. (13)
Richardson expounds on women's dependence on the good opinion of others and on an unsullied reputation, citing Hester Chapone, John Gregory, and Lord Kames. Richardson, Literature 172-173.

[41] Wollstonecraft herself was notorious when it came to disregarding social convention, from her outspokenness as a governess to her affairs with Imlay, Fuseli, and Godwin. Todd 102, 234-8, 152-7, 385-92. etc.

[42] Adeline rejects this hypocrisy.

[43] Pearson lists several instances in novels, where heroines would have been aided and made more worldly by being exposed to fictional scenarios outwith their daily experiences: "Eugenia in Burney's *Camilla* does not suspect her fortune-hunting suitor because she has read epic poems and not novels, and the classic texts of male culture have little to offer women; Lady Calantha in Lamb's *Glenarvon* is also at a disadvantage

A further irony is that much of the reading which in the past she encouraged can be blamed for Adeline's obdurate opinions. Both incidents are evidentiary support of Rousseau's argument for the correct method of socialisation for women.[44] Suitable reading should prepare women for their role in life, or at least give them insights into social norms, so that they can bend the rules without being ostracised. Mothers are shown to have the power to shape the futures of their children, both through active involvement and neglect, and Opie firmly blames Mrs. Mowbray for Adeline's fate, thus exposing the extent of maternal influence, power and responsibility.[45]

Inattentive mothering destroys family bonds. When Mrs. Mowbray interrupts her husband's attempted rape of Adeline, her self-absorption and lack of maternal instinct bursts forth, coupled with her complete irrationality. She is only concerned with how what she has witnessed affects her. It can be surmised that Adeline's liberal views may influence Mrs. Mowbray's belief that she is promiscuous and desires to steal Sir Patrick away from her when he attempts to force himself on her. Despite this, her maternal bond with Adeline is weak before she assigns her the role of rival (already established as a pseudo-sibling rivalry by sharing Mrs. Woodville as a mother-figure), and regardless of any information which may besmirch her lovely Sir Patrick, "she banished from her mind every trace of his unworthiness." (58) This shows that she is not the infallible genius, as she is incapable of evaluating anything rationally.[46] She is like many women observed by Wollstonecraft, who are "drawn from their duty by the admiration of men" in that she is blind to her child's distress under Sir Patrick's attentions.[47] She banishes her daughter, convinced that she had attempted to seduce Sir Patrick. Doctor Norberry (a respected

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with her wooer because 'even the more innocent fictions of romance had been withheld from her'; and Erasmus Darwin [in *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*] tells the story of a lady 'who was persuaded by her guardian to marry a disagreeable and selfish man', and who regretted that she had been 'prohibited from reading novels, for if she had 'I should have chosen better.'" Pearson 84-85.

[44] He suggests that "[t]hey should learn many things, but only such things as are suitable." Rousseau 392. Wollstonecraft notes how important it is for parents to select appropriate texts for children. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 50.

[45] Opie bluntly states that "any thing the mother of Adeline did should accelerate the fate of her devoted daughter." (56)

[46] In this way, Mrs. Mowbray personifies what Chapone cautions against in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*: "There have been, and there still exist, many sensible persons, who lead the life of romance that can stoop to no vulgar cares; but you will, by pursuing such examples, hurt your children, and the final risk, to be awakened from your fairy dream, by some sad, but common event." Hester Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (London: John Gregory, 1816) 24.
The "sad, but common event" is Adeline's death at the close of the novel.

[47] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 248.

friend of Adeline) attempts to reconcile mother and daughter, but to no avail. He explains to Adeline that her mother cannot be swayed to forgive her, as "her affections and her self-love, being equally wounded by sir Patrick's confession, you are at present the object of her aversion." (85) (*sic*)[48] Here, maternal duty is held in opposition to narcissism; it is defined as selflessness. Mrs. Mowbray is posed as an example of the *anti-mother* or the product of insufficient and lax parenting. When confronted, she curses Adeline and swears she will never forgive her or see her again. Adeline's response is to tell her: "let me thank you for all the affection, all the kindness which you lavished on me during eighteen happy years. I shall never cease to love and pray for you." (107) Opie's direct character contrast underscores her premise that the old-fashioned ideals of the surrogate mother, Mrs. Woodville, formed Adeline into a caring and respectful daughter. Where Adeline's upbringing was lacking, was in her socialisation (due primarily to her rural surroundings), Mrs. Woodville's lack of education, and especially due to her biological mother's selfishness. The eventual reunion and reconciliation end the novel on a harsh warning note, that mothers must raise their daughters with great care, and with a sensitivity to the regulations of social convention.[49]

Adeline Mowbray: example and warning

Adeline Mowbray serves as an illustration of what happens to a girl whose intellectual education is not guided by an informed mother-figure. She is ten years old when her father dies, so from this point forward, she is denied the influence of this parent and the focus is turned consequently to maternal power.[50] Adeline is intelligent and

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[48] He describes her after the estrangement with Adeline as "a woman dead to every graceful impulse of maternal affection, and alive only to a selfish sense of rivalship and hatred." (101)
By writing Mrs. Mowbray as a partial representation of Wollstonecraft, Opie is also revealing Wollstonecraft's hypocrisy in her own actions when she was pursuing men across Europe, while dragging her young daughter Fanny with her.

[49] Adeline (like Agnes in Opie's *The Father and Daughter*) draws on the parable of the Prodigal Son, but unlike the son, neither can return home. Tong explains that "[t]he central parent-child dynamic of each novel, characterised by patterns of either excessive attachment or neglect, haunts the women throughout their lives, contributing to their deaths and the orphaning of their children." Tong 466.
Both novels showcase the terrible effects of uninformed parenting.

[50] As someone who was raised almost exclusively by her father, as her mother died when she was fifteen, Opie analyses the importance of maternal influence from an unusual perspective. She herself found a surrogate mother-figure in family friend Mrs. John Taylor, proving that maternity is not necessarily dependent on a genetic bond. Brightwell 31.

caring and is selfless in that she is quick to be content with her mother's occasional satisfaction of her human needs.[51] In a way, she is protecting her mother, as her grandmother Mrs. Woodville portrayed her as being weak in this area. Even as a child, Adeline displays maternal tendencies, which benefit her throughout the novel. She learns from her grandmother and is "stimulated by the ambitions of being useful." (9) The term "useful" can be linked to Wollstonecraft's notion of "duty" and contemporary ideas of "virtue".[52] The act of being useful to others is a woman's duty, as well as being closely linked to mothering, in action. The selflessness of these acts of kindness and nurture are by definition virtuous.[53] After Mrs. Woodville's death, Adeline tries to achieve some level of intimacy with her mother and gain her respect, by informing herself about the same philosophers and concepts which inspire her mother. However, "unfortunately, these new theories, and these romantic reveries, which only served to amuse Mrs. Mowbray's fancy, her more enthusiastic daughter resolved to make conscientiously the rules of her practice." (14) As Adeline is never taught to question ideals, or to wonder if they have practical uses in life, she cannot differentiate between idealism and reality and does not approach what she is reading critically, and so she becomes yet another example of unguided education gone awry. She also decides to be an honest and forthright person (as directed by Mrs. Woodville) and can only conceive of living her life in accordance with her newly-forged principles, unaware, as Wollstonecraft agrees, that "her first wish should be to make herself respectable".[54] Ironically, Wollstonecraft herself did not seem to understand that respectability is only gained when people function within the parameters of what society deems to be normal.[55] Like Wollstonecraft, Adeline has an

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In spite of this, Opie's early introduction into society was deemed both "perilous" and "premature" by her biographers. Brightwell 8 & Margaret MacGregor, Amelia Alderson Opie; Worldling and Friend (Menasha: Washington UP, 1933) 7.

[51] However, she "was sometimes tempted to think her [mother] deficient in maternal fondness." (8)

[52] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 248.

[53] For example, Adeline also functions as almoner for Mrs. Woodville and takes great pleasure in nurturing the poor, tending their ailments, and distributing charitable funds, thus extending her nurture to the community. Howard notes that "[i]ndividual middle-class women could minister morally and financially – from their homes – to the neighbouring poor without fear of reproach; such *private* exercise of authority was altogether encouraged." Howard 365.

[54] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 97.

[55] In a review of Godwin's *Memoirs*, Wollstonecraft's reputation suffered: "We must observe, that Mary's theory, that it is the right of women to indulge their inclinations with every man they like, is so far from being new, that it is as old as prostitution." "Review of Memoirs of Mrs. Wollstonecraft" The Anti-Jacobin Review 1 (London: J. Whittle, 1789) 97.

"impassioned heart" and a "love of virtue", but she is too far removed from society to learn to measure herself and her ideals against social convention. (14) Her "love of virtue" can be seen to mirror Wollstonecraft's, and indeed the social norm, in this manner. In order to be of the most use to society, as Badinter observes, women must "embody virtue, goodness, courage, and gentleness".[56] To a certain extent, Adeline conforms to this ideal of femininity; however, she is not driven by the desire for conformity. The particular philosophy, which she embraces, due to lack of guidance, is Glenmurray's condemnation of the institution of marriage, believing that the legalisation of the bond between man and woman besmirches the purity of a bond forged by love and honour.[57] She vows to never be a hypocrite, and to forever follow the doctrines of this writer.[58] Opie comments on her character's naivety, stating that "[u]nfortunately, for her, she had no opportunity of hearing these opinions combated by [. . .] good sense and sober experience." (15) This description depicts her in a sympathetic light, rendering her foolish decisions as acts of misinformed youth.[59] Her rural upbringing, which has little to no opportunity of being enriched by the company of educated ladies of a similar station in life, leaves this notion unchallenged. By allowing Adeline to be isolated, Mrs. Mowbray is failing her as a mother in that she does not offer her opportunities to challenge her convictions. She herself should enter in a dialogue with her daughter as she

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[56] Badinter 224.

[57] This conviction is based on Godwin's *Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (published in 1793), furthering the link between Glenmurray and Godwin. (In Godwin's words from the chapter titled *Cooperation, cohabitation and marriage*: "Certainly no ties ought to be imposed upon either party, preventing them from quitting the attachment, whenever their judgement directs them to quit it." Godwin 764.) It does not in the slightest reflect Opie's own beliefs on the institution, as she refers to marriage as "that wonder-creating event" in her journals, although marriage in *Adeline Opie* is shown to be disempowering to women, as Adeline's legitimate husband, Berrendale, desserts her and attempts to ruin her reputation further. Brightwell 61.
Opie's novel is ambivalent about the merits of marriage, and its primary focus remains on the outcomes of uninformed and lackadaisical mothering. Bannet 119.
Opie was well acquainted with Godwin, and though she respected his intellect, she found his opinions in *Political Justice* to lack a basis in reality and dismissed them as "intellectual posturing", teasing him by calling him "the Philosopher". Taylor, Mary 191.

[58] Pearson observes that "[t]he heroine misled by novel-reading is a common plot-motif especially in the early nineteenth century, and it is unsurprising that treatments by women novelists are often 'paradoxical', ambivalent and conflicted." Pearson 198.
However, Opie's novel sends a more general warning, not necessarily against reading novels, but against un-guided reading and the naive embracing of any read materials as fact.

[59] Indeed, her naivety may even appear desirable to the reader, as "[t]he cultural norm of child-like innocence as the attractive mode for adult women was confirmed by the practice of men marrying younger women." However, this innocence merely reflects lack of life experience, which the novel proves to make for poor moral guides and mothers. Davidoff & Hall 346.

is inundating herself with philosophical theory, but her ego does not allow her to do this; she can only lecture and inform. It is Adeline's mother's obligation to keep her grounded in reality.

In spite of this, Adeline consistently makes a favourable impression on strangers through her benevolent maternal nature, which was formed by Mrs. Woodville, her surrogate mother. When Glenmurray meets her,

> she appeared to him to unite various and opposing excellencies. Though possessed of taste and talents for literature, she was skilled in the minutest details of housewifery and feminine occupations; and at the same time she bore her faculties so meekly, that she never wounded the self-love of any one, by arrogating to herself any superiority. (17)

The tragic pathos elicited from the reader stems from Adeline's near perfection. With the correct guidance, it appears that she would have been Opie's ideal woman (save for her fatal flaw of egotistical irreverence for the social validity of marriage, due entirely to her neglected upbringing), someone who conforms to convention in her home-making skills but who challenges convention through her well-educated mind and does not allow herself to be driven by self-love. In her case, she challenges stereotypes of vanity and narcissism, but these vices are replaced with wrong ideas about marriage. She is a person governed by kindness and empathy for all people, (much like the Pemberton family in Opie's *Tales*) never discriminating even between friends or strangers, in a word, unusually and inspirationally *benevolent*.[60] For instance, when Glenmurray and Sir Patrick threaten to duel over Adeline, the extent of her caring nature is revealed when she shows concern, not just for Glenmurray, but also for Sir Patrick, whom she dislikes. She justifies her concern by stating that "the safety of a fellow creature is always of importance in my eyes." (30) Instead of perceiving this rivalry as a form of flattery, as possibly her arrogant mother might, she is incensed by the irresponsible nature of it. Her reprimand is almost maternal in her desire for the men to employ common sense and reason, rather than being ruled by passion. Reflecting the doctrine of both Locke and

[60] Opie, Tales 104.

Wollstonecraft, it is a lesson any good *mother* would teach her *children*.[61] She conforms to contemporary standards of femininity, as analysed by Davidoff and Hall, when "it was expected that all women, whether biological mothers or not, had a maternal instinct."[62] This assessment of her character is also later confirmed by Mrs. Mowbray, when she describes Adeline as "the most extraordinary motherly young creature." (52) It can be argued that Adeline represents a feminine ideal, in that her concerns are dominated by her biological need to nurture, doomed only by circumstances created by her mother. Opie's implicit approval of these traits might encourage women readers to behave similarly, in order to meet with such approval themselves. However, Howard points out the intricacy of the issues put forward in the novel, as "Opie's early liberalism complicates her moral, ethical, and political positions."[63] The text is written in such a way, as to encourage the reader to engage with the character of Adeline to such a level, that her failings also serve as a caution to the reader of the consequences of what Opie deems to be rash misguided actions; so the text serves simultaneously (as Gary Kelly agrees) as partially a guide and partially a warning.[64]

Though Adeline is hailed as a prime example of selflessness, her naive idealism causes her many problems. She is "unconscious how much her avowed opinions had

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[61] This lesson is covered in great detail by both Locke and Wollstonecraft. Locke *Some Thoughts*, p.31; Wollstonecraft, Thoughts .8.

[62] Davidoff & Hall 335.

[63] Howard 357.

Taylor even lists Opie among several women authors (including Charlotte Smith), whom she deems "radical". Taylor, Mary 176.

In his interpretation of emotional and psychological discharging of debts in Opie's works, Gary Kelly elaborates on this, commenting that "for the well-known daughter of a well-known Norwich doctor, philanthropist, Dissenter, and "English Jacobin" to write simple moral tales [Opie refers to her novels as "tales"], rather than the all too often less simple and even less moral novels, constituted a polemical act of political and cultural, as well as literary significance." Gary Kelly, "Discharging Debts; The Moral Economy of Amelia Opie's Fiction," The Wordsworth Circle 11 (1980): 199.

[64] Opie's deliberate use of an imperfect heroine has a potent affect on the reader, as Adeline incites both respect and sympathy (rather than censure). Perhaps Opie was aware that "[m]oral reform both of the individual and of the family politic is achieved, not by utopian imaginative vision, but by the communal exercise of reason, moderation, tolerance, and the domestic affections, an exercise that can embrace the racial or alien other." Mellor, "Feminism" 192

She is foregrounding the need for the benevolent treatment of other human beings as well as the need for (gentle) feminist reform.

Kelly comments extensively on the "contradictory qualities" of the text and its "preaching conformity to the conventional sexual and family roles, but fascinated by deviations form those roles, incorporating criticism of the oppressive and unjust nature of social institutions and social convention, but reaffirming the dominance of social institutions and obligations over individual rights." Gary Kelly, "Amelia Opie, Lady Caroline Lamb, and Maria Edgeworth: Official and Unofficial Ideology," Ariel 12 (1981): 5.

exposed her to insult", because her mother never taught her the importance of abiding by social rules and norms in order to gain acceptance in society. (32) Her mother's inconsistency accords with Opie's opinions voiced in her later *Tales*, in which consistency is hailed as perhaps the most important rule of parenting.[65] This changeability causes Adeline to lose respect, but not love for her mother. Adeline's decisions are based solely on moral integrity. She does not adjust her stance (a personality trait which may have been inspired by Wollstonecraft), when she notes people's negative reaction to it and professes: "I make it a scruple of conscience to show by my conduct my confidence in the truth of my opinions." (37)[66] Above everything else, she loathes hypocrisy, perhaps voicing Opie's own dissatisfaction with this common social weakness, where women were revered for their maternal role, but had few legal rights except for those which they were granted through their male protectors.[67] However, her convictions are not well supported or at least not related to reality, and her pride (learned from her mother) gives her a level of inflexibility which makes it nearly impossible for her to question or challenge her own convictions (again displaying the damage inflicted by Mrs. Mowbray). She lacks what Wollstonecraft calls "a kind of individuality, which requires an exertion of judgement."[68] She is very rigid and does not consider the merit of not antagonising her fellow beings. Her "contempt of the world's opinion" mirrors her mother's sense of superiority. (37) She was never taught proper social etiquette and her mother does not set a good example, indeed her powerful negative example represents something which both Locke and Wollstonecraft warn against.[69] Adeline's adamance about remaining unmarried to Glenmurray has Dr. Norberry shouting at her, summarising Opie's opinion: "you in your way, are quite as obstinate and ridiculous as your mother." (110) Her obstinacy invites ridicule and undermines her respectability. With this direct emphasis on Adeline's shortcomings,

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[65] Opie, Tales 58.
[66] This paraphrases something Wollstonecraft wrote in a letter to Opie in (1797), in which she states: "my conduct in life must be directed by my own judgement and moral principle." Brightwell 60.
[67] Rousseau agrees with this state, remarking that a woman "will always be in subjection to a man, or to a man's judgement and she will never be free to set her own opinion above his". Rousseau 399.
[68] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 248.
[69] Locke cautions parents about the power of influence gained by setting a positive example, stating, "you should make them sensible, by the mildness of your carriage, and the composure, even in your correction of them, that what you do is reasonable in you, and useful and necessary for them." Locke 65. Wollstonecraft concurs. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 4.

Opie sets an example of the responsibilities of motherhood and the consequences of shirking this duty. Children are excellent imitators and parents must guide them to mimic the appropriate behaviours by setting a good example in their own actions. Through the story, Opie is providing for the reader, what Mrs. Mowbray failed to do for Adeline. She supplies examples of positive and negative decisions, followed by their equally positive or negative results, in order to influence the readers' future decisions.

Opie emphasises the maternal bond between mother and daughter and the power this lends the mother-figure, the abuse of which she warns against with this moral tale. Adeline initially only respects her mother's opinions, even agreeing to no longer see Glenmurray (once more demonstrating the power a mother has over her offspring), though she is unsure of the reasoning behind Mrs. Mowbray's disapproval of the act of disregarding social convention in order to follow one's own ideals. Any reason-inspired argument is weakened by her mother's obvious preference for the lascivious Sir Patrick and his negative opinion of Glenmurray. Adeline tells her: "If you think I have acted wrong, no doubt I have done so," showing again that Adeline is the image of the perfect obedient daughter. (39) She only reneges on this promise, when she is attacked by Sir Patrick and when, instead of protecting her as is her maternal duty, her mother accuses her of lying out of pique, believing that she attempted to seduce him and that he rejected her. So, she is forced out of her home, and having nowhere to go, seeks shelter with her lover, because as Lynn Abrams notes in *The Making of Modern Woman* "[i]n the absence of a male breadwinner a woman was obliged to find a substitute family to perform a similar function."[70] Her mother has abandoned her, forcing her to act in a questionable manner in order to survive.[71] This is yet another way in which Mrs. Mowbray ruins her daughter. Adeline's naivety emerges, when she tells Glenmurray, "I have convinced myself, that to leave home and commit myself to your protection was the most proper and virtuous step that I could take: I have not obeyed the dictates of love, but of reason." (64)

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[70] Abrams 92.

[71] Tong insists that Opie displays a "profound *lack* of faith in the bourgeois family as a stable ground for national healing", though in *Women, Writing, and Revolution* Gary Kelly puts forward that Opie among others turned to writing sentimental novels which "represent the *embourgeoisement* of domestic and rural life as the basis for a national moral and cultural reconstruction in the Revolutionary aftermath." Tong 466; Gary Kelly, Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827 (New York: Oxford UP, 1993) 278.
It is worth noting that there are no truly successful traditional families to be found in the novel. Even Dr. Norberry suffers under a domineering wife and his children are exposed as being petty and superficial.

She has no conception of what the statutes of society are with regards to "proper and virtuous" actions, nor does she understand the importance of positive public opinion. As a woman with no private means, she needs the public's good opinion, and contrary to Mrs. Woodville's expectations, Mrs. Mowbray does not provide for her daughter and gives control of the family finances to Sir Patrick. Adeline's assessment of the level of virtue in her behaviour has no sway in public opinion. This is the true beginning of her fall from grace, caused by her mother who left her little choice. As she has such a small circle of acquaintances, again due to the abrasiveness of her mother, the only socially acceptable person to run to is Dr. Norberry, a family friend who is married with children, but is not immediately to hand. And yet, her only concern seems to be having gone against her mother's wishes, which she excuses by stating that she was doing the only sensible thing, having considered her options. Her naivety and helplessness engage the readers' sympathies, inviting them to pity, but not imitate her actions (and if she is to be read as a stand-in for Wollstonecraft, then the reader must assume that this is the stance Opie wished people to take regarding her deceased friend). Her situation also serves as yet another example of the terrible nature of maternal power when it is wielded irresponsibly.

Mrs. Mowbray's maternal power (such as it is) over Adeline does not fade with physical distance. A mother's love takes precedence over heterosexual love.[72] Adeline is unable to enjoy her life with Glenmurray, because "[t]he idea that her mother had utterly renounced her now took possession of her imagination, and love had no charm to offer her capable of affording her consolation." (76) She has lost her mother, nearly as completely as if she had died. Her reaction is in accordance with Butler's assessment of the normal psychological reaction to this loss in *Gender Trouble*, in which she discusses the possibilities of gender being a social construct. She elaborates: "In melancholia, the loved object is lost through a variety of means: separation, death, or the breaking of an emotional tie" and "[t]he melancholic refuses the loss of the object, and internalization becomes a strategy of magically resuscitating the lost object, not only because the loss is painful, but because the ambivalence felt toward the object requires that the object be

[72] Indeed, Jane Spencer interprets that after Adeline is forced to leave her mother's house, her "whole life becomes a series of self-punishing moves to fulfil the conditions her mother has laid down for a reconciliation." Spencer 209.

retained until differences are settled."[73] In other words, instead of offering a new chance to declare her difference from her mother, this separation-induced melancholia urges Adeline to emulate her mother's poor behaviour with more vigour, even though she is aware of her mother's character flaws and knows that she was wrong to take Sir Patrick's side. She remains a paragon of the good daughter, which serves to vilify her mother further to the reader. Glenmurray cannot comfort her, because, as Rousseau proclaims, "there is no substitute for a mother's love."[74] A mother's love is more important than romantic love and the loss of it seems to influence many of Adeline's actions.[75] Furthermore, romantic love is isolating when it does not follow the path of social convention, as once she is living with Glenmurray most of her small circle of old friends and acquaintances shun her.[76] Always the obedient daughter, Adeline is only willing to compromise her convictions, at her mother's request, stating, "if she should insist on my marrying, I will comply, and on no other account," regardless of the number of people who spurn her. (89) Following Wollstonecraft's precept in *Thoughts* to show "a proper submission to superiors", Adeline trusted her mother, until through Mrs. Mowbray's marriage to Sir Patrick, it became apparent that her judgement is not trustworthy.[77] Her mother's influence is ongoing, which is apparent in her stubborn rigidity on the issue of marriage. Inflexibility is her legacy.

