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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE EDUCATION OF THE ENGLISH LADY, 1770 - 1820.

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Education of the English Lady, 1770 - 1820, submitted by Peter J. Miller in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this thesis are to examine, describe and, as far as possible, explain the educational provisions made for middle and upper class Englishwomen between 1770 and 1820, and to analyse the ideas expressed in the period about woman, her nature, responsibilities and education. In this respect, the study may be considered as an exploration of a particular relationship between educational theory and practice.

The thesis consists of four parts.

Part I describes the changing world of middle and upper class women during the period. Their legal, economic and social status is discussed. The effects of the improvements in industry, agriculture, transportation and general standards of living on the lives and aspirations of such women are examined, as are those of the intellectual, educational and religious movements which were gaining momentum at the end of the century. The developments in female education at this time can only be understood within the context of these important societal changes.

Part II deals with 'the education of a lady'. It was at this time that the popularization of this type of education among the middle classes took place. Whether given at home by a parent or private governess, or in one of the many boarding schools for young ladies, this distinctive education was fundamentally the same. Its aims, content and method are

examined and considerable attention is paid to such related issues as the cost of such an education, the social groups involved, and the lives of the 'typical' boarding school or private governess and her pupils.

In Part III an analysis is made of the educational ideas of the period which were connected with 'the education of a lady'. The various opinions expressed at this time are shown to constitute reasonably distinct schools of thought, each drawing inspiration from a major intellectual or religious development of the age. The many criticisms of contemporary female education are examined, as are the recommendations put forward to reform the education of middle and upper class women.

Part IV is a detailed analysis of the prevailing views of the nature of woman, her inherent strengths and weaknesses, and her domestic and social responsibilities. Particular attention is given to an examination of contemporary ideas of the characteristics of 'a lady', as presented in formal works on the subject and in the popular novels of the period. The close relationship between these 'images of womanhood', the prevailing conception of a lady, and the educational theory and practice of the period is readily apparent.

The study concludes with a summary of the major developments in educational practice and theory, an examination of the nature of the relationship between them, and an assessment

of the significance of 'the education of a lady' for the Victorian world of women.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It would be difficult to find two subjects more intrinsically interesting and rich in controversy than education and the position of women. This thesis is about both. Its major purpose is, on the surface, a simple one, to describe and, as far as possible, to explain the educational provisions made for middle and upper class Englishwomen, together with the ideas associated with these provisions, between 1770 and 1820.

Even a modest aim, however, may pose serious and difficult problems. To explain the educational ideas and practice of the period in the field of women's education requires that attention be given to several related issues. First, it involves a consideration of various economic, political, social, religious and intellectual developments as they affected the lives of women and, equally important, contemporary thought about women. Secondly, it demands that the educational practice of the period be viewed as an intelligible response by people to their experience of these developments. Finally, an analysis must be made of the views held about such matters as the nature of woman, her responsibilities, and the education appropriate for her. In this respect, the study may be considered an exploration of

the relationship between educational ideas and practice.

To justify any research into the history of women's education is not difficult. There are few areas in the history of education more generally neglected. In part, this is due to the development of history of education itself as a field of study. In the late nineteenth century, its content and, to some extent, its methodology were largely determined by the requirements of a newly formed and increasingly self-conscious teaching profession. Two areas became established as the 'legitimate' concerns of historians of education, one being the study of the 'great educators', whose work and ideas were considered to be of inspirational and pedagogic value for prospective teachers,[1] and the other an examination of the development of the institutions of formal education, particularly those of the mother country.[2]

This somewhat functional view of history of education did not result in an unscholarly approach to the subject. The 1890's and early 1900's were marked by both quantity and quality as far as textbook and monograph literature was concerned. What it did lead to, however, was a rather limited view, one, for example, that almost completely ignored the education of women. The great educators had said little on the subject that seemed to be of 'practical' value. And for an understanding of how the 'national system' had come about, a knowledge of female education was of little importance. It

was, in fact, impossible to treat the development of women's education 'institutionally'.

Almost all of the interest shown in female education has been by women, who have tended, not unnaturally, to consider it in terms of the growth of the ideal of female emancipation. It is, of course, inevitable that any study of women's education undertaken in the last seventy years or so be influenced by the tremendous changes taking place in the position of women and the views held of their nature and responsibilities. This thesis will prove to be no exception. Nevertheless, this influence should be recognized as a most dangerous one.

Its possible effects upon the writing of history have been clearly pointed out by Bernard Bailyn in his criticism of those American historians of education who sought and found in the past ideas, movements and institutions which, if they existed at all, people at that time viewed differently. His remarks are so pertinent to the historiography of female education that no apologies are needed for quoting from them at length.

> To these writers, the past was simply the present writ small. It differed from the present in the magnitude and arrangements of its elements, not in their character. The ingredients of past and present were the same. . . . They lacked the belief . . . that the elements of their world might not have existed at all for others, might in fact have been inconceivable to them. . . .

> In the telescoping and forshortening of history that resulted, the past could be differentiated from the present mainly by its primitivism, the rudimentary character of its institutions and ideas whose ultimate development the writers were privileged to know so well. There was about their writings, consequently, a condescension towards the past that exaggerated the quaintness and unreality of the objects they described. The story became serious only when these antiquities, sufficiently displayed, were left behind and the immediate background of present problems was displayed.[3]

The temptation to indulge in this 'sin of anachronism' is particularly strong when dealing with the period under consideration. For it is possible to trace the beginnings of the feminist movement back to the late eighteenth century and the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft and her friends.[4] It is extremely doubtful, however, if developments in women's education at this time can be understood in these simple terms.

The intended approach of this study will be to avoid treating the educational ideas and practice merely as 'seeds' from which were to develop at some future date advances towards justice and equality for the oppressed sex; rather they are to be looked upon as important social phenomena which require to be examined and explained.

This is not to say that the educational developments of the period were not significant in helping to determine the social position of women in nineteenth century England, or, indeed, the course of the movement for female emancipation.

They were, perhaps, the most powerful formative influences upon the Victorian world of women. By 1820, a woman's formal education had been settled upon and institutionalized; more important, her image had been fixed, her character and duties determined. If there was such a creature as 'the Victorian woman', it was in this period that she was conceived and brought into being.

The limitations which have been placed upon this study are few but crucial. It should be made clear at the outset that in this thesis all discussion of women and women's education will be confined to those who were, in one way or another, educated as ladies. To justify such a limitation, it is necessary to describe briefly the educational provisions for girls at the end of the eighteenth century.

At that time, there existed two distinct types of female education. First, there were the schools designed primarily for the lower orders, established and supported by the contributions of their social superiors. They included charity schools, schools of industry and Sunday schools. The aims of these institutions were religious and social, "to teach that 'fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom', and to steadily inculcate the duties of sobriety, temperance, and subordination."[5] From such schools the girls might be apprenticed to various menial occupations. Their eventual marriage would only rarely relieve them from

the necessity of working for a living.

Those girls who found places in such schools, particularly the charity schools, were the fortunate ones; they were, in fact, the elite of the lower orders. They might aspire to become a domestic servant or even the wife of a competent and reasonably prosperous artizan or trader. The great majority of their countrywomen began work at an early age, labouring in the fields, factories and mines under brutal and brutalizing conditions, invariably for less than a man's wage.[6] For such girls, formal education was non-existent, and remained so until well into the nineteenth century.

Socially and educationally, the lower class female was a creature conceived of and treated in radically different terms than her immediate superiors. Her education as a member of the lower orders and contemporary views about her character and duties will not be considered in this study. These matters are touched upon only inasmuch as they affected the lives of middle and upper class women.

It is with the second type of education that this thesis is concerned. By the end of the century, most of the middle classes were able to afford some kind of private education for their daughters. Whether this education was given in cheap or expensive boarding or day schools, or at home by a governess, parent, brother or sister, its aim was

the same, to develop the girl into what was conceived to be 'a lady'. It was this aim which determined the content and, to a large extent, the method of her education. The class, or rather the type, of young women, whose education is the object of this study, includes therefore all those who aspired to become, or at least to be looked upon as, ladies, and whose parents had the desire and means to provide them with the appropriate education.

The actual number of such females can only be guessed at. According to Colquhoun's estimate of 1815, the total population of England was some seventeen millions.[7] Of these, approximately twelve million belonged to the occupational groups of artizans, skilled workers, agricultural labourers, miners, servants, soldiers and sailors, and paupers. Few, if any, of the members of such groups can be considered actual or even potential buyers of 'the education of a lady'.

Of the remaining five millions, only some 300,000 were of the upper middle and upper orders,- that is, the nobility, gentry, upper clergy, greater merchants, wealthier doctors and lawyers, and the upper échelons of the services. All the women of these elevated ranks are included in this study.

The remaining four and a half millions or so, 'the middling orders', were comprised of various occupational groups, including farmers, freeholders, manufacturers, shop-keepers, innkeepers, the lesser professionals, and the

clergy. Many families within these groups would have possessed the means and the desire to have their daughters educated as ladies. Just how many of them actually did so can never be determined.

Even if all the females of 'the middling orders' are included, this would still only give a figure of some two and a half million women who were educated as ladies. The actual figure was almost certainly considerably lower, probably somewhere between one and two million, or one woman in every seven or eight.

However, the social influence of this minority of the female population and the significance of the education they received should not be judged merely in terms of the numbers of women involved. For in the creation and diffusion of those values, attitudes, religious beliefs and prejudices which were distinctive of Victorian civilization, 'the ladies' played a part out of all proportion to their numerical strength. Moreover, in their commitment to a standard type of education for their daughters, the middle and upper orders were establishing a pattern of female education which would be followed by all those who desired to elevate themselves socially.

The selection of a period and the assigning of dates as its limits are both somewhat arbitrary decisions. The period 1770 to 1820 is, of course, a crucial one in English

history. The improvements in industry, agriculture and transport, the American and French Revolutions, the subsequent wars, the growth of political radicalism, the romantic movement, the religious revivals, the development of humanitarian feeling and sentiment, all these trends and forces produced important changes in English society, changes that were particularly noticeable in 'the world of women'.

It was, moreover, an age intensely interested in education. The mounting criticisms of the grammar schools and the universities, the Sunday school movement, the experiments of the Edgeworths and their friends, the schemes of Owen, and the 'inventions' of Bell and Lancaster suggest a general awareness of the importance of education to the well-being of society.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that it was in this period that the popularization of 'the education of a lady' was completed. According to contemporaries, the number of young ladies' boarding schools increased dramatically at this time. In addition, the influx of French émigrés during the Revolution flooded an already overstocked market with would-be governesses and helped bring the domestic education of a lady within the means of many middle class families.

These developments in educational practice were matched by equally significant ones in the theory of female

education. The widespread interest of the age in education is nowhere to be seen more clearly than in this area. Perhaps the most valid reason for assigning the selected limits to the period is the great quantity of literature on women and women's education produced between 1770 and 1820.[8] If the sheer volume of writings may be used as a criterion for assessing interest, then this age must stand out as unique in its concern for the subject of female education. Never before or since has this issue occupied the attention of so many able and, in their day, reputable writers.

To the works of 'educationists' who were interested in applying the principles of 'scientific pedagogy' to the education of girls were added those whose authors were influenced by Romanticism or Sentimentalism, Evangelicalism, or political radicalism. It is just this divergence of opinion that gives to the writers of the period a liveliness and originality that is not to be found in their immediate successors.

By 1815, the debate seems to have concluded, and the quantity and quality of writings on the subject began to drop off. It was as though the whole issue had been settled and there was nothing more to be said. The few works that were published after 1820 tended to be an expression of opinions formed earlier in the century and contributed little if anything new to the topic.

The amount of literature published between 1770 and 1820 and relating to women and their education is enormous. The abundance of formal works on education, subject and monitorial textbooks, biographies, autobiographies, correspondence, periodicals and articles precludes any attempt to examine them all. It is upon what is hoped is a representative selection of such material that this study is based.

The number of secondary works devoted to women's education is extremely small. The 'standard histories' which make reference to this period are C. S. Bremner's Education of Girls and Women in Great Britain, (1897), A. Zimmern's The Renaissance of Girls' Education, (1898), D. Gardiner's English Girlhood at School, (1929), and, more recently, J. Kamm's Hope Deferred, Girls' Education in English History, (1965).

Of particular interest are two M.A. theses, E. M. D. Morris' Education of Girls in England 1600-1800, (1926), and M. Gordon's Demands for the Education of Girls, 1790-1865, (1950).

To the best of the writer's knowledge, there has been undertaken no detailed study of the developments in middle class female education during this most important period in English history, nor any attempt made to relate the education of women to the social, political and intellectual context of the age. It is hoped that this study will at least partially remedy both these omissions.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The sudden and enormous popularity of Quick's Educational Reformers (1868) in the 1890's is to be explained by the equally sudden appearance of history of education as a course offering in teacher training colleges. Typical of the more scholarly works produced at this time were those of the 'Great Educator Series' which was to produce standard monographs on Aristotle, Loyola, Alcuin, Froebel, Abelard, Herbart, Pestalozzi, Mann, Bell, Lancaster, and Arnold. The dominance of the 'great educator' approach to history of education has lasted until comparatively recently, particularly in the teaching of the subject in training colleges. See, Brian Simon, 'The History of Education', in J. W. Tibble, (editor) The Study of Education, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966. pp. 91-131.

[2]In this tradition may be considered Rashdall's classic work on the medieval universities (1895), Leach's English Schools at the Reformation, (1896), Watson's The English Grammar Schools, (1908), Irene Parker's Dissenting Academies, (1914) and M. G. Jones' The Charity School Movement, (1938). There are over 500 histories of individual grammar schools, quite apart from those dealing with university colleges, charity schools and even Sunday schools. See Tibble, op. cit. pp. 115-116.

[3]Bernard Bailyn, Education in the Forming of American Society, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1960, pp. 10-12.

[4]See, for example, Jacob Bouten, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Beginnings of Female Emancipation in England, H. J. Paris, Amsterdam, 1922.

[5]Annual Report of the Sunday School Society, 1795, cited in The Gentleman's Magazine, 1795, Vol. II. p. 785.

[6]Marian Ramelson, The Petticoat Rebellion, A Century of Struggle for Women's Rights, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1967. pp. 24-31.

[7]G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, The Common People, 1746-1946. Methuen, London, 1961. p. 71.

[8]See Appendix B. p. 492.

PART I

THE BACKGROUND

1743

Man to the plough
Woman, to the cow,
Girl, to the yarn,
Boy, to the barn,
And your rent will be netted.

1843

Man, Tally - Ho,
Miss, piano,
Wife, silk and satin,
Boy, Greek and Latin,
And you'll be Gazetted.

Quoted in Marian Ramelson, The Petticoat Rebellion: A Century of Struggle for Women's Rights, Lawrence and Wishart, London. 1967. p. 34.

CHAPTER II

THE CHANGING WORLD OF WOMEN 1750 - 1820

I

In the middle years of the eighteenth century, England was a nation well satisfied with itself. Religious strife, the product of superstition and 'enthusiasm', lay far behind in the 'dark ages' of previous centuries. The rebellion of 'forty-five' had been crushed, the Jacobite menace finally removed. The era of peace and prosperity which Walpole had sought and achieved had not ended with his political demise. Indeed, the self-confidence of the great merchants continued to make itself felt in their demands for a more aggressive foreign policy to protect and expand their commercial interests. Convinced that industry, agriculture and trade were all thriving, enjoying a stable political system which was the envy of Europe, and believing that art, literature and philosophy were reaching the zenith of perfection, it is scarcely surprising that most wealthy and educated Englishmen should subscribe to some form of what Basil Willey has aptly called 'Cosmic Toryism'.[1]

In politics, such a belief led to the conviction that the English constitution had now been perfected. There was certainly no need to tamper with it again. The settlements of 1689 and 1714 had properly, and perhaps providentially,

concentrated power in the hands of those who had the true interests of the country at heart, that is, the landed classes and the great merchants. Any attempt to disturb this arrangement would be striking at the heart of the nation, undermining its stability and threatening its prosperity. It is significant, for example, that both George III and his critics justified themselves and their actions on the grounds, not that they were improving the constitution, but rather preserving it.

Similarly, the existing social structure, based on the principle of rank and due subordination, was conceived to be the best possible arrangement. While English society was fluid and mobile compared to continental countries, by today's standards it was extremely rigid.[2] The maintenance of the principle of rank was thought to be just as important for the lower orders as for the rich and powerful. Rank implied not only privileges but responsibilities. As Trevelyan has pointed out,

> The political spirit of the eighteenth century was based not on equality but on the harmony of classes. It was far removed alike from the rebellious Radicalism and the reactionary Toryism which . . . sprang from the combined effects of the industrial and French Revolutions. Chatham's 'loyal Britons' had not yet become Burke's 'swinish multitude'. Poor and rich together took a patriotic pride in our 'free constitution', which they continually contrasted with the slavery of continental countries.[3]

The acknowledged leaders of society, the aristocracy and higher gentry, had every reason to be well satisfied

with their lot. There were few, if any, limitations placed on the range of activities and occupations open to the man of birth and fortune. Politics, business, industry, the professions, agriculture, the world of learning, the army or navy, the Church, a life devoted to pleasure, even apprenticeship to a trade, none of these were considered inappropriate for him.[4]

Nor had the middling orders any cause to feel dissatisfied. The greater and lesser merchants, the professional men, the traders, the farmers were all content with the world as they found it.[5] Their standard of living was adequate and improving. More important, the opportunities they enjoyed for economic and social advancement were, by eighteenth century standards, considerable.

The vast majority of the population, the labouring poor, far from being a homogeneous body, merged imperceptibly into the middling orders at one extreme, and down into the destitute and pauper elements at the other. While it is true that the poor, in town and country alike, frequently became a rioting, burning and looting mob and protested vehemently their condition, there is no evidence to suggest that they questioned the justice of the actual social structure itself. Indeed, their anger was generally directed against those whom they believed to be destroying the traditional relationships between the ranks of society. With

good reason, and almost instinctively, the poor hated both the 'improving farmer' and the 'rapacious factory owner'.

Ranged firmly behind all those who sought to preserve the status quo was the Church. By mid century, the identification of the clergy and the landed classes was complete.[6] This fact, coupled with the considerable government influence on the higher clergy,[7] meant that "the clergy and responsible laity were fully attuned to one another."[8] There were few clerics who saw any contradiction between their duties as Churchmen and their commitment to the existing social and political order. As Archbishop Tillotson proudly observed,

> I do in my conscience believe the Church to be the best constituted Church this day in the world . . . . And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above several professions that we know in the world, that it acknowledgeth a due and just subordination to the Civil Authority, and has always been undoubted in its loyalty.[9]

At this time and among 'those who counted', there was little questioning of the existing order. There were, it is true, a few dissident voices raised in protest against the age's complacency, condemning its vices and pointing the way to reformation, improvement and, perhaps, perfection. But in the middle years of the century, the criticisms of Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau and even Wesley could still be read and looked upon with detached interest and an amused tolerance. They certainly seemed to pose no threat to what,

for most Englishmen, was a most providentially arranged society.

In this apparently most stable of societies, the position of women who belonged to 'the nobility, the gentry and the middling sort'[10] seemed immutably fixed. In law, a woman's status had not changed significantly since feudal times. In fact, it was to remain constant until the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1750, as in the feudal period, the key to social advancement was land tenure and property. Thus, most of the statutory legal provisions and the rulings of Common Law concerning women dealt with their ability or inability to control or allocate control of land or property.[11] As such, of course, they were relevant mainly for women of property, although equally applicable to all classes.