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[73] Butler, Gender 87, 83.
Chodorow also explores this in terms of the desire for women to recreate the experience of being mothered by mothering others in turn. Chodorow 201.

[74] Rousseau 14.

[75] Felicity Nussbaum believes that maternity supersedes sexuality in Opie's novel, as proven by Opie's disapproval of Mrs. Mowbray's behaviour. F. Nussbaum, Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995) 43.
This is true for a mother's love of her daughter and the reverse. Eleanor Ty goes so far as to describe the novel as "a love story, not between Adeline and her lover, Frederic Glenmurray, but between Adeline and her mother." Eleanor Ty, Empowering the Feminine: Narratives of Mary Robinson, Jane West, and Amelia Opie, 1796-1812 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) 148
Kelly has a different interpretation of this, surmising that "[a]lmost all of Mrs. Opie's tales seem to be based on a similar pattern—the incurring, recognition, and discharging of debts of different kinds, moral, social, and financial. Actually, the tales devote most of their attention to the recognition and the consequences of indebtedness." Kelly, "Discharging" 201.

[76] Even Dr. Norberry snubs Adeline in public and gives her advice and emotional support (as much as his wife permits) in private. (86-87)
This makes him appear useless and powerless, especially when compared to such later helpers as Savanna and Mrs. Pemberton.

[77] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 21.

Because of her sense of benevolence (learned from Mrs. Woodville), when Adeline learns that she will physiologically become a mother, motherhood becomes the stimulation for self-betterment. Yet again, Adeline is the contrasting example to her mother. When she is pregnant with Glenmurray's child, she encounters a small boy who is bullied by a group of other children refusing to play with him because his parents are unmarried; Adeline begins to question her resolve regarding this issue. The boy is so upset, that he tells his father that he hates him, and Adeline wonders: "will my child curse me? Rather let me undergo the rites I have despised!" (128) Realising the power which a mother can exert over her child's perceptions and beliefs, she then changes her mind, declaring: "No: my child shall be taught to consider nothing valuable but virtue, nothing disgraceful but *vice*." (129) She remains unaware of the extent to which her unmarried life-style has branded her as a disreputable individual and that this judgement matters. Her stubbornness (learned from Mrs. Mowbray) once again damages her prospects. She has limited opportunities for socialising and for earning wages respectably. Her child would be irrevocably tarnished by her actions.[78] By perpetuating her notions of virtue and vice, she would be blighting her child's ability to enter social circles let alone negotiate them. She is potentially as neglectful a mother as Mrs. Mowbray. In Badinter's words: "Among those who flouted their obligation to watch over their children were the working woman and the lover", in that both categories have something other than mothering taking a priority over their children's socialization.[79] Adeline does not fall into either category yet, as after Glenmurray's death, Adeline loses her child, and takes a teaching position in a small village, where she hopes to be anonymous enough to be free of her sullied reputation. Her education has empowered her to support herself, much as Mrs. Nugent's education allows her to make a living in Opie's later-written *Tales*.[80] Even respectable women's options for work were limited and, according to Badinter's assessment, "[t]he only profession a woman could enter without diminishing

[78] Here Opie is asserting that the responsibility which mothers have for their children should outweigh a mother's personal principles. Attempts at reforming social norms must be overshadowed by responsibility. Bannet asserts that "constancy has to be imposed on people who prefer *licentiousness* and *change* – not for the benefit of women or to make *them* happy or secure – but for the benefit of children." Bannet 123.
[79] Badinter 243.
[80] Opie, Tales 38.

her *status* was teaching, which made her a *spiritual mother*".[81] In this manner, her mother did not fail her. Her education has provided her with a means to support herself. She has the option of becoming a teacher, as Davidoff and Hall note, because "[t]eaching was seen as an extension of childbearing."[82] Not only does it lend her a certain level of authority, but it also casts her in a favourable feminine light, where she enacts a mixture of nurture and wisdom (an outgrowth of the benevolence taught by Mrs. Woodville, again emphasising maternal power). Indeed, her position as teacher is represented as having these specific maternal overtones: "and no sooner were scholars entrusted to her care, than she became the idol of her pupils; and their improvement was rapid in proportion to the love which they bore her." (165) As an "idol" she is given a great deal of power to influence these children. Opie makes the reader aware of feminine power, which is not portrayed as unattractive, in this case, as Adeline takes this responsibility very seriously, and the "children were most fondly attached to her [. . . and they displayed] daily improvement under her care." (170)[83] Her maternal instincts, skills, and impulses are much better than her mother's, having been raised with care by Mrs. Woodville; however, she is forced to resign from teaching, when her past is made public by a disgruntled former servant.[84] So, though she has been educated in conventional feminine skills and social etiquette, her lack of respect for social norms, which she learned from her mother, ruins her life once more.

Opie introduces the notion that lack of maternal guidance may throw a woman into the path of prostitution. As society dictates that women need protection from unsavoury influences, it can be inferred that they need protection from themselves and their inability to manage their own impulses with reason. As Davidoff and Hall observe, it was believed that

> [w]omen, therefore, needed to be contained within families, whether their family of origin, their family of marriage, or the family of the church. Lack of attachment to a family would mean that women were exposed to being 'surplus,'

[81] Badinter 226.
[82] Davidoff & Hall 293.
[83] The theme of maternal responsibility for surrogate children and the "fictional elements she used to embody them" are shared by other novelists of the period, including Charlotte Smith. Kelly, "Discharging" 198.
[84] Incidentally, the servant in all of her petty glory is modelled on an actual servant of Opie's whom she dismissed in 1802. Brightwell 95.

with no meaning to their lives, and with the additional danger of uncontained sexuality.[85]

Adeline's "uncontained" state, in other words, her lack of guiding family unit, it can be argued leads to her unsanctioned affair with Glenmurray. Their courtship lacks supervision and does not follow social convention. Glenmurray is not vetted by her family and her mother's objections are not fully taken into account as she has all but lost her maternal authority over Adeline. However, Adeline does not see this as a wicked act, as she reserves her body for the only person she loves. Even after his death, Adeline never resorts to prostitution, but she is mistaken for a prostitute on several occasions, especially if she is overwrought and loses control of her ladylike poise, or if anyone asks her the direct question of whether or not she is or was married to Glenmurray. Finally, at one such instance after Glenmurray's death, the unwanted male attention escalates to the point where she fears that she might be raped by two gentlemen, and the only way she can discourage them is by claiming to be married and to have access to the protection of a man. This is the only time she lies about her position, having "used the sacred name of wife to shield me from insult", and her conscience forces her to accept Berrendale's proposal. (179)[86] The inference here is that poor parenting in the extreme case, can threaten a woman's safety, as Adeline is only unmarried because of her mother's inattentive parenting, which did not prepare her for the dangers of the consequences of going against convention.

Maternity, when embraced, offers more than power; Opie proposes that it is the ultimate experience of benevolence. Adeline soon has a child by Berrendale and "the first moment when she heard her infant's first cry, seemed to repay her for all she had suffered; every feeling was lost in the maternal one; and she almost fancied that she loved, fondly loved, the father of her child." (186) This feeling only lasts a moment; however, motherhood is posed as a cure for unhappiness and by portraying this concept in this manner, Opie is obliquely paying tribute to Wollstonecraft.[87] Not only does it lend women a sense of purpose, social status, and acceptable power, but it is also rewarding.

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[85] Davidoff & Hall 114.
[86] Berrendale is Glenmurray's cousin, whom he asked Adeline to marry on his deathbed.
[87] This sentiment mirrors Wollstonecraft's heroine in *Mary*, where at a moment of great depression "[h]er benevolence, indeed, knew no bounds; the distress of others carried her out of herself; and she rested not till she had relieved or comforted them." Wollstonecraft, Mary 11.

Adeline spends her days nursing her baby and her evenings, "writing stories and hymns to publish, which should, she hoped, one day be useful to her own child as well as to the children of others," much as Opie herself may have felt when she later wrote *Tales of the Pemberton Family*. (186)[88] Though she had no children of her own, she seemed to thrive when playing a maternally guiding role for others.[89] This is in contrast to Mrs. Mowbray, who wholly neglected Adeline and allowed her ambitions to be a renowned parental influence on strangers to take precedence over the nurture of her daughter. Adeline again becomes the positive example, in direct divergence from her mother. Adeline is miserable, but "alive only to the maternal feeling," showing that motherhood lends a woman a sense of value and direction. (191) When Berrendale leaves for the West Indies, he makes arrangements to remarry, claiming that he was never married to Adeline.[90] Instead of expressing indignation for herself (in contrast with her mother's outrage when Adeline was threatened by Sir Patrick), Adeline's change of focus becomes apparent, as she expresses concern only for her daughter: "Oh my child! and does thy father brand thee with the stain of illegitimacy?" (197) Here, she is finally aware of the reality of the situation: a woman's status depends on the good opinion of strangers and the public; they have no inherent power to demand the respect of others and their actions may permanently ruin the lives of their own daughters.[91] They are completely dependent

[88] Wollstonecraft may have had similar impulses when she wrote *Original Stories from Real Life*.

[89] Opie spent much of her time pursuing what she perceives to be her Christian duty, by not only reading religious tracts or segments of the Bible to her servants, but also to inmates in prison. Brightwell 208.

[90] Berrendale consistently proves to be a terrible husband before he leaves Adeline. He has affairs with the staff and consumes so much food that Adeline frequently abstains from eating, because there simply isn't enough left to satisfy both her and Savanna. (188)
Howard points out that "Opie provides no redemptive paternal authority, no dependable father or husband, to offset the cruelty and selfishness of Berrendale." Howard 365.
Because of this, the novel is very much centred on how women must shape their own lives and the lives of their children, as they cannot depend on male assistance or guidance. Eberle comments that, though she is in many ways conservative, "Opie's negative characterization of Adeline's legal marriage is perhaps her most overt subversion of conventional morality." Eberle 140.
This is especially true, as the notion of companionate marriage had become a popular subject in women's writing. Skinner 92.

[91] Similarly, in *The Father and Daughter*, the heroine, Agnes, contemplates airing her son's illegitimacy to the public, but is dissuaded by her maid, who had strong maternal feelings for the boy and knows that this will ruin his life. Opie consistently show awareness of the importance of an unstained reputation for the future prospects of children. Amelia Opie, The Father and Daughter, eds. Shelley King & John B. Pierce (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003) 196.

on their (usually male) benefactors.[92] Concern for her child coupled with her experience of safety from unwanted male attention ultimately convinces Adeline that the marriage state carries with it more blessings than evils. So, motherhood, much more so than social ostracism, has finally urged her to act in a socially correct and responsible fashion.

The new perspective gained through physical maternity drives Adeline to experience complete selfless benevolence, proving that the act of embracing the maternal role brings out altruism in women. She never quite manages to escape her soiled reputation from living out of wedlock with Glenmurray, and contracts consumption, which ultimately ends her life. When this becomes self-evident, she comments to Savanna, her maid, "perhaps I think my death would be of more service to my child than my life." (222)[93] She is concerned that her little Editha (named after her mother) will follow her example and flout social convention, disregarding her mother's hardship.[94] Instead, she chooses her own mother as a better guide and example to her daughter, even though her mother is to blame for her own predicament. This is what Eberle calls "*proof* of Adeline's own intrinsic purity", because she sacrifices herself for the good of her daughter.[95] In her final letter to Colonel Mordaunt, she states:

> There are two ways in which a mother can be of use to her daughter: the one is by instilling into her mind virtuous principles, and by setting her a virtuous example: the other is, by being to her in her own person an awful warning, – a melancholy

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[92] The harsh reality of the powerlessness of women in this situation is also covered in Wollstonecraft's *Maria*, when the heroine is at the mercy of her cruel husband who has her institutionalised and takes away her child. (See Chapter 3 **Manipulating Maternal Social Stereotypes – the Novellas of Mary Wollstonecraft**)

[93] Further discussion of the dynamic between Savanna and Adeline may appear relevant to this discussion, as they take turns performing maternal roles for each other. The issue of race, however, complicates this relationship beyond the scope of this study. The possible significance of their relationship is discussed in depth in Howard's and Eberle's works. Howard 367; Eberle's 141-143.

[94] Opie is building on Wollstonecraft's assertion that "[i]n the school of adversity we learn knowledge as well as virtue." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 112.
In other words, life has taught Adeline what books could not: that her ego is less important than her reputation.

[95] Eberle 144.
Kelly proposes that less than perfect characters must reveal their virtues and moral superiority in the correct manner, so as to not boast (which would negate them instantly). He states that "they cannot themselves be the agents of self-revelation: that would be a breach of the code of femininity. The virtuous inner self must be revealed, but only in the right way and the right circumstances." Kelly, "Discharging" 202.
It is noteworthy that Taylor interprets this act more cynically, in that Adeline, representing Wollstonecraft, is better off dead than a "female moral delinquent." She further postures that Opie and Godwin's fleeting flirtation may have caused Opie to feel jealous of Wollstonecraft. Opie's journals certainly do not indicate this, but nothing can be truly proven. Taylor, Mary 247, 306.

> proof of the dangers which attend a deviation from the path of virtue. [. . .] I can never, now, be a correct example for my Editha, nor could I endure to live to be a warning to her. (238)[96]

And so she looks forward to her own death, conforming to Badinter's interpretation of the contemporary social convention of femininity, where "the myth of female happiness is sacrifice".[97] Her only purpose seems to be motherhood, and she has lived her life in such a way that she cannot perform the attached duties to her own standards; therefore, death is preferred to living a life which could ruin the chances of her daughter.[98]

A Cautionary Tale for Mothers

Opie's exploration of the responsibilities which accompany maternal authority includes warnings of the limitations of this power.[99] Maynard (Adeline's colonel friend) comments that "[a]ll women are rivals in one sense – rivals for general esteem and admiration." (73) This is also true of Adeline and her mother and this competition is presented as a possible cause of loss of maternal authority. Though convinced that she is no genius, Adeline feels the urge to out-do her mother in her domesticity and other traits instilled in her by Mrs. Woodville, almost like sibling rivalry, something which is also noted in Tong's critical paper.[100] Her power is limited by her disregard for the behavioural parameters set by her culture and time. Furthermore, Opie's burgeoning

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[96] Near end of novel Colonel Mordaunt marries Emma Douglas who is compared to Adeline, but does not make any of her bad choices in life. (239) By having this character praised so highly and bestowing a happy ending on her, Opie is emphasising that Adeline's (and perhaps Wollstonecraft's) innate but misunderstood goodness should be emulated. Eberle 144.
Incidentally, this pattern occurred in Opie's earlier novel, where the character of Caroline represents the un-fallen Agnes, high-lighting the admirable qualities of her character in spite of her bearing an illegitimate child. Opie, Father 134.

[97] Badinter 234.

[98] Felicity Nussbaum explains what Adeline seems to understand that "the domestic woman gains power to shape the public realm, particularly the nation, through procreation and education." Felicity Nussbaum, "Savage Mothers; Narratives of Maternity in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century," Eighteenth-Century Life 16 (1992): 145.
Adeline is aware of the power of a poor example, and feels that any education she can offer her daughter would not countermand her history.

[99] Matthew explains that "anti-Jacobin sentiment, along with the novel's reputation, required women to offer narratives that provided models of proper conduct for young women." Matthew 383.
Wollstonecraft explores this in great detail during the trial in her novella, *Maria: or The Wrongs of Woman*, as discussed earlier. In order to escape the infamy of the novel, Opie had to be blunt in her moral message.

[100] Tong comments on the fluid nature of the women's roles, what she deems a "blurring of the boundaries between women's roles in a reduced family." Tong 466.

fascination with the Society of Friends can be seen in her rendering of the Quaker, Mrs. Pemberton, who defines Adeline's faults by stating,

> how vain are personal graces, talents, sweetness of temper, and even active benevolence, to ensure respectability and confer happiness, without a strict regard to the long-established rules for conduct, and a continuance in those paths of virtue and decorum which the wisdom of ages has pointed out to the steps of every one. (170)[101]

Here Opie bluntly voices her judgement of the flouting of social norms. The novel implies the desire for the empowerment of women, but within the confines of social convention. It is a softer call for a change in social norms than Wollstonecraft's, and is often critical of both Wollstonecraft's arguments and her bohemian life-style, while simultaneously respectfully building on aspects of her convictions.[102] Mrs. Pemberton, functioning as an authorial intrusion, infers that empowerment is possible within the feminine roles of mother and teacher.[103] By adopting her mother's derision for social norms, Adeline's "graces" have lost their charm and are used by her (much like Wollstonecraft, whom Brightwell refers to as a "strange incomprehensible woman" in her biography of Opie) as weapons against other women, to whom she feels superior.[104] The thirst for power corrupts maternal intentions, so that the focus is diverted from the child or child-figure to competitors: power for power's sake feeding narcissism. Other

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[101] The Quaker philosophy of moderation appealed to many, especially after the French Revolution of 1789 – 1799, when passion and excess took on an air of danger. There was an implicit sense of moral danger from excessive wealth and luxury. During an analysis of the state of social morality in this time of social change, the Quaker, Priscilla Wakefield, proposed in summation in *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798) that women should take the desire to overcome vice and ignorance and to pursue virtue seriously enough to consider it their civic duty. If this were accomplished, she predicted, it would improve general morality and happiness. She also urged lower class women to be educated in some manner, so that they could earn a living and support themselves, without harming their feminine nature. Education should prepare them for domestic roles, so as to train them to assist the wife of the household in her duties as a mother, homemaker, and civil servant without damaging the family's religious standing. See the entire work. Priscilla Wakefield, Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; With Suggestions for its Improvement (London: J. Johnson, 1798).

[102] According to Matthew, Opie, while "attempting to write a cautionary tale, rightly identified as sentimental and didactic, could not properly punish a fictionalised version of her [Wollstonecraft]: Adeline does not die the death of a fallen woman but of a female warrior on a domestic battlefield, setting the terms for her daughter's future." Matthew 388.
Opie respected many of Wollstonecraft's ideals, but not her life-style. She attempts to separate these qualities out in the novel.

[103] Mrs. Pemberton frequently functions as the personification of Opie's viewpoints, as Opie held Quakers in the highest regard, and converted to Quakerism herself in 1825.

[104] Brightwell 59.

characters' maternal traits are shown to be revolting when Opie describes the Misses Norberry. When describing them, the narrator comments that "[l]ittle minds love to bestow protection; and it was easy to be generous to the fallen Adeline Mowbray: had her happiness continued, so would their hatred." (95) Here women are exposed as being in such intense competition with each other, that their humanity is tainted. They must out-shine each other in order to secure protection and respect through the winning of public approval. According to Eberle, in this way "Opie also redeems Adeline [and if the novel is to be read as a rendering of Wollstonecraft's life, Wollstonecraft] in the eyes of the reader by contrasting her true virtue to the assumed virtue of supposedly pure women" and "[e]ven as Opie condemns the consequences of radical theory, she satirizes the hypocritical society which shuns the lovers."[105] For example, Major Douglas comments to Glenmurray, urging him to prepare Adeline for the danger she is putting herself in with her convictions: "The opinion of the world is every thing to a woman." (82) Opie repeats the importance of this point, as this is the vital lesson, which Mrs. Mowbray neglected to teach to Adeline, and yet Adeline ultimately entrusts her own daughter to her.

Motherhood is also posed as being a huge responsibility, providing its power with a terrible force. Opie frequently blames Adeline's short-comings on her mother's lack of involved and informed parenting. This blame is in accordance with Davidoff and Hall's understanding of the period in which "[a]dult women acted as gatekeepers for admissible behaviour," and Mrs. Mowbray did not pass on the need to adhere to social standards.[106] Opie is clearly supporting the belief that children are formed primarily by how they are raised, rather than by any biological predispositions, thus following Wollstonecraft's beliefs on the power of nurture in her educational texts. This idea is casually worked into the dialogue, for instance, when Mrs. Norberry (Doctor Norberry's wife), in an attempt to explain Adeline's behaviour, declares to her daughters that "our faults and our virtues [. . .] depend so much on the care and instruction of others." (93) Though Adeline can thank her grandmother for having taught her to be "useful" in maternal matters of caring for the ill and helpless, she was never taught to think for herself in a rational manner. (156) She simply latches on to the opinion of someone else, who impresses her in some

[105] Eberle, "Amelia" 136, 135.
[106] Davidoff & Hall 399.

manner, and then proceeds to defend this person's view-point, without ever having challenged or questioned it. According to Opie, this is not her fault, as Doctor Norberry asserts to his daughters: "Had Adeline [. . .] had such a mother as yours, she would have been like you." (93)[107] Opie's comment on the level of responsibility which mothers had accords with Davidoff and Hall's account of social norms of the time, when they state that "[m]others had to oversee the development of a middle-class moral code as well as the acquisition of correct speech and behaviour" and it is the absence of a "middle-class moral code" which leads to Adeline's downfall and can be traced back to her mother's poor parenting.[108] Her definition of virtuous behaviour differs from convention. She agrees that people should focus primarily on being kind and generous to each other, however, she also considers her adherence to unchallenged ideals to be virtuous, as she is being constant. The ideals of society have withstood scrutiny and the test of time, where she has failed to question her philosophy even once. This premise that mothers or maternal figures shape their children for better or worse is not only alluded to in casual dialogue in the novel, but Opie's voice also directly emerges through the Quaker, Mrs. Pemberton, whose moral and social judgements are harsher and more critical, especially, as she is presented as a figure who is to be respected and treated as a moral authority.[109] She exclaims to Mrs. Mowbray: "Ah! 'tis as I suspected. [. . .] Thy daughter's *faults* originated in thee! her education was cruelly defective." (250) (This pays tribute to Wollstonecraft, when she states: "The weakness of the mother will be visited on the children.")[110] She continues: "till of late years, a thick curtain of self-love seems to have been dropped between thy heart and maternal affection." (251) In other words, once a woman becomes a mother, her child must be her sole concern, as Adeline

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[107] Dr. Norberry is frequently read as the novel's *moral guide*, but Tong points out the limitations of his role as a supportive element in Adeline's life, especially in his "distinction between his public and private conduct" as he shuns her in public and only offers support where no one can judge him for associating with Adeline. Johnson, "Novel" 13; King, Shelley & John B. Pierce xxxi; Tong 480.

[108] Davidoff & Hall 339.

[109] Opie's interest in Quakerism increased with time, especially after her husband's death (three years after the publication of this novel) on the 9th of April, 1807. By 1814, she made the acquaintance of J. J. Gurney, who convinced her that she suffered greatly from the vice of vanity. This may have contributed to her attending Quaker religious services at this point as well as to her eventual conversion in 1828. Brightwell 134, 146, 172, 216.
Opie took pride in her wit, something which More also warns against, stating that "[w]it is, of all the qualities of the female mind, that which requires he severest castigation." More 24.

[110] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 248.
This theme is also prevalent in Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791).

demonstrates.[111] This maternal duty extends far beyond physically caring for the child; it is the social preparation which is so vital to the child's success in life. A girl must be taught to be, what Badinter calls, a "good mother, moral example, and teacher", for this purpose.[112] A mother may kill her child through physical neglect, by not feeding or clothing it, but Opie takes this responsibility further, by conveying that a mother's duty includes caring for a child's intellectual and social development and may kill her socially by neglecting this. If the novel can be taken as a social lesson, to neglect a child's education is to risk its life, as much as physical neglect might.

Adeline is ultimately a role-model to the reader in her self-sacrifice, as she has learned this lesson by the end of the novel, which is why she deems herself to be unfit to raise her child. She writes a letter to Colonel Mordaunt, stating: "It is evident that on the education given to children must depend the welfare of the community; and, consequently, that whatever is likely to induce parents to neglect the education of their children must be *hurtful* to the welfare of the community." (237) As Mrs. Woodville has inculcated in her the need to nurture others and to attempt to better humanity, Adeline fears that her example may cause harm to society, if her child is not taken away from her, because her daughter may emulate her, and therefore further the destructive notion that marriage is unethical and that public opinion is irrelevant. She decides to die, to surrender to death and leave her daughter in the care of Mrs. Mowbray, who seems (rather tidily) to have learned her lesson regarding the responsibilities of parenting.[113] Mrs. Pemberton is employed once more to sum up Opie's ideas of maternal responsibility for the shaping of children: "A child's education begins almost from the hour of its birth;

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[111] Like Adeline, "the moral mother would be selfless, useful, and dutiful." Ruth Bloch, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother 1785-1815," Feminist Studies 4 (1978): 177; Perry 214.

[112] Badinter 229.

[113] The novel ends as it begins, at the estate of Rosevalley in a female utopia, where women support and influence each other for better or for worse. Eberle comments on the claustrophobic nature of this ideal, as the women are confined entirely to the domestic sphere. Eberle 146.
This idea is further unpacked in Howard's paper, when she states that "[t]he community of mothers and daughters established at the narrative's close will endure beyond Adeline's death. Savanna, Mrs. Mowbray, and Mrs. Pemberton will care for Adeline's orphan. The novel thus establishes a maternal order as the solution to the problems of the text." Howard 368.
It is worth commenting on the proto-feminist quality of this dream, as it is an outgrowth of Astell's vision at the close of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. (1694) Tong comments that there is a shift in eighteenth century culture "from kinship system that favoured consanguine bonds to one that privileged affinal bonds" which is reflected in the novel, especially in the ending. Tong 479.

and the mother who understands her task, knows that the circumstances which every moment calls forth, are the tools with which she is to work in order to fashion a child's mind and character." (251) A woman's priorities must shift away from herself and put the child first, when she becomes a mother.[114] She is responsible for forming a member of society. This is her task and her duty. This reads as a respectful evolution of Wollstonecraft's desire, when she states, "I wish to see my sex become more like moral agents", perhaps in reaction to Wollstonecraft's hypocrisy in how she lived her life as well as paying tribute to her philosophical ideals.[115] Women shape the moral psyche of society through the manner in which they raise their children. Mrs. Pemberton continues speaking to Mrs. Mowbray, stating: "thou didst not, as parents should do, inquire into the impressions made on thy daughter's mind by the books which she perused. Prompt to feel and hasty to decide, as Adeline was, how necessary was to her the warning voice of judgment and experience!" (251) Mrs. Mowbray should have been consistently involved in Adeline's upbringing to understand her passionate nature and to open a rational discussion of Adeline's philosophical readings, again reflecting Wollstonecraft's philosophy.[116] Mrs. Pemberton blames her for Adeline's downfall.

To a certain extent, the novel, on occasion, may seem to comment on the lives, convictions, and decisions of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, though this is an oversimplification of the text.[117] For instance, Opie's criticism of Mrs. Mowbray's blind pursuit of Sir Patrick at the expense of raising her daughter carries enough parallels to possibly be interpreted as a mocking of Wollstonecraft's act of traipsing through Europe (writing *Letters written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* published 1796) in pursuit of Gilbert Imlay while arguably neglecting to provide a stable home-life for her daughter, Fanny (born 1794).[118] Opie, in turn, can be interpreted as empathising with her own heroine (whom some interpret as representing Wollstonecraft),

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[114] By doing this, she is performing an act of self-sacrifice (a truly feminine and maternal act) by "submerging [her] personal desires into a desire for the good of [her] family or the whole community." Mellor, "Feminism" 183.
[115] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 250.
[116] Here Opie is agreeing with Wollstonecraft's assertion that "[i]t is the duty of a parent to preserve a child from receiving wrong impressions." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 20.
[117] Todd 385-406.
[118] William Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman', ed. Richard Holmes (London: Harper Perennial, 2005).

as Adeline attempts to achieve some sort of understanding of socially acceptable feminine power through her role as a teacher, and her compositions for the education of her daughter. Opie is a figurative daughter of Wollstonecraft in her struggle to assimilate her radical concepts, while attempting to figure out how to live a socially accepted life in accordance with her convictions.

Glenmurray's struggle with hypocrisy, as he continuously proposes marriage to Adeline (especially once she is with child), when he wrote his impassioned tracts on the evils of the marriage convention, mirrors Godwin's decision to marry Wollstonecraft, once she became pregnant with the future Mary Shelley.[119] (Indeed, Eberle calls the novel "a deliberate consideration of the consequences of the Godwinian philosophy for a female proponent.")[120] Opie is indirectly critical of this convenient setting aside of beliefs, in order to adhere to societal norms, however, she also explores the very real consequences of not doing so. As Howard points out, Wollstonecraft and Godwin "receive sympathy (tempered by condescension)" and their "illicit but happy love affair easily outshines the bleak representations of marriage."[121] *Adeline Mowbray* reads almost (but certainly not entirely) as an exposition of the wagging tongues of the public reaction to the marriage of this notorious couple. The novel however also shows the honour-driven intentions behind their decision (as the future Mary Shelley never had to fear the stigma of illegitimacy), while show-casing many of Wollstonecraft's philosophical ideals in a truly reverential light.

Challenging and Respecting Social Norms

Opie seeks to influence her reader in *Adeline Mowbray*, as the novel functions not only as a work of entertainment, but also exposes some of the difficulties encountered by intelligent women of the time, including the desire to escape the constraints of social convention, as Kaplan agrees.[122] It presents a dialogue between the need for change and the need for conservatism, so as to inform the reader of the arbitrary nature of social

[119] Opie's opinion of Godwin can be deduced from Brightwell's *Memorials*, in which she states that by marrying Wollstonecraft, he "proved that his heart was not so wise as his head" Brightwell 59. Wollstonecraft justified this decision in letters to Opie, citing marriage as a cure for loneliness and to avoid social censure on the birth of the future Mary Shelley. Taylor, Mary 201-202.
[120] Eberle 127.
[121] Howard 357.
[122] Kaplan agrees, stating that Opie's "main thrust is the reformation of English society." Kaplan, "Imagining" 198.

rules, while emphasising their importance.[123] As Mellor observes, women writers of the Romantic era effectively "argued that the function of art is to teach morality or right feeling by arousing their readers' sympathies through the representation of probable or believable examples of virtuous and evil human behaviour in realistic situations."[124] So, readers are diverted and engaged both intellectually and emotionally, as they follow characters through harrowing choices and believable adversity, influencing their own decisions in life. Novels also had the ability to instil more specifically defined standards of social norms, or functioned as a platform to criticise ideology, which may be less inflexible than society purports it to be. Arguably, their portrayal is more impressively influential than poetry or drama, as the world depicted in novels is "more credible and more psychologically complex."[125] The idea of the empowerment of women, it can be contended, is presented through the guise of maternity or maternal influence. As Badinter comments in *The Myth of Motherhood*, a mother is the primary influence on her child and "[s]he would be her child's teacher as well as his source of inspiration, his counselor, and his confidante."[126] And this power of influence can be seen to spread through the entire community, as every politician and noble is swayed, indirectly, by his mother. Because of this, the mother persona in novels is intrinsically trusted by the

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[123] Kaplan compares Opie's anxiety about post-revolutionary feminism to the anxiety of the general populace over possibly granting slaves freedom in Britain, calling it the "rejection of the right to individual autonomy" and thus drawing a parallel between Adeline and Savannah (who is a free slave). Indeed, "Adeline's threat to social order is seemingly the more extreme, since perhaps she has potentially the most ideological and social power – her detailed repentance of her youthful radicalism does not avert an authorial death sentence" and renunciation of her youthful ideals is deemed "unconvincing". *Ibid* 198, 197.

[124] Mellor, "Feminism" 190.
Richardson believes that at this time in history novels had "begun to emerge as an alternative to religious doctrine for the work of sublimating or *humanising* the heart." Richardson, Literature 259.
If this is the case, then novels were truly a powerful instrument for social (not to be confused with political) reform.

[125] Mellor, "Feminism" 190.
This is also supported by Bannet. Bannet 56.
Opie was encouraged by her husband to write novels (her focus had been on poetry and songs) as he liked to read them. Brightwell comments that "[h]e was above the petty, yet common affectation of considering that sort of reading as beneath any person but fools and women." Brightwell 12, 70; Dale Spender, Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen (New York: Pandora, 1986) 318.
Conversely, Amelia Opie voices frustration with the fact that the name of *novel* is ascribed to every thing in prose that comes in the shape of a story, and so she insists that each of her novels is a "SIMPLE, MORAL TALE". Opie, Father vi, *sic*.
Kelly elaborates on her definition, stating, "[a]s such, they indicate both aesthetic ("simple") and "moral" qualities; and it is well known that the moral and aesthetic were both parallel and connected according to the most important tradition of the eighteenth-century British philosophy of man." Kelly, "Discharging" 199

[126] Badinter 227.

reader, as a source of wisdom and a guide for corrective actions, until proven incompetent. Opie comments, near the close of her novel that "[i]t is evident that on the education given to children must depend the welfare of the community; and, consequently, that whatever is likely to induce parents to neglect the education of their children must be *hurtful* to the welfare of the community." (237) In other words, women who play the role of mother impart on their children knowledge, manners, kindness (or selfishness), and the ability to reason. These skills are then used to either aid or damage the community, the nation, and perhaps even the world. The novel becomes a kind of surrogate mother to readers, influencing them in a similar manner.[127] As the novel informs the reader, it could even be argued that it takes on the role of teacher (or mother), inciting the reader to emulate many of the actions of the characters, while ardently avoiding others by learning from their mistakes, as Bannet agrees.[128] (The cause and effect of every act is clearly shown.) Female power is presented in a non-threatening fashion, even rendered attractive and desirable, in the guise of the maternal figure if embraced responsibly. Refusing to acknowledge and wield this power correctly is shown to harm those characters who are left in the mother-figure's charge (perhaps much as melodramatic fiction was believed to harm unsuspecting readers). This power is burdened with grave accountability and if shirked does irreparable harm to the child. Badinter's assessment is shown in that:

> [b]y accepting responsibility for her children's upbringing the middle-class woman improved her personal status. To the power of the purse (power over the family's material goods), which she had long had, she added power over human beings – her children. She became the central axis of the family. Responsible for the home, its material goods and its human souls, the mother became the holy "domestic monarch".[129]

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[127] Indeed, it can be surmised that women of the Romantic period could not define themselves as separate from their circle of influence, in other words that "[t]his self typically located its identity within a larger human nexus, a family or social community." So, in this manner, Opie's sense of citizenship and drive for social change were strongly linked. Mellor, "Feminism" 192

[128] Bannet asserts that "[f]ictitious examples could educate, motivate, and awaken a desire of imitation in the reader as well as true ones." Bannet, 62.
This is the power of the novel.

[129] Badinter 189.

This level of responsibility may have been daunting to some readers, but others may have experienced a sense of liberation, as they discover their "task of life" underscoring once more the complexity of Opie's ambivalence towards Wollstonecraft's philosophy and lifestyle.[130] No longer useless, women readers may have had the urge to educate themselves, as Wollstonecraft dictates in her second *Vindication*, in order to become better mothers and teachers, as the desire (if it was present before) is no longer attributed to vanity or selfishness.

The paramount nature of the respect for social norms remains one of Opie's most ardent convictions. Her differentiation between indulgence and responsibility within the novel would have clarified what Wollstonecraft may have left nebulous. However, the novel also proves Butler's modern assessment that

> the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence [. . .] are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the 'expression' or 'effect' of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice.[131]

In other words, social norms interfere with and prevent change. However, if the reader absorbs Opie's cautionary tale, it becomes apparent that change can only be implemented if it is covert, as is substantiated by Bannet.[132] Unnoticed by society, it goes unchallenged. Wollstonecraft's approach, like Adeline's, caused a great uproar, leaving the task of social reformation, arguably, to those such as Opie or Smith, who worked revolutionary ideals into complex yet seemingly benign works of fiction, though it appears that many of her reviews focused entirely on the Wollstonecraft and Godwin angle and ignored the main focus of the text, which, if the title is observed in its entirety, is obviously the mother-daughter relationship.[133] In this manner Opie takes on the role of

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[130] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 119.
So, Opie is furthering Wollstonecraft's cause to readers who may have been turned away from Wollstonecraft's texts by her sullied reputation. Her ambivalence is reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's own conflicting feelings about her former idol, Rousseau. Wollstonecraft explains: "warmly as I admire the genius of that able writer, whose opinions I shall often have occasion to cite, indignation always takes place of admiration." *Ibid* 93.
[131] Butler, Gender 23.
[132] This change must also adhere to established virtues and morals, so as to not besmirch the reputations of those who support it. Bannet 57
[133] Godwin, Memoirs (in its entirety)

mother and teacher to the reader more obliquely than in her later text for children. It can be argued that Opie's novel is more successful as an influential work (according to some of her admirers) than *Tales of the Pemberton Family*, because it is more engaging as entertainment and less evangelical in tone, even though it was written twenty-one years earlier and with milder benevolent intentions.[134]

The following reviews focus on the similarities between the novel and the lives of Wollstonecraft and Godwin:
"Review of Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter". Edinburgh Review 8 (Edinburgh: Francis Jeffrey, 1806) 465. "Review of Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter". The General Review of British and Foreign Literature 1.1 (London: D.N. Shury, 1806) 22-27. "Review of Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter". Monthly Review 51 (London: Ralph Griffiths, 1806) 320-321.
Even so, the Monthly Review and The General Review praise the novel for its "good sense" and "powers of imagination, as well as of argument", respectively.
Two reviews discuss Opie's premise that faulty education and lack of maternal guidance are to blame for Adeline's downfall. The European Magazine blames the lack of a "proper director of her studies". "Review of Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter". The European Magazine, and London Review 47 (London: The Philological Society of London, 1805). 129. The Annual Review addresses the effects of poor mothering, going so far as to state that "[f]rom the adventures of the mother is taught, the folly of neglecting all the duties of life for the study of metaphysics and politics; the ill consequences attendant on a complete ignorance of the world in a mother of a grown up daughter". "Review of Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter". The Annual Review and History of Literature 4 (London: T.N. Longman, 1805) 653.
However, this review also goes on to state that "[i]f [. . .] it was Mrs. Opie's wish, by the present work, to establish her name among the great guides of female conduct and promoters of practical wisdom, she has assuredly failed of her object [. . . though it is] amusing the fancy and touching the heart." *Ibid*.
Opie received a favourable review for *Adeline Mowbray* in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1806, stating that "she has, like most accomplished women, the talent of perceiving truth" and her writing "gives powerful effect". "Review of Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter", Edinburgh Review 8 (Edinburgh: Francis Jeffrey, 1806) 465.
[134] In 1820, Opie encountered some Americans, who thanked her for writing her novels, as they were "universally acknowledged to have done good in their country." Brightwell 190.

Chapter 6
Charlotte Smith's *Rural Walks* – Developing Respectability

By the time she began writing children's literature, Charlotte Smith was already a renowned novelist. *Rural Walks: In Dialogues Intended for the use of Young Persons* (her first book for children written in 1795) depicts a series of daily occurrences (much like Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*) interspersed with what Smith calls "*les petites morales*".[1] It met with generally favourable reviews.[2] The text's aim is to instil moral behaviour in her readers by way of fictional examples, as, it will be argued, Smith does in her novels.[3] The format is fairly typical of didactic works of the time, illustrating a series of conversations between teacher and student or mother-figure and child. In her essay, *Familiar Conversations*, Michele Cohen notes that "[w]hat 'familiar' offers is an artful pedagogic approach bringing together the informal – social, domestic – within the more formal dialogic form."[4] Smith wrote many didactic works, and Loraine Fletcher argues in her biography that Smith was an "expert on girls' education".[5] It is relevant to analyse both the methods of inculcation

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[1] Charlotte Turner Smith, Rural Walks: In Dialogue Intended For The Use Of Young Persons (Dublin: P. Wogan, 1795 facsimile) ii.
Smith's text follows Wollstonecraft's format in *Original Stories* (1788), in which the teacher, Mrs. Mason explains her methods by stating: "I usually endeavour to recollect some persons of my acquaintance, who have suffered by the faults, or follies, I wish you to avoid." Wollstonecraft, Original 42.

[2] *The Critical Review* deems it to be "not unworthy the pen of Mrs. Smith." "Review of Rural Walks," The Critical Review, Ed. Tobias Smollett (Edinburgh: Archibald Hamilton, 1796) 446.
The *Monthly Review* recommends it "to the favourable attention of the public, as being entertaining and generally instructive." "Review of Rural Walks," Monthly Review 35 (London: Ralph Griffiths, 1794) 350.

[3] Myers stresses the relevance of studying this, what she calls "undervalued and almost unrecognized female literary tradition". Myers, "Impeccable" 33.
She also brings to light the similarities in "reformist themes" in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* and in her novellas, making space for the suggestion that Smith may have done something similar with *Rural Walks* and her novels. *Ibid* 39.

[4] Cohen goes on to say that the conversational style facilitates the acquisition and retention of knowledge. Cohen, "Familiar" 108.
This is also substantiated by Myers. Myers, "Impeccable" 38.
This format was common and can be found in further works, including Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), John Rippingham's *Natural History Explained according to the Linnaean System* (1815), and Robert John Thornton's *Juvenile Botany* (1818).
Cohen contends that women took this format and appropriated it to suit their own agendas. Cohen, "Familiar" 113.

[5] Loraine Fletcher, Charlotte Smith – a Critical Biography (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 18.

as well as the doctrine which is to be spread to the fictitious children and the youthful reader, especially in order to trace the depiction of maternal authority and the similarities between the treatment of child and adult-readers.[6] The purpose of the text is to entertain child-readers (in particular girls, as the main characters are all female), while teaching them benevolence through the actions of Mrs. Woodfield, her two daughters, Elizabeth and Henrietta, and their cousin, Caroline Cecil, who has recently joined their household in the country, after her mother's death of an illness in London.[7] Mrs. Woodfield is rendered as a powerful maternal figure of both authority and wisdom, who is designed to appeal to mothers using this text as a tool for teaching their daughters, but also to independent girl-readers, as a role-model.[8] As in Wollstonecraft's educational works, though, she does not contend that Mrs. Woodfield came by these skills naturally. They were learned, what in *Collaborative Motherhood* Elizabeth Dolan calls "a formulation that counters the eighteenth-century ideology of *natural* mothering."[9] In her paper titled *Governess to their Children*, Jill Shefrin states that "the image of the aristocratic mother teaching her own children was becoming part of the iconography of sentiment, as well as of rational or enlightened

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According to Alan Richardson, writing didactic texts for the use in middle-class homes became somewhat of a craze in the 1780s, with writers such as Smith following the ideals of both Locke and Rousseau. Richardson, Literature, 3.
This dissertation contends that she follows Wollstonecraft's outgrowth of Rousseau more directly than Rousseau himself, as the plethora of apt quotations from Wollstonecraft supports.

[6] As with Opie's *Tales*, Smith's *Rural Walks* was written after the novel to be analysed in this thesis.

[7] On the subject of entertainment, N. Meredith states on page xiii of the preface of his *Rudiments of Chemical Philosophy* (1810) that "every one knows that the information or entertainment of the reader is the object aimed at." Cohen, "Familiar" 111.
Smith clearly states the purpose of her text in the preface as "[t]o repress discontent; to inculcate the necessity of submitting cheerfully to such situations as fortune may throw them [children] into; to check the flippancy of remark, so frequently disgusting in girls of twelve or thirteen; and to correct the errors that young people often fall into in conversation, as well as to give them a taste for the pure pleasures of retirement, and the sublime beauties of Nature." (iii)
As in most of her prefaces, she also alludes to her financial strife, which could be interpreted as reassurance that she is not writing to gratify her ego, but merely to survive and according to Richardson, literature for children which aided in their moral development was fast becoming a luxury for which parents were more and more willing to spend large amounts of money. Richardson, Literature 109, 128.
Sarah Zimmerman comments on Smith's constant need for an income, stating that "[e]ven before she left her husband, Charlotte found herself responsible for her children's—and often her husband's—support." Sarah Zimmerman, "Charlotte Smith's Letters and the Practice of Self-Presentation," Princeton University Library Chronicle 53.1 (1991): 52.

[8] Cohen remarks on the power imparted on the female persona through the dialogic format, stating that "converting informal domestic and social conversations into print imparted order and method on the conversation and the authority to their voice." *Ibid* 114.
Though following this common format, Fletcher calls *Rural Walks* "an unusually child-centred book for its time." Fletcher, Charlotte 228.

[9] Elizabeth Dolan, "Collaborative Motherhood: Maternal Teachers and Dying Mothers in Charlotte Smith's Children's Books," Women's Writing 16.1 (2004): 110.

domesticity."[10] By writing just such a text, Smith becomes part of an accepted image of women of authority and standing. She also concedes that while educating her own daughters, she found there to be a shortage of suitable available texts at her disposal.[11] Also, being acquainted with Wollstonecraft, she shared her feminist philosophy as well as her desire for the reformation of social norms.[12] Aware of the power of influence of the novel, she states in her preface: "I wished to unite the interest of the novel with the instruction of the school-book," which supports the premise that there is a clear link between the novels written by this author and her penchant for instruction. (iv)[13] In a way, the author becomes the reader's teacher.[14] In this text, she wishes to make her ideas accessible to young people, so as to be of use to them in becoming balanced and contented adults, who do not fall prey to vanity and supercilious chatter. She mirrors Wollstonecraft in her belief that women need to be educated to become less superficial, vain, petty, and in order to control their emotions.[15] Smith furthers her cause to empower women by addressing their most prevalent vices, while suggesting remedies for them through the development of

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[10] Shefrin, "Governess" 181.
One such famous portrait is of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire with her Daughter by Sir Joshua Raynolds (c.1784-86). Incidentally, the Duchess of Devonshire liked Smith's *Rural Walks* so much that she wrote to her, urging her to write two more volumes, which she did. Fletcher, Charlotte 256; Charlotte Smith, The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith, ed. Judith Phillips Stanton (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2003) 197-198.
Smith also sent the Duchess gift copies of *The Conversations*, *Rural Walks*, and *Rambles Farther*. *Ibid* 712.

[11] Shefrin adds that aristocratic women in the middle decades of the century "were concerned to provide their daughters with an education that reflected their own Enlightenment values and principles." Shefrin, "Governess" 182.
This drive demonstrates aspects of protofeminism, in which women were directing their daughters to a future which may have differed from tradition, as shown by Smith's concerns.

[12] Fletcher comments on Wollstonecraft's influence especially on Smith's educational works. Fletcher, Charlotte 235.

[13] Indeed, Myers claims that power gleaned through writing juvenilia is one of its specific purposes. Myers, "Impeccable" 42.
Reading had become such a widespread past-time that the influential power of novels was immeasurable. Richardson, Literature 45-46.
Watt explains that novels influence their readers through the "impersonal authority of print [which] is complemented by its capacity for securing a complete penetration of the reader's subjective life." Watt 198.

[14] Myers agrees, stating that "[i]n their capacity as surrogate mothers, these writing women testify to maternal and pedagogical power." Myers, "Impeccable" 33.

[15] This precept is possibly an outgrowth of Wollstonecraft's creed in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, in which she cautions mothers when raising their girls that "[t]he turbulent passions may be kept down till reason begins to dawn." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 8.

benevolence and reason.[16] Both of these qualities, she implies, will heighten a woman's respectability.