As a single woman and owner of property, a woman enjoyed in every respect equality with a man. She had complete control over her possessions, could enter into contracts, and dispose of her goods in a will as she wished. She could sue and be sued according to the law and her status in court was not a whit different to that of a man.

Once, however, a woman betrothed herself, her legal status was altered and her rights curtailed. From that time on, her property was considered that of her prospective husband. No gift to another person or settlement was valid

unless he consented. To deprive herself of property while under a promise of marriage was a "fraud on his marital right."[12]

As a wife, she owed complete obedience to her husband.

> He had the right to her absolute fidelity, to her society and to her services - in legal language to her consortium. His domicil became her domicil, and her marriage vow laid upon her the duty to reside with him wherever he might choose to live. Her property, with a few partial exceptions, became his property, and over the children of their marriage his rights were absolute.[13]

Even her earnings during marriage, if she had any, belonged legally to her husband. This master-vassal relationship, for such it was, had been expressed most clearly in a law dating from 1351 (and not repealed until the reign of George III), by which the murder of a wife by her husband was a felony punishable by hanging, while the murder of a husband by his wife was considered the murder of a superior by an inferior and thus petit treason, punishable by burning after being 'drawn to the stake'.

The legal means by which a husband could enforce his rights were several. If his wife refused to live with him, he could bring her before an Ecclesiastical Court and have her imprisoned. He could confine her at home by force and could beat her though "not in a violent and cruel manner."[14] Nor were such sanctions considered merely a dead letter of the law, remnants of medieval ignorance. Sir Frances Buller, who sat on the bench during the famous Treason Trials of

1794, was celebrated for his ruling that it was legal for a husband to beat his wife provided he used a stick no thicker than his thumb.[15] If she deserted him, all her property and earnings remained his, and he was not liable to support her in any way. He could also sue and claim damages from any person who deprived him of her services and society.

The legal rights of a wife were, in theory, considerable, although by no means as impressive as those of her husband and extremely difficult to enforce. Her husband was obliged to maintain her, but only in items 'of absolute necessity', that is food and clothing. If her husband left her, she could pledge his credit with any tradesman who would accept it; only an extremely benevolent or very foolish shopkeeper, however, would accept the credit of a deserted wife. She too possessed the right to apply for a restitution of conjugal rights in an Ecclesiastical Court. But this was a lengthy and expensive business, and she could not compel his consortium in any other way. Moreover, if he did desert her, he retained all her property and could insist on her earnings, even those gained during his desertion, being paid directly to himself. He retained the right to return at any time to resume cohabitation. The grounds on which she could legally refuse to live with him were extremely narrow ones. As late as 1811, "nothing but terror and violence" justified such a course of action.[16]

It was virtually impossible for a wife to divorce her husband. Infidelity on his part was not considered sufficient grounds, although if she was unfaithful the husband could sue the man involved under Common Law, obtain a legal separation and eventually apply for a divorce. It was possible for a wife to obtain a legal separation from her husband. But if this were granted by an Ecclesiastical Court, neither party could remarry; meanwhile the husband retained all her property, apart from a small allowance he made her. Real divorce was possible only by an Act of Parliament and was available in practice only to a very few wealthy men.

As a mother her rights were virtually nil. The father exercised complete control over the children during their minority. He could remove them from the mother and put them in the care of his mistress. He could even deny his wife access to them.[17] So firm was the law on this point that, if a separation was granted, the husband could not assign custody of the children to his wife. If he did not choose to care for them, they became wards of the court. A widow's right to take charge of her children depended upon the terms of the will. The husband had the right to appoint guardians of his children, even minors, who then assumed all his powers. They too might exclude the mother from all contact with her children. Since any threat to property tended to be treated as an offence, a person who seduced or eloped

with an heiress who was a minor could be sued by the father. The offender had, in fact, not committed a crime against her person; rather he had infringed the property rights of the father.

A married woman owned no property of her own. She thus had no contractual capacity in Common Law; she could neither sue nor be sued, unless, that is, she was a trader by profession.[18] Just as she could neither sue nor be sued in contract, so too she could neither sue nor be sued in civil actions, even if the offence had occurred before her marriage. If judgement was not recoverable from the marriage partners, they were both liable to arrest and imprisonment.

Marriage also affected a woman's criminal responsibility. Excluding treason, murder and brothel keeping, she was not responsible for any criminal act committed in the presence of her husband, the presumption being that she had acted under his orders and thus done 'the proper thing'. She could not be an accessory after the fact and could not give evidence against her husband. She could not form a conspiracy with her husband, since that required two legal agents and they formed but one. For the same reason, she could not steal from him, nor he from her.

Behind the laws governing the rights and duties of wives and husbands were two beliefs, widespread in the eighteenth century,- first that family life depended for its

health upon there being one head possessing absolute authority, and second that the rights of property must be protected.

There was little questioning of the law as it stood. Since the vast majority of women possessed no property anyway, they stood to gain little from a change in property rights. And for those women who did own considerable property, the principle of Equity and Equity Law was increasingly available.[19] For it was possible, through a Court of Equity, for property to be set aside for "the separate use" of a married woman, "either by gift or will, or by means of a contract between husband and wife, either in the marriage settlement or later."[20] Over this property she exercised the same control as a single woman.

However, Miss Reiss is probably correct in her view that

> the doctrine of separate use was invented not so much to enable a woman to have control over her own property as to guarantee to her father that his money should be used for her benefit and not to defray the expenses of an extravagant son-in-law.[21]

The same principles which governed a woman's status under the law as a wife and a mother also helped determine her public rights and duties. Although she could occupy the highest office in the land and assume all the rights of kingship, she was excluded completely from the electorate. In local government, however, her right of participation was considerable. She could, if she had the necessary qualifications, vote in vestry,[22] and for the guardians of the poor.

She could also vote for and occupy the offices of sexton, church-warden and overseer of the poor.[23] The reason for her being allowed to fulfill such functions was summed up in the case of 1739 which decided a woman might vote for and fill the office of sexton.

> This is a servile ministerial office which requires neither skill nor understanding. But this cannot determine that women may vote for members of Parliament, as that choice requires an improved understanding.[24]

Ironically, as a shareholder, she could vote for the governing body of the East India Company and thus help determine the administration of an enormous empire.

In general, there appears to have been little involvement of women in local government. Their energies were to be expended in 'less exacting' pursuits. The wives and daughters of the aristocracy and wealthy gentry led lives that were every bit as elegant as the exteriors and décor of their country houses and town counterparts. The latest fashion in dress or art, interesting gossip and new amusements were their central concerns.[25] Some, it is true, did show an interest in more manly affairs. Elizabeth Montagu, for example, was engrossed with the operation of her estate and became something of an expert on such unwomanly subjects as the prices of barley, malt and coal.[26]

It was usual, however, for the great ladies of the aristocracy to be free from any responsibilities; save, that

is, childbearing. In an age when women of all ranks were expected to marry young, the 'pernicious martyrdom of childbearing' faced every female. Improper deliveries, a high incidence of infection and fever, and almost annual pregnancies combined, if not to bring an early death, at least to undermine the constitution.

The women of the lesser gentry seem to have led a rather less exciting life than their superiors. They were, moreover, kept much busier. Servants were plentiful but families large; and in the country much had to be produced at home. Beer was brewed, and bread, butter and cheese made. Country wives, even those of the best gentlemen, were expected to supervise all such activities. Lady Blois' somewhat cryptic letters to her husband, written early in the eighteenth century, show well the kind of work expected of even genteel country ladies.

> My Cooke, new, complaints: and dus little: and I tiried out with the hury of this week; prepairing the bread and butter for the poor: and managing a hog: pudings and link I will send you a Munday.[27]

The wife of John Noble, a Hereford Justice of the Peace, was expected to organize the fetching of coal from the Forest of Dean, supervise the mixing of bread flour, and see that the vestry kept its expenditures well in hand.[28]

For the wife of a farmer, even a prosperous one, life was even more strenuous. She was not expected, as continental wives did, to work in the fields; but around the house and

farmyard her duties were many and onerous.[29] Like other country wives, she was also expected to be something of a medical expert. Frequently, she played the role of a country general practitioner.[30]

In the larger towns, the women of the middling orders enjoyed a somewhat easier existence. Servants were even more plentiful, and her ready access to shops and markets relieved her from the tiresome business of making bread, butter and cheese. But if her domestic responsibilities were fewer, her work outside the home tended to be greater. In the middle of the century, it was still common to apprentice girls to craftsmen or craftswomen. The indenture fees, which often ran as high as £40 or £50, suggest that such apprenticeships were mainly middle class avocations. Both girls and married women of respectable middle class families worked as grocers, hair-buyers, hatters, innholders, lace-makers, linen drapers, mantua makers, woollen drapers and milliners.[31] In addition to such occupations, they were expected, like the working wife today, to look after their husband and children. It is not difficult to appreciate why industry was a highly approved quality in a wife.

The opportunities which women enjoyed for recreation and amusement depended on two factors, their social class and where they lived. For the aristocracy, both town and country pleasures were available. The practice of spending

the 'season' in London or at one of the great resorts away from the country estate was already well established. And if, in the country, the great lady found her recreations limited to riding, visiting and the occasional ball, there were no such restrictions placed on her range of activities in the town. As Soame Jenyns observed in 1751 of the life of 'the modern fine lady':

> Winged with Diversions all her Moments flew,
> Each, as it passed, presenting something new;[32]

For the great landlords and their families, the 'season' was a costly, frequently extravagant and obviously highly enjoyable annual holiday.[33]

For the country gentleman, a visit to one of the popular resorts was possible only once or twice in a lifetime. Their womenfolk had to be content with country amusements and recreations, although these were by no means inconsiderable. Parties, feasts and dances were frequently provided by gentry and farmers, particularly in the winter months when the farm work had slackened off. Markets, fairs, hunts, visits from travelling players and a whole host of what to the twentieth century seem peculiarly cruel and vulgar amusements, including goose-riding, bull-baiting and public executions, were available to men and women alike, regardless of wealth or rank.

In the larger towns, particularly in London, the wives and daughters of any man of moderate means enjoyed

almost as wide a range of recreations and amusements as the greatest lady in town. The London parks were open to all and sundry, and walking 'to see and be seen' was every bit as popular then as now. Nor did the pleasure gardens which surrounded London cater exclusively to those of rank and fortune. At Ranelagh and Vauxhall, diversions of every kind were available. Here a humble trader's wife could rub shoulders with and feel she belonged to the Beau Monde.[34]

In the amusements it offered, London illustrated well its "curious mixture of fashion, squalor and the macabre."[35] Public floggings of soldiers took place in Saint James' Park, while gaily dressed ladies promenaded up and down. Public executions and the bridewell were still attended by all ranks of society. The opera and Garrick's performances of Shakespeare were popular, but no more so than the obscene amusements offered at Cupid's Gardens and The Royal Diversion.[36] In the middle of the eighteenth century, the variety and number of amusements and entertainments deemed suitable for and enjoyed by women were almost certainly greater than at any time since.

If the mid-eighteenth century woman possessed more freedom in choosing her recreations than her daughters and grand-daughters, she tended, in general, to be far less literate than succeeding generations. The popular novel was in its infancy, the lending and circulating library was

still a rarity, and periodicals designed exclusively for women were few and expensive. Boarding schools for young ladies were increasing in numbers but were by no means ubiquitous. The quality of women's correspondence, at least as far as spelling and grammar were concerned, was markedly inferior to that of the next generation. Dancing, music and needlework were the staple ingredients of the education of a young lady, while those daughters of the middle classes who were apprenticed to crafts or trades could scarcely be said to have received a 'literary education'. Not that this formal education, or rather its lack, in any way prevented them from fulfilling their domestic and social duties, or from enjoying life to the full. The growth in the literacy and refinement of women, which characterized the second half of the century had already begun; but it had not yet achieved full momentum or produced any widespread or significant changes in the lives of women.

In view of the Latitudinarian climate of the age, it is not surprising that there were few women who could be described as 'enthusiastically religious'. Wesley's mission had just begun and the revival within the Church was to take almost another half century to achieve any widespread influence. Nevertheless, contemporary accounts suggest that women's attendance at church was heavy and regular. Dr. Edmund Pyle, for example, on becoming Archdeacon of York,

noticed at his installation,

> Nothing but ladies by dozens (and very pretty ones) on the right hand or the left or in front of my stall, but through mercy, having the service to read, I was forced to look at least as much on the rubric of the book as upon that of their cheeks.[37]

Whether or not they were impressed with their need for a 'vital religion', the numbers of people confirmed in the middle years of the century, which are astonishingly high by today's standards, suggest that both men and women attended well to the formalities of religion.[38]

The actual relationships between men and women at this time are not easy to determine. The theoretical and legal relationship was, of course, not fully mirrored in practice. The growing use of equity settlements had given many women of property some measure of financial independence from their husbands. More important, contemporary literature suggests that there was no lack of women who, through their power of personality or even superior physical strength, succeeded in 'holding their own' with their husbands. The shrew or the wife beating her husband was a commonly used woodcut in eighteenth century chapbooks.[39] And the number of well known personalities who stood in fear and trembling of their wives was considerable.[40] But such cases were no doubt the exception rather than the rule; for most women, the idea of their achieving equality in the marital relationship would have been foreign and quite possibly repugnant.

Between a daughter and her father, the principal nexus was their mutual concern that she obtain a suitable husband. Among the aristocracy and the gentry, marriages were generally arranged, in the sense that the social and financial status of the prospective groom were vital factors in determining his eligibility. On the other hand, it was rare for a young lady to be married against her will. The role of the father in this connection was to reconcile his daughter's preferences with his own ambitions for her, to choose, in fact, the best of the proposals received.[41]

For the aristocracy of birth or of wealth, the 'suitable marriage' was a commonly used means of uniting in a single family, land and money. The daughter of a wealthy merchant, who passionately desired an estate for his family, could not only realise her father's wish; she could also satisfy the monetary needs of an impoverished landowner.

If the marriage stakes among the middling orders were comparatively smaller, they were no less important in determining the filial relationship between father and daughter. The merchant, shopkeeper and successful artizan or craftsman could have ambitions for his daughter every bit as great as those of a wealthy financier. Marriage was one of the most easily negotiated avenues of social mobility. Increasingly, as the century wore on, parents were willing to pay handsomely to have their daughters educated so as to attract suitable husbands.

To contemporaries, the position of women seemed as fixed and as stable as the structure of society itself. There were, it is true, occasional outbursts of resentment by women who were angered by their subordinate position. The bitter and somewhat eccentric Mary Wortley Montagu, for example, complained to her daughter in 1752, "To say truth, there is no part of the world where our sex is treated with so much contempt as in England."[42] She did not object to her exclusion from government or from "all degrees of power," but she was incensed that no art was omitted "to stifle our natural reason."[43]

Significantly, her daughter, the Countess of Bute, would have none of her mother's ideas on women and women's education. Within a year, Lady Montagu wrote rather stiffly to her daughter, "You see I was not mistaken in supposing that we should have disputes concerning your daughter, if we were together, since we can differ even at this distance. . . . I shall speak no more on that subject."[44]

Sharing Lady Montagu's discontent was the author of a work published in 1744 under the pseudonym, Sophia, a Person of Quality, and entitled Beauty's Triumph; or the Superiority of the Fair Sex Invincibly Proved. Sophia, in caustic and yet somehow good humoured language, insisted that there was "no difference between Men and Us, than what their tyranny has created."[45] It was ridiculous, she went on, that women

should live "in a state of subjection to the Men." Yet this is just what one writer had asserted,[46] "lest this age be ignorant what fools there have been among his Sex in former ones."[47]

There was about Sophia's outburst none of the great seriousness of intention which marked the works of later feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays. For example, rejoicing that women had been excluded from all warlike employments, Sophia explained the reasoning of Providence. "As sailors in a storm throw overboard their more useless lumber; so it is fit that the Men alone should be exposed to the dangers and hardships of war, while we remain safe at home."[48]

Sophia's work drew forth an immediate reply, Man Superior to Woman, or The Natural Right of Men to Sovereign Authority over the Women. If anything, it was even more bantering and light-hearted in tone. Sophia, the author argued, was completely in the wrong. Women were shallow creatures whose intellect "seldom can reach higher than a Headdress."[49] "Need we look any farther than their soft, simpering, silly Faces, to fathom the perceptible depth of their Understandings?"[50] Sophia was "a living Demonstration" that for women

> A little learning is a dangerous Thing.[51]

So similar are the styles of the two works that they

may well have been written by the same person, quite possibly a man. What is important is that the interest shown in the issue of women's rights is considerably less than the author's concern to score points off an opponent. The rough and occasionally crude badinage suggests a kind of equality between what were, in effect, combatants in a rhetorical debate.

In the middle years of the century, the question of women's position in society, its justice or injustice, while affording topics for amusing debates, was not an issue that aroused serious concern. The social, economic, political and legal status of women was confirmed and incontrovertible.

Yet those Englishmen who were well satisfied with things as they were and saw little about them to threaten their 'providential society' were already living in a fool's paradise. Theirs was a false sense of complacency. The forces of change were gathering strength; soon they would be striking at the very roots of the old order.

II

From the middle of the eighteenth century, England was increasingly affected by a passion for improvement. Advances in agriculture, industry and transportation proceeded alongside growing demands for political, religious and moral improvement. There was scarcely an area of life

that was not to be influenced in some way or another by the 'Ideal of Progress'.

Even the most conservative elements in society, the landed aristocracy and gentry, were infected with enthusiasm for more efficient methods of agricultural production. And yet the agrarian revolution, its new techniques, crops and machines, and the enclosure movement were giving rise to important social changes. The improving landlords were playing a leading role in the breakup of the very order they were concerned to preserve.[52]

The growing class of industrial capitalists faced no such contradiction; for them the status quo was in no way sacrosanct. They looked forward to a better world, where thrift, industry and godliness went hand in hand to assure all men, if not happiness, at least security and prosperity.[53] If reason and progress demanded political and social reform, it must be undertaken. Nothing must be allowed to hinder improvement.

The country farmer and industrialist were in complete agreement about the benefits to be gained by improvements in transportation. The country must be opened up and markets expanded; better roads and more canals were essential.

By the end of the century, a philosophical creed, or rather several creeds, for this ideal of progress had been formulated.[54] Perhaps inevitably, the belief in progress

assumed political and social dimensions. To the economic arguments of Adam Smith were added those of Paine, Godwin and Bentham. The differences in their thought were important, but no more so than their common concern to alter and improve the current political and social arrangements of society.

These various shades of political and social radicalism were thrown into sharp focus by the French Revolution. At first, it was an enormous encouragement to all reformers, particularly the Dissenters, who had long laboured under civil disabilities. The Revolution had the effect of polarising opinion in England; it put people into camps in which they could be attacked and defend themselves.[55] In this war of ideas, reaction triumphed. Political and social reform was discredited; the status quo firmly vindicated.

All these great movements, the agrarian and industrial revolutions, the social changes associated with them, the French revolution and the rise and demise of political radicalism, tended to threaten the existing order. Indeed, they were more than threats; before the end of the century, they had already produced important changes in society, changes that affected markedly the lives and aspirations of women.

Nor were these 'progressive' movements the only forces that affected women and their image. Equally significant were the religious revivals, Methodism and Evangelicalism. Both stressed a particular view of women and their duties,

and both helped bring about changes in her world. No less important was the growth of humanitarianism, which was linked both to the religious revivals and to the various cults of romanticism which appeared in the latter half of the century.

Throughout this period and particularly in the immediately pre-Victorian age, the position of women, their education and the ideas connected with these issues were largely determined by these movements and their effects on the world of women.

From the middle of the century onwards, the lives of the women of the upper and middle orders were marked by an ever-growing amount of leisure and refinement. For the aristocracy of birth or of wealth, it was an Age of Grandeur.[56] The improvements in agriculture and consequent increases in profits and rents, the widening of markets, the development of specialized farming, and the exploitation of mineral deposits on their estates provided the great landowners with enormous incomes. Nor were they hesitant in disposing of their great wealth. They were patrons of artists, sculptors and designers, importers of every kind of objets d'art, and buyers of what are still fine houses, furniture, silverware and pottery. With a self-confidence that amounted to arrogance, they paraded their riches to the envy of their contemporaries and posterity.[57]

The general increase in wealth was not confined to

the aristocracy. Dorothy Marshall has pointed out that it has become "commonplace to assert that any period of transition in English history is characterized by 'a rising middle class' and to attribute to its activities much of the subsequent changes."[58] But the commonplace nature of the assertion does nothing to lessen its force. The late eighteenth century was a period when the middle classes were growing and enjoying increasing opportunities for social advancement and prosperity.

Nowhere was this tendency more evident than in the households of successful farmers. As her husband's profits steadily increased, particularly during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, the farmer's wife was able to free herself from the drudgery of running the dairy and taking care of the household. She could now afford to send her daughters to a boarding school for young ladies. Arthur Young spoke disapprovingly of finding pianofortes in farmers' parlours, and occasionally even liveried servants. Farmers, he warned, should avoid imitating "the folly, foppery [and] expense" of the gentleman.[59]

And what was true of the prosperous farmer was equally so of the successful shopkeeper, trader, craftsman and businessman in the towns. They too possessed the means to ape their betters,- to employ more servants, drink the more expensive brands of tea, dress their wives in style, provide

their daughters with an expensive musical instrument, and take them to the theatre or opera. Their wives no longer worked outside the home, and their aspirations for their daughters reached higher than an apprenticeship to a trade or craft. China and pottery replaced pewter, Sheffield plate graced tables that were, like the rest of the furniture, elegant imitations of Chippendale or Sheraton, and washbasins were no longer objects that evoked surprise and conversation.[60] And all the while, the code of polite manners that was being evolved among the Great steadily percolated down into the middle ranks.[61]

Perhaps the most dramatic aspect of the general improvement in standards of living, particularly as far as women were concerned, resulted from advances in medical knowledge and practice. At the end of the century, medicine was still primitive by today's standards,[62] but it had made progress. The plague was no longer a threat, smallpox had been conquered by Jenner, and innoculation of infants was becoming common practice. Surgery and midwifery had taken great strides forward,[63] while soap and the bath had both been accepted as important in maintaining good health. The mortality rate of infants and mothers had dropped. Henceforth, infection, disease and death in childbirth would no longer be accepted as the inevitable lot of a woman.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, English-

men and women enjoyed increasing geographical mobility. After centuries of neglect, the roads of England were being made usable, and with the same zeal for improvement that characterized industry and agriculture. Between 1700 and 1750, some 400 road acts were passed, while in the next forty years this number was quadrupled. Despite the inevitable and often justified complaints about the state of the roads, by the end of the century, the major centres of population were well served by road transport of every description.

The effect on England could not have been other than exhilarating. As Arthur Young noted with satisfaction,

> New people - new ideas - new exertions - fresh activity to every branch of industry . . . and all the animation, vigour, life and energy of luxury, consumption, and industry, which flow with a full tide through this kingdom, wherever there is a free communication between the capital and the provinces.[64]

The improvement of the roads had an important homogenizing effect on English life, particularly in the country. Along the turnpikes travelled not only goods and travellers but news and ideas. There were still, of course, many areas which remained completely isolated from and unaffected by the life and ideas of the towns. But into the villages along the great highways were imported fashions, amusements, literature and gossip,- in fact, a whole new way of life. The ease and cheapness of access to the towns meant that increasingly townspeople drew their supply of servants from the country.[65]

And when the servant and maid returned home from their employment, they brought with them values, prejudices and knowledge that could not but help break down provincial attitudes.

As the speed, ease and comfort of travelling facilities grew throughout the century, the spas and resorts, which formerly had been accessible only to the wealthy, were thrown open to an increasing number of middle class families.[66] A visit to Brighton, Harrogate or Bath had become no more difficult and no less essential for a wealthy businessman or successful trader than for a Duke or Duchess.

Brighton, which by 1810 was less than a half day's journey from London, became more and more middle class in its clientèle. No sooner had the war in Europe concluded than the aristocracy began to desert it for the more exclusive and infinitely more hospitable resorts of Southern France and the Italian riviera.[67]

At the turn of the century, the great resorts offered numerous opportunities to mingle with the Great and improve one's social contacts. The hopes and fears of the family visiting Bath were cleverly, if somewhat bitterly, portrayed by Jane Austen in her Persuasion (1818). On their arrival in Bath, the Elliots and Russells were more than gratified to find that "everybody was wanting to visit them. They had drawn back from many introductions, and still were perpetually having cards left by people of whom they knew nothing."[68] Yet

when distant relatives, a Viscountess and her daughter no less, arrive for the season, the problem of how to introduce themselves properly into such august company causes them agonies of mind. After all, "family connexions were always worth preserving, good company always worth seeking."[69] And the pleasure to be gained from enjoying access to their society was more than adequate compensation for having to endure the stupidity and insensitivity of their noble cousins.

The formal and informal contacts established at the fashionable centres were an important means of spreading taste and the observance of polite manners among the middle class. These they took back with them to their homes, where they further influenced their friends and relations who had no opportunity of seeing first hand the splendors of the great resorts.

The opening up of the resorts to the middle class had important repercussions upon the Beau Monde itself. As Fanny Burney pointed out in her Evelina (1778), the fashionable world had become vulgarized; one could no longer be certain, even in London, of meeting in it only 'the best sort' of people.[70] Moreover, the middle class' almost innate dislike of gross extravagance and immorality tended to alienate the more debauched, profligate and, perhaps, truly aristocratic elements from what became known as 'polite

society'. The Prince Regent and his friends might do as they pleased in the decadent and indecent atmosphere of the Brighton Pavilion; but they were under constant attack from the majority of Brighton's respectable middle-class visitors and holiday makers.

The opening up of the country by the roads, the growth of the resorts and the more numerous social contacts enjoyed by any family of means broadened considerably a girl's marital prospects. Put simply, she and her parents met a greater number of young men from a wider range of social and occupational backgrounds. Her chances of improving herself and her family's connections seemed consequently to be greater than ever before. It became more and more important, therefore, that she acquire the manners, skills and knowledge considered appropriate in attracting an eligible young man. The great increase in the number of boarding schools for young ladies and the rise of the private governess as a major profession for women is clearly associated with this concern of the middle class to educate their daughters for the marriage market.

Social mobility had kept pace with geographical mobility. Both were connected with what contemporaries felt was a total breakdown of a society based upon the principle of rank. This was not, of course, a feeling or fear unique to the late eighteenth century. Protests against the inferior

orders' imitation of their betters were common enough in the seventeenth century and continued to be voiced all through the eighteenth. By the end of the century, however, the criticisms had become more numerous, more serious, and frequently almost hysterical in tone.

Even the peerage had not escaped contamination.

> You will find few commoners in England [wrote Mrs. Scott to a friend in 1762]. We make nobility as fast as people make kings and queens on Twelfth Night, and almost as many. . . . Lady Townshend says, she does not spit out of her window for fear of spitting on a lord.[71]

Making lords out of wealthy merchants was bad enough; but that drapers, innkeepers and farmers and their wives and children should attempt to turn themselves into ladies and gentlemen was far worse. It was just this rank, the hard-working, sober and socially conservative middle class, which should comprise the backbone of the country, its greatest source of good sense and industry. ". . . is it not obvious," lamented Hannah More, "that . . . this very valuable part of society is declining in usefulness, as it rises in its ill-founded pretensions to elegance ."[72] Despite the frequency of such warnings and criticisms, they were ineffective in stemming the tide of social ambition and refinement of the middle classes.

In the nineteenth century, the main criteria for determining social class, particularly within the middle class itself, were income, occupation and education, which

merged together in various combinations to determine one's social position.[73] Of these three factors, education was the most easily manipulated, particularly as far as women were concerned. A woman's social class would be determined by her marriage, the prospects for which depended largely on her father's income and occupation. For her, these were fixed; there was nothing she could do to 'improve' them. But her education was another matter; it was in her power, or rather her parents' power, to buy an education which was, so to speak, above her station, to obtain for her what was conceived to be the education of a lady. The breakdown of ranks, upward social mobility, the importance of marriage as an avenue of social advancement, the increase in the number of boarding schools for girls and the appearance of the private governess, all were inextricably bound together.

Quite apart from the emphasis placed on the importance of a fashionable education, and perhaps in spite of it, the late eighteenth century was characterized by a marked quickening of the intellectual life of women. In a relatively short period of time, women had become readers. John Bowdler pointed out that

> the accumulation of riches . . . gives to them [women] a greater command of ease, books, and every facility for instruction. It multiplies too continually the number of those who will be ambitious of some intellectual attainments; and by multiplying their number, at once gives a price to knowledge, and withdraws the reproach of singularity.[74]

By the end of the century, there were few writers who did not feel that the Englishwoman was the most literate and intellectually competent female who had ever walked upon the earth.[75]

Not only had women become readers; they had taken to listening. Public lectures on experimental philosophy, medicine, midwifery, literature and history had been attended by women earlier in the century,[76] but from the seventies on, it became more and more common for speakers to address their advertisements to both sexes. It is, of course, impossible to determine how many women did take in the numerous lectures and debates on political, religious, scientific and literary matters that took place in the larger towns. Doubtless they were in a minority, and those who did attend kept themselves well in the background. Public speaking and controversy were not at all "compatible with the soft delicacy" of the female character.[77]

Reading, however, was another matter. From the middle of the century, women began to make up an increasingly important part of the general reading public. Writers, publishers and book sellers were not slow to capitalize on this new demand for 'female literature'. Periodicals devoted 'entirely to their use and amusement' appeared. By the early nineteenth century, The Lady's Magazine, The New Lady's Magazine, and La Belle Assemblée were all providing entertainment for the fair sex.[78]

By far the most popular form of reading for women was the novel. Indeed, its popularization as a literary form and decline in quality in the late eighteenth century were probably connected with the rapid growth of a large reading public comprised mainly of women. Exquisitely sentimental love stories, Gothic novels, macabre tales of horror, - the good, the bad and the indifferent - all were gobbled up by the ladies.

The lending and circulating libraries which sprang up all over the country brought the novel within the reach of almost every woman of means. While the more reputable writers disassociated themselves from the libraries, the hundreds of literary hacks found their major account in them.[79] The quality of literature can be gauged to some extent by the usual fee paid for writing a 'library novel', one half guinea per volume in the sixties, rising to five and then ten guineas a novel by the end of the century. Occasionally as much as £20 to £30 would be paid for better quality work. For well established authors, the fees were very large, £250 for Fanny Burney's Cecilia (1782), and £900 for Mrs. Radcliffe's The Italian (1797).[80]

The growth of a reading public comprised largely of women coincided, not unnaturally, with the appearance of large numbers of female novelists. Between 1788 and 1791, The New Annual Register listed 118 new novels and romances;

all of them were apparently written by women. Probably some of them were, in fact, written by men who found it politic and profitable to have their hastily written works published under a woman's name. But the fact remains that the novel was conceived to be peculiarly suited to a woman's abilities.

> Here . . . was a new and unexacting literary form, hedged round by no learned traditions, based on no formal techniques, a go-as-you-please narrative, spun out in a series of easy, circumstantial letters, such as a young lady might write to a school-friend before domestic cares absorbed her. It did not look difficult.[81]

Nor did the female writers limit themselves to the novel. They wrote on more important and more abstruse matters. Catherine Macaulay Graham produced a highly praised history of England, Elizabeth Carter translated the works of Epictetus, Hannah More lectured the fashionable world on its religious shortcomings, and Mary Wollstonecraft crossed swords with Edmund Burke and most of her countrymen and women on the issue of the rights of men and women.

Their major 'non-fictional' interest, however, was education, particularly that of women. The late eighteenth century was the first, and perhaps the last, period in history when the most widely discussed books on education were written by women. In their time, Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. Trimmer, Elizabeth Hamilton, Hannah More, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mrs. Cappe and Madame de Genlis were educational giants whose works were every bit as well known as those of contemporary male authors.

The participation of women in the intellectual life of the country was illustrated most clearly in the gatherings of the Bas Bleu. Mrs. Montagu, who was acknowledged by Doctor Johnson as "Queen of the Blues,"[82] explained the aim of the group. "This idea of 'conversation' in place of gambling and other fashionable follies, was the leading idea with the ladies who share the merit of having founded the Blue Stocking Assemblies."[83] Although an actual club never existed, the conversation parties "of Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, and Mrs. Ord were spoken of indifferently as bas bleu assemblies."[84] Literature, art, religion and morality were the principal topics of conversation, although only politics was excluded altogether.

The Bluestockings were generally content to enjoy the pleasures of 'rational conversation' with the eminent men who frequented their circles. In the eighties, Johnson, Boswell, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Fox, Burke, Gibbon, Goldsmith, Garrick, Lord Monboddo and Lyttleton were all to be seen at their assemblies, which were invariably marked by the strictest propriety and great social esteem. They hatched no daring philosophical schemes, being moralists rather than political or social reformers. All of them were violently opposed to any form of political radicalism, particularly as propounded by Mary Wollstonecraft and her friends.

Although some of their members, Mrs. Montagu, the

Duchess of Beaufort and Lady Clermont, were of the aristocracy, most of them came from the middle classes. Their origins were reflected in their great sense of propriety, their concern for their reputations, and their hatred of any hint of scandal. For example, when Mrs. Thrale married the Italian singer Piozzi, her relationship with the rest of the coterie was in considerable jeopardy. For a time, she was forced to withdraw from Bluestocking circles.[85]

After Johnson's death, no male candidate appeared to occupy his vacant throne. The male element in the assemblies diminished. In fact, no new members came forward to fill the places of those who died or, like Hannah More, dropped out of fashionable society. The Bluestockings left no successors and achieved no reforms. By 1810, the term Bluestocking had entered the English language and already connoted a rather formidable looking female who was almost certainly a pedant. For a woman to converse with a man as an equal, even if she did show respect and deference, was considered improper and unnatural. To be a Bluestocking and truly feminine was no longer possible.

However, the Bas Bleu assemblies had done much to establish and popularize a new code of polite behaviour between the sexes. Many of 'the ladies' had been encouraged actively to concern themselves with the great issues of the day, the slave trade, the plight of the poor, and the

improvement of the manners and religion of their countrymen. All of them shared the opinion of Hannah More, who in her writings insisted that upon the prevailing religious and moral principles of women depended the advance of civilization in England. Thus, they demanded for their sex something better than the staple diet of accomplishments dished out to each generation of young ladies. In their own eyes, they had dignified the state of womanhood and given to their sex, if not equality of status, at least equally important responsibilities and significance.

The position and image of women in English society was influenced to some extent by any intellectual movement that offered the possibility of a 'progressive' or 'liberating' interpretation. Her status and functions had always been conceived of and justified in terms of her 'original nature'; and, for the eighteenth century particularly, the appeal to nature was ultimate and irrefutable, although completely equivocal.

From the scientific movement of the seventeenth century originated several such 'progressive' streams of thought. The reductionistic and mechanistic explanations of mind and the human personality, which can be seen in the writing of Hobbes and even Descartes, could be used to demonstrate that the soul has no sex. If the environment was everything, as Helvetius and Holbach insisted it was,

and as Locke himself had seemed to suggest, then any argument which justified the subordinate position of women by an appeal to their original and distinctive nature was false.

This environmentalistic viewpoint did not only allow the refutation of old theories of the nature and status of women; by an appeal to their nature, which was now conceived to be no different to that of man, its proponents insisted upon complete equality between the sexes. Such was the position of the earliest of the encyclopedists, Poullaine de la Barre, who as early as 1673 had argued that women might be employed as judges, preachers and even generals.[86]

In England, it was to be another century or so before such views were advanced. And yet Associationist psychology, as propounded by Locke and Hume and developed into its most influential form by Hartley, seemed to negate any innate sexual differences in the mind or character. When Locke popularized the conception of the mind as a tabula rasa, he had, in fact, made experience the determining factor in the human personality.

David Hartley, in his Observations on Man (1749), built on the ideas of Locke and Hume and developed Associationism into a comprehensive theory of the development of mind.[87] All man's ideas, he argued, develop from sensation. Some sensations persist and give rise to simple ideas. By compounding these simple ideas through the universal principle

of Association, man acquires complex ideas. In this way, Hartley explained not only mental processes but the whole personality, including aesthetic taste, the emotions, and moral sense.

As a philosophy and a psychology, it was materialistic, mechanistic, necessitarian and perfectibilistic; it looked back to Hobbes and forward to Godwin.[88] Not until the end of the century, however, were the implications of the theory for the rights of men and women spelled out and broadcast to the world.

It was in the works of Godwin and his circle that the social and political aspects of Associationism were taken to their extreme conclusions.

In his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793), Godwin, following Locke and Hartley, pointed out that "the Character of Man originates in External Circumstances."[89] Necessitarianism and its paradoxical counterpart, perfectibilism, were thus central elements in his thought. What, he asked, had prevented man from enjoying earthly felicity? The answer was obvious. It was the ignorant opinions upon which the whole archaic and tyrannical system of government and established institutions were founded. Reason, universal benevolence and justice would one day inevitably triumph; meanwhile, to hasten the coming of the golden age, all men and women must work for the reform and eventual abolition of

government, the penal code, the military and the institutions of marriage and property.

"Political Justice caught an incoming tide of opinion,"[90] and expressed what many liberals and reformers were feeling in the early days of the French Revolution. Many of his important ideas had been put forward earlier. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, in her A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), had demanded that reason and justice prevail between men and, more important, between men and women. She too had criticized the most sacred institutions of society, marriage, filial obedience, property and the political system.

In the social and political radicalism of Godwin and his friends, and the interpretations of utilitarianism offered by William Thompson,[91] and later John Stuart Mill, are to be found the first real stirrings of radical feminism. In their works are outlined the complete platform of female emancipation - political, legal, economic, social and educational equality with men.

The forces of progress, improvement and enlightenment which seemed at the time to be liberating influences on the world of women were thus many and varied. The one great thing they had in common was the threat they posed to the traditional position and image of woman. Greater wealth and technological and industrial advances were beginning to free a considerable number of women from the old domestic duties.

Increasing leisure and improved communications had given them opportunities for cultural refinement, amusement and education. In addition, theories were being propounded which offered a theoretical justification for their achieving total equality with men.

Why, then, do modern feminists regard this period as a dismal episode in the history of female emancipation, a time of 'hope deferred'?[92] The answer is to be found in those forces of the time which, as far as the world of women was concerned, and from the perspective of a feminist, can only be described as reactionary.