Vices Which Must Be Addressed

Smith comments extensively on emotional and intellectual superficiality, which manifests itself as narcissism, found especially in women. As the prime example of how not to be (but also of how this can be overcome), Caroline Cecil is fashion-conscious, even though she is in mourning for her mother, and is contemptuous of her country relations.[17] Mrs. Woodfield is aware of this, but feels compelled by her sense of Christian benevolence, and familial duties, to take her in and attempt to assist in ridding her of her abrasive shallowness. At the first opportunity, she takes the self-absorbed Caroline along with her daughters to offer charity at a poor household, where she notices her discontent, but takes the "opportunity of shewing her what real misery was, and checking that disposition to repine, which makes so much of the artificial calamity of life." (11) (*sic*)[18] Caroline does not differentiate between the misery of mourning her mother and her perceived misery of having moved to the country. She considers her physical discomforts of boredom and lack of gossip to be lamentable, even after she has witnessed true poverty and destitution. Incidentally, linking the scenarios in children's books with novels for adults, during this period novels are filled with female characters who wallow in self-pity (for instance the mother in Wollstonecraft's *Mary* and Mary in Jane Austen's later-written *Persuasion*) mostly due to boredom and an underdeveloped sense of benevolence. Ideally, the opportunity to assist those who

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[16] Sarah Trimmer, among other didactic women writers, voiced apprehension about the fear that literature for children was being used to indoctrinate child-readers with radical ideals. Richardson, Literature 141.
Myers agrees that "the little books tidily demonstrate women writers' resourceful exploitation of the available literary and culture conventions to suit their own ends." Myers, "Impeccable" 55.

[17] Helen Berry's research indicates that towards the end of the eighteenth century, consumerism became heavily frowned upon, due to widespread Evangelical revival. This conservative stance was perpetuated by such publications as *The Lady's Magazine*. Helen Berry, "Women, Consumption and Taste," Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850, ed. Hannah Barker & Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005) 205, 205.
Cohen's research indicates this as well. Cohen, Sentimental 139.
This may account for Smith's snide portrayal of Caroline's fashion-consciousness.

[18] Fletcher deems this moment to be written with a "dismayingly moralistic tone", but concedes that it is thankfully free of threats of damnation, unlike many other works for children of the time. Fletcher, Charlotte 230.
However, Mrs. Woodfield oscillates between censure and encouragement, depending on what is needed. Smith's harshness towards her character mirrors an instance in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, in which a character "without any real misfortune, [. . .] was continually miserable." Wollstonecraft, Original 34. However, Caroline has the 'misfortune' to have only just lost her mother.

experience unyielding daily suffering should draw Caroline of her gloom, as is shown through the eponymous character in Wollstonecraft's *Mary*.[19] In *Rural Walks*, the gradual conversion of Caroline from narcissistic and superficial to benevolent and generous is easily traced in the text as Smith's primary example of how to transform this sort of child through her precepts of education and maternal guidance, concurring with Wollstonecraft's sentiment that "reason, with difficulty, conquers settled habits".[20]

Another vice addressed by Smith is the societal obsession with rank and status. Smith was made to suffer for her diminished social rank, due to her father's loss of fortune and her husband's speculative schemes.[21] She stresses the importance of being beloved for one's character rather than for one's wealth or title, a lesson which Caroline in particular needs to learn, as she believes that "a title *is* a pleasant thing", to which Mrs. Woodfield responds that "[m]any foolish women have thought so, and have sacrificed [. . .] the real happiness of their lives." (50)[22] Caroline suffers from envy in her desire for social status and perhaps what she perceives to be power. Mrs. Woodfield is protecting her from this covetousness.[23] She points out a nobleman who is ill-natured, and who is shown respect only by those who enjoy the opulence at his house-parties. (49) The man is shown admiration for his wealth, not for his person. Mrs. Woodfield (as Smith's voice) has the greatest disdain for this, questioning the intelligence of anyone who values rank above personal admiration. She tells Caroline: "'mouth honour' can, I should hope, give no pleasure to a rational

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[19] Throughout her lonely childhood, Mary is comforted by her own acts of kindness towards others, to such an extent that "[h]er benevolence, indeed, knew no bounds; the distress of others carried her out of herself; and she rested not till she had relieved or comforted them." Wollstonecraft, Mary 11.

[20] Wollstonecraft, Original iii.

[21] Smith's father, Nicholas Turner, was addicted to gambling and her husband, Benjamin Smith, not only embezzled his father's trust-fund which was set up to support Charlotte and her children, but also invested in varied schemes including the raising and selling canaries. Fletcher, Charlotte 11, 62, 7. The reader may suspect that her disdain of social rank could be a reaction to this.
Though Smith shares some misfortunes with Sarah Pennington, whose separation from her unpleasant husband was instrumental in her publication of *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters* (1761) in order to re-establish her good reputation, Smith's biographical references are confined to her introduction. Both women needed the extra financial support gleaned by selling their didactic works. Mary Austin, A Critical Edition of Lady Sarah Pennington's 'An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters in a Letter to Miss Pennington' (Tempe: Arizona State UP, 2009) xxx-xxxi.

[22] This is an example of what Cohen calls "*familiar* – social, domestic and informal – conversations, [which] with their freedom and spontaneity, promised mental training, inquiry and reflection." Then she adds: "That is what consumers were looking for." Cohen, "Familiar" 112.
Smith was very much aware, out of necessity, what would sell more copies of her work, however her primary focus still seemed to be the act of influencing a reimagining social norms.

[23] "Covetousness [. . .] being [what Locke calls] the root of all evil." Locke 87.

and thinking being." (51) Like Wollstonecraft, she strives for the genuine and wishes her charges to be "rational" and worthy of respect, which would give them a measure of lasting power, unlike social status which cannot be guaranteed.[24] Yet more shortcomings of rank are exposed in that wealth and social standing are shown to not guarantee happiness. Sir Herbert Harbottle, a neighbour, is paranoid about what people say and think of him, because he is uneducated and frequently makes factual blunders, while being surrounded by people of high social rank and education. He is insecure and unhappy, "having never cultivated the little understanding he possessed, he raised contempt by his blunders, instead of respect by his eloquence." (58) His insecurity is shown as an argument for why education is important.[25] As someone preoccupied with the acquisition of beautiful things and clothing, Caroline has never considered that wealth may not assuage all of her desires. The development of the intellect is posed as far more valuable than wealth. Smith's comments on the impermanence of rank and status reflect her own loss of social standing.[26] She urges the shallow Caroline to perfect her skills for drawing, so that she may have a means to support herself, should her life depend on it, so that she has no need to turn to prostitution. (61-62)[27] So here, as in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, one of the goals of female education is posed as the achievement of relative self-sufficiency.[28]

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[24] As a better alternative, Wollstonecraft contends that "[r]eason must often be called in to fill up the vacuums of life" and warns that "affectation, though despised, is very contagious." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 99, 159.
Similarly, in *Original Stories*, she is adamant that truthfulness is the key to earning respect. Wollstonecraft, Original 40.

[25] Astell voiced a similar understanding, when she states that "Riches do not free us from Anxieties and Solicitude, they many times increase them, Therefore to be Rich and to be Happy are not one and the same thing." Astell 183. *sic*
To this, Wollstonecraft adds that "a thinking person can very readily make allowance for those faults which arise from want of reflection and education." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 119.
Therefore, Sir Harbottle should not incur the ridicule of his betters, but their understanding.

[26] As someone who was raised in a well-to-do family, Smith found it difficult to come to terms with her increasing poverty throughout her life. Fletcher reveals about Smith that she was unaccustomed to abstaining from luxuries such as meat and a flock of servants. Fletcher, Charlotte 105-106.

[27] Dolan remarks that "Smith does not endorse the dependence of daughters on their father's financial health. Instead, she emphatically exposes that dependence as a major social problem." She also links this instance to Wollstonecraft's *Maria*, in that it stresses the fact that "the lack of employment opportunities in patriarchal culture reinforces this dependence, even pushing women into prostitution." Dolan 115, 123.
This concern was voiced much earlier in Sarah Pennington's *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters*, in which she warns her daughters against relying entirely (especially financially) on their future spouses. Austin 51.

[28] In *Original Stories*, the girls overcome their childish narcissism and develop an "accomplished and dignified mind that relies on itself." Wollstonecraft, Original 46.
Richardson comments that this sort of education was designed to lead to "enlightened womanhood" and "rational autonomy". Richardson, Literature 168.

She also displays her reaction to the French Revolution (1789 – 1799) in her irreverence for social rank, as she tells Caroline: "Reflect, my child, how many persons, who were born in a higher rank of life than you were, even in the first classes of the nobility of France, are now reduced to the necessity of labouring for their daily bread in a strange land." (62)[29] From this exposition of refugees from France, she shows that rank can be lost. It guarantees nothing, but a well-developed sense of reason is a permanent asset. Wollstonecraft comments on the duties of motherhood to prepare children for the hardships of life, so as to protect them from the misery of helplessness.[30] A mother who has failed to outfit her charges with flexibility of thought and a sense of capability has failed them in the acutest manner, even if they appear to have an assured position in life. Indeed, Mrs. Woodfield surmises that "so poor are the advantages of rank, and so ridiculous is it to assume it." (100) Smith's irreverence may be caused by her own loss of rank, due to her father's gambling and her husband's ill-fated money-making schemes and her social rank did nothing to guarantee that her children were fed and clothed.[31]

Mrs. Woodfield also voices disdain for women whose behaviour and appearance is designed solely to impress their betters. She condemns women who do not think for themselves when deciding how to behave or what to wear. She shows contempt for the nebulous "them" who dictate correct appearance and behaviour. (87) Vanity is a vice which Wollstonecraft addresses in great detail as well.[32] Mrs.

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[29] Smith was strongly in favour of the French Revolution and the influence on social reformation through changes in philosophy it promised in England. However, she was more of a Girondin rather than a Jacobin and opposed the level of violence of the Revolution. This revulsion against the blood-bath came to a head when her son, Charles, lost his leg when the British besieged Dunkirk in 1793. Fletcher, Charlotte 132-206.
Smith's opposition to the violence in France mirrors that of Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in which he laments the barbarism brought on by revolutionary zeal, which negates all perceptions of the sublime. Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France and The Rights of Man (New York: Anchor Books, 1973) 90.

[30] Wollstonecraft contends that there are benefits which arise from life's disappointments. God sends us trials, so that we may correct wayward behaviour, by learning to persevere through painful periods of time. These instances train the mind to overcome the passions, if we manage to practice "forbearance", rather than sinking into melancholia or self-pity. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 112.

[31] Zimmerman argues in her essay which focuses on Smith's self-representation that she took great pains in her various correspondences to publishers and indeed any prospective purchasers of her writing to present herself foremost as a mother in desperate need of monetary support in order to care for her children. This included subtle changes made to her portrait in which "her expression changes from a dejection bordering on listlessness to the "spirited" gravity that she wanted to convey." Zimmerman 52-53.

[32] According to Wollstonecraft, obsession with clothing "gives rise to envy, and contests for trifling superiority, which do not render a woman very respectable to the other sex." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 37.

Woodfield is criticising and trying to influence Caroline, who is very conscious of the good opinion of others, provided they are of a high social rank. Caroline also wishes to travel, stating that "it is such an advantage, and gives one *such an air*, to have it to say, when one returns, that one has been at Rome!" Mrs. Woodfield shames her into reformation: "And it is precisely that *air* I should fear you assuming, for nothing is half so absurd and disgusting." (114) This sentiment mirrors both Locke's and Wollstonecraft's disdain for affected behaviour.[33] The dismissal of public opinion is justified, when Mrs. Woodfield, as the authorial voice, points out how ridiculous the fashions of five years ago seem now, as evidence for the frivolity of fashion, stating that "[i]t should be a lesson to the spangled butterfly of the passing day, and it should teach her the superiority of intellect over beauty". (93)[34] Caroline is further urged to notice the insignificance of fashion, when Mrs. Woodfield comments on the foolishness of elderly ladies making themselves ridiculous with makeup and girlish airs.[35] She feels that they deserve to be treated with respect, even though they appear foolish. The overall sentiment agrees with Wollstonecraft, who also believes that false behaviour is very reprehensible. However, Smith sometimes overrides the urge for contempt and replaces it with benevolent pity, which allows Mrs. Woodfield to lead with exemplary behaviour. (161) Her principles seem to mirror Wollstonecraft's in that universal benevolence should be the primary obligation of everyone, however, Wollstonecraft makes no allowances for ridiculous women.[36] Smith is kinder about human faults.

The idea put forward is that the underdeveloped ability to reason not only impedes respect, but also raises disdain, especially in the enthrallment of ignorant people with sensational stories. Mrs. Woodfield comments to her charges that "[t]he uneducated in all countries are alike; they love the marvellous, and are stimulated by

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She says something very similar in *Original Stories*, claiming that "when the main pursuit is trivial, the character will of course become insignificant." Wollstonecraft, Original 99.
In either case, Smith's accordance with Wollstonecraft is clear.

[33] Locke 165; Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 29

[34] This is in accordance with Wollstonecraft's premise that "[s]implicity of Dress, and unaffected manners, should go together. They demand respect, and will be admired by people of taste." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 41.

[35] Wollstonecraft says something very similar, when she comments that "[i]t is very absurd to see a woman, whose brow time has marked with wrinkles, aping the manners of a girl in her teens." *Ibid* 28.

[36] Wollstonecraft supports universal benevolence. *Ibid* 91.
However, in *Original Stories*, she justifies her own misogyny by stating that "[w]hen we frequently make allowance for another in trifling matters, notions of inferiority take root in the mind, and too often produce contempt." Wollstonecraft Original 101.
In other words, tolerance has a more harmful outcome than immediate censure.

the gloomy, the horrible, and the improbable." (121) Smith may have been inspired by Locke, who comments on the dangers of this sort of influence from servants, especially if children are left in their care.[37] Locke contends that this leaves children overly fearful, superstitious, and prone to prejudice. Sensationalism also appears in a different guise. Mrs. Tansy, an acquaintance of the family, is tiresome in her ignorance, as "[s]he talks, as many other people do, in the hope of being thought wise; but of those to whom she happens to address herself, some suspect that she is mad, and all are sure that she is tiresome." (125) Her affected knowledgeableness is exhausting. She has "no judgement in conversation" because of her "love of fame". (126) The common vice here is the inability to differentiate between topics which incite empathy or benevolent action and topics which showcase self-aggrandisement. Smith's proposed education is posed as the cure for such behaviour and as the assurance for acquiring genuine respectability and social gravity.

Countering Emotional Superficiality with Benevolence

Smith, like Wollstonecraft proposes that one method of empowering women is by establishing their propriety in the course of the development of benevolence through charitable action.[38] Having struggled with her own survival and that of her children, Smith has little patience for people who do not express benevolence towards strangers.[39] In *Rural Walks*, Henrietta and Elizabeth (Mrs. Woodfield's daughters) are already benevolent children. They are moved by a visit to a poor family (whereas Caroline is only overcome by the horror of poverty and the boredom of conducting charitable visits, which are not entertaining). When Henrietta contrives to remake some of her own old clothes for the younger children, Mrs. Woodfield does not respond to this idea with any calamity, but treats it as a patently obvious action, neither calling attention to it, nor rewarding it overtly. The message to the reader here is that benevolence should become natural and not be forced or contrived. In this manner, the concept of benevolence is linked to Wollstonecraft's interpretation of

[37] Locke 106.
[38] The tradition of female charity can be traced throughout the period and has been mentioned in previous chapters. Davidoff & Hall 66.
[39] After people of noble birth fled from France to England, Smith opened her home to several immigrants, offering them what food and comfort she could afford. People did, in general, not treat her with the same level of benevolence. Some of her publishing companies refused to pay her bills in advance of publication, even though her novels (and poems) sold dependably well. Fletcher, Charlotte 191-192, 105.

Christianity.[40] The Woodfield family displays this matter-of-fact attitude towards benevolence throughout the text. By later hiring an unemployed French refugee priest as a language tutor for her charges, Mrs. Woodfield is combining an act of charity with benefiting her daughters' education. (70)[41] Benevolent action is shown to benefit everyone as well as being a feasible way of life. Smith is urging her readers to instigate change, and to take an active role in the remodelling of society, action which would also empower women.[42] Mrs. Woodfield's success at inculcating this behaviour into her family can be seen by the daughters acting independently of their mother. Henrietta has learned to be benevolent, which can be seen when she chooses not to pick wild strawberries herself, but to buy them from two poor girls, who are selling them in order to provide for themselves and their grandmother. She does not wish to "rob" them. (157) Her mother praises her, urging her to pick strawberries to add to the children's horde and then gladly purchases strawberries from the poor children. Elizabeth later has the idea to urge a wealthy lady (Mrs. Wadford) to share some of her gambling winnings with the poor and Mrs. Woodfield is proud of her for urging others to be benevolent. (152) As Myers agrees, this supports the notion that these powerful texts, which are purportedly for the education of children, also urge the adult reader, teacher, or mother to engage in a reimagining of social norms, or in Wollstonecraft's words, for women to make themselves "useful".[43]

Another method of overcoming emotional shallowness, is teaching the importance of emotional charity. As an example, the neighbour, Mr. Somerville, who is wealthy, but unhappy, as his children have married badly and cause him grief, is

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[40] Wollstonecraft firmly believes that every person contains an element of the divine, "that every human creature has some spark of goodness" from God. This liberal sentiment, if embraced, should incite compassion and benevolence for the less fortunate. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 150.
This natural benevolence was then frequently linked with the maternal impulse, which then in turn evolved into self-sacrifice. Kipp 26.

[41] Smith's sense of public duty is similar to Astell's, when she states: "We're all apt enough to cry out against the Age, but to what purpose are our Exclamations unless we go about to Reform it?" Astell 235. *sic.*
Smith's love of French culture and people is also well documented. Matthew Bray, "Removing the Anglo-Saxon Yoke: The Francocentric Vision of Charlotte Smith's Later Works," The Wordsworth Circle 24.3 (1993): 155-58.

[42] She is endorsing what Dolan calls the development of "authoritative maternal pedagogues." Dolan 122.

[43] Wollstonecraft, Original 109.
Myers elaborates on the intended effects of these didactic texts on their readers, stating that "[w]hen real-life matriarchs fail, fictional ones may fill the gap; but the aim is always to empower the living mother as teacher." Myers, "Impeccable" 37.
So, although *Rural Walks* could function as a surrogate mother for its child-readers, its primary purpose was to enable both mothers and future mothers to perform the much-needed informed role of teacher for her charges.

generous to the poor, which soothes his own heartache, as does the comforting thought that he will be rewarded in heaven. (57) His strongly developed sense of benevolence gives him the desire to continue with his life, which otherwise would be nothing but bleak.[44] This emotional benevolence is also a leading characteristic of Mrs. Woodfield, who is "[e]ver alive to the voice of human misery." (65) Mirroring Wollstonecraft in *Original Stories*, Mrs. Woodfield encourages her children to feel empathy and then to use their intellects in order to figure out how to aid those who have inspired the benevolent desire to help. (196)[45] For instance, she finds positions for Fanny, an orphaned destitute stranger, the young Benison and her brother, which allows them to continue their education, so that they can fulfil the dreams of their dead parents. Though she leads by example, she also exposes her children to the misery of others, so as to awaken empathy and the desire to help others. When Mrs. Woodfield and her charges witness fishing vessels sinking in a storm, the terror felt by the wives of the drowning fishermen overcomes Mrs. Woodfield's fear for herself and her children. The storm is violent enough to cause justified anxiety for their safety, though they are on dry land. She is overcome by empathetic "terror and pity" for the women forced to witness the likely deaths of their loved ones. (218) By showing this emotional upheaval, she is more able to offer support to the distraught women. This also develops her charges' sensibilities.

Mrs. Woodfield's strength of benevolence is also shown to include kindness in the face of tedium. While "relating to people she never saw, or desired to see, was very irksome to her [. . .] she compelled herself to listen with all the patience she could muster." (242) She values the emotions of others above her own inconvenience, even in trivial matters. In teaching the ability to empathise, she is also teaching the art of judging other people's irksome behaviour, not in order to criticise, but to follow Wollstonecraft's precepts for educating children, and for her children to try to find these undesirable qualities within themselves and then to remedy this: "[L]et us learn to avoid what strikes us as being so unpleasant in them, and let us never fall into that very common error of talking to people on subjects that cannot

[44] He is a successful example of Wollstonecraft's belief that "[u]niversal benevolence is the first duty, and we should be careful not to let any passion so engross our thoughts, as to prevent us from practicing it." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 91. By focusing on how to help others, he does not dwell on his own misfortunes.

[45] Similarly, in *Original Stories*, Mrs. Mason tells her charges, "I hope you have learned to think [. . .] and that your hearts have felt the emotions of compassion." Wollstonecraft, Original 168.

either interest or amuse them." (246)[46] People may put up with this in order to be seen in the company of people with higher social rank, but Mrs. Woodfield is stating that this is not worthwhile, while pressing her children to avoid feelings of superiority, when benevolence would be more beneficial to others and themselves, making them worthy of respect.

Smith also voices the need to extend benevolence to animals. Her premise is that depth of emotion must be extended to all living things, and, conversely, cruelty to animals is a precursor to cruelty to people.[47] She is quite passionate about this, stating: "Were I a man, I am persuaded I should turn knight-errant in defence of mere animals". (79) Smith voices frustration with limitations of her sex and wishes that noble traits of chivalry could be applied to women. She also is aware of the trait of malice in children and is thankful that her sons (who appear briefly in the text) do not display "that disposition to cruelty which is said to be inherent in human nature, and which I have sometimes thought really is so, however degrading the idea may be." (78) Smith shows frustration with children who are allowed to rescue injured animals, only to inadvertently kill them with kindness. (78) She also chastises her son for believing that he is tending a poached nest of birds better than the mother-bird ever could have. She is appalled by his arrogance and anthropomorphises the birds into a human family with kidnapped children and a grieving mother. (83)[48] She explains that she wants her sons to nurture the helpless orphans without the angry tone: "to engage you, in every case, to put yourself in the place of whatever creature you are about to injure or oppress." (85) By appealing to their empathy, she is instilling in them the desire to be benevolent.[49] Cruelty is labelled as "criminal". (86)

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[46] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 66.

[47] Smith may be building on Wollstonecraft's premise that "[s]tories of insects and animals are the first that should rouse the childish passions, and exercise humanity; and then they will rise to man." *Ibid* 143.

[48] Less impeccable than Wollstonecraft's Mrs. Mason, Mrs. Woodfield is occasionally quite passionate in her outbursts of disapproval. Wollstonecraft, Original 52.
Smith's use of a bird-related anecdote is very like the one used by Wollstonecraft in her *Original Stories*, also to teach what she calls "the emotions of humanity". *Ibid* 9-11.
The personification of the bird is reminiscent of Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories: Designed for the Instruction of Children, Respecting Their Treatment of Animals* (1786).

[49] Fletcher maintains that Smith's educational works are strongly influenced by Rousseau's *Emile*, though she applies Rousseau's delineated educational regime for boys to girls. Fletcher, Charlotte 228.
This instance in Smith's text exemplifies Rousseau's statement that children's "education calls for patience and gentleness, for a zeal and love which nothing can dismay." Rousseau 388.
In other words, Smith is employing the nurture of the breast and the discipline of the figurative cane.
Fletcher also comments that Smith's primary focus in her works for children is the development of sensibility, though it can be argued that this is merely a preamble for the benevolent life-style. Fletcher, Charlotte 228.

As in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, Smith demonstrates her strong beliefs that the female reader must be inculcated with a sense of rational and moral autonomy.[50] Overall, she does not distinguish between an unfeeling nature towards people and animals. As Wollstonecraft professes in *Thoughts*, Locke contends that "[c]ruelty should from the beginning be bred up in an abhorrence of killing or tormenting any living creature," because heartless acts reflect badly on the person committing them, and it is a mother's prerogative to address this in her charges.[51]

Countering Ignorance with Reason

Manners and courtesy are the primary lesson taught to girls, but Smith contends that these traits become more naturalised through reason.[52] Considering herself superior to the rural people around her, Caroline complains about finding someone's company tiresome, to which Mrs. Woodfield responds by pointing out the uselessness of criticising others, stating that criticising someone as being "dull" is "an observation that did not much contribute to make her otherwise." (5) Unlike in Opie's later-written work, she does not comment on how such observations are contrary to benevolence, she rationally criticises the ineffectual nature of them.[53] When Caroline continues to criticise, Mrs. Woodfield perceives a link between manner of dress and pretension and she voices an opinion similar to Wollstonecraft's on the subject when she says that "simplicity and neatness accord with humble fortune." (34)[54] In this manner, Caroline's obsession with fashion is shown in a pretentious light of affected wealth and rank. Her sense of superiority on the subject, however, is harder to curb. She behaves in a manner, which Locke warns against, and when an acquaintance's appearance becomes the object of Caroline's ridicule, as the woman is gaudily dressed, Mrs. Woodfield tells her: "If I had seen her, she would have appeared an object rather of concern than ridicule." (35)[55] Not only are Caroline's manners reprehensible, but her focus needs to be drawn into a benevolent vein. By inviting Caroline to see the woman as object of pity, she is urging her to

[50] Myers, "Impeccable" 34.
[51] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 15; Locke 91.
[52] For perhaps the most widely-read conduct book of conventional feminine behaviour, see, Dr. John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*.
[53] In Opie's work, the mother-figure, Mrs. Pemberton "wished to discourage every tendency in them [her sons] to detraction and satire." Opie, Tales 62.
[54] Discouraging vanity, Smith agrees with Wollstonecraft's precept that "Dress ought to adorn the person and not rival it." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 36.
[55] Locke 110.

attempt to understand the woman's circumstances, rather than blindly criticise her.[56] In other words, other people's foibles present an excellent opportunity for the observer to address and rectify their own.

Smith discourages blind prejudice and in this vice, Mrs. Woodfield's own daughters provide scope for lessons for the reader. They too pass judgement before analysing what they perceive. She counters Elizabeth's prejudicial trepidation of some poor people by urging her to confidently treat all strangers with kindness rather than wasting time trying to ascertain their worthiness. (45) Smith does not comment on the heartlessness of Elizabeth's prejudice, but focuses on how ill-advised it is to pass judgement before being aware of all of the facts.[57] Children should learn to not pass judgement, until they have informed themselves of the circumstances behind someone's actions, otherwise, their verdict comes across as rude, and "nothing can justify ill-breeding." (101) There is no excuse for poor behaviour and it is something for which mothers are responsible.[58] Later, her focus shifts from external concerns to internal ramifications, when she reprimands Elizabeth for treating an unfortunate woman with contempt, asking her, "where was your heart?" (102) Because she herself knows the woman's woeful story, she is shocked by the insensitivity of Elizabeth's actions. Prejudice not only makes children appear to be ill-bred, but it also develops callousness in them. Mrs. Woodfield tells Elizabeth that the belief that she outranks the people around her does not give her licence to be condescending towards them, because "[i]n a public room, every person is on an equality." (103) She wants her charges always to set a good example to others. However, she also stresses the importance of a genuine manner. Regarding affected kindness witnessed in an acquaintance, Mrs. Woodfield comments: "To such a woman as this, I have frequently been tempted to say, If this is your tenderness and your friendship, for Heaven's sake give me rudeness and enmity." (112) (*sic*) The extreme emotion regarding this issue is reminiscent of Wollstonecraft.[59]

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[56] Similarly, possibly inspiring Smith, Wollstonecraft contends that "[w]hile we are looking into another's mind, and forming their temper, we are insensibly correcting our own; and every act of benevolence which we exert to our fellow-creatures, does ourselves the most essential services." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 66.

[57] Wollstonecraft contends that "it requires some experience to be able to distinguish the dictates of reason from those of passion," however, it is important to teach young people to recognise the difference. *Ibid* 127.

[58] Austin. *See the entire work.*

[59] Wollstonecraft goes so far as to state that "[a]ffectation, and not ignorance, is the fair game for ridicule" Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 29.

Reading is proposed as an approved method of self-education and action taken for the broadening of knowledge, and Wollstonecraft also acknowledges that this manner of acquisition of information and mannerisms can also be diverting.[60] Smith obliquely encourages people to read by showing Mrs. Woodfield's disappointment in Caroline's small collection of books. The reader may suspect Smith of encouraging the sales of her own works in this indirect fashion, however, the fact remains that she encourages reading, whether it is self-promotion or not. In either case, she stresses the importance of parents directing their children's exposure to novels.[61] Mrs. Woodfield had no such parents, so she read indiscriminately any books which she encountered, causing her to acquire, "at a very early age, a great deal of desultory knowledge." (147) Wollstonecraft warns against this, as she fears that it hampers a child's development and encourages melodrama.[62] Mrs. Woodfield's first-hand experience of neglectful parenting and its consequences leads her to guide her own charges with more care. As a child, she aspired to gain her father's approval, and she confused quantity with quality of reading.[63] Her father discovered this, and remedied his remiss parenting, but punished Mrs. Woodfield for not being open with him. (150) By telling this personal story, Mrs. Woodfield is making her own expectations of her charges clear.[64] The repercussions of being exposed to questionable texts were giving her "false views of life", something which Wollstonecraft also warns against. (150)[65] Children are vulnerable to these things, as they have not formed the skills to question texts critically and this danger was of great public concern during the period, as discussed in previous chapters.[66] Mrs. Woodfield also cautions the girls against

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[60] *Ibid* 47.

[61] Smith mirrors Wollstonecraft's concern in *Thoughts*, in which she cautions that "[t]hose productions which give a wrong account of the human passions, and the various accidents of life, ought not be read before the judgment is formed, or at least exercised." *Ibid* 50.

[62] Smith once again shares Wollstonecraft's convictions that young women may be damaged by too much exposure to worldliness, or in Wollstonecraft's words: "What a painful train of reflections do then arise in the mind, and convictions of the vice and folly of the world are prematurely forced on it." *Ibid* 159.

[63] Fletcher contends that this anecdote reflects Smith's own experiences during childhood. Fletcher, Charlotte 15-16.

[64] Here Smith agrees with Locke, that lying is the most reprehensible vice, and that it must be addressed immediately. Mrs. Woodfield's actions of concealing her habits from her father are tantamount to lying, and so, her father is shocked by this covertness, much more so than by her reading habits. Locke 103.

[65] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 50.

[66] Wollstonecraft warns that unguided reading is "one great cause of the affectation of young women." *Ibid* 50.
Stephen Behrendt summarises this concern by stating that reading novels was blamed for "undermining moral character." Behrendt 96.

becoming "affected and ridiculous" (a vice associated with the reading of novels) warning against the "pretence of excessive sensibility" again much like Wollstonecraft's caution against the theatre, and any affected behaviour learned there. (110)[67] Generally, reading is purported to be a sensible way to spend time, however, Mrs. Woodfield adds that children should only read novels which manage to spin a good tale "without giving them those false views of life, which is one of the most serious objections against this species of writing." (282)[68] This "species of writing" is the sort of writing from which Smith supported herself and her children, and with this statement, she is justifying the writing and reading of her novels. The ability to reason greatly diminishes the dangers of unguided reading. She also recommends more conventional and widely accepted mind-broadening texts, such as essays, periodical papers, and newspapers, and travel writing.

Life Skills gained through Benevolence and Reason

Perhaps the most readily accepted role of the mother-figure is to teach her charges how to negotiate life's challenges. One of Mrs. Woodfield's objectives is to teach the children to attempt to see the best in people. She tells Elizabeth, who is negatively affected by Caroline's snobbery, regarding an acquaintance of theirs: "I own, Mrs. Gervais is not elegant, nor even educated; but she has many good qualities, which ought to make you overlook much greater defects." (30) This skill is linked to simple good manners taught in conventional conduct literature, but it is also a life philosophy, which enables the individual to have greater patience with tiresome people; it limits narcissism and feelings of superiority; and it paves the way to generosity of spirit and benevolent actions. Elizabeth's criticism of others, according to Mrs. Woodfield,

> will be certainly counteracting, my child, *the purposes of your education, which is to make you reasonable and happy*, if, instead of teaching you to pass over the slight faults of others, or to profit by them in mending your own, you learned to be vain of the very little you know [. . .] and to despise and fly from every one who may not have had equal advantages. (32) (*italics mine*)

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[67] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 148.

[68] Smith herself is guilty of teaching "false expectation" in the ending of *Celestina*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this idea again mirrors Samuel Johnson's widely-known seminal *Rambler, Number 4* (1750), in which he laments the effects of novels on young minds. Samuel Johnson, "Rambler, Number 4,".The Works of Samuel Johnson in Nine Volumes, Vol 2 (London: FQ Books, 2010) 208.

Here, Smith sums up her purpose in such a manner as to silence any dispute against the development of reason in women. No one can argue against the benefits of producing "reasonable and happy" women, who treat others with respect, in other words, to be as happy as is possible outside of heaven.[69] Strongly influenced by earthly concerns, if unchecked, Elizabeth's behaviour may turn her into a Mrs. Cardimore, an acquaintance, who is reminded by her friends of how fortunate she is compared to some people, and yet "[s]he does not think so, she sees nothing extraordinary in their being unhappy, impoverished, or liable to any other evil; but that *She* herself should have the smallest pebble in her path, seems the most strange thing in the world." (251) Mrs. Cardimore displays a profound lack of empathy and a complete inability to be benevolent, because her focus has always only been directed at herself. Smith encourages her readers to learn to be independent by looking after their best interests. However, by achieving this through education, Mrs. Woodfield explains, "you will acquire an habit of attention and of patience, useful to yourself." (155) Benevolent actions as habit as well as a rational and objective outlook on life are qualities desirable in future wives and mothers. By promoting this, Smith displays a knowledge of Wollstonecraft's premise that women have a public "duty" or the "precedency of moral obligation," which must always be at the forefront of their minds.[70] This "duty" gives them a sense of purpose, which aids in the development of a positive outlook on life. Smith agrees in this text, albeit in a more restrained manner.

Like Wollstonecraft, Smith shows awareness of the social limitations of her sex. Her text obliquely comments on the powerlessness of women when relating a story about a young woman who married "and, contrary to what generally happens in such cases, he was the man she would have preferred, had she had the power to chuse." (135) (*sic*) This statement is fraught with Smith's bitterness, regarding her naivety in her own choice of husband, who frittered away her earnings, even after they separated, frequently leaving her struggling to provide basic necessities for herself and her children.[71] Smith is warning young women about how little power of choice they have in their lives. Through Mrs. Woodfield's voice, she attempts to impart a level of this harsh realism to her child readers. She warns the girls (and the

[69] Her sentiment mirrors Astell's as she professes: "My earnest desire is, That you Ladies, would be as perfect and happy as 'tis possible to be in this imperfect state." Astell 56. *sic*.
[70] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 141.
[71] Fletcher, Charlotte 322.

reader) about irrational and callous people at whose mercy they may find themselves, stating that "an inhuman heart, hardened by selfish policy, is not to be moved." (168) The mother-figure must attempt to prepare her charges for life beyond her apron-strings, however, Mrs. Woodfield "was conscious of the impropriety of too frequently presenting to young minds gloomy and discouraging prospects of human life." (195) By discouraging children too much about humanity, they may sink into despair and fear to venture out into the world, or to face adversity at all and then there would be no scope for the reformation of social norms, if all women feign contentment with their lot out of cowardice.[72] The precept here is that women should not be raised to be meek. A good teacher and role-model admits when she sets a poor example, especially in this regard. Unlike Wollstonecraft's unshakable Mrs. Mason, Mrs. Woodfield panics briefly when a stranger is at the gate, as she is convinced that it is a bearer of terrible news and her daughters panic, believing it to be a madman and she admits that her reaction is silly. (272) She then turns it into a lesson and cautions her charges that "it is an improvident weakness to exhaust our spirits in contending with imaginary or possible evils". (275) It was widely believed that the 'exhaustion of the spirits' could lead to madness, unless emotions were governed by rational thought.[73] Furthermore, her reaction was counterproductive as it is a mother's calling to be brave in the face of perceived threats, for the sake of her children. (292) Though motherhood is shown to be both rewarding and empowering, Smith comments on the hardships associated with it, when Mrs. Woodfield states that "[t]he most tenderly affectionate child does not feel, for the fondest parent, the same degree of affection as that parent has felt for her.[74] This is so ordered by nature, who seems to have made

[72] As mentioned above, Smith's thoughts on this issue accord with Wollstonecraft's. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 159.

[73] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 134.
As addressed in the previous chapter, Opie also believes that unbalanced people were "victims of their sensibility" (much like in Wollstonecraft's *Maria*, in which madness is attributed to the "decay of reason".). Brightwell 15; Wollstonecraft, Maria 73.

[74] The power of the maternal role is acknowledged even by such conservative writers as Hannah More, who states that "[i]n the case of our children we are responsible for the exercise of acknowledged power: a power wide in its extent, indefinite in its effects, and inestimable in its importance." More, Strictures 59.
As well as this level of responsibility, according to Kipp, it was also widely believed by such renowned philosophers as David Hume and Adam Smith that the maternal impulse coincided with "an impulse of self-sacrifice so extreme that it becomes a form of horrific self-annihilation." Kipp 17.
Smith as well saw herself as a martyr to her children, both in the dangers she faced bringing them into the world and also in single-handedly supporting them financially. Fletcher, Charlotte 10.

the love of a mother for her children the strongest of all sensations." (275)[75] The mother-figure or teacher is shown to be the most selflessly benevolent being, performing countless self-sacrificing deeds.[76] This is the role performed for the reader by the author.

Smith showcases the effectiveness of an education in improving the individual's character through the development of benevolence and reason. Mrs. Woodfield's efforts with Caroline have improved her character greatly,

> [. . .] for so much was her character changed by the pains Mrs. Woodfield had taken to teach her to reflect, and by being detached from those scenes of thoughtless dissipation that had rendered her heart insensible by distracting her understanding, that her temper was now more likely to be injured by extreme sensibility than to want it. (200)

This success story underscores Wollstonecraft's assertion that any girl can overcome her vices if "her understanding took the lead, and she practiced virtue."[77] Previously repelled by poverty, Caroline is shocked at the stereotypes of gypsies, after having been frightened by the appearance of a beggar at their front gate being alleviated by Mrs. Woodfield. She asks Mrs. Woodfield why people spread horrid rumours, such as the idea the gypsies steal children. Mrs. Woodfield responds by telling her that mankind is cruel and that "it is almost cruel to give to young minds the fatal information of *how* wicked mankind have been." (229) With this, she cautions teachers and mother-figures to continue to foster a young person's sense of hope for humanity while gently battling their naivety, thus nurturing the desire to be benevolent and to not judge others too harshly, but to seek their weaknesses in an attempt to awaken pity, rather than criticism, again in concurrence with Wollstonecraft.[78] Mrs. Woodfield's efforts are rewarded by Caroline's "[g]ratitude towards her aunt, affection for her cousins, and a taste for the domestic amusements and resources the country afforded, had taken place of that sullen apathy, which on her coming to reside in the family had given her aunt so much uneasiness." (258) She has become that which Smith holds as an example of what parents should aim to

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[75] This premise that mothers have the instinct to sacrifice themselves for their children is explored in Opie's later-written *Adeline Mowbray*, as discussed in the previous chapter. Opie, Adeline 238.
[76] Smith sacrificed her relationship with William Hayley, whose mistress (her letters intimate) she would have liked to become. She, however, did not wish to risk the prospects of her daughters through any indiscretions on her part. Fletcher, Charlotte 128.
[77] Wollstonecraft, Original 81.
[78] Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 107.

achieve in moulding their daughters through the development of both reason and benevolence.

Overall, *Rural Walks* shows the influence of many precepts delineated by Locke and Wollstonecraft incorporated into Smith's view of how the world should aspire to be. Though Wollstonecraft gained respect for her didactic works, her life-style negated much of her social influence. Smith took Wollstonecraft's concepts and presented them again at a time when people had become unreceptive to the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Both Smith's philosophy and the manner in which the dominant female character dictates the behaviour of those around her are identical in *Rural Walks* as in *Celestina*, as will be made clear in the following chapter. By using what Cohen calls "the familiar format [which] had proved popular for both sexes, it could not be attacked and discarded merely on the grounds of its association with domestic teaching and women."[79] In other words, Smith established herself in *Rural Walks* as a maternal authority figure (whose power is acknowledged by Myers) who has wisdom to impart on her readers.[80] Dolan contends that Smith's use of surrogate mothers is unique to her in her works for children, however more oblique surrogacies can be traced in her novels, and indeed in the novels examined in previous chapters.[81] In Smith's opinion, people's actions should be driven by a desire to be benevolent and to show charity and kindness to strangers in need and her choice of genre here is more likely to be taken seriously than her novels. It can be argued that Smith shows a social need for women to be proud and confident leaders within their social circles and that they must wield this level of power with reason and a sense of citizenship.[82] *Rural Walks* employs the maternal voice in order to subtly alter how the female reader of any age thinks about herself and her role in society,

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[79] Cohen, "Familiar" 115.

[80] This is further corroborated by Myers, when she states that a woman author who writes for children empowers her social standing, as "teaching shapes her persona and her stance, grants her a mode in which to have her social say." Myers, "Impeccable" 35.
This is also further substantiated by Elizabeth Fay, when she states particularly that "children's literature thus reveals the author as maternal, transforming the absence of the mother in adult literature [as will be discussed in the following chapter] into a literary presence for child readers." Elizabeth Fay, A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) 92.

[81] Dolan 109.
Indeed, in her works for children, Dolan contends that "Smith focuses especially on those who have lost their mothers and who thus search for surrogate guidance and protection", which is also the case in her novel, *Celestina*. *Ibid* 110.

[82] Myers comments that one of the purposes of juvenilia is to teach young women that they have the power to make a difference in the world. Myers, "Impeccable" 47.

leading by way of example and influencing the expectations of the reader of the possibility for the reformation of social norms.[83]

[83] Guest 12.

Chapter 7
Celestina
– Emancipation Through the Maternal Guise

Written for the adult reader, Charlotte Smith's novel *Celestina* (1791) is not a typical example of domestic fiction.[1] Exposing similar principles to Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist ideals and educational precepts, it conforms to the conventional ending of the courtship novel only after the eponymous heroine showcases feminine strength and power in an attractive light, while receiving favourable reviews from the public (though Wollstonecraft herself didn't seem to recognise the feminist slant).[2] The

[1] Richardson remarks on how writers of children's fiction geared the style and content towards a specific age-group of reader in order to maximise the reformation of the reader's mind. Richardson, Literature 129. Arguably, the writers of novels as reformative fiction held similar strategies. Smith certainly seemed to believe this, according to Judith Stanton. Judith Phillips Stanton, ed, "Introduction," The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2003) xxx.
Furthermore, Mary Anne Schofield argues that the power of Smith's fictions lies in the blending of "romance fiction and personal fact", which lends it an air of truth while bewitching the reader through entertainment. Mary Anne Schofield, "The Witchery of Fiction," Living by the Pen – Early British Women Writers, ed. Dale Spender (London: Teacher's College Press, 1992) 181.

[2] In *Romantic Aspirations, Restricted Possibilities: The Novels of Charlotte Smith* Katharine Rogers claims that "[a]ll Smith's heroines show [a] discrepancy between aim and achievement." She explains that Smith felt forced to conform to convention in that her heroines were youthfully naive and that their character was not permitted to be too independent in their ways without risking loss of readers. Katharine M. Rogers, "Romantic Aspirations, Restricted Possibilities: The Novels of Charlotte Smith," Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837, eds. Carol Shiner Wilson & Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) 80.
The Town and Country Magazine calls this novel "a work of considerable merit." "Review of Celestina." The Town and Country Magazine 24 (London: A. Hamilton Jr., 1792) 57.
The Monthly Review praises Smith in general, referring o her as an author of "ready invention and elegant taste", while stating that *Celestina* "will give the reader no unfavourable idea of Mrs. Smith's talents, both for prose composition, and for poetry." "Review of Celestina." Monthly Review 35 (London: Ralph Griffiths, 1791) 287, 291.
The Critical Review praises Smith herself, decreeing that "[i]n the modern school of novel-writers, Mrs. Smith holds a very distinguished rank" and that in the novel "the situations are generally interesting, and generally well chosen." "Review of Celestina." The Critical Review. Ed. Tobias Smollett (Edinburgh: Archibald Hamilton, 1791) 318, 320.
Smith's contrived ending actually receives high praise in *The English Review* which states that "we find no unnatural effects produced by particular causes; no incidents o'erstepping the modesty of nature; no characters *perfectly good*; no prospects painted in tints too glowing and unnatural; and no situations represented in which misery is left totally destitute of hope. This is the proper end of novel-writing." "Review of Celestina." The English Review 18 (London: H. Murray, 1791) 259.
Wollstonecraft treats Smith with some respect, referring to her as an "ingenious writer", while deeming *Celestina* to be "an amusing production [. . .] very defective and unnatural; but [with] many lucid parts [. . .] scattered with negligent grace, and amidst the entanglement of wearisome episodes." She does, however concede that "there is a degree of sentiment in some of her delicate tints, that steals on the heart,

bulk of the novel indicates to the reader that women are perfectly capable of living life without the protection or guidance of a man, provided that they have sufficient income to support them, so that they can contribute to society by offering moral and intellectual guidance, as well as nurturing support to those who need it.[3] These maternal qualities show strength of character without detracting from femininity. This concept works well in dialogue with Wollstonecraft in her discourse on "masculine women," who merely are attempting "the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character."[4] Self-improvement and capability do not preclude femininity in the novel. Smith's heroine challenges her contemporary societal norms, becoming a powerful attractive woman who combines feminine maternal attributes with intellectuality and competence.

Celestina may appear to be a courtship novel at first glance as the eponymous heroine undertakes a journey of self-development which culminates in her marriage to the man whom she loves.[5] However, there is no political undercurrent of a symbolic union between divergent classes or countries.[6] Indeed, the heroine's development has very little to do with her ultimate marriage or her increased suitability as a bride. The novel also contains aspects of the Gothic tale in that Celestina becomes increasingly angst-ridden as

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and made us *feel* the exquisite taste of the mind that guided the pencil." "Review of Celestina," Analytical Review 10 (London: Joseph Johnson, 1791) 409.
Wollstonecraft respected Smith enough to include several of her sonnets (*Sonnet to Sleep* and *Sonnet to a Nightingale*) in her *Female Reader*, however she had little respect for her novels and in her review of *Ethelinde* goes so far as to state that "we cannot help lamenting, that this elegant writer neglects her talent for poetry" by writing novels. "Review of Ethelinde." Analytical Review 5. London: Joseph Johnson, 1789. 484.

[3] In many ways the novel conforms to the English *Bildungsroman*, or novel of development, in that the heroine must acquire certain skills in order to negotiate life successfully. Parrinder 30.

[4] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 74.
Angela Keane confirms in *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s* that "women who adopted the learned discourses associated with professional middle-class men were caricatured as monstrously masculine." Angela Keane, Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 12.
In *Gender Trouble*, Butler throws modern light on this anxiety, contending that "gender identity appears primarily to be the internalization of a prohibition that proves to be formative of identity." Butler, Gender 86.
In other words, Wollstonecraft's fear of being classified as "masculine" pushes her to define femininity as divergent from many characteristics traditionally defined as masculine.