III

By far the most reactionary movement in late eighteenth century England was that called forth by the French Revolution. Once it became apparent that most, if not all, of the gloomy prognostications of Burke were coming true, the tide of opinion in England quickly receded from any extreme form of social or political radicalism. Even 'the non-violent reformers', whose enthusiasm for the Revolution had outlasted the Terror and subsequent war, were lumped together with the hated Jacobins. The significance of the Treason Trials of 1794 lies not only in the acquittal of moderate radicals like Horne-Tooke, Hardy and Holcroft, but in the fact that they were held at all.[93] Together with the

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repressive measures of the 'nineties and their reinforcement in 1817 and 1819, they represent the most concrete expression of the revulsion against the ideals of Godwinism.[94]

Political repression was not the only reaction against the doctrines of equality and justice. By the early nineteenth century, Godwin and his ideas had been submerged in a sea of parody, satire and bitter invective. Some years later, Shelley was surprised to find that he was still alive.[95]

The discrediting of Godwin was accompanied by an equal villification of the radical feminists, particularly Mary Wollstonecraft. Horace Walpole referred to her as one of "the philosophising serpents we have in our bosoms,"[96] "a hyena in petticoats". In the attack on her personal life, her ideas tended to be lost sight of.[97] When Godwin published his Memoirs of her life, The Anti-Jacobin, even after her tragic death, found itself unable to be charitable.

> William hath penned a wagon-load of stuff,
> And Mary's life at last he needs must write,
> Thinking her whoredoms were not known enough
> Till printed off in black and white.[98]

In this period of national crisis, when every social and political question was debated with a sense of utmost urgency, when fear of rapid change, if not violent revolution, swept over the country, it was natural that the home and domestic life should be regarded as a bulwark of stability. Radical feminism threatened the established order of domestic relationships. Thus, the great majority of works on the

character and duties of women made no mention of their rights, and either defended or ignored their current political, economic and legal status.

Eighteenth century thought did not flow along one clearly defined channel. Its tributaries were many and varied, and from the middle of the century on they tended to contribute their ideas to two major streams of thought. The course of one of these streams, that running from Helvetius to Godwin, has already been traced. For those interested in the emancipation of man and woman, it was progressive, offering hopes for a more just society. Its major feature was an unquestioning acceptance of reason as the ultimate arbiter of the destiny of civilization.

The other stream was characterized by its emphasis and reliance upon the truth of feeling or sentiment. Its source may be traced to the writings of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, although it did not reach full flow until the appearance of the major works of Rousseau in the sixties. From that point on, the two streams ran close together; in their proclamations of the rights of man, and in their pleas for justice and the sanctity of nature, they appear at times to be identical. In the French Revolution and the Terror, the Cult of Reason and the Cult of Sensibility assumed such monstrous shapes as to be indistinguishable one from another. And in these forms they were totally discredited in England.

Nevertheless, the distinction between the two streams was an important one. It is to be seen most clearly in eighteenth century ethical theory. In his classic study, British Moralists (1897), Selby-Bigge distinguished an 'intellectual school', which based its theories on an appeal to natural law or reason, and a 'sentimental school', which made moral sense a natural and intuitive response to a given set of conditions.[99] For the latter school, morality was a product of feeling or sentiment, not reason; or, as Rousseau blatantly expressed it, "The first impulses of nature are always right."[100]

The sentimentalist position appears to give to the humble and unsophisticated peasant, as much as to the most enlightened philosopher, the power of choosing wisely and well. In this respect, it is clearly connected with 'common man idealism' and the democratic ideals of the French Revolution. But while such theories could be used as a basis for demands that the natural rights of man be recognized, as far as the rights of women were concerned they were equivocal. One has only to examine Rousseau's Emile to see how easy it was for the rights of man to be conceived in quite different terms from those of a woman.[101]

It was generally agreed that women were by nature creatures of feeling, dominated by their emotions. They were thus, from a sentimentalist viewpoint, naturally more

moral than men. Yet, paradoxically, the moral superiority of women did not mean that they should no longer be subordinate to men, - quite the reverse. How was this paradox to be resolved?

Just as the sentimentalist pointed out to the intellectualist that reason could never 'move to action', or, as Hume put it, that it "can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience or a sense of morals,"[102] so the intellectualist insisted that the sentimental theory supplied no criterion of objectivity or universality.[103] This latter point is crucial to an understanding of the views of women presented by writers with as widely differing interests and backgrounds as Rousseau and Hannah More. By both of these writers, women were conceived as creatures of feeling, whose faculty of judgement was inferior to that of a man.[104] Both asserted that women tended to be more moral than men. And both believed that the subordination of women to men was essential.[105]

Their reasoning, which was common to most of the 'sentimentalists', was simple, if somewhat strained. Where women were concerned, the feelings were not so much a guide to right conduct, as a spur driving them to do what was right. In their natural desire to follow the good, women were superior to men. However, in the apprehension of goodness, which was a cognitive process dependent on reason,

they were markedly inferior. The sexes could thus be seen to be complementary; the male discovered virtue or truth, while the female felt the need to practise it and to inspire others to do so. According to Rousseau, "this relation produces a moral person of which the woman is the eye and the man the hand, but the two are so dependent on one another that the man teaches the woman what to see, while she teaches him what to do."[106]

Despite the violence done to the sentimentalist theory of ethics presented in the first half of the eighteenth century, such a view of the relative powers and responsibilities of the sexes became the dominant one throughout much of the nineteenth century. Women were securely confined to a world of sentiment and feeling, the values and standards of which were to be determined from outside, by men.

As the various cults associated with the reinstatement of feeling and sensibility developed, it became possible, for men and women both, to glorify this woman's world into a qualitatively different and morally superior existence to that of a man. The woman's world, like that of a child, or perhaps even that of the noble savage, had become something of a symbol of man's lost innocence, a state uncorrupted by the aberrations of reason and the nasty business of survival in modern civilization - a world that man could admire and perhaps worship, but never enter.

The final, and perhaps most important, conservative influence affecting English society and particularly the world of women, were the religious revivals, that outside of the Church, Methodism, and that within, Evangelicalism. Both represent reactions against the dry latitudinarian theological climate of the mid-eighteenth century; both are connected with the new emphasis on the truth of feeling and the claims of the heart as opposed to the head. For both the Methodist and the Church Evangelical, the current state of religion and public morality could not be allowed to continue.

The untiring energy of Wesley and Whitfield, and the former's genius for organization assured the success of Methodism. By the end of the century, they had given fresh vitality to religion as a force in society, particularly among the lower orders.[107] By 1813, there were 231,000 Methodists in England, and many more on the fringes of the movement.[108]

Yet Methodism, unlike Evangelicalism, was always what it eventually admitted to, a form of dissent. Wesley's refusal to conform to Church order and discipline and the creation of a vast organization under his sole authority meant that "an embryo had formed within the womb of the Establishment."[109] It was inevitable that, before long, the embryo would achieve a separate existence.

The social distinctions between the two movements were equally significant. Methodism made its appeal to the lower and lower middle classes, and its itinerant preachers came from the same background. "To speak the truth," said Wesley, "I do not desire any intercourse with any person of quality in England."[110] So close was the identification of Methodism with the lower orders that, at the end of the eighteenth century, Methodists with social pretensions and ambitions began to desert the chapel for the parish church.

As Ford K. Brown has pointed out, to reform a nation such as England in the eighteenth century, it was folly to ignore 'those who counted'.[111] To improve the moral and religious condition of their country by influencing the Great was the intention of the Evangelicals, those devout and somewhat Calvinistic Christians, who, while profoundly dissatisfied with the whole ethos of the Church, yet considered themselves and their movement as part of the Establishment.

In 1785, although there were Evangelical clergy scattered all over England,[112] they in no way constituted a party, having "no clear direction, no organization, no programme, no means, no resources, no propaganda, no numbers, no power."[113] But with the conversion of William Wilberforce and his assuming the leadership of the 'Saints' with whom he was acquainted, they had all of these. By 1820, they were an

influential group, including in their ranks all manner of highly born and highly placed personages.[114]

The central committee of the party became known as the Clapham Sect, a small but influential body of laymen who lived in and around Clapham. Its leading members were Wilberforce, Samuel, Henry and Robert Thornton, the Macaulays, and Hannah More, who when in London spent much of her time visiting there.

Their lives were strictly ordered. "Every hour, every shilling belonged to God. They prayed, they worked, they gave alms, they performed their deeds of charity, . . . living all their lives 'in the great Taskmaster's eye'".[115] They were in many ways decidedly ascetic. Extravagant clothes and hairstyles, cards, dancing, the theatre, novels, tobacco and strong drink were all targets for their attacks on vice and error, while duelling, blood-sports, profanity and failure to observe the Sabbath were irrefutable evidence of an ungodly life.

This otherworldliness did not mean that they were completely indifferent to the affairs of this world. Like the Methodists, they were extremely conservative in political and social matters. Unlike the Methodists, however, their support of the established order was not passive, but whole-hearted and active. They were much opposed to any doctrine which preached natural and inalienable rights. Hannah More's

Village Politics (1792),[116] the most popular and widely read refutation of Paine's work, represented the orthodox Evangelical position on political and social issues. True, they wished to reform society, to improve its religion and morality; but they had no desire to see the established order replaced by 'a Godless republicanism' or even a liberal democracy. They accepted fully the eighteenth century notion of rank, necessary subordination, and the supremacy of the landed classes.

Despite the failure of the Evangelicals to take over the Church, their influence on English society was profound. They played a leading part in the abolition of the Slave Trade, they founded innumerable religious and humanitarian societies, and were great contributors to and workers in the Sunday school movement. Evangelicalism was one of the most important tributaries "sending down its flood of improving, moralizing ideas and energy towards the ocean of early Victorian respectability and public probity."[117] They had exercised on the middle and upper orders an influence similar to that exercised by Methodism on the masses.[118]

The nineteenth century's inheritance from Evangelicalism and Methodism is best summed up by G. M. Young.

> The Evangelicals gave to the Island a creed which was at once the basis of its morality and the justification of its wealth and power, and with that creed, that sense of being an Elect people which,set to a more blatant tune, became a principal element in late Victorian imperialism. By about 1830 their work was

> done. They had driven the grosser kinds of cruelty, extravagance, and profligacy underground. They had established a certain level of behaviour for all who wished to stand well with their fellows. In moralising society, they had made social disapproval a force which the boldest sinner might fear . . . . Evangelicalism had imposed on society, even on those classes that were indifferent to its religious basis and unaffected by its economic appeal, its code of Sabbath observance, responsibility, and philanthropy; of discipline in the home, regularity in affairs; it had created a technique of private persuasion and social persecution.[119]

The influence of the religious revivals upon the world of women can scarcely be regarded as an emancipating one. They had, of course, 'tightened up' their manners and morals, and called them to a deeper awareness of their responsibilities as wives, mothers, 'the legislators of public morality' and the chief source of benevolence and humanitarian sentiment. Many women had been given a fresh and vital religious experience. And, no doubt, in their consciousness of the weight and importance of the obligations placed upon them, many women found a new sense of dignity and pride in their sex.

Nevertheless, the Evangelicals' conception of woman was fundamentally that of St. Paul. Their views of her position in society were every bit as conservative as their social and political ideas. They hoped to make her a better creature, but within the traditional framework governing the relationship between the sexes. Her world was the home and its immediate environs. Here she should carry out her domestic

and social duties, ministering to the physical, religious and emotional needs, not only of her own family and household but of the local poor and afflicted. In accordance with her nature and biblical injunctions, she was to be excluded completely from politics and the world of business.

IV

These conservative forces, the reaction to the Revolution and political radicalism, the growth of 'sentimentalism', and the religious revivals, were more than enough to snuff out the threat of any sweeping changes being effected in the status and image of woman. In 1820, her world once again seemed fixed and stable. Indeed, from a purely feminist viewpoint, things seemed to have got worse. Her range of amusements and recreations had been drastically curtailed. She was bound by a more restrictive code of propriety. In 1750, a woman's choice of a career had been extremely limited; in 1820, she had no choice at all. As a respectable woman, it was no longer possible for her to work for a living in a craft or trade. Either she married or she became a private governess and/or an old maid, neither of which constituted a desirable alternative to being a wife and mother.

Her legal position had scarcely altered at all. William Thompson's Appeal of One Half the Human Race (1825), which was a plea for female suffrage and emancipation, stands

in complete isolation from the main current of thought of the period. Even James Mill, that most rational of utilitarian thinkers, insisted that women should be excluded from all political rights, on the grounds that their interests were "involved either in that of their fathers, or in that of their husbands."[120] The Reform Act of 1832 and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 both made a point of excluding women from voting, thus giving statutory force to what had previously been a matter of mere custom or prejudice.

These statutory limitations were an expression of opinions already formed about the nature and functions of a woman. The ideal of a modest, retiring, submissive female, whose religiosity, manners and morals were beyond reproach, and whose chief purpose in life was to be a wife, mother and public benefactor had been stated so forcefully and by so many writers that by 1820 the tide of reaction from radical feminism was full. It was to be several decades before it showed the least signs of ebbing.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that nothing had changed in the world of women between 1750 and 1820. Most middle class women enjoyed a greatly improved standard of living. They had greater leisure and, if they had any influence over their husbands, more money to spend. Improvements in medicine and a healthier diet had given them a better life expectation. They were more acutely conscious

of fashion and taste. Whatever Matthew Arnold might later say of the 'philistinism' of the middle class, their passion for imitating their betters had at least brought into the lives of women a little more refinement and comfort. They were certainly more conscious of their reputation, and, in that sense at least, probably 'better' women. Most important of all, they were now fully literate, despite all the shortcomings of their education.

There is no evidence at all to suggest that women in general were in any way dissatisfied with their lot. Indeed, the chief stumbling block to the growth of the ideal of female emancipation was not the conspiracy and tyranny of men but the complacency and self-satisfaction of middle and upper class wives and daughters. In her hatred of any talk of women's rights, Queen Victoria was one with the vast majority of her subjects and her sex.

It is within the context of these various movements and forces that the ideas and practice which governed women's education throughout the period and much of the nineteenth century were determined. The development of the young ladies' boarding school, the 'institutionalization' of the private governess, the many criticisms voiced of the education of a lady, and the ideals of womanhood held in the early nineteenth century, all these can only be understood in terms of the far-reaching economic, social, political,

religious and intellectual changes that make the epithet, 'The Age of Transition', so peculiarly apt for this period of English history.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, Penguin Books, London, 1965, pp. 47-59.

[2] Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement, Longmans, London, 1959. p. 9.

[3] G. M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century and After, (1782-1919), Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1956. p. 19.

[4] Dorothy Marshall, English People in the Eighteenth Century, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1956, pp. 117-122.

[5] J. H. Plumb, The First Four Georges, Fontana Library, Collins, 1966. p. 27.

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[7] Ibid. pp. 41-91.

[8] G. F. A. Best, Temporal Pillars, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964. p. 73.

[9] Cited in S. C. Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889, S.P.C.K., London, 1959. Vol. I. pp. 27-28.

[10] For a discussion of the composition of these groups see Marshall, op. cit. pp. 105-159.

[11] The following summary of the legal status of women is taken largely from the following works:
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A. Beatrice Wallis Chapman and Mary Wallis Chapman, The Status of Women under the English Law, George Routledge and Sons, London, 1909. passim.

[12] Reiss, op. cit. p. 20.

[13] Ibid. p. 6.

[14] Cited Ibid. p. 7.

[15] Rosalie Glynn Grylls, William Godwin and his World, Odhams Press, London, 1953. p. 11.

[16] Reiss, op. cit. p. 12.

[17] Mrs. Norton's autobiographical account of her experience of the application of this law and of the other tribulations she suffered as a wife and mother is still the best exposé of the actual legal status of women in nineteenth century England. See
C. Norton, English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century, J. Wertheimer and Co., London, 1854.

[18] Chapman, op. cit. p. 12.

[19] Reiss, op. cit. pp. 23-26.

[20] Ibid. p. 24.

[21] Ibid. p. 24-25.

[22] Sydney and Beatrice Webb, The Parish and County, English Local Government, (1906), Frank Cass and Co., London, 1963. Vol. I. p. 106.

[23] Ibid. pp. 15, 17, and 34.

[24] Cited Reiss, op. cit. p. 41.

[25] Arthur Bryant, The Age of Elegance, Collins, London, 1950. p. 163.

[26] Doctor Doran, A Lady of the Last Century (Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu), Richard Bentley and Co., London, 1873. pp. 184-185.

[27] Cited in G. E. Mingay, English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963. p. 224.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. p. 246.

[30] Ibid. pp. 246-247.

[31] Marshall, op. cit. p. 64.

[32] Anonymous, (Soame Jenyns), The Modern Fine Lady, R. Dodsley, London, 1751.

[33] Mingay, op. cit. pp. 155-158.

[34] M. Dorothy George, 'London and the Life of the Town', in A. S. Turbeville, (editor), Johnson's England, An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1933. Vol. I. pp. 187-193.

[35] Ibid. p. 186.

[36] R. Bayne Powell, Travellers in Eighteenth Century England, J. Murray, London, 1951. p. 85.

[37] Reverend N. Sykes, 'The Church', in Turbeville, op. cit. p. 23.

[38] Ibid. pp. 29-30.

[39] See John Ashton, Chapbooks of the Eighteenth Century, (1882), Benjamin Blom, New York, 1966. pp. 239, 259, 298, 311 and 328.

[40] See, for example, the letters written by the abjectly apologetic if totally drunk Richard Steele to his 'Dear Prue',
Willard Connely, Sir Richard Steele, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1934. pp. 110-142, passim.

[41] Mingay, op. cit. pp. 225-226.

[42] Mary Wortley Montagu, The Works of Mary Wortley Montagu, including her Correspondence, Poems and Essays, Richard Phillips, London, 1805. Vol. IV. pp. 148-149.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid. p. 183.

[45] Anonymous, (Sophia, A Person of Quality), Beauty's Triumph: or, The Superiority of the Fair Sex invincibly Proved. J. Robinson, London, n.d., c. 1744. p. 10.

[46] Common Sense, Sept. 1, 1739, cited Ibid. p. 20.

[47] Sophia, op. cit. p. 20.

[48] Ibid. p. 55.

[49] Anonymous, (A Gentleman), Man Superior to Woman, or, The Natural Right of the Men to Sovereign Authority over the Women, (bound with Sophia, Beauty's Triumph), J. Robinson, London, n.d., c. 1744. p. xiv.

[50] Ibid. p. 19.

[51] Ibid. p. 26.

[52] Briggs, op. cit. pp. 39-42.

[53] Plumb, op. cit. pp. 21-22.

[54] G. M. Young, Victorian England: Portrait of an Age, Oxford University Press, London, 1963. pp. 8-10.

[55] Philip Anthony Brown, The French Revolution in English History, (1918), Barnes and Noble Inc., New York, 1965. pp. 27 ff.

[56] Plumb, op. cit. p. 32.

[57] J. H. Plumb, Men and Places, Essays on the Eighteenth Century Scene, . . ., Penguin Books, London, 1966. p. 93.

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[59] Cited Ibid. pp. 237-238. See too Mingay, op. cit. pp. 254-255.

[60] Plumb, The First Four Georges, pp. 32-33.

[61] Dorothy Marshall, 'Manners, Meals, and Domestic Pastimes', in Turbeville, op. cit. p. 338.