[5] Parrinder attests to the broad appeal of the courtship novel to "the curiosity of young readers, since it offered both instruction in the social proprieties and the indulgence of (licit or illicit) desire." Parrinder 31.

[6] Parrinder asserts that these are frequent aspects of the courtship novel. *Ibid* 30-31.

she continually fails to escape the grasps of her unwanted suitors.[7] The overall purpose of the novel seems to be the exposition of forms of self-empowerment for women. Smith exposes more moderate ideals of what later became Wollstonecraft's vision of this by masking some of the authority behind maternal nurture and ultimately by giving her heroine weaknesses which accord with contemporary misogyny, while she parades feminist vigour in a didactic manner.[8] By doing this, she covertly forces the conservative reader to consider socially revolutionary ideals, without insulting the status quo.[9] In order to understand Smith's feminist thread in the novel, it is important to examine the efficacy of maternal power in the mother-figures. This behaviour is then mimicked by

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[7] This terror, driven by the act of "straining to exceed some limit" adheres to David Miall's definition of the Gothic novel. David Miall, "Gothic Fiction," A Companion to Romanticism, ed. Duncan Wu (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) 346.
Having said this, all of these categories of writing are disputed and fluid, but nevertheless worth mentioning as proof of the complexity of this seemingly trivial novel. Celestina certainly conforms to Diane Long Hoeveler's definition of Gothic novels, as a "thinly disguised effort at propagandizing a new form of conduct for women." Diane Long Hoeveler, Gothic Feminism – the Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998) xv.
It is also worth mentioning that the relentless pursuit of men mirrors Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*.
[8] In the introduction to the novel, Loraine Fletcher conveys that Smith "and Mary Wollstonecraft were the first writers to see that the personal is the political, but Smith was quicker than Wollstonecraft to convey that perception into the plots and domestic settings of the novel," thus influencing her readers while entertaining them. Loraine Fletcher, ed, "Introduction," Celestina (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2004) 42.
This is further substantiated by Ros Ballaster in *Women and the Rise of the Novel*. Ballaster, "Women" 201-202.
For further details on Smith's political opinions, see her novels *Desmond* (1794) and *The Young Philosopher* (1798).
[9] In *Passionate Encounters*, Ann Jessie Van Sant explores the desire for change felt by many feminist women, stating that by shaping the reader's perceptions of issues which concern the writer, the writer manages to influence and reform cultural perceptions of these issues. Ann Jessie Van Sant, Ann Jessie, Passionate Encounters – Eighteenth-century sensibility and the novel: the senses in social context (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1993) 90.
This is further supported by Bannet. Bannet 55.
Myers concurs. Myers, "Impeccable" 54.
It is also worth noting that Smith had to please conservative readers, in order to ensure high sales of her novels, as she needed the income to support her family. Fletcher, Charlotte 105.
Celestina sold for £50 per volume. Stanton, Collected 28.
Rogers explains that "a woman could not see herself as a prophet in the manner of Blake and Wordsworth. As a hard-working professional whose works had to meet the bills, she was tied to this world." Rogers, "Romantic" 83.
Novels were still considered luxury items, "far above the means of any except the comfortably off." However, they *were* selling, especially as they were increasingly designed to appeal to a wide audience. Watt 42, 48.
Incidentally, public opinion was ambivalent about the merits of women publishing their writing. Hester Chapone considered financial profit to be less of a problem than vanity acquired through the positive reception of written works by women. Chapone, Letters (1816) 163.
Guest comments on Elizabeth Carter's approval of women earning a living through writing in *Small Change*. Guest 130.

Celestina who is not a biological mother, but who becomes adept at using maternal authority on weaker characters who in some ways become her surrogate children, proving to the reader that this emancipating power can be harnessed by any woman, whether she has children or not. Finally, Smith nearly negates Celestina's power by having her revert to the swooning helpless creature found in the romantic novels so abhorred by Wollstonecraft, once her hero reappears at the end in order to marry her.[10] The only power Celestina retains is financial, as she ultimately is blessed with an inherited fortune and title, much like the hero in Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones – a Foundling* (1749), albeit with gender reversal. By doing this, Smith's novel remains appealing to a wide readership, including people shocked by the revolution in France, in whose minds she normalises radical feminist ideals.[11]

Smith's Exposition of Mediocre Maternal Figures

Celestina obliquely explores female power when it is wielded as maternal authority, delineating both successful and unsuccessful examples and the effects they have on young people as they mature. Mrs. Willoughby is a well-meaning but broadly ineffectual mother, who attempts to educate her children. Her only truly admirable act is the adoption of Celestina, whom she finds in a convent while on holiday in France.[12] She dotes on her children, but ultimately fails them, as she is too indulgent.[13] Smith describes

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[10] As Smith became disempowered by her own marriage, it can be argued that she viewed marriage as being detrimental to women's authority as well as their ability to determine their destinies. Fletcher, Charlotte 6. Celestina's sensibility becoming a liability is yet another element of the Gothic novel, according to Miall. Miall 349.

[11] The conventional ending of the novel in marriage coupled with Celestina's regression from forceful individualist to simpering conformist may have increased the sales of this novel. This would also have been a strong motivator for Smith, who depended on the income from her writing in order to support herself and her children.

[12] Dolan comments on Smith's use of orphans and surrogate mothers throughout her novels and works for children, stressing that biological relationships are superseded by the socially established bonds. Dolan 110.
Bannet also comments that the loss of one or both parents was a common enough occurrence before a girl reached marriageable age that by depicting orphans successfully navigating life was both instructive and empowering. Bannet 74.

[13] This is something Wollstonecraft warns against. Wollstonecraft, Vindication 137.
This is also supported by Elizabeth Bergen Brophy who comments on contemporary convention, stating that "duties as mother are love and care, but overfondness is cautioned against." Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, Women's Lives and the 18th Century English Novel (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991) 10.
Similarly, Smith addressed the same issue earlier in *Emmeline* (1788), in which Delamere, one of the heroine's unwanted suitors, is described as "the victim of his mother's fatal fondness." Charlotte Smith, Emmeline, ed. Loraine Fletcher (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2003) 476.

Mrs. Willoughby's relationship with her son, George Willoughby, by stating that her "love for him might have been said to border on weakness" and he is "ever the object of her tenderest affections."[14] Mrs. Willoughby's maternal doting is shown to work to the detriment of her children. Willoughby is a dreamer, who is unaware of his family's financial difficulties, as his father squandered the family fortune. (63) He believes that he is free to marry Celestina and live a life of luxury on the estate of Alvestone, which he intends to restore. It is part of Mrs. Willoughby's maternal duty to prepare her children for life outside of the home, but she is "unwilling to interrupt the felicity of her son's happiest hours, by representing to him a dreary prospect of the future." (59) Her affection for his whimsical nature keeps her from preparing him for his familial duty to marry for money; instead, she naively hopes for a financial miracle. (59) By protecting him from adult worries, she is not being an effective mother and her nurturing intentions are actually harming him. However, her children, both biological and adopted, love her.

Mrs. Willoughby's indulgent mothering has worse effects on her daughter than on her son. After the death of her good friend Everard, she becomes too ill to attend social events with her spirited daughter, Matilda, so she allows her to go with friends rather than with adult supervision, and she "did indeed engage in them with an avidity which her mother was too indulgent to repress." (62) She allows Matilda too much freedom and when her health declines further, "Matilda, then about sixteen, was the only person about who seemed insensible of the alteration which now made a slow but very evident progress in her looks and manner." (62) Much like her later-created character of Caroline in *Rural Walks*, the mother's indulgence has created an ungrateful insensitive child.[15] When Mrs. Willoughby dies of her ailment, Matilda rather shockingly does not mourn her. (70) Matilda's coldness towards her mother could be explained by her mother's lack of involvement in disciplining her as a child, as a mother's indulgence can be interpreted by the child as indifference. Wollstonecraft concurs, stating that she believes "it is questionable whether negligence or indulgence be most hurtful; but I am inclined to think

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[14] Charlotte Smith, Celestina, ed. Loraine Fletcher (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2004) 58, 70. *sic*. All subsequent *Celestina* citations are from this edition.

[15] Smith, Rural 11.
Wollstonecraft warns that children "ought not to be let run wild, nor confined too strictly." If they are, they lose respect for their parents and fail to learn self-discipline as well. Both of these then lead to an insensitivity towards others. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 125, 6.
This builds on Locke's warning against indulgence. Locke 32.

that the latter has done most harm."[16] Mrs. Willoughby's brand of nurturing, which was far too permissive when it came to her daughter, is the cause of Matilda's reciprocated indifference and inability to care. The same brand of nurture leaves Celestina unharmed, as she is naturally of a more benevolent disposition.

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Willoughby devoted her entire life to her children.[17] Though partial to her son's tutor, Mr. Everard, her children remain her sole focus. Smith goes so far as to explain that "she made this sacrifice to maternal tenderness, and refused her hand to a second husband, because she would suffer nothing to interrupt the attention she owed to the children of the first." (353)[18] She devotes her time to their education and tries to treat them with equal affection and refers to them as "her three children", a phrase which later causes Willoughby to wonder if Celestina might be Mrs. Willoughby's illegitimate daughter by Mr. Everard. (55 & 105) Though both Matilda and Willoughby suffer from her favouritism, Willoughby and Celestina recognise her valiant efforts as a mother and appreciate all that she has taught them. She does exhibit some assertiveness. Her maternal power is made clear through Willoughby's reaction to her disapproval of his love for Celestina: "when catching his mother's eye, who seemed to look at him reproachingly, he blushed," then left abruptly, rather than face her displeasure. (66) This is one of the few instances when she exerts her authority over him. After her death, (perhaps because of this authoritative incident) Willoughby describes her to a friend as "a woman whom, had you known, you would have reverenced and loved." (132) This "reverence and love" show respect, which can only be earned through some level of effective guidance.[19] Fulfilling her desires is of the utmost importance to both of them, even after her death, which is why they do not marry initially, as "she deserved to be obeyed." (97) Mrs. Willoughby inspired respect and love in these two children, and is therefore a successful mother in some ways. Her

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[16] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 137.
[17] According to Brophy, at this time, "[a] widow is expected to always regard her children's welfare, not her own happiness." Brophy 11.
[18] In this manner she exemplifies Wollstonecraft's creed that it is "the duty of every rational creature to attend to its offspring." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 1.
[19] Similarly, Celestina holds Mrs. Willoughby's memories in "tender venerations", possibly because she feels beholden to her for adopting her. (323)
Reverence and love are gained through consistent parenting, which sets parameters for acceptable behaviour. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 6; Locke 36.

benevolence meets with Smith's approval, while her lackadaisical attitude towards discipline serves as a warning to readers to not indulge their children. The melancholia induced by her death, makes Celestina desire to imitate her.[20] Celestina takes what she has learned from her as a starting point, and improves on this knowledge by becoming a superior mother-figure.

When Willoughby assigns Mr. Thorold (the local vicar and his friend) to protect Celestina, the reader encounters yet another (by both Wollstonecraft's and Smith's standards) deficient mother-figure.[21] Like Smith's Caroline in the later-written *Rural Walks*, Mrs. Thorold is portrayed as a vain, insensitive, and irrational gossip, who is crudely materialistic in her obsession with rank. (168 & 187)[22] She exemplifies what Wollstonecraft calls "women, whose minds are not enlarged by cultivation [. . . and] are very unfit to manage a family."[23] She is a poor mother, because she does not take the time and effort to educate her children with care, as "she told her son [. . .] not only what she knew, but invented answers on some points which she only guessed at." (183)[24] Her children and the task of raising them are not her primary focus.[25]

Like Mrs. Willoughby, she does not treat her children equally, though this does not seem to concern her. Her younger son, Montague Thorold, is a "very good scholar, with a passion for poetry" and a propensity to fall madly in love with any beautiful woman he sees. (179) When he falls in love with Celestina, "his mother only ridiculed him, telling him that he was never easy but when playing the Philander, and that he cared not with whom," not realising that his feelings in this case are deeper and more sincere than before. (187) Wollstonecraft terms this "[t]he want of natural affection in many

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[20] As in Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, Celestina's imitation of her surrogate mother accords with Judith Butler's concept of melancholia, in which "the loved object is lost through a variety of means: separation, death, or the breaking of an emotional tie." Through imitation, the loss is lessened, as the act of imitation creates the illusion of resurrection. Characteristics thought to be lost are re-enacted and thus the memory is kept alive. Butler, Gender 87.

[21] Mrs. Thorold exemplifies what Wollstonecraft calls a "[w]oman [who will] seldom exert enlightened maternal affection; for she either neglects her children, or spoils them by improper indulgence." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 222.

[22] Smith, Rural 50.

[23] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 135.

[24] Wollstonecraft stresses the importance of answering children's questions truthfully, as this encourages their sense of curiosity, which urges them to further pursue their education. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 18. She also comments on how ridiculous women appear when they act knowledgeable about something which is beyond their understanding. *Ibid* 132.

[25] This in itself presents her in a negative light, especially in contrast with Mrs. Willoughby, who saw motherhood as her "task of life". Wollstonecraft, Vindication 119.

women," the cause of which lies in ignorance and narcissism.[26] Mrs. Thorold moulds him in a very specific way. She disciplines him the moment she discerns inappropriate attachments or behaviour with biting sarcasm rather than with sober reason.[27] He is not indulged or pampered, but her action is neither supportive nor effective. Mrs. Thorold's strictness poses the mother-figure as being in a position of power over men and this power can be abused. She finds his melodrama irksome and considers him a "fool," whose attachment to Celestina is mere "nonsense." (232) Completely lacking benevolence, she does not realise that his love is sincere and that Celestina's romantic indifference is torturing him. Though her reprimand is apt, through her lack of sympathy she is exacerbating his self-pity, hampering his development to manhood.

When it comes to her elder son, Captain Thorold (who is destined to inherit a fortune), Mrs. Thorold is perhaps even more permissive than Mrs. Willoughby is with George Willoughby: "Mrs. Thorold doted on her eldest son, whose figure and fortune gratified her vanity," even though he was "spoiled from his first entrance into life, [and] he had learned to consider himself as irresistible, and supposed every woman he saw his own." (179 & 178) He is a rake, who seduces women and leaves them once he has tired of them. Mrs. Thorold is not entirely unaware of this tendency, yet she sees him as a "superior being" and delights in his mercenary attitude, possibly because this is something she can relate to better than Montague's "modest and unassuming" sensibilities. (187 & 179)

When comparing the characters of the brothers while considering their mother's inconsistency in raising them, Captain Thorold's callous behaviour can be attributed to his mother's indulgence, while Montague Thorold's caring character can, to a certain extent, be attributed to his mother's cruelly firm hand. Wollstonecraft explores this phenomenon:

> Severity is frequently the most certain as well as the most sublime proof of affection; and the want of this power of the feelings, and of that lofty, dignified affection which makes a person prefer the future good of the beloved object to a

[26] *Ibid* 111.

[27] At one instance when Montague Thorold is overwhelmed with discouragement while relentlessly pursuing Celestina, he "sighed so loud and so long, as to attract notice and some very acrimonious speeches from his mother." (221) Again, Smith is furthering Wollstonecraft's precepts that this form of discipline is harmful. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 4; Locke 71.

> present gratification is the reason why so many fond mothers spoil their children, and has made it questionable whether negligence or indulgence be most hurtful; but I am inclined to think that the latter has done most harm.[28]

By indulging her elder son, she is neglecting her maternal duty and any discipline, even if it is overly harsh, is better than none. Unlike Mrs. Willoughby, she is not allowing her sensibilities to override her reason. Instead, she is allowing her own selfish goals to override the feelings of other. This form of inconsistent nurturing is harmful to children, as it borders on indifference to one son, while intensifying the narcissistic nature of the other. Smith's disapproval is obvious and having witnessed his mother's cruelty Celestina is more likely to mother Montague out of pity.[29]

Smith's Vision of the Ideal Mother-figure

One mother-figure who inspires Celestina and becomes a role-model to her and the reader is Mrs. Elphinstone, a woman Celestina encounters in her travels, as she derives great comfort and a sense of purpose from her children.[30] The first image of Mrs. Elphinstone in the novel is of her being surrounded by order and happiness, all of her creation: "A cradle, with a sleeping baby in it, stood at her feet, by which a little girl of three years old sat, as if watching the infant, and on hassocks near the window were placed two little boys, the elder not above six years old, who were learning their tasks." (119) Smith seems to have lifted this concept from Wollstonecraft who paints a similar image:

> I think I see her surrounded by her children, reaping the reward of her care. The intelligent eye meets hers, whilst health and innocence smile on their chubby cheeks, and as they grow up the cares of life are lessened by their grateful attention. She lives to see the virtues which she endeavoured to plant on principles, fixed into habits, to see her children attain a strength of character sufficient to enable them to endure adversity without forgetting their mother's example.[31]

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[28] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 137.
[29] Mrs. Thorold's example of reprehensible female power teaches Celestina and the reader how not to behave.
[30] Motherhood was widely believed to give women a sense of purpose. Davidoff & Hall 342.
[31] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 119.

This is presented as an ideal image, something to which young women should aspire. Mrs. Elphinstone takes great pride and pleasure in her children. They give her life meaning: "without them, [. . .] I am afraid that I should have tired long ago in the rude and various path I have trod." (255)[32] The role of the mother is the only source of Mrs. Elphinstone's strength, as her husband (whose character is based on Smith's own spouse) is unreliable and philandering.[33] She is implying that without the vocation of motherhood, she would have lost hope and interest in life. This role has given her a purpose, which is what Celestina is seeking after losing Willoughby. Once she has adopted the role of mother, she has a reason to live as well as a means to assert herself. By presenting this image of idealised maternity, Celestina's actions of nurturing strangers appear to mirror the maternal impulse, while putting her in a position of power over those who assume the role of 'child' in her presence.

Another ideal mother-figure is Lady Horatia Howard, an old friend of Mrs. Willoughby, who in many ways represents the feminist emancipated woman, in that she is intelligent, kind, wise, maternally powerful, practical, and (as a widow) independent of all men.[34] As the original conception of Mrs. Woodfield in Smith's later-written *Rural*

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[32] Later, when her husband dies at sea, she becomes nearly catatonic with grief and can only be rousted from this when she is made aware of her children's need for her. (304, 311)
Smith addressed the power of maternal love similarly in *Emmeline* (1788) when a minor character's life becomes unbearable: "Lady Adelina had, till then, wished to die. She saw her child – and wished to live." Smith, Emmeline 262.

[33] The autobiographical elements of this character are discussed in detail by Judith Stanton. Judith Stanton "Charlotte Smith and 'Mr. Monstroso': An Eighteenth-Century Marriage in Life and Fiction," Women's Writing: The Elizabethan to Victorian Period 7.1 (2000): 7-22.
Smith frequently exposed her husband's infamy through characters in her novels, a fact which became well known amongst her reading public. This seems to have prompted Wollstonecraft's sympathetic review of the later-written *Marchmont* (1796), in which she states that "[i]t is to be lamented that talents like hers have not had a more genial sky to ripen under; and that the delightful task of invention has been a labour of patience rather tending to embitter than soothe a wounded mind. Her manner, indeed, of alluding to her domestic sorrows must excite sympathy, and excuse the acrimony with which she executes, and holds up o contempt, the man to whom she attributes them." "Review of Marchmont." Analytical Review 25 (London: Joseph Johnson, 1797) 523.

[34] This is an odd character to have in a courtship novel, as her absence of a male protector is portrayed as a source of independence and happiness, rather than rendering her as someone to be pitied. This underscores the socio-political purpose of the novel. She is compared to Lady Russell who advises Anne in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. Fletcher, Charlotte 138.
Further detailed analysis of Smith's influence on Austen can be found in Jacqueline Labbe's *Narrating Seduction: Charlotte Smith and Jane Austen*. Jacqueline Labbe, "Narrating Seduction: Charlotte Smith and Jane Austen," Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008): 113-128.
Schofield contends that Smith is "trying to show her readers that they do not have to accept the lies men offer, that they have a right to their own minds, selves, and lives." Schofield, "Witchery" 186.

Walks, she is worldly enough to consistently offer sound advice, and she is financially secure and prestigious enough to be able to do and say whatever she likes. The fact that she uses this freedom with decorum makes her an ideal role-model for Celestina and the reader. She represents the person Celestina could become if she abandoned her love for Willoughby. Having lost her children and her closest brother, as well as her estranged husband, Lady Horatia, spends most of her time travelling and pursuing philanthropic projects. (286)[35] Celestina becomes one of these ventures and she feels for her "an affection almost as tender as she could have felt has she been her mother." (384) This clearly expresses the mother-daughter dynamic which these two characters share and which (like Mrs. Elphinstone) revitalises Lady Horatia and lends her a greater sense of purpose.[36]

Lady Horatia exemplifies Wollstonecraft's ideal woman as her emotions are governed by reason. When Celestina unexpectedly encounters Willoughby at a party, she is so taken aback that she first shrieks and nearly swoons, unbeknownst to Lady Horatia, and then, having collected herself, asks to leave, claiming to be suffering from a headache. (377)[37] Lady Horatia watches over her the entire night, "sitting by her bed side, holding one of her hands, and gazing on her with great concern." (379)[38] She then urges Celestina to govern her emotions and her "reasonable and gentle arguments had their desired effect." (379) Like Wollstonecraft's Mrs. Mason in *Original Stories*, she is kind and gentle, but does not indulge irrational behaviour.[39] Lady Horatia exhibits exactly the sort of maternal guidance, which Celestina provides for Jessy, Vavasour, Montague, and to a lesser extent Willoughby throughout the novel, as a self-empowered woman. Lady Horatia's rational authority serves to make the reader aware of Celestina's regression as she surrenders to her emotions. This underscores Smith's feminist belief

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[35] Indeed, charity was considered to be a lady's calling, especially concerning the impoverished members of the community. Davidoff & Hall 429; Stott, Anne 110.

[36] Abrams explains this sort of relationship by stressing the dependence which unattached women experienced: "[i]n the absence of a male breadwinner a woman was obliged to find a substitute family to perform a similar function," as a possible "survival strategy" for women who wished to remain unmarried. Abrams, Lynn 92.

[37] This incident is compared to Marianne's reaction to being ignored by her Willoughby (the name cannot be a coincidence) in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Fletcher, Charlotte 304.

[38] This scenario is very similar to the seminal moment (discussed in a previous chapter) in the later-written *Adeline Mowbray*, in which Opie stresses the intense bond which is formed between mother and daughter when the mother-figure nurtures the ill daughter-figure, who is in a near infant-like state. Opie, Adeline 8.

[39] Wollstonecraft, Original 55.

that women are perfectly capable of being respectable and authoritative, if they govern their passions, and that this does not detract from their conventional nurturing femininity; indeed it adds to it.[40]

Lady Horatia has a sober and practical outlook on life. She is concerned with securing Celestina's independence and provides for her future by bequeathing her £2000. (384)[41] She urges her to consider marrying Montague Thorold, as he can afford to support her and keep her in upper-middle-class comfort.[42] She is also convinced that he would not dominate Celestina, allowing her to be her own person and to pursue her own goals. (385) Celestina, though "deeply sensible of the uncommon generosity [. . .] made it a rule never to oppose the wishes of Lady Horatia." (385) However, she rejects Lady Horatia's guidance.[43] At this point, Smith's focus on Celestina as a conduct guide to the reader has clearly shifted to Lady Horatia. Celestina loses all of her assertiveness, as she regresses into a child-like role, while Lady Horatia becomes the sagacious voice of reason.[44]

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[40] This again expounds on Wollstonecraft's ideals. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 99.