[62] See the curious cures discussed in T. H. White, The Age of Scandal, (1950), Penguin Books, London, 1966. pp. 30-33.

[63] Sir D'Arcy Power, 'Medicine', in Turbeville, op. cit. Vol. II. pp. 265 ff.

[64] Cited in H. L. Beales 'Travel and Communications', in Turbeville, op. cit. Vol. I. p. 128.

[65] Ibid. pp. 127-128.

[66] Marshall, op. cit. p. 131.

[67] Plumb, Men and Places, pp. 109-110.

[68] Jane Austen, Persuasion, (1818), Airmont Publishing Co., New York, 1966. p. 105.

[69] Ibid. p. 113.

70 Frances Burney, Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World, (1778), The Century Co., New York, 1906. pp. 41, 56 ff., and 77 ff.

71 Doran, op. cit. p. 120.

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73 See the illuminating discussion of nineteenth century views of the composition of the middle classes in, W. B. D. Heeney, The Established Church and The Education of the Middle Classes: A Study of the Woodard Schools, 1847-1891. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, St. John's College, University of Oxford, 1961. pp. 6-20.

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75 See Chapter V, pp. 204-205.

76 Nicholas Hans, New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century, (1951), Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966. p. 205.

77 See the discussion of this issue in The Lady's Magazine, March, 1780, pp. 148-150, and May, 1780, pp. 250-251.

78 See Chapter IV, pp. 168-176, for a discussion on periodicals for women.

79 J. M. S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800, Constable and Co., London, 1932. p. 3.

80 Ibid. pp. 8-9.

81 Ibid. p. 119.

82 Jacob Bouten, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Beginnings of Female Emancipation in England, H. J. Paris, Amsterdam, 1922. pp. 113-114.

83 Doran, op. cit. p. 273.

84 Ibid. p. 271.

85 Bouten, op. cit. p. 107.

[86] See the discussion of the works of Poullain de la Barre, Ibid. pp. 27 ff.

[87] Willey, op. cit. pp. 133-148.
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[88] Willey, op. cit. p. 147.

[89] Ibid. pp. 207-224. and Grylls, op. cit. pp. 36-44.

[90] Grylls, op. cit. p. 36.

[91] William Thompson, Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, Longmans, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, London, 1825.

[92] 'Hope deferred' is Dorothy Gardiner's assessment of this period in the history of women's education and are the concluding words of her work on female education. They also comprise the title of Josephine Kamm's book on the same subject.
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[97] See for example, the attack of Richard Polwhele in Richard Polwhele, The Unsex'd Females: A Poem addressed to the Author of The Pursuits of Literature, T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1798.

[98] Cited in Grylls, op. cit. p. 142.

[99] L. A. Selby-Bigge, British Moralists, being Selections from Writers principally of the Eighteenth Century, (1897), Dover Publications, New York, 1965. Vol. I. pp. xi-lxx, but especially pp. xii-xiii. See too Willey, op. cit. pp. 60-61.

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[101] Ibid. Book V. pp. 321-368.

[102] Cited in Selby-Bigge, op. cit. p. xxxix.

[103] Ibid. p. xlvii.

[104] More, op. cit. pp. 195-197, and Rousseau, op. cit. pp. 328, 333 and 340.

[105] More, op. cit. pp. 193-194, and Rousseau, op. cit. pp. 333 and 340.

[106] Rousseau, op. cit. p. 340.

[107] G. R. Balleine, History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1933. pp. 17 ff.

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[111] Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961. p. 2.

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[113] Brown, op. cit. p. 2.

[114] Ibid. pp. 9-10.

[115] Carpenter, op. cit. p. 28.

[116] Hannah More, Village Politics, (1792), The Works of Hannah More, D. Graisberry and Co., London, 1803. Vol. I.

[117] Best, op. cit. p. 143.

[118] Halévy, England in 1815, p. 450.

[119] Young, op. cit. pp. 4-5.

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PART II

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

'Tis Education, heavenly art,
Does every needful aid impart.
It gives the graces all to shine
And makes the human form divine.

Anonymous. The Female Instructor; or Young Woman's Guide to Domestic Happiness. Thomas Kelly, London, 1822. Frontispiece.

CHAPTER III

YOUNG LADIES BOARDED AND EDUCATED

I

The 'Female Seminary', 'Young Ladies' Academy' or 'Boarding School for Young Ladies', as it was variously called, was a seventeenth century educational innovation. In the early part of this century a number of such schools were opened in the larger towns, particularly in London.[1] As their number grew, the frivolous atmosphere and superficial learning which characterized many of the schools provoked a considerable body of criticism, much of it in the form of satire and farce.[2] This awareness of the deficiencies of the schools also resulted in a number of schemes for the reformation of the education of young ladies, the most notable being those of Mrs. Makin and Mary Astell.[3]

The criticism of boarding school education continued into the early eighteenth century although it appears to have had little effect upon the schools themselves. Towards the end of the century, the number of these schools seems to have increased dramatically. At least, this is how it appeared to their new critics who, suddenly becoming aware of what they felt to be a most unhealthy educational development, poured abuse upon them and revealed their many shortcomings to unwary parents.[4]

There are, unfortunately, no means of discovering even approximately how many establishments there were at the end of the century calling themselves 'Young Ladies' Boarding Schools'. Their critics may well have exaggerated their numbers since they were concerned to show the great extent of their pernicious influence. Elizabeth Appleton, for example, reported that in 1815 there were "thirty thousand in and round London, and hundreds in other parts of England."[5] Clearly this figure is unrealistic. Even assuming a very low average enrollment of ten, this would mean a girls' boarding school population of 300,000. Yet in 1811 the total population of London was just over a million[6] and that of London, Surrey, Essex, Middlesex and Kent only about two million.[7] It may be that Miss Appleton intended to say that there were 30,000 girls attending such schools in and around London, a high but not completely incredible estimate.

Whatever their actual number, boarding schools there were in abundance. In 1830 Brighton, with a population of some 40,000, boasted over 100 such schools,[8] and it is probable that other fashionable centres, Bath for example, possessed an equal number. If contemporary critics are to be believed, every town and village had its share of them.

> "We have young ladies . . . boarded and educated," says Miss Alscrip (in Burgoyne's The Heiress 1786), "upon blue boards in gold letters in every village, with a strolling player for dancing master, and a deserter from Dunkirk to teach the French grammar."[9]

Clara Reeve noted the same phenomenon.

> In every town you go through, you may see written in letters of gold, "A Boarding School for Young Ladies"; but did you ever see one for those who are not to act out the part of young ladies? I believe not; they are rarely to be found.[10]

Miss Reeve raises a crucial point. Who, in fact, attended such schools? What kind of parents would wish their daughters to be educated in such establishments and, more importantly, be able to afford the expense? It is obviously impossible at this point in time to discover how many girls there were attending such schools at the turn of the century. But it seems clear, even if we allow for some exaggeration by contemporary observers, that there were many girls attending boarding schools who could not possibly have come from the leisured classes. Writer after writer of the period insisted that the schools were accommodating girls whose parents qualified neither as gentlefolk nor even as buyers of so expensive a commodity as 'the education of a lady'. The heroine of John Corry's The Unfortunate Daughter, whose seduction and eventual abandonment is traced to a faulty if fashionable boarding school education, is introduced to the reader as the daughter of a grocer of Wapping.[11]

Another critic observes that

> persons below the class of common mechanics are made members of boarding schools, and instructed in such polite accomplishments as cause them afterwards to blush at, and contemplate with disdain, their origin and paternal roof.[12]

And this observation is supported by many other writers of the period.[13]

How justified were these complaints against the social origins of part of the boarding school population? Were, in fact, the inferior orders poaching on the educational preserves of their betters? The eighteenth century, perhaps more than any other, was characterized by countless denunciations of the tendency among the lower and middle orders of society to imitate their betters in every way possible. It was the awareness of this tendency that led many reformers and moralists, particularly the Evangelicals, to the conclusion that the only effective way to improve the lower orders was to vitalize the religion and improve the morality of the Elite. As Hannah More pointed out,

> Reformation must begin with the GREAT, or it will never be effectual. Their example is the fountain whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters. To expect to reform the poor while the opulent are corrupt, is to throw odours into the stream while the springs are poisoned.[14]

Jean Hecht has examined this imitative tendency and advanced a possible explanation.[15] He points out that a knowledge of how the Great lived was widespread among the middle and lower orders of society. Through various face to face contacts, articles in periodicals, print drawings and hearsay, the Beau Monde was laid bare to a public eager for information about how its betters lived. In the downward percolation of ideas, values, fashions, virtues and vices

through society, the domestic servant class acted as an important cultural nexus.

> In one way or another, then, the subordinate classes gained a certain familiarity with the manners of the élite; and for the most part, they sought to imitate it as closely as possible. This was natural. In virtually all societies that possess social solidarity the highest social strata tend to be taken as models by the strata beneath. Imitation may not be taken very far; in fact, where there are specific tabus against it or where there are wide fissures in the social structure, it may scarcely occur at all. Nevertheless the tendency normally exists and in eighteenth century England, it existed under optimum conditions.[16]

Thus, the subordinate orders of society learned from their superiors to take snuff, drink tea, use sugar and prefer white bread. Often they aped the dress of their betters. And it seems quite probable that many of them imitated the élite in the education they purchased for their daughters.

It is true, however, that just as the less opulent had to be satisfied with inferior brands of tea and snuff, cheap rather than expensive wines and spirits, and made-up silk and cotton dresses instead of those designed by the latest fashionable coutourier, so too they were obliged to send their daughters to the cheaper boarding schools. The commodity purchased by various social groups might appear to be similar and would certainly be called the same; in fact, however, its quality and of course its price would vary according to the clientèle it expected to attract.

That many of the middling and perhaps some of the lower orders of society were sending their daughters to boarding schools is born out by an examination of the social structure of England at the turn of the century. If boarding schools were as numerous and ubiquitous as contemporary accounts suggest, then there were simply not enough young women of rank and fortune available to fill them all. The Edinburgh Review in 1810 stated that there were only some 50,000 females of all ages in Great Britain who belonged to the leisured class, that is who had no duties or work at all to perform.[17] Of this number only a very small proportion would have been attending the schools.

Cole and Postgate's estimate of the number of heads and dependent members of families in various social and occupational groups in 1815 is also relevant in this connection.[18] The total number of such people in the groups which could be expected to patronize the ladies' boarding schools was only some 330,000.[19] Of this number, there could scarcely have been more than 35,000 - 40,000 girls between the ages of 9 and 17.[20] Many, perhaps the majority, of these girls would have been educated at home by their parents or, more likely, by private governesses and tutors. Clearly, the schools numbered in their clientèle groups lower down the social pyramid than the élite.

Perhaps the most simple and useful way to consider

the social origins of the boarding school population is to examine the expenses involved in sending a girl to such a school. If, in fact, the schools were educating girls from a wide variety of social groups, one would expect to find a considerable variation in the cost of a boarding school education. What is known about the expenses involved confirms this expectation.

Chirol reported that he discovered one school whose fees exceeded £200 a year,[21] an extremely high figure. He may not have been exaggerating, however, for the two-years schooling that Frances Power Cobbe received in a fashionable school in Brighton in the 1830's cost her parents over £1,000.[22] The Gentleman's Magazine for 1776 contains a letter from a correspondent complaining that it cost him over £100 to educate his daughter at a boarding school.[23] Mrs. Sherwood, who was already a well known writer, was able to charge "80 guineas if they go home for holidays, otherwise 100 guineas" in her school at Worcester which she established about 1820. And this did not include payments for instruction in the academic subjects.[24] Thus, there were at least a few schools which were able to charge fees in excess of £100 a year. Those who could afford it must have been willing to pay heavily for the privilege of sending their daughters to an exclusive school.

The actual cost of boarding and educating a girl could

scarcely have amounted to more than £50 to £60 a year, a commonly quoted figure in prospectuses and advertisements.[25] It should be noted, however, that schools issuing prospectuses and advertisements were probably neither exclusive nor cheap. The former would not have felt it necessary, and the latter would tend to attract a purely local clientèle.

If £50 to £60 a year be taken as the usual cost of a boarding school education, then the daughters of many of the lesser gentry and the vast majority of clergymen must have been excluded from the schools. Parson Woodforde, for example, whose income between 1776 and 1802 was £300 a year and who could afford to employ five domestic servants,[26] would have been hard pressed to send a daughter to school, that is, if he had had one. And for Goldsmith's vicar of Auburn, who was "passing rich with forty pounds a year,"[27] it would have been quite impossible.

There is evidence to suggest, however, that for those whose incomes failed to match their social aspirations for their daughters, there were many schools whose fees were considerably lower. An anonymous writer in 1785 complained that "cheapness and economy in education are very preponderant at this time", and pointed out that £12 to £14 a year, which was what many schools were charging, was not enough to look after and educate a girl properly.[28] That the complaint was justified is evidenced by Charlotte Bronte's recollections

of her sisters' experiences in the school at Cowan Bridge, near Haworth.[29] It was on her knowledge of this school that she based her description of the infamous Lowood Hall in Jane Eyre. The school at Cowan Bridge was established in 1823 for the daughters of clergymen. Its fees were a mere £14 a year for boarders plus an additional £3 for accomplishments. The school was damp and poorly heated, the food inadequate. The girls were frequently ill; on one occasion over forty of them contracted chronic food poisoning.[30] Charlotte's sister Maria, a sickly nine year old, was not strong enough to survive there. Shortly after her admission she contracted a sickness from which she died.[31]

At £12 to £14 a year, there must have been many parents who were only too happy to send their daughter to a ladies' boarding school, particularly if they believed, however wishfully, that while there she would be mixing with the Great.[32] Nor was this the minimum cost of a fashionable education. Many of the schools, even fairly expensive ones, took as students both day boarders and day scholars. Presumably day boarders received a meal or meals at the school and day scholars provided their own. Both types would obviously be local girls. An advertisement for a school at Islington, near London, quotes a figure of thirty guineas a year for boarders, fourteen guineas for day boarders, and only six guineas for day scholars. Writing, Geography,

Drawing, Music, and Dancing were extra, "on the usual terms".[33] It was possible, therefore, for a girl to attend a boarding school for as little as two shillings and sixpence a week. At this price the education of a lady fell within the reach of a great many of the middle orders of society. It is quite likely, therefore, that the numerous complaints against innkeepers, shopkeepers, craftsmen, farmers and even servants sending their daughters to these schools were not overly exaggerated. Certainly, many parents in such groups would have possessed both the desire and the financial resources to do so.

As the nineteenth century progressed, it became more and more common for the schools to cater to particular social groups. Thus, the Report of the Schools' Inquiry Commission noted in 1868,

> . . . all the sharp lines of demarcation which divide society into classes, and all the jealousies and suspicions which help to keep these classes apart, are seen in their fullest operation in Girls' Schools. . . . One lady prides herself on taking pupils exclusively from 'country families', another draws the line at wholesale traders, and refuses to receive the daughters of a shopkeeper. Thus each school is obliged to content itself with pupils of a particular social grade.[34]

Apart from the prevailing tendency to imitate their superiors, parents had sound reasons for investing money in the education of their daughters. To begin with, the alternatives were few, and not very desirable. A mother could if she possessed the time, inclination and ability, educate her

daughter at home, and many doubtless did so. Alternatively, a girl could be sent to a cheap common day school or an even cheaper dame school. But the knowledge, attitudes and skills she acquired there, though perhaps not entirely useless, were scarcely of that type which would enable her to make a figure in the locality and shine in the world. The charity schools, where they existed, were certainly popular and had no difficulty recruiting students. For many young people they provided an opportunity of rising in the world. But for the socially ambitious parent, the stigma of their daughter's wearing a distinctive uniform and receiving instruction alongside girls whose parents, presumably, could afford nothing better must have excluded such schools from consideration.

Interestingly, at least one charity school was established exclusively for girls of the better classes. The Godolphin School, endowed by a foundation in 1726, was not opened until 1783. Unlike other charity schools for girls, it provided its students with a fashionable education, offering free board and tuition to a few girls and taking in a much larger number of paying boarders. Thus, somewhat ironically, 'young ladies' were accepted as charity scholars. In the nineteenth century it became one of the better boarding schools for girls.[35]

Unquestionably the most important reason for the

popularity of the schools was the opportunity they offered for social advancement through marriage. Their one great strength, and that for which parents were willing to pay handsomely, was their ability to prepare a girl to compete effectively in the marriage market. The hope that a daughter might 'do well' in marriage, not prove to be a financial burden to them, perhaps even help provide for them in their old age, must have been a powerful motive for many parents sending their daughters to a boarding school. Without a fashionable education, with all the knowledge, graces, manners, accomplishments and female artifices which it seemed to guarantee, the chance of a girl's marrying well must have appeared slim. Later in the century, the 1868 Report noted this opinion of parents.

> The knowledge which will 'pay' in the business or pursuit a lad is likely to enter is fully appreciated by the parents. But the only business of life which they contemplate for their daughters is marriage, and they ask for an education which will fit her for this end. And the accomplishments which they value are those which promise rather to increase her attractiveness before marriage than her happiness or usefulness after that event.[36]

II

Even if attending such a school failed to secure a suitable husband, the education she received there might still be of great service to a young girl. She could always become a teacher or governess, and, if the life and remuner-

ation were frequently unattractive, it was a livelihood in an age when women possessed few means of achieving independence. Thus, Hannah More, criticising current educational practice, asserted that girls are educated "either to make their fortune by marriage, or if that fail, to qualify them to become teachers of others: hence the abundant multiplication of superficial wives, and of incompetent and illiterate governesses."[37]

For many women, becoming a teacher was a considerable social improvement, for the occupation of governess was considered the prerogative of gentlewomen who had fallen upon hard times. As one would expect, there were the usual complaints of the impropriety and evil effects of young women from the inferior orders encroaching upon the rightful occupations of their betters. Chirol insisted that even the heads of the schools were but servants with a little money,[38] while the proprietor of a school in a contemporary play is made to observe, "I suppose, if boarding schools were to be examined into, there would be found a great number whose governesses are decayed tradesmen's wives."[39]

It is true that the supply of teachers for the schools came from a variety of social groups. What they had in common was their need to earn a living in a respectable occupation. As Mrs. Sewell recollected, at the turn of the century, "If girls went out for governesses it was always

supposed they were poor."[40] Thus, when her father lost his money and most of his property in a business venture, there was nothing for it but for her and her four sisters to accept positions as governesses in schools and private families.[41] A similar fate befell the beautiful and notorious Mary Darby, later Mrs. Robinson.[42] When her father left for America on business and his remittances to his wife were delayed or lost, the women were forced to open a boarding school in Chelsea to support themselves. On the husband's return, "he was offended even beyond the bounds of reason; he considered his name as disgraced, his conjugal reputation tarnished . . ."[43] Needless to say, the school was closed down immediately.

The numbers of young women who sought employment as teachers or governesses must have been great, and the competition for positions severe. Nor was the situation improved when, during the French Revolution, large numbers of emigrés increased the supply of prospective teachers. Miss Mitford, recalling this period wrote,

> Something wonderful and admirable it was to see how these Dukes and Duchesses, Marshals and Marquises, Chevaliers and Bishops bore up under their unparalleled reverses! . . . Very many lived literally on the produce of their own industry; the gentlemen teaching languages, music, fencing, dancing; while their wives and daughters went out as teachers or governesses, or supplied the shops with those objects of taste in millinery or artificial flowers for which their country is unrivalled.[44]

Few other writers were as charitable in their remarks as Miss Mitford. It was true, of course, that the emigrés

were the victims and enemies of an atheistic tyranny and, as such, to be pitied and even commended. But they were also Roman Catholic and, perhaps worse, French, bringing with them all the wickedness of their country's religion and aristocracy. To allow them into schools and homes where they could not fail to influence young Englishwomen was to invite the corruption of youth. Moreover, they were filling positions which rightfully belonged to English gentlewomen in distress and helping to depress salaries even further.

It was at this time that the French governess became something of a stock villain in literature.[45] And the number of denunciations of French influence in education increased markedly. Hannah More's warning of the dangers of hiring French teachers was typical. They were "foreigners, of whose principles they [the parents] knew nothing, except that they were Roman Catholics."[46] France, lamented the Reverend John Bennet in 1795, "has infected many other countries of Europe, but, particularly, our own, and overwhelmed them, at least, with a deluge of frivolity, if not of crimes."[47]

Despite all the warnings and complaints, French governesses and teachers continued to be in great demand. Even menials and domestics, who had accompanied their mistresses across the channel, found employment in the schools.[48] Such a one, apparently, was Miss Bournany, who taught at the

Abbey School, Reading, for a while. Mrs. Sherwood remembered her as a "dashing, slovenly, rather handsome French girl who ran away with some low man" a few months after her arrival there.[49]

It is thus scarcely surprising that salaries were generally low, averaging £15 to £20 a year according to Chirol.[50] These figures are supported by Elizabeth Appleton who noted that "a private governess may be had for any salary from £20 to £200."[51] Charlotte Bronte, as late as 1841, received only £20 as a governess,[52] and in 1868 the average salary of a resident teacher in a boarding school was between £20 and £25 a year.[53] Yet there was no shortage of applicants for teaching positions; there simply was not another occupation which attracted both social climbers willing to accept low salaries for the added prestige, and depressed gentlewomen seeking to preserve some remnants of their gentility.

Ironically, the life and work of a teacher in a boarding school was anything but genteel and not particularly prestigious.

> Would any sensible woman, any person of talent, knowledge, education, . . . accept a situation, which reduces her . . . almost to a level with a menial, and to a still lower scale in respect to trouble, fatigue, and salary? Besides the instruction which a teacher gives, . . . she has also to wash and comb the young ladies, to mend their clothes, and to carve for them at table, to attend them in their walks, and in their intervals of recreation, to watch over them continually, to adjust their quarrels, and

> to prepare needlework and lessons for school hours; so that, from the moment of rising, which is in general at five o'clock in summer, and half past six in winter, till bed time, (ten o'clock) not a minute can she obtain to breathe freely, or to call her own.[54]

Again these observations of Chirol are born out by the experiences of the Bronte sisters. Emily Bronte left home to teach at a boarding school in 1835. Charlotte wrote several months later,

> I have had one letter from her since her departure; . . . it gives an appalling account of her duties; hard labour from six in the morning to eleven at night, with only one half-hour of exercise between. This is slavery. I fear she will never stand it.[55]

Mrs. Sewell, recalling her life as a teacher, obviously felt she had been fortunate in obtaining that particular position.

> I had undertaken to teach writing and ciphering to all the school, as well as reading, besides hearing all the usual lessons, and a quantity of mending and stockings etc. . . . The mistress and her sister both liked me and were very kind, and after a while I felt pretty much at home -- as much as you can when the servants call you familiarly by your name as if you were one of them.[56]

The life of a teacher at a boarding school was hardly an enviable one. Poorly paid and thus unable to put something aside; worked hard from morning to night every day of the week, with little time for recreation; looked down upon by even the students and servants; forced to pander to the wishes and idiosyncrasies of parents; finding it difficult but necessary to dress neatly and not too unfashionably; her

only chance of release the slim chance of an offer of marriage, or the even slimmer possibility of a generous legacy; and in the future the inevitable retirement or dismissal and a life of abject poverty.[57]

An important distinction should be made, however, between the proprietor of the school, frequently referred to as 'the governess', and the actual teachers. The governess frequently seems to have led a life which bordered on elegance if not actual grandeur. Thus, a correspondent of The Lady's Magazine remarked of her former governess,

> Her post was to sit all day, nicely dressed, in a nicely furnished drawing room, busy with some piece of delicate needle-work, receiving mamas, aunts, and god-mamas, answering questions, and administering as much praise as she conscientiously could.[58]

She was never seen by the pupils.

A governess could, if she was unscrupulous enough, make a great deal of money. By employing teachers at low salaries and by cutting back on such 'unnecessary expenses' as heat, washing, bedding, medicine and food, her margin of profit per student could be considerably raised. Chirol may not have been exaggerating when he reported that "within the last ten years, not less than 73 governesses to my knowledge, have retired with an independent fortune".[59] The same criticism was voiced later in the nineteenth century, when an observer remarked,

> One might be tempted to believe, that the end most school mistresses propose to themselves in

> teaching is to get themselves handsome houses, furnish sumptuous drawing-rooms, keep livery servants, and, perhaps, equipages, to make purses for themselves out of the credulous vanity and craving for stylishness in their employers.[60]

Apart from resident teachers and governesses, the boarding schools also provided employment for a considerable body of men, either as proprietors of the schools, or, more often, as visiting instructors. Thus a Mr. Rice apparently spent some twenty years as an English master, attending young women in their homes or in boarding school.[61] Mrs. Sewell recalled that at the school she attended as a girl she had both a French and a drawing master.[62] And there are numerous other references to masters attending the schools.[63] They taught French, Italian, drawing, dancing, various musical skills, writing, the use of the globes; in fact, anything which parents were willing to pay for. It was thus a common arrangement at a boarding school for resident teachers, almost always females, to take responsibility for some of the instruction (presumably that included in the basic cost of boarding a girl) and all the supervision, while masters came to teach, on an individual or group basis, whatever subjects parents chose to pay for.

The amount of instruction included in the basic cost of a boarding school education varied considerably. In some, like Mrs. Scriven's school in Tottenham, the £50 fee appears to have included everything.[64] In others, for example Mrs.

Steele's establishment, the 36 guineas fee included only board and instruction in English, Geography, History and Needlework. Each extra subject had to be paid for at the rate of £1.11.6. a quarter plus one guinea entrance fee for each.[65] The effect of this practice on the cost of a boarding school education was remarked upon in the 1868 report.

> It may be said generally that in boarding schools the nominal charge for board and instruction is supplemented by extras varying from one-half to three-fourths of its entire amount . . .[66]

It was also noted that the "multitude of separate masters" teaching the extras tended to depress the salaries of all concerned. It seems likely that, whenever a subject was offered "on the usual terms", a master would attend to teach it. The more expensive and exclusive the school, the greater the number of masters who found employment there.

III

If, generally speaking, the life of the teachers in the schools was not to be envied, that of the boarders themselves appears to have been little better. It is of course, difficult to generalize where there existed such a wide variety of establishments. Undoubtedly, there were some where the girls were housed comfortably, fed adequately and generally well looked after. There were certainly many

schools where exactly the reverse was the case. It is about the latter that we possess most information, since it was the more reprehensible schools that attracted the attention of critics.

Even within the same school there might exist wide differences in the girls' standards of living. For example, parlour boarders (so called because they had access to the governess' parlour) could expect to pay almost half as much again as ordinary boarders. The benefits, however, were several. As a girl, Mrs. Sewell was certainly well aware of them. "I was a parlour boarder, [she wrote] which gave me the advantage of dining in the parlour when there were visitors - always having tea there with the governess, and sitting up to supper."[67] A comfortable, warm room to sit in during the long winter evenings and extra tea and meals could well mean the difference, if not between happiness and unhappiness, at least between content and discontent. Mrs. Sherwood remembered the evenings she spent as a girl 'in the parlour' at the Abbey School, Reading, as the happiest and most instructive of her life.[68]

If we are to believe contemporary accounts and recollections, however, there must have been few girls who were sorry to see their school days over and done with. Since virtually all the schools were former private residences which had undergone varying degrees of alteration and renovation, many of them suffered badly from overcrowding. The

classrooms were frequently small, ill-ventilated chambers and, when in use, stuffy and unpleasant. The bedrooms tended to be even more unhealthy, being far too small for the numbers using them. The practice of sleeping two or more girls to a bed was a common one.[69]

Perhaps the most crucial problem, as far as the girls were concerned, was the heating in winter. If the governess, because she charged too small a fee, wished to increase her income, or perhaps even because of the nature of the school building, failed to heat the chambers, the girls often virtually froze. And even if she had fires lit all over the school, the resulting chilling drafts meant that only a few could be warm at any one time. After interviewing many girls in a number of boarding schools, Dr. Beddoes noted, "Everyone without exception has complained of being uncomfortably cold or quite benumbed, during school hours in winter".[70] The only places that guaranteed warmth were in bed with fellow students or next to a fire. The latter situation invariably was reserved for the older girls.

It was scarcely surprising that the universal ailment in boarding schools was chilblains. Dr. Beddoes devoted a whole section of his essay on boarding schools to the cure and prevention of chilblains, as did Chirol and Erasmus Darwin.[71] So normal a feature of boarding school life were they that one girl noted, "There was a person on purpose to

dress the chilblains with opodeldoc[72] - they were very common."[73]

Like heating, food was an item on which it was easy to economize.[74] Breakfast, usually eaten around 8 o'clock, about one to two hours after rising, consisted typically of bread and butter with tea. Dinner, which was eaten sometime between one and three o'clock in the afternoon, was plain in the extreme, usually consisting of meat with pudding. Occasionally pies would be served although the novelty seems to have been more than counterbalanced by the poor quality of the new item on the menu. Chirol was informed by one girl that "they might be thrown, with the greatest force, up to the ceiling, or upon the stones, without breaking."[75] The final meal of the day, unless one was a parlour boarder, was eaten around five to seven o'clock in the evening. Once again it consisted typically of bread and butter and tea.

Fortunately for the girls, some governesses seemed to have encouraged the parents to send their daughters boxes of food, the contents of which were eaten at specified times or on special occasions, often with dire consequences for ill-nourished stomachs.[76] Those girls who possessed sufficient money were able to purchase additional eatables, either legally from travelling vendors or illegally from servants and, one suspects, teachers. But such practices were usually frowned upon. To show too great an interest in food was

hardly ladylike and, besides, 'overeating' was bad for the figure and complexion. Indeed, abstinence from food was considered a social grace. Chirol reported that in one school the girls had been 'shamed' into virtually starving themselves.[77]

To the dangers to health arising from inadequate ventilation, heating and food were added those of uncleanliness. Unchanged clothes and bed-linen and an unwillingness or inability on the part of teachers to check a girl's personal hygiene, apart from the easily inspected 'hands and face', must have been common. In 1772, Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, visiting her niece at boarding school, was pleasantly surprised to find her "perfectly clean and neat, tho' I called on ye Saturday, which is usually only the eve of cleanliness. I remember at Mrs. Robarte's, at Kensington, the girls used to be so dirty, sometimes one could not salute them."[78] A young girl attending Miss Mangnall's school at Crofton Hall, one of the best known and most prestigious of the nineteenth century, found the occasions when she was 'looked over' rare and interesting enough for her to record in her diary.[79]

The strict regimen of the schools, the policy of keeping the girls from any contact with young men, the practice of sleeping several girls together and the whole sexual character of their education all lend weight to

Chirol's assertion that the schools fostered the habits of masturbation and, perhaps, homosexuality.[80] In view of the unhygienic conditions and the current state of medical knowledge and practice, one is also inclined to believe his statement that many girls became sick of infection contracted as a result of this "baneful habit", sometimes with fatal consequences.[81]

The health of girls in boarding schools was thus generally poor. As Doctor Beddoes noted, "The keepers of boarding schools are among the persons to whom the physician often deems it advisable to render particular homage. Medical men have few better patrons."[82] He went on to declare that, in his experience, most girls within one to two years of their entering such a school began a period of declining health. With the girls' resistance to infection reduced by inadequate food, heating and personal hygiene, the danger of epidemics of whooping cough, influenza, dyptheria and measles running unchecked throughout the school population was always high. And tuberculosis must have thrived in such conditions.

Some schools, in their advertisements and prospectuses, boasted of separate apartments for the sick, although the fact that it was felt important enough to mention suggests that such a provision was rare. Generally the sick girl was confined to her bed and dosed with 'treacle-posset' or some

other popular cure-all. If this failed, the local doctor would be called in. It would be interesting, but unfortunately impossible, to know the mortality rate among girls attending boarding school and compare it with that of those educated at home. In view of the unhealthy conditions and increased danger of infection, one suspects that it was considerably higher.

Maria Bronte's death was attributed by her family to the harsh regimen at the Cowan Bridge school.[83] And when Arthur Young's daughter died of an illness contracted at school, he too, in his grief, blamed it on the conditions of life there.

> The rules for health are detestable, [he wrote] no air but in a measured, formal walk, and all running and quick motion prohibited. Preposterous! She slept with a girl who could only hear with one ear, and so ever laid on one side, and my dear child could do no otherwise afterwards without pains, because of the vile beds are so small that they must both lie the same way. The school discipline of all sorts, the food etc., all contributed. She never had a belly-full of food at breakfast. Detestable this at the expense of £80 a year.[84] Oh! how I regret ever putting her there . . . .

Yet few parents seem to have felt any qualms about sending their daughters to such establishments. They accepted the hazards to health as an unpleasant but unavoidable part of a girl's education. Thus, Josiah Wedgwood, whose daughter Sukey, aged nine, was attending a boarding school, wrote in 1773,

> I am going to Liverpool this week, and to Buxton the next. To the former with poor Sukey who after sitting and sewing at school for 12 months is so full of pouks, and boils, and humors that the salt water is absolutely necessary for her.[85]

Presumably, the advantages that resulted from her attending school outweighed the dangers to her health.

It was not that parents were unsolicitous about their daughter's welfare. They realized that, since her wellbeing depended to a large extent upon her making a good match, it was their responsibility to make sure that she received an education designed almost exclusively for that purpose. If this is born in mind, the educational practices of the schools, many of which seem strange and even repugnant to the twentieth century, can be seen to make sense. Physically, morally and intellectually, the girl in the boarding school was educated not so much to be a wife as to become one.

IV

The most obvious aspect of this concern was the attention paid in the schools to improving the shape and posture of the girls. In general, it was the development (if necessary, the manufacture) of a shapely rather than a healthy body which interested parents, students and teachers. Compared to the ingenuity and inventiveness which must have gone into the various gadgets and instruments designed to

improve the form and bearing of girls, the many mechanical advances made in industry in the same period pale into insignificance. Mary Somerville's experience at a boarding school in 1789 was not untypical.

> A few days after my arrival, although perfectly straight and well made, I was enclosed in stiff stays, with a steel busk in front, while above my frock, bands drew my shoulders back till the shoulder blades met. Then a steel rod, with a semi-circle which went under the chin, was clasped to the steel band in my stays. In this constrained state I, and most of the younger girls, had to prepare our lessons.[86]

Such devices were supplemented by a variety of other contrivances and exercises, most of which were depicted in Edward Bunney's famous satirical print, 'The School of Deportment, or An Elegant Establishment for Young Ladies'.[87] It depicts a group of girls undergoing, with no great distress and perhaps some pleasure, various torturous activities. One employs a back board to straighten her back and show what bust she has to advantage, another exercises with dumbells, presumably to develop her arms and shoulders, while yet two others are encased in a complicated contraption apparently designed to hold the head still while walking. Amid the crowd and hurly-burly two young ladies lie prostrate on the floor straightening their spines, while others are instructed in deportment and dancing by a moustachioed military man and a rather foppish looking gentleman. Finally, above them all, a young girl, with head and neck encased in a leather harness and dumbells in hand to increase her weight, is hauled

unceremoniously up to the ceiling by a pulley and what appears to be a rather sinister man-servant. Hanging by the head and neck was thought to increase the length of the neck and perhaps even the height of a girl who appeared to be in danger of turning out a little too short and fat.

Obviously, such a formidable array of gadgetry would rarely, if ever, be found in any one school. However, the concern for 'correct' posture, a pleasing shape and generally improving upon nature, seems to have been universal. Nor was it necessary for a governess to invest large amounts of money in expensive equipment. Lying flat on the back, standing in one position, particularly on one leg, for a considerable length of time, and walking with a book upon the head could serve just as well to develop the form and carriage of a girl as the most sophisticated and expensive piece of machinery.

Even where nature and art had combined to produce a slim elegant figure, things could be further improved by 'tight lacing' the girls in whalebone stays. Perhaps due to the influence of Rousseau, who had violently condemned it,[88] this practice seems to have fallen into disfavour for a short time at the end of the century.[89] However, the vagaries of fashion soon brought it back again and this unhealthy manner of producing the slender waist continued to be popular throughout the nineteenth century.

The most popular recreational activity of a girl in a

boarding school was walking, which offered an excellent opportunity for teaching by precept and example how young ladies were to behave in public. It was also considered to be healthy, good for the figure, and provide instruction in carriage and deportment. Perhaps most important of all, it was cheap. One of the most frequently committed and punished offences at Crofton Hall was 'poking of heads' while walking.[90] Like chilblains, the two-by-two walk was a misery that all girls attending a boarding school could expect to suffer. They walked after breakfast, usually after lunch, and sometimes in the late afternoon. Rarely was any real physical exertion required. As Dr. Beddoes pointed out, "The greater part of the movement of girls at boarding schools, no one, who has any regard to propriety of language, will characterize by the name exercise. . ."[91] Since the routes were seldom, if ever, varied, the walks soon lost any charm of novelty and the girls lethargically submitted to what one inspector called in 1868, "the dreary two and two walk along the dusty highway or the dull suburban street."[92] Later in the century, the 'walk' was to be supplemented by games, notably croquet and tennis, but in the period under discussion any strenuous activities involving competition between females were considered morally and physically degrading and quite foreign to the delicacy which should distinguish a lady.

It was not enough that a girl have the figure, deport-

ment and carriage of a lady; she must also be 'accomplished'. Accomplishments were the purely ornamental aspects of the education of a lady. Generally they consisted of dancing, needlework and drawing, although there were many specialties within each of these. Some of the prospectuses and advertisements included instruction in these 'subjects' in the basic cost of an education; others made them an extra. In most schools specialized instruction in the more esoteric branches of each accomplishment could be purchased from a visiting master.

Dancing was one of the more popular accomplishments and, in the educational programme of a highly eligible young lady, an essential. According to the girls interviewed by Dr. Beddoes, instruction and practice in dancing rarely took up less than six hours a week,[93] and for those girls who 'specialized' and had extra instruction it was a great deal more. For the eminently sensible and down-to-earth Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, the quality of instruction in dancing was one of the crucial factors in deciding which school a girl should attend. Writing to Mrs. Robinson in 1773, she advised that in boarding schools,

> the carriage of the person, which is of great importance is well attended to, and dancing is well taught. . . . I believe all boarding schools are much on the same plan, so that you may place a young lady wherever there is good air and a good dancing-master.[94]

Even Chirol admitted that the dancing instruction in boarding

schools was excellent.[95]

In some schools, where the moral and religious aspects of the education of a lady were stressed, the emphasis on dancing was often very slight. Mrs. Sherwood's advertisement, for example, makes no mention of accomplishments of any kind.[96] But if instruction in this branch of a fashionable education was desired by parents, it could easily be purchased elsewhere, either at home during the vacation from a visiting master, or in one of the many 'dancing academies' in the larger towns.