[41] She urges Celestina to "wean" herself from her "excessive partiality" to Willoughby, emphasising Celestina's regression into an infantile state of dependence. (391) Dolan remarks that most of Smith's works culminate in "the achievement of relative self-sufficiency" of her main female characters, underscoring her feminist agenda. This novel is no exception, despite the regression of Celestina's character by the close of the novel. At least she has some financial freedom due to Lady Horatia's generosity. Dolan 118.

[42] Davidoff and Hall's research indicates that some women felt forced into marriage through economic circumstances. Davidoff & Hall 325.
Smith may have rejected this match for her heroine, as she herself was married off to her reprehensible husband, so as to no longer financially burden her father. Stanton, "Charlotte". *This is in reference to the entire article.*

[43] A modern psychological interpretation suggests that Celestina, in a way, has returned to the womb or *chora*, by being taken in and nurtured by Lady Horatia, who has, in a way, become the mother she never had. Celestina is experiencing at a symbolic level the attraction/repulsion facets of Julia Kristeva's analysis of people's relationships with their mothers; she contends that since children are drawn to their mothers, identifying them as the source (in Celestina's case the monetary and emotional source) of their existence, they simultaneously require a sense of their separate individuality. This is why the mother figure is attractive to emulate, even while the 'child' wishes to be free of it. This dependence inevitably turns into resentment. Kelly Oliver, Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double-bind (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993) 60.

[44] With her "maternal council", she even assists Celestina in her struggles with her unwanted suitors, "from whose visits she knew not how to disengage herself." (345, 349)
Ballaster considers this sort of sheltering to be an avoidance of the threat of exposure of the female body to the public. She proposes that this protection culminates in the heroine realising that she must ultimately abandon her idealised romantic lover in favour of a more mature and well-grounded man, much as Marianne does in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Ballaster, "Women" 198.
Though Lady Horatia urges Celestina to marry Thorold (who is *not* older and wiser, but nonetheless more suited in practical matters than Willoughby), she ultimately rejects this advice.

Celestina as Feminist Ideal

Smith endows Celestina with strong independent traits, which accord with Wollstonecraft's feminist principles.[45] Nature has made Celestina physically beautiful and her personality is such that it adds to this beauty. (99) She is not vain like Matilda, in fact she frequently is "perfectly unconscious of the power of her own charms," which make men fall madly in love with her, when she is merely speaking to them sensibly, showing rationality to be an attractive trait. (146) Her primary characteristics are her universal benevolence and her ability to reason. These traits are idealised by Wollstonecraft and allow Celestina to influence men in a positive and respectable way as she gains confidence.[46] She also possesses more traditional feminine qualities. Near the end of the novel, as Willoughby realises that he is free to marry Celestina at last, he loses complete control of his emotions, however "his spirits became calmer, and the native serene dignity of his mind returned," simply because she is embracing him. (533) She has within her what Rousseau terms a "gentleness," which is a fundamental ingredient in a maternal woman, ensuring that she makes those who are in her presence more biddable.[47]

Though possessing strong sensibilities, Celestina's actions are driven by her ability to reason. Wollstonecraft emphasises the need for women to think clearly for themselves, as "in every circumstance of life there is a kind of individuality, which requires an exertion of judgement."[48] Celestina's intelligence is made most apparent by her sense of honour, duty, and propriety. She is what Wollstonecraft terms a "moral

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[45] Fletcher observes that "Smith's feminine model is as independent as possible for an unmarried young woman in the middle or upper class who wished to remain socially acceptable." Fletcher, "Introduction" 19.
In spite of this, throughout the novel, Celestina is presented as an example of correct yet powerful behaviour, even though this sort of behaviour would generally be considered to be unwomanly. Davidoff & Hall 451.
Smith's desire for female independence is addressed in more practical terms in *Rural Walks*, when she urges young women to acquire skills which may later earn them enough income to survive. Smith Rural 60-61.

[46] Wollstonecraft voices the importance of this by stating that any woman's "first wish should be to make herself respectable". Wollstonecraft, Vindication 97.

[47] Rousseau 399.
Wollstonecraft comments on female sensibilities, stating that "[w]omen are supposed to possess more sensibility, and even humanity, than men, and their strong attachments and instantaneous emotions of compassion are given as proofs." Wollstonecraft, Vindication 260.

[48] *Ibid* 111.
She also clarifies that "sensibility is not reason." *Ibid* 72.

agent."[49] When Willoughby first proposes that they marry in spite of having promised his mother on her death-bed that he would marry his wealthy cousin (Miss Fitz-Hayman), Celestina protests vehemently (exemplifying Wollstonecraft's ideals), stating that "she should never forgive herself were she to be the means of his breaking a promise so solemnly given" to her "dear deceased benefactress." (98)[50] She does this in spite of being in love with him, as her sense of honour and duty to her adopted mother is greater than her desire for happiness. She also considers Willoughby's happiness as she "coolly reflected on it" and decides "that it was very probably his love would soon yield to the regret which would arise from their sacrifice" of the family estate, which would be either sold or fall into ruin, if Willoughby does not marry for money. (100) Smith ensures that the reader does not think this comes lightly to her, as "all her fortitude and strength of mind were necessary." (102) Celestina is more aware of "duty" than Willoughby.[51] She is more mature than he is and thus serves as his moral guide or mother-figure. By combining the ability to reason with her sensibility Celestina gains the "respect" of both the reader and her male counterparts, without risking being, as Wollstonecraft fears, "hunted out of society as masculine."[52] Furthermore, other people's comfort is her primary concern and she des not call attention to herself with her "genius". (350) Instead, reason helps her when her heart is troubled. When Willoughby leaves her at the altar (avoiding the possibility of incest with Celestina, whom he believes to be his half-sister), she appears to follow Wollstonecraft's advice by using her intellect in "obtaining that degree of content and resignation which may enable [her] to go through life" without him. (383)[53] Not only is she required to be strong for her own sanity, but Willoughby's as well, as he begs her: "Write to me, Celestina: you have more strength of mind than I have; you are not, like me, the sport of agonizing passions." (333) Here Celestina is

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[49] *Ibid* 113.
Davidoff and Hall's research confirms this to be a widespread expectation of women. Davidoff & Hall 339.
[50] She is exemplifying Wollstonecraft's rule that reason must govern passion. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 8.
[51] Richardson's research indicates that women were taught to suppress their desires at an early age and to adhere, instead, to duty and decorum. Richardson, Literature 173.
[52] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 103.
Watt expounds on the influential power of the novel in its covert manipulation of the sensibilities of the reader, who identifies with characters in the novel and is thus inclined to support their actions, even if they are counter-cultural. Watt 206.
[53] Wollstonecraft contends that the development of reason is of the highest value when facing moments of crisis, as it allows for rational solutions to problems, rather than making room for utter despair. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 8, 110.

portrayed yet again as the wiser of the two; the one who has "more strength of mind," and who is in control of her "passions" which gains her Willoughby's respect. When Willoughby's friend, Vavasour, rages at Willoughby, voicing his frustration with his lack of success at wooing Celestina, Willoughby's admiration shines through as he tells him that "she is mistress of herself, and at liberty to reject those whose offers may not be acceptable to her." (396) This reflects Smith's feminist premise that women of reason should be granted respect rather than censure. Indeed, she is implying that women have the strength of reason to determine a suitable match for themselves, though Celestina, it can be argued, eventually loses this ability.

Celestina strives to maintain her integrity. Although she cannot afford to live independently in the style in which she was raised by Mrs. Willoughby, she refuses to marry for any reason other than love. Her courage to leave Willoughby and give up her "accustomed indulgences," in order to "enter a life of comparative hardship and deprivation," shows an uncommon strength of character. (104) Mr. Molyneux (Matilda's husband) asks her, "do you pretend that you would not marry as other women do for money or title?" To which she replies: "For neither, upon my honour." (82) Unable to work for a living, middle and upper-class women relied on either marrying or inheriting money. In marrying for money, Wollstonecraft warns that "strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing [. . . herself] – the only way women can rise in the world – by marriage."[54] This act of refusing to marry for money also serves to endear Celestina to older readers as being childishly naive. Yet, in her naivety, she maintains her sovereignty, as long as she can afford it. She never formulates a plan for attaining financial independence, relying throughout the novel on her modest annuity and the charity of those who choose to become her protectors. Celestina dislikes depending on anyone, even Mrs. Willoughby, and "while she indulged her gratitude towards the friend on whom she depended, she felt that she was not born to be dependent." (105) Her tender nursing of her adoptive mother ensures that she does not appear ungrateful and Smith also offers the disclosure of Celestina's noble parentage as an explanation and possible excuse for this independent streak. The reader is, however, also invited to consider and to accept the idea of female desire for independence, even

[54] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 76.

after she marries Willoughby, as she inherits substantial wealth and thus retains some autonomy.[55] Celestina's dilemma of figuring out how to maintain her integrity in a society in which she has little power or legal rights showcases this social problem to the contemporary reader.[56]

Celestina proves to be capable of negotiating many difficult social situations. She outmanoeuvres unsolicited and unwanted flirtatious attention from Captain Thorold, through coy confidence and charm. She explains to Harry Vavasour (Willoughby's friend, whom he asks to look after her) that she does not need his protection from other men, by stating that Captain Thorold "never coquets with me I assure you, [. . .] for I never give him an opportunity." (214) She can protect herself up to a point, which is as she prefers it to be, though later she depends on Lady Horatia to rid her of her unwanted suitors. Smith explains the importance of self-preservation, stating that "[h]er pride [. . .] was rather a virtue than a blemish, and taught her to value herself, but never to despise the rest of the world." (350) Self-"value" is shown as being a positive female trait and Smith underscores that it is not to be confused with vanity or narcissism. Instead it gives her an air of seemingly unshakable integrity and power.[57] By valuing herself, Celestina remains an admirable character whom the reader is invited to see as a role-model and who fills other characters with an element of awe.[58]

Celestina Empowered by Maternal Tendencies

By learning to become maternal, Celestina carves a niche for herself as an authority figure who has the power to teach men how to behave properly and to reject their advances in a manner which does not detract from her respectability, a tactic which

[55] By stressing how desirable independence is for Celestina (and also Lady Horatia), Smith is making the reader aware of the problem of women's dependence on benefactors, turning this novel into what Parrinder would classify as a "social-problem novel" which uses the typical plot (similar to Richardson's *Clarissa*) of the idyllic turning to the traumatic and returning to the idyllic. Parrinder 117.

[56] According to Skinner, women's rights were culturally (if not legally) improved by the convention of republican motherhood, in which maternal figures were ascribed the responsibility for instilling republican virtues in her sons. This auxiliary role made a "fundamental political contribution." Skinner 105-106. Celestina, as we shall see, claims this type of power for herself by mothering her unwanted suitors.

[57] This precept is also stressed by Locke. Locke 105.

[58] By rendering Celestina in this positive light, Smith makes her a desirable person for the reader to imitate, as, if Wollstonecraft is to be believed, "example will best enforce precept." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 68.

many scholars have noted.[59] Celestina already has nurturing tendencies before she emulates Mrs. Willoughby, what Smith calls a "natural softness of her heart," which inclines her to bestow her tenderness on those in need of maternal nurturing and guidance. (437)[60] The reader is first introduced to this character-trait when Mrs. Willoughby's health declines. George Willoughby is away at Cambridge and Matilda is too preoccupied with her social life to administer loving affection to her mother, but Celestina, "careless of all that has usually attractions for youth, devoting her whole time and thoughts to Mrs. Willoughby," nurses her until she dies. (62) She does not mind the discomforts of looking after someone constantly and she has placed Mrs. Willoughby's sense of wellbeing above her own, showing her maternal selflessness above the usual expressions of benevolence.

Celestina is further established as having strong maternal qualities, by mirroring Mrs. Willoughby's actions. The desire to imitate her, as the heroine imitates her mother in *Adeline Mowbray*, is created through the melancholia induced by her death.[61] Celestina takes what she learned from her as a starting point and builds on this

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[59] Keane states that maternal behaviour was requisite for women who behaved outwith social norms. Keane 3.
Therefore, Celestina's maternal tendencies ensure her a recognisable place within the normal social structure. This also empowers her when she finds herself at the mercy of her suitors and Hoeveler comments that in the Gothic novel "women were advised [. . .] not to trust the goodwill of men but to manipulate or control those men – weakened by their own emotions – without those men actually being aware of it." Hoeveler 33.
Bannet concurs by stating that "they could change the conduct and principles of all those in their *sphere of influence* by constructing themselves as examples." Bannet 63.
The power of the unattached female guide or teacher is acknowledged by Davidoff and Hall, whose research has shown that "[t]wo-thirds of the women running schools were single." Davidoff & Hall 296. This is also supported by Richardson. Richardson, Literature 169.
Furthermore, in *Impeccable Governesses* Myers comments that many women writers read "motherhood as a social opportunity [. . .] valorising heroines as rational educators." Myers, "Impeccable" 35.
Even though this paper concerns educational texts, Smith's tactics in *Rural Walks* and *Celestina* are similar enough to make this idea relevant.

[60] This aspect of her character accords with social convention, as "it was expected that all women, whether biological mothers or not, had maternal instincts." Davidoff & Hall 335.
Keane interprets eighteenth century women to be most valued for their potential motherhood. Keane 125. This makes Celestina's character admirable to the reader, even if she flouts convention by also being individualistic.

[61] Butler explains that "the loved object is lost through a variety of means: separation, death, or the breaking of an emotional tie." Through imitation, the loss is lessened, as the act of imitation creates the illusion of resurrection. Characteristics thought to be lost are re-enacted and thus the memory is kept alive. Butler, Gender 87.

knowledge of how to interact with and benefit others.[62] She looks after Jessy, a complete stranger, an act which parallels Mrs. Willoughby's adoption of her as a child, and she encourages Willoughby to consider his duties, much as Mrs. Willoughby does when she makes him swear to marry Miss Fitz-Hayman. She also attempts to play the roles of mother and teacher to her various unwanted suitors, in order to aid their mental and emotional development and become empowered enough to control the situation, a skill on which Myers comments.[63] By harnessing this authoritative role, Celestina enables herself within the confines of her social restrictions. Celestina's selflessness marks her as acting beyond conventional benevolence, as she puts the needs of others above her own.[64] For example, after a short bout of incredulous shock, Celestina explains her priorities after Willoughby abandons her at the altar by stating: "indeed his happiness, and not my own, has been always the first wish of my heart." (159) Her own suffering is less important than the needs of her lover. And when Montague Thorold begins soliciting her affection, "she wished to put an end to Montague's persecuting admiration both for his sake and her own." (211) Smith sums it up as "a disposition to please by seeming interested for others; by entering into their joys and sorrows, and by thousand little nameless kindnesses." (351) Celestina's selflessness and maternal nurture arguably wins the reader's admiration, inspiring a desire to emulate her actions, which is the power of the novel.[65]

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[62] In this way Mrs. Willoughby is what Kristeva refers to as her "source of meaning and identity." John Lechte, ed, "Introduction to 'Nom de mort ou de vie' ('Name of Death or of Life')," Writing and Psychoanalysis: A Reader (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996) 104.
Celestina is also enacting Wollstonecraft's premise that every act of benevolence which we exert to our fellow-creatures, does ourselves the most essential services." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 66.
This helps her to overcome her sense of bewilderment after Willoughby abandons her.

[63] Myers comments that didactic women writers "read nurture as power", which is why the maternal figure is such an influential figure in influencing a change in social norms. Myers, "Impeccable" 54.

[64] With this, she follows Wollstonecraft's ideal, as "[a] benevolent person must ever wish to see those around them comfortable and try to be the cause of that comfort." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 120.
Hoeveler identifies this act of self-sacrifice with masochism, which has "the dubious distinction of being one of the few characteristics consistently identified by Freud (and his female disciples) as clearly associated with women." Hoeveler 13.

[65] Richardson comments on the use of novels for self-education and that these texts were frequently used in lieu of guidance from possibly absent mother-figures. Richardson, Literature 233.
Fay remarks that the maternal character can be used to powerfully showcase both intellectual and political issues, without making the author appear immoral. She also argues that authors including Wollstonecraft used rhetorical writing (including novels) in order to produce "the *literary maternal* – an appropriation of the maternal metaphor for educative purposes." Fay 91, 93.

Celestina, who, though unwed and childless, takes her first 'child' under her wing, when Jessy, an unfortunate servant-girl, needs her strength and support: "Ever ready to assist the unhappy, the generous heart of Celestina was touched with compassion towards this forlorn stranger." (109)[66] Jessy has been dismissed from her position in London, in order to regain her health. She serves as a surrogate child to Celestina, who nurtures her, even though she has only just met her, simply because she feels sorry for her. (109)[67] Nurturing others becomes an escape mechanism from Celestina's own worries, and it gives her a purpose in life. Her primary concern when Willoughby leaves her at the altar is that she is now "useful to nobody." (188) Smith poses maternal concern as a healthy and mature outlet for sorrow and, as stated above, something which gives a woman a sense of purpose, as with Mrs. Elphinstone, suggesting that sadness should be redirected from the self to benefit less fortunate people. It also introduces the means by which Celestina will regain an interest in life, in other words by becoming useful to others.[68] Smith explains Celestina's behaviour, stating that, "deprived as she was of all her former connections, and of every prospect of happiness for herself, she was sensible of no other pleasure than what arose from the power of soothing the sorrows of her unfortunate companion." (122) Celestina is posed throughout most of the novel as a selfless and mature character, who puts the welfare of others, even strangers, above her own, making

[66] Kipp comments on this behaviour-pattern, noting that "[m]othering as a process was held to encourage *empathetic nurturing*, which was associated with a *natural* feminine predisposition for sympathy." Kipp 13.
Incidentally, this mirrors Mrs. Woodfield in *Rural Walks*, as she is "[e]ver alive to the voice of human misery." Smith, Rural 65.
This high-lights Celestina's embodiment of the ideal mother-figure, even though she has no biological children.

[67] This is similar to Wollstonecraft's heroine's actions in *Mary*, who overcomes her own tragedy by helping others: "the distress of others carried her out of herself." Wollstonecraft, Mary 11.
Straub comments that during this period servants and children are treated as *pedagogical subjects*, (as are other adults in some works of fiction). Both servants and children were "willingly subordinate" to the perceived "moral authority". Straub 127, 130.
This is further substantiated by Smith's predecessor, Eliza Haywood (1693 – 1756) , who comments on the childlike love felt by servants for their surrogate parents (their masters) in *Present for a Serving Maid.*
Eliza Haywood, A Present for a Servant-Maid. Or, the Sure means of gaining Love and Esteem (Dublin: George Falkner, Dublin, 1743, facsimile) 32.

[68] Her initial reaction to her abandonment is to wish herself dead. (189)

herself seem a strong and self-possessed female character.[69] She is a productive member of society, as she nurtures everyone she encounters.

Harry Vavasour is an extremely wealthy friend of Willoughby, who becomes obsessed with acquiring Celestina, whom he objectifies. Having lost both of his parents at a very young age, his guardians "had very little influence over his mind and his morals" and gratified his every whim. (148)[70] He serves as Smith's example of a typical adult who was neglected as a child. Because he had no mother-figure as a child, he never learned to control his passions and therefore, "[t]o speak to Vavasour, was to address the winds of the sea: [. . .] he was incapable of [. . .] listening to any thing but his passionate impetuosity." (338) This makes him a "thoughtless friend." (149) Vavasour's passions are compared to a force of nature, which cannot be controlled by man. Wollstonecraft warns mothers about this, stating that "[t]he management of the temper, the first, and most important branch of education, requires the sober steady eye of reason."[71] Vavasour is "little accustomed to think at all." (139) Though Celestina has a "steady eye of reason," she has little power over Vavasour, as he does not usually regard her as a person. Mr. Thorold (the father of Captain and Montague Thorold) explains, by pointing out that "Mr. Vavasour has, I apprehend, no mother or sister, and you cannot be ignorant that he has the character of indulging himself in liberties, which even in this age of freedom make him rather a marked man." (224) The absence of female influence on him, makes Vavasour suspect as being untrained and undisciplined, possibly implying that only women have the power to teach men self-control. Instead, Vavasour seems to embrace Rousseau's misogynistic viewpoint that "woman is specially made for man's delight."[72] As a pleasure-seeker, he frequently visits prostitutes.[73] His life-style "hardens the heart while it corrupts the morals." (226) However, Vavasour takes his role as Celestina's protector as seriously as he can and he attempts to treat her with both respect and

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[69] Again, this mirrors Wollstonecraft's precepts, as she believes that "[u]niversal benevolence is the first duty, and we should be careful not to let any passion so engross our thoughts, as to prevent us from practicing it." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 91.

[70] This is something against which Wollstonecraft warns gratuitously, when she states that "[i]ndulging children, even if only to keep them quiet for a moment, quickly leads to a spoiled nature, which constantly requires gratification. Consistency is vital, when it comes to praise and punishment, the absence of which produces "affection devoid of respect." *Ibid* 6.

[71] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 137.

[72] Rousseau 385.

[73] Indeed, he attempts to buy Celestina's affection with gifts, as if she were a prostitute. (343)

propriety, "seeming to repress it [his affection for Celestina] with great difficulty from the habit he was in of doing whatever pleased himself without considering whether what he did was, according to the established forms of the world, rude or polite." (205) He is not ignorant of the "established forms of the world," he simply sees no reason as to why they should apply to him. Yet, he cannot maintain this control over his emotions, having never been taught the importance of governing his passions. Celestina's power lies in inspiring him to *want* to change. Unaccustomed to this, he balks, shouting: "Curse me if I am not ashamed of myself when I think what a whining puppy she has made of me." (369) He equates his unbridled animalistic impulsiveness with his manliness and she infantilises him in his animal state, making him a "puppy".[74] Ultimately, his "passions were at all times too strong to suffer him to listen either to reason from others or to his own." (319) He cannot be controlled and he lacks the self-discipline to control himself, alluding once more to Wollstonecraft's concern about the "management of the temper."[75] Because he is so passion-driven, he is a danger both to himself and to others and his unfeeling narcissism makes him blind to the feelings of others. Vavasour's character cannot be enlightened, changed, or moderated, because he was raised without a mother.

Smith, however, also attributes one positive quality to Vavasour's lack of upbringing. By having no mother at all, he does not suffer the effects of having a *bad* mother and "his temper was generous, candid, and artless." (134)[76] This artlessness leads him to nurse Emily, one of his prostitutes, as she suffers from consumption. When she dies, the level of Vavasour's unaffected benevolence is revealed. He is so consumed with loss over her death that he becomes hysterical and Celestina is the only "restorer of his reason." (525) Here Celestina enacts the same maternal power as is shown earlier by Lady Horatia when she restores Celestina's mental calm. Furthermore, this is the only instance where she has any true authority over him, as she is being nurturing without

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[74] In *The Long Eighteenth Century* Frank O'Gorman states that "[n]ot only were they [men] physically superior to women; they were also assumed to be rational, decisive and consistent." Frank O'Gorman, The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832 (New York: Hodder Arnold, 1997) 9.
Vavasour clearly is less rational than Celestina, proving Smith's point that some women should assume a maternal role to some childish men, in order to maintain social order.

[75] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 137.

[76] He has not learned affected behaviour, which is something Wollstonecraft despises. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 29.

depending on the authority lent through reason. Reason is something which Vavasour cannot comprehend. He is a man who has much potential, but who is ruined beyond repair, by his lax upbringing.