Music, which might include instruction in singing, the harp, spinnet, harpsichord, and, increasingly, the piano, rivalled in popularity both dancing and deportment exercises. Most parents considered it important that their daughter be able to entertain her family and, hopefully, her prospective husband, in the evening. Nor in an age when professional entertainment was scarce outside the larger towns was this desire unreasonable. Unfortunately, musical ability is a great deal rarer and less easily acquired than skill at dancing. The remarks made by Miss Beale in 1868 about this aspect of a girl's education would have been quite appropriate some sixty years earlier.

> Girls who have neither ear nor taste, are compelled to spend . . . often about one hour out of every four devoted to education, in torturing pianos, and acquiring a mechanical facility which, in the most favourable cases, enables them to rival a barrel-organ.[97]

The experience recorded by Fanny Burney in her diary must have been quite common. Describing an assembly she attended at Bath in 1780, she wrote,

> About the time I got against the door . . . of the music room, the young ladies were preparing to perform, and with the assistance of Mr. Henry, they sang catches. Oh, such singing! Worse squalling, more out of tune, and more execrable in every respect, never did I hear.[98]

But to a parent or close relative, and perhaps even to a lover, the execrable singing would have had quite a different sound. Like dancing, musical accomplishments were obvious acquirements; they could be seen and heard. They brought the young girl into the light, focused attention upon her and gave her an opportunity to shine.

Together with grace in the dance and musical abilities and skills, the accomplished young lady possessed several other attractions and acquirements. Every girl was expected to have some proficiency in one or more of the branches of drawing, painting, modelling and needlework. To this end was devoted a considerable proportion of her education. Mrs. Sewell, recalling the year she spent at a boarding school, mentions that she spent a great deal of it copying flowers. She goes on to say, "The only thing I have to show for this year is the piece of embroidery in wool, which, when I came home, was duly framed and hung up."[99]

The number and variety of the branches within each of these accomplishments were considerable. A girl could

specialize in one or several of the following: drawing and/or painting figures, landscapes or flowers; varnishing, gilding and japaning;[100] modelling in clay or some other material; etching and engraving; embroidery, tapestry work, tambour[101] and ribbon work. Which of these the girl 'made a proficiency at' depended on what the school offered and, of course, the ability and willingness of the parents to pay.

Occasionally, a school would specialize in particular types of accomplishments and make this their chief selling point. Thus, the advertisement for Mrs. Girton's Boarding School at Newark, set up around 1800, reads

> Young Ladies are Taught Embroidery, Tambour, Pearl and Ribbon work, curious Buckles etc., Figures, Animals, Fruit and Flowers, in Cloth, Satin, Silk etc.[102]

Almost as an afterthought, in small print, is added, "Writing, Music, Dancing, etc. by able Masters."

The popularity and overwhelming predominance of accomplishments requires some explanation. For the vast majority of girls who attended the schools they were of no practical value, nor was any attempt made to justify them on those grounds. If they did possess any such utility, it was a by-product and not a particularly desirable one at that. Parents did not send their daughters to school to acquire 'useful accomplishments'; indeed, such an expression was almost a contradiction in terms. What they valued above all else were the prestige and allurement of the purely ornamental,

those skills and acquirements which would enable their daughter to shine in the world and mark her out from those who had not had the benefit of a fashionable education.

When Mrs. Sewell noted that her piece of embroidery was "duly framed and hung up", she raises an important point. True, accomplishments were innocent and perhaps amusing pastimes which could fill up whatever leisure hours a woman was granted by her circumstances. More important, however, was the fact that they were just the kind of acquirements which could be easily displayed to relatives, friends and admirers. They were visible, frequently tangible, signs not only of a young girl's abilities but of a particular type of educational experience, the same experience as that of 'a lady' for whom such accomplishments were felt to be not just skills and acquirements but part of a whole way of life.

Nor was this fact lost upon the proprietors of the schools. Parents paying directly for the education of their daughters and wishing to make known their ability to do so required some kind of public evidence. What better evidence could there be than a daughter's skill in dancing, or music, or even a fine piece of embroidery? In order to compete effectively for students, governesses found it necessary to advertise their products by displaying their girls' accomplishments at dances, musical soirées and exhibitions. Mrs. Sherwood, remembering her father's decision to send her to school, illustrates the importance of such activities.

> My father . . . had been taken . . . to see a sort of exhibition, got up by the ladies of Monsieur and Madame St. Quintin's School, kept in the old Abbey at Reading. My father was delighted with all he saw there. This, he thought, is the place for Mary.[103]

So important was it for governesses and teachers to make a good showing at such exhibitions that one is inclined to believe Chirol's criticism of this aspect of a girl's education.

> The specimens of drawing, and geographical maps and tent-stitch works, which are presented to their wondering papas and mammas at vacation time . . . are but shameful impositions on their self-love and credulity; these specimens being, in general, half-executed by the masters or mistresses.[104]

Just as highly prized by the socially ambitious parent as the accomplishments was the boarding school's ability to rid a girl of a provincial dialect or accent. There was no more damning indictment of a girl's social and geographical origins than these, and 'fashionable English' was itself often considered an accomplishment. As one writer observed,

> An harmonious well managed voice, is to sublime or delicate sentiments, what elegance of dress is to a fine person; it is at once an ornament and recommendation. I know of no personal qualification that more strongly characterizes the gentlewoman: there being generally to be observed in women who have not had the benefit of a good education, a vulgarity of tone, (as well as manner of expressing themselves) that is very apparent to persons of discernment; and which not all the advantages of dress, or polite accomplishments can conceal.[105]

Mrs. Montagu, writing to a friend in 1773, showed herself to be well aware of this particular benefit of a boarding school education.

> I am glad you intend to send my eldest niece to a boarding school. What girls learn at these schools is trifling, but they unlearn what would be of great disservice - a provincial dialect, which is extreamly [sic] ungenteel. . . . in this polish'd age, it is so unusual to meet with young Ladies who have any patois, that I mightily wish to see my niece cured of it.[106]

It seems probable, however, that in those schools where local day-boarders and day-scholars rivalled or exceeded in numbers the boarders, the chances of a girl's retaining or even acquiring a provincial accent and dialect were just as great as her losing them.

One final 'ornamental' aspect of boarding school education needs to be mentioned. It is the emphasis that was placed on 'fair handwriting'. This was not, of course, only the prerogative of a lady. It was one of the characteristics of a gentleman and even the charity schools devoted considerable time to developing their students' penmanship. But for girls, a 'fair hand' was doubly important. To begin with, a delicate and beautiful hand seemed to accord well with notions of female artistic sensibility. A girl's handwriting was thus one of the hallmarks of her femininity. Moreover, since to develop the ability to write well required little more than practice, and, once mastered, was an easily exhibited decorative acquirement, it was highly regarded by parents. Like dancing, it was one of the more easily imitated characteristics of a lady. For the teacher whose limited knowledge prevented her from teaching anything of

substance, the handwriting exercise must have been a godsend. The copying out of aphorisms, biblical quotations and maxims for conduct could also be justified on moral grounds. The writing master and handwriting exercise were thus universal elements in the boarding schools. And even a severe critic like Chirol had to admit that it was well taught.[107]

V

Ranked next in importance to the ornamental aspects of education was moral and religious instruction. There was probably more variety in the nature and effectiveness of this aspect of education than in any other. Moreover, since so much depended on informal elements in the educational process, the social climate within the school, the character and integrity of governesses and teachers, and the type of girl attending the school, this is the aspect of education about which least is known.

One school that paid particular attention to the moral well-being of its students was Crofton Hall, a strict Anglican establishment. Here the girls attended church regularly, learned their catechism, sang hymns and psalms, and were subjected to a rigid discipline.[108] Punishments were varied and frequently severe. "They included even corporal measures, wearing the cap, and being sent to Coventry, while 'verses', a collect, the Epistles and Gospel were

Crofton's form of lines."[109] How severely offences were punished can be gauged from the entries in young Elizabeth Frith's diary, kept during her stay there in 1812-1813. They include the following:

April 8 - Some of the ladies had 30 verses for having things in the back hall cupboard.

.....

May 18 - Miss Britton had her dirty clothes pinned to her back for having them under her bed.

.....

Sept. 1 - I got verses for a slop at breakfast.

.....

Sept.12 - Miss Ropers [sic] were sent to Coventry till they could say their catechism.

.....

Sept.22 - Mary Wilson was whipped for obstinacy.

.....

Nov. 12 - I got 20 verses for throwing a blackboard down.

.....

Nov. 26 - Mary Wilson had the cap on for ippertinence [sic] to Miss Harrison and a paper to say what it was for,

.....

Dec. 4 - Miss M'Cumming was whipped and sent to Coventry for telling a fib.

.....

Feb. 26 - Miss Julia was sent to Coventry, had the cap on, and was whipped for telling a story about her father.[110]

Untidiness, grossness or carelessness at table, bad manners (especially 'ippertinence'), disrespect to one's elders, particularly parents, ignorance of the catechism or lessons, which betokened idleness, and lying were the cardinal sins

at Crofton Hall, matched in the frequency with which they were punished only by poor deportment or 'poking of heads'. In the boarding school, moral and religious education was so closely bound up with the development of a ladylike bearing and conduct as to be virtually inseparable. The expression 'to act like a lady' carried with it, as it still does today, much the same connotation as 'to act like a gentleman'; both implied a definite set of habits, moral standards, values and religious beliefs.

Supplementing the disciplinary aspects of education were the regulations of the schools, most of them designed to preserve the moral integrity of the girls. Thus, in many schools, contacts with the other sex were kept to an absolute minimum. So rare were they at Crofton Hall that when one girl succeeded in escaping supervision and talked for an half hour "to a man in the village", Elizabeth Frith found it worthy of note in her very sparse diary.[111] At another school, the parents were promised that "nothing is neglected for the preservation of purety [sic] of the mind", that the teachers "sleep in the dormitories and never lose sight of their pupils", and that "no young lady goes abroad but with approved persons, or on a note from her friends."[112]

One of the more obvious forms of moral and religious instruction was the Sunday lecture or sermon. Not only did the young ladies attend church; frequently they were expected

to listen to an evening talk given by a local clergyman or, more often, the proprietor of the school. A Mr. Burton, the head of a boarding school, found the twenty eight Sunday evening lectures he delivered to his charges so inspiring that he had them published.[113] His topics consisted mainly of the desirable qualities in a young lady, humility, docility, modesty, sincerity, domesticity, love of economy, skill in accomplishments, beauty and taste in dress, courtesy, sensibility, philanthropy, and forgiveness. The other lectures dealt with the opposite vices. They hardly constitute entertaining reading and one cannot help but sympathize with the girls who had to sit and listen to them, week after week. It was almost certainly the genuine concern shown by some governesses and teachers for the moral and religious well-being of their students that resulted in what one critic was later to call "the barren drudgery of a Sunday", with its "dressing for, and the walk to, the fashionable chapel; the formal turns after service; the dryness, doubly dry, of Sunday lessons and exercises".[114]

How typical were the schools operated by Burton, Mrs. Sherwood, Madame Aubert and Richmal Mangnall at Crofton Hall it is impossible to say. There is certainly evidence to suggest that not all schools were as scrupulous in the supervision of their charges. At the Abbey school at Reading, Mrs. Sherwood reported that the girls were given almost

complete freedom. ". . . no human being ever took the trouble to consider where we spent the rest of the day between our meals. . . . No one so much as said, 'Where have you been?'"[115] At Mrs. Lorrington's school in Chelsea, the supervision of the girls was even less noticeable. For although Mrs. Lorrington "was mistress of the Latin, French, and Italian languages, [and] was said to be a perfect arithmetician and astronomer,"[116] she was, alas, a chronic alcoholic, whose taste for strong drink brought her to destitution, the workhouse and a lonely death.

If their critics are to be believed, the boarding schools were nothing but "seminaries of immorality and corruption".[117] Forced to mix with teachers and students of doubtful characters and backgrounds, able if she wished to converse with servants whose influence could only be harmful, free to read the latest trashy novel borrowed from the local circulating library and smuggled into the school, the 'new girl' could scarcely hope to maintain her innocence more than a day or two. Seductions and elopements were apparently none too rare occurrences and some critics went so far as to accuse governesses of using their power and influence to set young girls on the road to prostitution.[118] Doubtless, such reports were exaggerated for there is no real evidence to suggest that the vast majority of young ladies leaving the schools were any worse or indeed any better than earlier or

later generations. Colquhoun's estimate that of the 50,000 prostitutes in London, 2,000 were well educated, and 5,000 above the rank of servant, no doubt shocked contemporaries, and lent a certain credence to such criticisms of fashionable education.[119]

It is certainly true that in the field of moral and religious education, the proprietors of schools found themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, they had guaranteed an education which would enable a girl to attract attention, and make a fine showing and a good match. The tone of such an education was inevitably sexual in nature and could scarcely avoid inculcating the belief that there were few things in life more important than winning the heart of an eligible young man. Nor, of course, given the social position of women at the turn of the century, was this concern unreasonable. On the other hand, current notions of morality and religion demanded that the girls be immured from contacts with the other sex, and constantly lectured on the importance of chastity, modesty and the passive, domestic virtues. The critics of the schools were well aware of the resulting ambivalences in education; they realized, if the parents and teachers did not, that the "undefiled seductress" was a mythical animal, a contradiction in terms.

Perhaps the most important form of moral or character education was the conscious or unconscious imitation of models or exemplars of womanhood, as presented by parents,

teachers and friends, from real life or from contemporary literature.[120] In the creation of an accomplished lady such imitation must have been just as influential as formal instruction and precept. The importance of the schools in this respect was their creation of an environment where such imitation could take place and be approved of by teachers and, more importantly, by the girl's peers.

VI

A girl's intellectual development was by far the least important aspect of her education. As a governess was to remark to an inspector later in the century, "You know that gentlemen do not like learned ladies; our great aim is to make the young people attractive in society, and if we do that, we are satisfied."[121] No normal, reasonable parent wished their daughter to become a 'prodigy of learning', a 'bluestocking', or a 'female pedant'. Such unfeminine, unattractive and ineligible creatures were social and financial liabilities. That parents conceived the education of their sons in quite different terms from that of their daughters is well illustrated by the attitude of Josiah Wedgwood, solid factory owner and eminently down-to-earth parent. Describing two proposed pictures of his children, he wrote in 1779,

> The two family pieces I have hinted at above I mean to contain the children only, and grouped perhaps in such manner as this.
>
> Sukey playing upon her harpsichord, with Kitty singing to her which she often does, and Sally and Mary Ann upon the carpet in some employment suitable to their ages. This to be one picture. The pendant to be Jack standing at a table, making fixable air with the glass apparatus etc.; and his two brothers accompanying him. Tom jumping up and clapping his hands in joy at seeing the stream of bubbles rise up just as Jack has put a little chalk to the acid. Joss with the chemical dictionary before him in a thoughtful mood . . .[122]

It was not that parents wished their daughter to be totally lacking in knowledge. They simply demanded that she be taught what was requisite for a lady; in other words, what was suitable for the mental capacity of a female and, more important, the social position to which she aspired. The body of knowledge that this demand gave rise to was generally agreed upon; thus the 'academic subjects' and their presentation varied little in the schools.

French was the most popular of these subjects; though its value to a young lady was mainly ornamental. Not only had it been taught in the schools since the early seventeenth century and thus acquired the weight of tradition; but with the influx of some 40,000 French emigrés during the French Revolution,[123] it received an impetus which enabled it to maintain its position throughout the nineteenth century.

To judge from the frequency of French allusions and epigrams in contemporary diaries, correspondence and periodicals (occasionally whole articles were written in French),

there must have been a great many women who could read and presumably speak French adequately. However, if the period of greatest French influence in the 1790's did see an improvement in the level of instruction, it was only temporary. In the 1868 report, all the inspectors roundly condemned French teaching in the boarding schools.[124] One suspects that, since most parents desired their daughters to acquire a knowledge of 'conversational French' of a kind that could be easily displayed in company, there must have been a great many girls who learned neither to write nor speak the language grammatically.

In some schools, Italian and even German might be taught. Frances Power Cobbe recalled that in the school she attended at Brighton, the girls recited their lessons aloud in English, French, German, and Italian to the sound of four pianos being played in adjacent rooms. "In the midst of the uproar" she wrote, "we were obliged to write our exercises, to compose our themes, and to commit to memory whole pages of prose."[125]

Although most schools seemed to have employed teachers of English, no subject of this name was to be found in the schools. At least one attempt was made to have it introduced as a subject in its own right;[126] apparently, however, it met with little success. Spelling, a smattering of grammar, composition, poetry, drama, belles lettres, were all taught

by the English teacher; but so too, apparently, were a great many other subjects. One former pupil, describing her English teacher, wrote that during the time she spent with her,

> I found myself, to my unspeakable discomposure, getting by rote . . . sundry tedious abridgements of heraldry, botany, biography, mineralogy, mythology, and at least half a dozen 'ologies more, compiled by herself for my express edification.[127]

It was this same teacher who later in the year insisted that the girls perform "the only play fit to be acted by young ladies", Hannah More's Search after Happiness. However, as the former pupil noted, "Mrs. Hannah More, though a forcible prose writer, is . . . no great poet," and the girls refused to act in a play which was "not very dramatic, and not pastoral at all." Only when they had amended it somewhat and were promised "new dresses and splendid decorations" did they relent and perform it for their admiring parents and friends.[128] In the boarding schools, it appears that not only was 'every teacher a teacher of English', but that 'every English teacher was a teacher of everything else'.

Since the major aim of intellectual education was to enable the young lady 'to make rational conversation', it is quite natural that history and geography were universally popular in the schools. Both supplied an abundance of miscellaneous information about a whole medley of topics. Suitably edited and interpreted, they could also be employed as

powerful vehicles of moral and religious instruction. Finally, both could be taught almost entirely from abridgements or compendiums, of which there were many. Occasionally, the teachers compiled their own 'pieces', which were copied and memorized by generations of young ladies.[129] Thus, neither of them required the employment of a master; except of course, to teach that most abstruse of subjects, 'the use of the globes'.

The approach adopted in the teaching of history and geography scarcely accords with modern 'enlightened' pedagogy. In history, the most popular 'text book' was Richmal Mangnall's famous, or rather infamous, Historical and Miscellaneous Questions.[130] First published in 1800, it had gone through ten editions by 1813 and was thereafter reprinted almost annually up to 1869 when the wholesale condemnation it received from the inspectors of the 1868 Enquiry seems to have caused its decline and gradual abandonment in the schools.

Consisting as it does of some 400 pages of questions and answers, the book is impossible to summarize. However, its contents and the approach to history can be illustrated. Thus, under the heading 'Miscellaneous Questions in General History - Chiefly Ancient', one finds the following:

> Name the famous battles of antiquity? [sic] - Marathon, Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamin, or Salamis, Platea, Euremydon, Arginusae, Leuctra, the Granicus, Arbela, Issus, Ticinus, Trebia, Thrasymene, Cannae, Zama, Pharsalia, Phillippi, and Actium.[131]

And on and on the questions and answers go, through 'famous seiges of antiquity', 'great examples of mutual friendship', 'celebrated ancient queens', 'what was remarkable in Cleopatra', 'Roman kings' and 'celebrated Athenians'. No doubt, in the hand of a good teacher the book had some value. Unfortunately, the book usually replaced the teacher and for most girls history meant 'getting by rote' long lists of names, places and dates about which they knew absolutely nothing.