As the product of Mrs. Thorold's caustic form of mothering, Montague is a romantically-inclined university student destined to become a clergyman. He has a tendency to fall in love with any woman who is even remotely handsome. Montague falls in love with Celestina after Willoughby abandons her at the altar. He follows her all over the country, abandoning his studies and ignoring his concerned father's requests to continue his life. There is an element of the ridiculous in his Werther-like languishing love, but Celestina takes pity on him, as he wallows in his unrequited love, while feeling intense empathy for Celestina's broken heart. Though he lacks self-discipline, he is *not* immune to reason. At one instance when he is overwhelmed with discouragement while relentlessly pursuing her, his melodrama incites his mother's acerbic criticism. (221) Celestina imitates this behaviour when his admiration becomes too troublesome. She shouts at him and calls him "Ridiculous! [. . .] Really, Mr. Montague, the style to which you have accustomed yourself destroys all conversation." (206) However, unlike Mrs. Thorold, her temper and her directness are moderated by a genuine concern for his wellbeing.[77] Wollstonecraft approves of this form of chastisement.[78] Celestina wants to improve him. She shows the reader where Mrs. Thorold fails with her mothering practice by reprimanding Montague with kindness and concern accompanying any severity, unlike Mrs. Thorold's unfeeling sarcasm. She is perfectly willing to be in his company and to befriend him, however, his self-destructive melodrama concerns her greatly. She must teach him decorum, but unlike his mother, softens her criticism by offering sympathetic advice following her irritation. At a later point when she realises that her anger may have wounded him, she moderates her complaint, stating, "that is exactly what I complain of: there is no rational conversation with you, capable as you are of adorning it." (228) Celestina's annoyance is designed to impress contemporary readers with

[77] Indeed, "she could never divest herself of solicitude for his welfare." (349)
Celestina's guidance would have been socially acceptable, as women were seen as "gatekeepers for admissible behaviour." Davidoff & Hall 399.
[78] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 137.
She also states that "[w]e should never give pain without design to amend", which is exactly what Celestina is doing, as she cares for Montague Thorold, who needs her guidance. Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 29.

appropriate feminine authority, given that she has adopted the role of mother to Montague's role of child. This empowers her, lending her dignity to his melodrama. She, however, alternates her harsh reprimands with reason and appeals to decorum by offering him her friendship. (228) This again mirrors Wollstonecraft's sentiment.

Smith introduces the reader to a Willoughby who is torn by the clash between his duty to his mother and his family and his desire for Celestina. By creating a hero who is this malleable and unformed, she is allowing Celestina to have the power to shape him into a well-respected adult man. To showcase his immature lack of resolution, he fairly quickly gives in to his desires and it is up to Celestina, as a figure of feminine power, to maintain his honour, even if it is to her own detriment:

> A conflict then began between her affection for him and her duty and gratitude towards the memory of his mother, which was almost too severe to be endured; but however soft her heart, her reason was equal to the task of checking a dangerous or guilty indulgence of that sensibility; and after long arguing with herself, she found she loved Willoughby better than every thing but his honour and his repose. (99)

This shows Celestina's superior strength of character and her ability to teach Willoughby to be a man of honour. Her reason is stronger than his, putting her in the position of an adult in light of his childishness.

Part of being a mother is knowing what lessons the children need to learn in order to become functional contributing members of society. This relies heavily on the child's desire to please the mother. In *Celestina*, Willoughby childishly balks against performing his social duty of attending a party where he will be thrown together with his cousin, Miss Fitz-Hayman, whom his mother had wanted him to marry. He actually has a tantrum, shouting to Celestina: "I cannot – I will not go to these people, [. . .] why should I?" (102) Celestina cajoles him into going by reminding him of decorum: "[S]urely you ought not rudely and without reason to decline it." (103) Celestina, though in love with Willoughby, urges him to remember social etiquette. She selflessly soothes his childish outburst, even though, on a personal level, she would rather he forget his promise and marry her, than Miss Fitz-Hayman. However, Mrs. Willoughby's wishes that Willoughby marry Miss Fitz-Hayman must be respected ("the obligation by which he had

bound himself to obey the last injunctions of his mother" (100)), or at least not made irreversible by a childish outburst and social faux pas. Celestina goes so far as to urge him to leave her, believing it her "duty" and breaking her own heart in the process. By playing the maternal role of social teacher, to the detriment of her own happiness, Celestina has ensured that Willoughby does not ruin his life.[79] By teaching him the harsh realities of life and urging him to think about the consequences of his actions, she is being maternal, as Wollstonecraft would attest, in order for him to "attain a strength of character sufficient to enable [. . . him] to endure adversity without forgetting [. . . his] mother's example."[80] His mother was not as consistent or as strict as Celestina is with him, which is why he heeds her when the memory of his biological mother is not strong enough to keep him honour-bound.

As well as urging men to perform their duties, women are held responsible for propriety, as they are frequently considered to be morally superior to men, while embracing their role as mother and teacher. When Willoughby greets Celestina, after a prolonged absence he is very emotional and behaves inappropriately. He takes her hand and cries out: "My heavenly girl! my own Celestina!" (137) As she believes him to be married, "she withdrew her hand with an air of resentment." (137) Celestina's initial reaction is standoffish, as if to teach Willoughby that he cannot be so informal and candid with her in the role he has assumed, as someone else's fiancé. Unable to overcome her own emotional turmoil at this point, she still manages to fulfil her morally superior maternal duties by making her displeasure known to him, albeit without the power of speech. (Her actions mirror Mrs. Willoughby's earlier disapproving glance, which quelled Willoughby's inappropriate attentions to Celestina.) Wollstonecraft doubtlessly would approve of Smith's portrayal of Celestina, stating: "I wish to see my sex become more like moral agents," rather than being dependent on men's morality.[81] Smith's example of Celestina, as a "moral agent," is effective in portraying a powerful female character in an attractive light to the reader. She employs a tactic later identified by Judith Butler, as she explains that "the category of 'women,' the subject of feminism, is

[79] Her actions mimic those of Mrs. Mason in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, putting Celestina in the role of teacher or maternal guide to the youthful Willoughby. Wollstonecraft, Original 64.
[80] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 119.
[81] *Ibid* 113.

produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought."[82] Butler identifies the restrictions of social convention, in this case the role of mother, but also acknowledges that the smoother road to change is one which causes the least disruption to the social structure. Smith's maternal roles in *Celestina* invite the reader to consider fairly radical change, without upsetting conventionality too much.[83] In doing this, her suggestions are more likely to be considered, as they are not shocking or radical to the conservative post-revolutionary reader.

When Passion Overrides Reason

One characteristic, which becomes more prominent as the plot unfolds, is Celestina's emotional frailty and her increasing dependence on mother-figures.[84] It reads as a feminist degeneration, however, the reader is invited to empathise with her, even when in her battle between reason and emotion, her emotion is allowed to win. When Willoughby first voices his affection for Celestina, she knows she must discourage him, for the good of the family and their position in society. Yet, "her heart refused to assent to what her reason pointed out as the conduct she ought to pursue, [. . . and] she found it impossible to urge his quitting her for ever." (102) Because her most constant mother-figure, Mrs. Willoughby, was weak, Celestina was raised without self-discipline and reason and whatever she had been given by nature, she had to develop herself.[85] Concerned for Celestina's financial and emotional well-being, Lady Horatia later attempts to rid her of her attachment to Willoughby, thus issuing in a symbolic battle between sentiment and reason.[86] She urges her to be realistic, asking her "how could he afford to marry you?" (353) This is the first time that Celestina is forced to consider this

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[82] Butler, Gender 4.
[83] Rogers compares her to Ann Radcliffe as a fellow Romantic author, however she deems Radcliffe to be conservative in contrast to Smith's notions of reimagining social norms. Rogers, "Romantic" 74.
[84] Hoeveler again classifies this as an element of the Gothic novel, as Celestina does not belong to any family and the men assigned to protect her have proven themselves unworthy of her trust by their relentless pursuit of her, therefore she conforms to "Gothic heroines, [who] if they were to survive, were then forced to seek protection from any surrogate protection agency they could find." Hoeveler 35.
[85] Even though she is posed as an ideal throughout much of the novel, her lack of guidance during her most formative years has left its mark and, as Wollstonecraft attests, "there is not a temper in the world which does not need correction." Wollstonecraft, Thoughts 65.
Without this correction, Celestina is vulnerable to her own passion.
[86] Rogers comments on this trend which can be traced through many of her novels, stating that Smith often "effectively juxtaposed romance and realism in order to bring out the contrast between idealistic aspirations and the limitations of actual life." Rogers, "Romantic" 82.

salient concern. Lady Horatia continues relentlessly, reflecting the desire to help her to regain her rationality:

> Let me conjure you, then, my dear Celestina, to exert that large share of reason, with which you are endowed; and expelling from your mind all that has passed, try to look forward to happier prospects – to prospects unclouded by doubt, and undarkened by the gloomy apprehensions of being despised by the family of your husband, and of being reproached as having embarrassed his fortune. (391)

Ignoring all other grounds, the act of marrying Celestina would ruin Willoughby. Lady Horatia is appealing to Celestina's "reason," not her emotions, underscoring that Celestina's emotions have overthrown her rationality, and she has succumbed to that very character weakness which she sought to eradicate in her charges (Willoughby, Vavasour, and Montague Thorold) earlier in the novel. With this pragmatic outlook, Lady Horatia attempts to encourage Celestina to marry her friend Montague Thorold in order to have financial security, as Celestina's love for Willoughby blinds her to the necessities of life.[87] He would be more than willing to marry her, and he could offer her a secure and comfortable life, which she could never have if she remained unmarried. Urging Celestina to see to her financial security is very sound advice, however her frustration with Celestina's romantic lack of pragmatism is portrayed as abrasive: "I am amazed, [. . .] that with such very good sense as you possess, you would accustom yourself to cherish these *childish and girlish* notions: what is this love, without feeling all the violence of which you suppose it impossible to be happy?" (438) (*emphasis mine*) This justifiable condescension incites Celestina to speak out and to override her respect for her mother-figure, emphasising that she has lost touch with her ability to reason.[88] Lady

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[87] If we can continue to draw parallels between *Celestina* and Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, then it follows that Austen also disapproved of Celestina's abandonment of reason for passion, as her parallel character, Marianne, eventually abandons her love for the romantic Willoughby and marries Colonel Brandon who can support her. Fletcher, Charlotte 304.

[88] According to Rogers, Smith termed her characters as being *romantic* in that they are "idealistic characters whose principles rise above expediency and whose aims rise above mercenary prudence." Rogers, "Romantic" 75.
These tendencies counter reason, however, to a very specific effect.
Richardson comments that one purpose of novels is to depict the struggle between reason and passion, and then to render examples of the outcomes of giving in to one or the other. Richardson, Literature 189.

Horatia's advice has now fully been rejected and Celestina's financial security is ultimately attained solely by chance, rather than through her own doing.[89]

Celestina is always slightly enslaved by her passion for Willoughby and no amount of mothering by Lady Horatia can teach her to choose her future spouse rationally.[90] Her final indiscretion near the end of the novel is an actual shocking social faux pas, when she embraces Willoughby, as "she forgot that he was (as she believed) the husband of Miss Fitz-Hayman; but he was in a moment the beloved Willoughby, the first and only possessor of her heart." (532) Here Smith performs a role-reversal, when he pushes her away, thinking she is married. At the beginning of the novel, Celestina maternally insisted on his behaving appropriately and fulfilling his social obligations. Now he has matured and she has become the child, who puts her own emotions above the expectations of society and even her own practical needs.[91] The only resurrection of her dignity is offered through the revelation of her heritage, as she "was born of parents to whom it was honourable to belong." (533) She is permitted dignity through high birth and her inheritance, but no longer through moral or intellectual superiority.[92]

By the end of the novel Smith may seem to accord with Rousseau's rather sexist gender-role parameters, which dictated that men should be more powerful, both physically and mentally, while women should be "weak and passive" in every way.[93]

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[89] In modern psychological terms, this rejection is the *abjection* of the mother in the pursuit of individuality. Abjection is the summoning of such an intense dislike or repulsion, that it becomes a violent rejection. This is the reaction a child has to smothering, restrictive, maternal love. All maternal love eventually becomes somewhat restrictive to a child when it is growing into an individual, as Celestina is growing into an individual, having rejected Lady Horatia's guidance. This shows the reactionary nature of her behaviour, which exemplifies her passions overriding her ability to reason. Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror. trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982) 2-3.
This phenomenon of the development of individuality is confirmed by Nancy Chodorow and Jane Flax. Chodorow 159-170; Jane Flax, "The Conflict between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and within Feminism," Feminist Studies 4 (1978): 171-189.

[90] Dolan contends that in Smith's novels there is a great need for mother-figures, as "women are always in danger of slipping into the role of adolescent in patriarchal culture." Unfortunately, Celestina seems to be no exception. Dolan 123.

[91] Throughout the novel it is made clear that Willoughby must marry for money, as he has none. Celestina is in the same situation. Marrying for money is showcased as an act of survival. Ballaster considers this authorial abandonment of feminist ideals as a return to the scripted form of patriarchal convention. Ballaster, "Women" 202.

[92] Abrams comments on the revolution of the idealised convention of marriage, stating that "[b]y the second half of the [19th] century, marriage was being transformed from an economic institution to a romantic one." Abrams 75.

[93] Rousseau 385.

Celestina throws herself into Willoughby's arms, against all propriety and it is up to him to respond correctly. (533) As Celestina has lost her ability to reason and has surrendered completely to her passion, her future is no longer under her control, demonstrating a trend in plot-lines analysed in Judith Newton's paper.[94] The happy outcome of the novel depends entirely on luck, as Willoughby miraculously inherits a fortune. He ends up marrying Celestina with all of the social benefits he would have gained by marrying Miss Fitz-Hayman. The feminist reader is left disappointed by Celestina's loss of everything she has learned through the course of the novel. Just before her regression, Celestina voices a wish to "be mistress of her time and herself", which is very feminist, mirroring Wollstonecraft's and Smith's desires to be permitted to be an individual and a person. (458) However, by the end of the novel, she suddenly conforms to ideals of conservative femininity. The ending of the novel could be seen as reinforcing the traditional, conservative gender roles which prompted Wollstonecraft to observe how "[w]eakness may excite tenderness, and gratify the arrogant pride of man, but the lordly caresses of a protector will not gratify a noble mind that pants for and desires to be respected."[95] In spite of this, Smith assures the reader that both Willoughby and Celestina have a happy future in store for them. (542) And yet this is a reformist novel, inciting the reader to reconsider social convention and its flaws, or as Fletcher puts it in her *Introduction* to the text: the goal of the novel is to inspire the reader "to see that the story does not stop when

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Richardson comments that "[t]he same ideology which entrusts mothers with the production of rational, autonomous individuals also attributes to women an irrationality, rooted in the body, which continually threatens to erupt unless carefully managed." He later adds that "women are (ironically) infantilized at the same time as their role as educators or children and socialisers of men is celebrated." Richardson, Literature 169, 173.
Smith appears to be demonstrating this in her novel. However, Ty believes that even though Smith's heroines may conform to the social convention of "docility, submission, and self-sacrifice", she couldn't have endorsed this simply because of her own life experience. Ty, Unsex'd 119.

[94] In *Power and the Woman's Sphere* Judith Newton compares several novels of the period, including Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), and discovers a pattern revealing that after an entire novel filled with education and growing assertiveness, "the heroine's power is sometimes renounced and often diminished at the end of the novel, so that it seems that he work has had nothing to do with power at all." Indeed this was deemed as necessary as the novel ending in marriage. Judith Lowder Newton, "Power and the *Woman's Sphere,*" Feminisms – an Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism, eds. Robyn R. Warhol & Diane Price Herndl (Piscataway: Rutgers UP, 1991) 769.

[95] Wollstonecraft, Vindication 98.
Parrinder contends that "[t]he English courtship novel, with its strong appeal for female writers and readers, reflects the tension between the traditional definitions of womanhood in terms of the marriage market, and women's demand for moral independence and self-respect." Parrinder 184.
Celestina is a complex mixture of this tradition, with more emphasis put on the need for self-respect through the *Bildungsroman* aspects of the heroine's character development.

the book does, to understand that things in the real world need changing."[96] Through writing, the female author can voice these concerns without the need for a male protector, as the writer is not physically present when her views are expressed.[97] Though not a political novel, in *Celestina* Smith's feminist caution is present, albeit obliquely: the surrender of reason to passion leaves women at the mercy of good or bad fortune.[98] However, Smith also shows that maternal power is available to *all* women, should they choose to wield it. They need not give birth. They merely need to assert themselves with benevolence and calm reason which endows them with enough power to influence the direction of their lives.

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[96] Fletcher, "Introduction" 30.
Keane concurs by stating that "Smith's fictions do not allow for the easy separation of private and public interest, as they play out the way in which one produces and redefines the other." Keane 95.
Hoeveler also states something similar, calling Smith "a sentimentalist with a social and political agenda." Hoeveler 37.
Her social and political concerns also feature prominently in her poetry. Terence Allan Hoagwood, "Introduction," Beachy Head with Other Poems, (New York: Delmar Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1993) 3-11.
Rogers agrees adamantly, stating that Smith "insisted that passions must be curbed" and that "[s]he questioned conventional thinking and established institutions, but she could not cast them aside altogether." Rogers, "Romantic" 81.
Indeed, Parrinder contends that the very purpose of the novel is to impart "knowledge of the world" through unassuming entertainment. Parrinder 14.
Smith's power of influence is also believed to have touched Jane Austen. A detailed discussion of this can be found in Jacqueline Labbe's paper *Narrating Seduction: Charlotte Smith and Jane Austen*.
[97] Ballaster 198.
[98] Newton concurs, stating that "[t]o write subversively is more than a means of exercising influence. It is a form of struggle – and a form of power." Newton 777.
Smith offended Thomas Lowe in 1791 by fervently discussing politics, which he found "disgusting" in a lady. Stanton, Collected 39
Ty concurs that Smith's desire for societal changes is much more subversive than Wollstonecraft's, especially as her novels needed to "please and entertain a general public" in order to sell well enough to support her family. Ty, Unsex'd 115.

Conclusion

During the Romantic Period, the call for a reformation of social norms was widespread, particularly before the French Revolution. Radical reform was seriously considered in many circles, which may have encouraged Wollstonecraft to voice her concerns so adamantly in her more famous political works, after her successful publication and positive public reception of *Thoughts*, which helped to establish her as a respect-worthy woman writer (as the previously cited reviews indicate).[1] However, after news spread of the horrors of the French Revolution, people in England became wary of change and especially of empowering any group, including women, who throughout history had been subservient to others. Yet feminists continued to demand reform.[2] In this thesis I have indicated that Wollstonecraft herself seemed to have personified her own model of the unspoiled child in her complete lack of affectation, which included a certain lack of social graces or awareness of how to manipulate her readers into considering her ideals. I have argued that this was a hindrance to her mission.[3] Covert action was needed. Even though she also employed the use of the more emotive form of the novel, her didactic style and absence of subtlety, this thesis contends, worked against her, especially after Godwin's publication of her biography, when respect for her writing dwindled, as Matthew agrees.[4]

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[1] *The Critical Review* refers to *Thoughts* as being "concise, and sometimes desultory" as well as "clear, judicious, and correct. The mind of the author appears to have profited by observation, and a habit of reflection: it seems both well informed, and well regulated." It then proceeds to quote several long passages for their "justness and propriety". "Review of Thoughts on the Education of Daughters", The Critical Review 63. Ed. Tobias Smollett. Edinburgh: Archibald Hamilton, 1787. 287-288.
The English Review agrees that *Thoughts* is "dictated with great judgment" and that Wollstonecraft has "reflected maturely on her subject", going on to say that "she writes with a decision which nothing but attentive observation could inspire; and, while her manner gives authority, her good sense adds irresistible weight to almost all her precepts and remarks"; it is described as "worthy the attention of those who are more immediately concerned in the education of young ladies." "Review of Thoughts on the education of Daughters", The English Review 10. London: H. Murray, 1787.

[2] With texts such as Catharine Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790) and Maria Edgeworth's *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795).

[3] Taylor agrees. Taylor, Mary 247.

[4] Matthew cites the *Gentleman's Magazine* which before the publication of Godwin's biography lauded Wollstonecraft's "soundness of understanding, and sensibility of heart [for which] she was, perhaps never equalled." She goes on to say that the "publication of *Memoirs* so destroyed her reputation that *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was not published again until 1840." Matthew 386, 387.
Implicit feminist, the conservative Anna Barbauld, actually opposed Wollstonecraft's ideas in her poem titled *Rights of Woman* (1792), while questioning many traditional assumptions about femininity with an arguably feminist slant. Taylor, Mary 108.

Novels certainly attracted a different group of readers than political texts. In this thesis I have shown that in *Adeline Mowbray* Opie reached her readers in a more subtle manner than Wollstonecraft, perhaps in order to distance herself from the stigma of the 'unsex'd female', the term which in 1798 Richard Polwhele used to refer to overtly political women, including both Smith and Wollstonecraft.[5] Opie's greatest hindrance to actively pursuing a reformation of social norms seemed to be a fear of hubris, whereas Smith was held back by her financial needs. However, I believe that both of these authors influenced a wide readership, perhaps including some who may not have been receptive to Wollstonecraft's creed. Unfortunately this is all speculation, as the power of influence of the novel is immeasurable and how readers chose to interpret what they read is indeterminable and beyond the control of any author.[6] Yet, as my research has indicated, many scholars have admitted that *some* level of influence was indisputable, as Briggs contends: women authors "contributed to a particular ethos of moral sensibility, of fine distinction and discrimination that defined itself in the novel as the study of character, motives, and morals."[7] Certainly all three writers manipulated the maternal role in order to lull the reader into sympathising with perhaps otherwise negatively judged characters, as the similarities between their openly maternal voices in their works for children and their more subtle maternal voices in their works for adults indicate.

The role of mother seemed inescapable to the feminist, even though all aspects of femininity and female space were what Butler terms a "social construct." But within the confines of the maternal role, authors, such as Smith, illustrated women's wisdom and influence, even if it was forced by these constraints to take the form of manipulation. Through manipulation, I have argued, women assumed the role of mother, forcing those who opposed them into the role of child, so that women could *mother* and *teach* these *children*. This, I have indicated, was a necessity in order to be

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Barbauld is grouped with Wollstonecraft in Armstrong's article, which (as cited before) states that these women "challenged the male philosophical traditions that led to a demeaning discourse of feminine experience and remade those traditions." Armstrong, 16.
Furthermore, Guest cites Mary Berry as pointing out the similarities between Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) and Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) regarding their opinions on female education – a point which would have greatly offended More, who openly disagreed with anything linked to Wollstonecraft and her ideals. Guest 274.

[5] This titbit of information is taken from Barbara Taylor's *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Taylor, Mary 181. It refers to Polwhele's *The Unsex'd Females, a Poem.*

[6] Richardson, Literature 266.

[7] Briggs 67

taken seriously and in order to have any sort of control or power over their destinies. Women were simply not respected for their opinions and contributions to society, unless it was within the constraints of the maternal role. It seems to have worked. My research has indicated that social (not to be confused with political) reform does not occur simply because political figures have reasoned that it should. The public masses must first embrace new ideals before change is actualised. This most populous group of people presumably did not read political tracts and I argue that people have not changed in this regard. If they read, they read for pleasure. Perhaps Samuel Johnson expressed it best when in 1783 he wrote: "People in general do not willingly read, if hey can have any thing else to amuse them. [. . .] The books that we do read with pleasure are light compositions, which contain a quick succession of events."[8] In other words, people read novels (and poetry, but this is beyond the scope of this study), and "reading [. . .] is a means to personal salvation."[9] This is where changes in social norms take root: in the minds of a dramatically growing group of people during the Romantic Period – the reading public.

[8] James Boswell, "Life of Samuel Johnson," Great Books of the Western World Vol. 44 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952) 513.
[9] Briggs 68.
Brewer agrees, stating that leisure-time was often "devoted to self-improvement through literature, the arts and learning", adding that these activities were meant to "delight". Brewer 57, 58.

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