Like history, geography was a subject which required of the student the memorization of vast quantities of disconnected factual information. Lists of countries, towns, rivers, mountains, oceans and islands comprised almost its entire content. Even in the best schools and taught by the best teachers, geography retained its 'cape and bay' character. Thus Josiah Wedgwood, much impressed by the school of Mrs. Williams in Chelsea, wrote in wonderment to a friend that

> the Young Ladies at this School are learning Geography and are very fond of the science. They can point out upon a Table or blank Paper where all the Counties in Great Britain lie - where the Rivers rise, what Towns they visit and where they empty themselves into - with the several circuits, and chief towns in each County.[132]

What must have been a typical method of teaching the subject is to be found in Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's very popular The Young Misses' Magazine. Mrs. Affable, a

model governess, has decided to teach her young charges geography. All the young ladies are set to work getting by heart long lists of names and places. When Lady Charlotte succeeds in reciting "all the mountains of Europe, the principal rivers, peninsulas and isthmuses", Mrs. Affable condescends, "That's well, my dear. You'll soon become an able geographer."[133] But Lady Charlotte and her friends are not to relax their efforts. As Mrs. Affable reminds them,

> You have still the names of the fifty-two counties in England to learn, and the capes, bays and islands; but you all have PALAIRET's Geography, there you will be so good as to learn them by yourselves. Adieu, children.[134]

Of the various branches of mathematics, only arithmetic or cyphering received any attention in the schools, and there must have been few female teachers competent to teach even this. Thus, in Ann Murry's Mentoria: or The Young Ladies' Instructor, when an eager young lady asks her governess if she can be permitted to learn geometry, she is brusquely informed, "It is not a part of female education."[135] Arithmetic, however, did manage to keep its place in the schools, and in 1868, the inspectors discovered that roughly one hour out of thirteen was devoted to this subject.[136]

Botany and astronomy were the only 'scientific' subjects which were considered suitable for inclusion in the education of a young lady. Hans mentions two schools, those operated by Mrs. Bryan and Mrs. Florian, which attempted to

provide a systematic and comprehensive treatment of the sciences.[137] But such women were pioneers and their schools oddities,- out of the mainstream of female education. If, as Hans suggests, there was "a widespread interest in sciences among women",[138] it was only faintly reflected in the boarding schools where the sciences would have been foreign elements, smacking of masculinity and pedantry. An acquaintance with botany and astronomy, however, was considered suitable for a lady. Neither were primarily 'experimental' sciences and both could, if correctly interpreted, lead the mind to higher things and provide an irrefutable argument against atheism.[139] Once again, their study involved committing to memory long lists of names and definitions.

VII

In view of the conditions in the schools and the education they provided, it is not surprising that they were subjected to numerous criticisms. Yet they made no effort to change their aims and content, and only a little to improve living conditions. Individual schools might die with their proprietors or be closed for lack of patronage; but there were always others to take their place. As a recent writer has noted "by the end of the eighteenth century, . . . a rash of small incompetent boarding schools disfigured cities and country villages alike; and during the

first fifty years of the nineteenth century the rash was permitted to spread unhindered."[140]

And yet it is difficult to imagine what other type of education the schools could have offered. They depended for their survival upon the patronage of parents. As long as they were satisfied, the schools could afford, indeed were obliged, to ignore the criticism and give people what they demanded. The ladies' boarding school was an educational response to a whole set of social, economic and intellectual conditions which prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century. One can, if one wishes, disapprove of these conditions, for example the social, legal and economic position of women; but to condemn outright the schools is to blame the symptom for the sickness, if, indeed, it was a sickness. Undoubtedly, the schools were frequently expensive, unhealthy, and taught a largely trivial and useless subject matter. Perhaps they failed to produce what they had promised, 'an accomplished fine lady'. However, their imperviousness to criticism and general popularity suggests that, whatever their shortcomings, they were meeting a need felt by a great many parents, all of whom were convinced that they knew and were doing what was best for their daughters.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Josephine Kamm, Hope Deferred, Girls' Education in English History. Methuen and Co., London. 1965. p. 68 and Dorothy Gardiner, English Girlhood at School, A Study of Women's Education through Twelve Centuries, Oxford University Press, London, 1922. pp. 206-218.

[2] See Kamm, op. cit. pp. 70-71 and Gardiner, op. cit. pp. 219-226.

[3] Bathsua Makin's Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen (1673) is discussed at length in Kamm, op. cit. pp. 73-76.
Mary Astell's plan to establish a kind of "monastery or . . . a Religious Retirement" is to be found in her A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest, Richard Wilkin, London, 1697, (3rd. edition). pp. 40 ff.

[4] See Chapter V, pp. 225-233 for an analysis of this criticism.

[5] Elizabeth Appleton, Private Education: or a Practical Plan for the Studies of Young Ladies, with an Address to Parents, Private Governesses, and Young Ladies, Henry Colburn, London, 1815. pp. 24-25.

[6] B. R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962. p. 20.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Kamm, op. cit. p. 145.

[9] Cited J. W. Adamson, An Outline of English Education, (reprinted from The Cambridge History of English Literature), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1925. p. 7. See too Doctor Doran, A Lady of the Last Century (Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu). Richard Bentley and Son, London, 1873. p. 77.

[10] Clara Reeve, Plans of Education: with Remarks on the Systems of Other Writers. T. Hookham and J. Carpenter, London, 1792. p. 111.

[11] John Corry, The Unfortunate Daughter: or The Danger of the Modern System of Female Education. B. Crosby and Co., London, 1803. p. 5.

[12] Miss Hatfield, Letters on the Importance of the Female Sex: with Observations on their Manners and on Education. J. Adlard, London, 1803. pp. 90-91.

[13] See, for example, J. Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners, Printed for the Author, London, 1793. Vol. I. p. 28.
Reeve, op. cit. pp. 60, 111, and 116-117.
Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, (1799), The Works of Hannah More, D. Graisberry, London, 1803. Vol. IV. p. 39.
The Lady's Magazine: or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, G. Robinson, London, October 1796, pp. 453-455.

[14] Hannah More, Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society, Works. Vol. III. p. 306.

[15] J. Jean Hecht, The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth Century England, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1956, pp. 200 ff.

[16] Ibid. pp. 203-204.

[17] The Edinburgh Review: or Critical Journal - No. XXX January 1810. p. 305.

[18] G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, The Common People, 1746-1946. Methuen, London, 1961. p. 71.

[19] That is, the Nobility, Baronets, Knights, Squires, Upper Clergy, Merchants, Bankers, Upper Civil Servants, Lawyers, Independent Gentry, Upper Doctors and Professionals, and some Army and Navy Officers.

[20] This figure is arrived at by assuming an average household to comprise five members, a husband, wife and three children, of whom probably two would be dependent females, the young men achieving independence at an earlier age than their sisters. This would give about 130,000 dependent females other than wives, of whom one third to a quarter would fall into the boarding school age group. If brothers and sisters be assumed equally dependent, the estimated total of girls of boarding school age would be considerably less.

[21] J. L. Chirol, An Enquiry into the Best System of Female Education: or Boarding School and Home Education Attentively Considered. T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1809. p. 40.

[22] Kamm, op. cit. p. 145.

[23] The Gentleman's Magazine, Supplement for 1776, p. 603.

[24] F. J. Harvey Darton (editor), The Life and Times of Mrs. Sherwood, (1775-1851) from the diaries of Captain and Mrs. Sherwood. Wells Gardner, Darton and Co., 1910. p. 439. Arthur Young, whose daughter attended the Cambden House School, paid £80 a year for her schooling. See D. Marshall, English People in the Eighteenth Century. Longmans Green and Co., London, 1956. p. 125.

[25] At this time, the fees charged by the public schools for taking boys as boarders seem to have been, if anything, somewhat less than those of the more expensive girls' schools. The seven year's schooling of James Powell at Harrow between 1775 and 1782 cost roughly £207, or about £30 a year. At Eton, the half yearly school bills of Henry Ellison came to just over £26. See Marshall, op. cit. p. 107.

[26] Hecht, op. cit. p. 7.

[27] Oliver Goldsmith, The Deserted Village, 1770. line 142.

[28] Anonymous, The Governess: or The Boarding School Dissected - A Dramatic Original, The Female Academy, London, 1785. pp. 58-59.

[29] See E. C. Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Bronte, Smith, Elder and Co. London, 1857, (2nd edition) Vol. I. pp. 63-79.

[30] Ibid. p. 75.

[31] Ibid. p. 79.

[32] That it was possible to board and educate girls reasonably cheaply is evidenced by the fees of the Woodard Schools for girls. As late as 1874, St. Anne's School at Abbots Bromley, designed for upper and upper middle class girls, charged fees ranging from 28 to 40 guineas. Seven years later, "St. Mary's Lower Middle School" charged only £21 per annum. And costs had certainly not gone down during the nineteenth century.
See W. B. D. Heeney, The Established Church and the Education of the Victorian Middle Classes: A Study of the Woodard Schools, 1847-1891. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, St. John's College, Oxford University. 1961. p. 67.

[33] Cited Nicholas Hans, New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966. p. 250.

[34] D. Beale, Report Issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls. David Nutt, London. no date. c. 1869. p. 25.

[35] See M. A. Douglas and C. R. Ash, The Godolphin School, 1726-1926. Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1928.

[36] Beale, op. cit. p. 43.

[37] Hannah More, Strictures, p. 39.

[38] Chirol, op. cit. p. 48.

[39] Anon., The Governess, p. 58.

[40] Mrs. Bayly, The Life and Letters of Mrs. Sewell, James Nisbett and Co., London, 1889. p. 34.

[41] Ibid. pp. 45-49.

[42] Mrs. Robinson was considered one of the most beautiful women of her age. Peter Pindar composed an elegy on her beauty, George IV eventually succeeded in making her his mistress for a short time, Coleridge was reported to be infatuated with her, and she was constantly besieged with admirers.

[43] Mary Robinson, Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson Written by Herself, (1801), L. Cobden - Sanderson, London, 1930. p. 23.

[44] Cited Darton, op. cit. p. 123.

[45] See, for example, Maria Edgeworth, Mademoiselle Panache, Tales and Novels, George Routledge and Sons, London, n.d. pp. 360-410. and Corry, op. cit.

[46] Hannah More, Strictures, p. 56.

[47] A Clergyman of the Church of England, (Reverend John Bennet), Strictures on Female Education: chiefly as it relates to the Culture of the Heart. T. Cadell, London, c. 1780. p. 51.

[48] Anon., The Governess, p. 61.

[49] Darton, op. cit. p. 125.

[50] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 55-56.

[51] Appleton, op. cit. p. 13.

[52] Gaskell, op. cit. p. 226.

[53] Beale, op. cit. pp. 25-26.

[54] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 54-56.

[55] Gaskell, op. cit. p. 160.

[56] Bayly, op. cit. p. 49.

[57] The plight of unemployed and retired governesses and teachers finally stirred the nineteenth century conscience, and in 1843 the Governesses' Benevolent Institution was established.

[58] The Lady's Magazine, October 1822. p. 546.

[59] Chirol, op. cit. p. 56.

[60] Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country, Vol. XXXI, June 1845. p. 703.

[61] See J. Rice, A Lecture on the Importance and Necessity of Rendering the English Language a Peculiar Branch of Female Education, G. Kearsley, London, 1773, and J. Rice, A Plan of Female Education, Printed for the Author by I. Moore, London, 1779.

[62] Bayly, op. cit. p. 44.

[63] See, for example, Thomas Beddoes, Hygeia: or Essays Moral and Medical, on the Causes Affecting the Personal State of our Middling and Affluent Classes. J. Mills, Bristol, 1802, Vol. I. p. 20.
Bayly, op. cit. p. 36, Gaskell, op. cit. pp. 128-129, and Appendix A, Advertisements and Prospectuses for Girls Boarding Schools, p. 486.

[64] Reeve, op. cit. p. 186.

[65] Prospectus for Miss Steele's Boarding School at Witham, Essex, no date. c. 1820.

[66] Beale, op. cit. pp. 25-26.

[67] Bayly, op. cit. p. 44.

[68] Darton, op. cit. p. 125.

[69] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 32-36. and Beddoes, op. cit. p. 22.

[70] Beddoes, op. cit. p. 25.

[71] Ibid. pp. 16-17, 25-28, Chirol, op. cit. pp. 35-36, and Erasmus Darwin, A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools, J. Chambers, London, 1798. pp. 95-101 and 148.

[72] Opodeldoc, according to the Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, is "a solution of soap in alcohol, with camphor and essential oils, ..."

[73] Beddoes, op. cit. p. 23.

[74] The following account is based upon the information given in Beddoes, op. cit. pp. 16-25, and 28-30., Chirol, op. cit. pp. 25-28 and the cases cited by Kamm, op. cit. pp. 146-148.

[75] Chirol, op. cit. p. 27.

[76] See, for example, H. A. Beaton, 'Diary of a Yorkshire Schoolgirl', Books: Journal of the National Book League, Spring 1967. pp. 10-17.

[77] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 28-29.

[78] Doran, op. cit. p. 170.

[79] Beaton, op. cit. pp. 13-16.

[80] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 40-41.

[81] Ibid. p. 40.

[82] Beddoes, op. cit. p. 12.

[83] Gaskell, op. cit. p. 79.

[84] Cited in Marshall, op. cit. p. 125.

[85] Josiah Wedgwood, (editor K. E. Farrar), Letters of Josiah Wedgwood, printed for private circulation, London, 1903. Vol. II. p. 36.

[86] Martha Somerville, Personal Recollections, from Early Life to Old Age, of Mary Somerville, John Murray, London, 1873. pp. 21-22.

[87] For a reproduction of this print, see Malcolm Seaborne, Education (Visual History of Modern Britain Series) Studio Vista, London, 1966, plate 104.

[88] Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile, (1762) Everyman's Library, J. M. Dent, London, 1966. p. 330.

[89] Darwin, op. cit. p. 110.

[90] Beaton, op. cit. pp. 12-13.

[91] Beddoes, op. cit. pp. 42-43.

[92] Beale, op. cit. p. 66.

[93] Beddoes, op. cit. pp. 16-23.

[94] Doran, op. cit. pp. 181-182.

[95] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 68-69.

[96] Darton, op. cit. p. 439.

[97] Beale, op. cit. p. xiv.

[98] Frances Burney (Madame D'Arblay), Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, Henry Colburn, London, 1842. Vol. I. p. 369. See also Ibid. p. 365.

[99] Bayly, op. cit. p. 44.

[100] Japaning was a method of varnishing, employing Japan lacquer, a hard jet-black substance.

[101] Tambour was a type of embroidery using a frame shaped like a tambour, a small shallow drum. Usually it meant a rich kind of gold and silver work.

[102] Seaborne, op. cit. plate 103.

[103] Darton, op. cit. pp. 84-85.

[104] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 68-69.

[105] J. Rice, A Lecture on . . . The English Language. p. 21.

106 Doran, op. cit. pp. 181-182.

107 Chirol, op. cit. pp. 68-69.

108 Beaton, op. cit. p. 12.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid. pp. 13-16.

111 Ibid. p. 16.

112 Prospectus for Madame Aubert's Boarding School for Young Ladies, c. 1816.

113 Burton, op. cit.

114 Frazer's Magazine, June 1845. p. 712.

115 Darton, op. cit. p. 127.

116 Robinson, op. cit. pp. 17-18.

117 Chirol, op. cit. p. 112.

118 Ibid. pp. 111-112, and Corry, op. cit. p. 5.

119 See, for example, Anonymous, The Victim, in Five Letters to Adolphus, W. Button, London, 1809, 2nd. edition. p. 61.

120 See Chapter VIII, p. 381 for a discussion of literary models of womanhood.

121 Beale, op. cit. p. 31.

122 Wedgwood, op. cit. Vol. II. pp. 380-381.

123 Darton, op. cit. p. 148.

124 Beale, op. cit. pp. xvii ff.

125 Cited Kamm, op. cit. p. 145.

126 Rice, op. cit.

127 The Lady's Magazine, Vol. III. December 1822, p. 672.

128 Ibid.

[129] See, for example, Mary Ann Stevenson and John Kemplay, Pieces Written and Designed for the Use of the Pupils of Mr. and Mrs. Kemplay's Ladies' Seminary, Leeds. 1819. Manuscript in possession of the Women's Service Institute Library, Fawcett House, London.

[130] Richmal Mangnall, Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, for the Use of Young People, (1800), Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1813.

[131] Ibid. pp. 51-52.

[132] Wedgwood, op. cit. Vol. II. p. 108.

[133] Madam Le Prince de Beaumont, The Young Misses' Magazine, containing Dialogues between a Governess and Several Young Ladies of Quality, (1756) J. Nourse, London, 1776, (3rd. edition), pp. 223-234.

[134] Ibid. p. 316.
See also Ann Murry, Mentoria: or The Young Ladies' Instructor, Charles Dilly, London, 1785, pp. 76-110.

[135] Murry, op. cit. p. 201.

[136] Beale, op. cit. p. xv.

[137] Hans, op. cit. pp. 203-204.

[138] Ibid. p. 204.

[139] See Anonymous, The Book of Creation Unfolded: or The Creator as Seen in His Works . . . intended for the Instruction of the Young. F. Hamilton and Son, Wellington, 1828.

[140] Kamm, op. cit. p. 141.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOMESTIC EDUCATION OF A LADY

I

By far the most important agency in a girl's education was the home, the cornerstone of English social life. Its influence was all-pervading and all-powerful during the most impressionable years of her life. Because of the intimate and emotional attachments involved, its effects were of deep and lasting significance. In the education of a future wife and mother, the home environment and family atmosphere were considered essential ingredients. Even the boarding schools were aware of this and sought to make themselves something of a family unit.

A girl's domestic education comprised many types of experiences, formal and informal, intentional and unintentional. The latter distinction is an important one. Intentional education implies an awareness or intention on the part of the instructor of what he or she wishes to teach. There is, in other words, a definite subject matter of education, consisting of factual information, skills and appropriate attitudes. Usually, though not necessarily, instruction is given in a formal situation. It includes precept, advice, the conscious provision of examples of conduct, the approval of certain attitudes, manners and

activities, the provision of a particular kind of reading material, and the deliberate organization of the environment so as to bring about certain types of educational experiences.

The great significance of this type of education was that it was easily standardized. Precisely because it was somewhat formalized and regularized, it was duplicable; not only in the countless boarding schools up and down the country, but also in the homes of those parents who could afford to purchase the services of a governess or even one of the innumerable monitorial text-books for young ladies.

The unintentional aspects of education are more difficult to characterise and virtually impossible to describe in operation. They include all the various influences of the social and physical environment, the unconscious provision and approval of examples of conduct, attitudes, moral codes, values, speech patterns, social relationships and information. The variety of this type of education is infinite, depending as it does upon such factors as geographical location, social class, occupation and religion. It is, by its very nature, not imitable.

These two types of education, intentional and unintentional, almost invariably conflict in some way. This was particularly true of the domestic education of a lady. Even in the households of gentlefolk, a girl might acquire manners, tastes and knowledge which were daily condemned by her

governess, masters and parents. And as one moved down the social scale, the gap between the two types grew larger and larger. Contemporary critics show themselves to have been well aware of the resulting confusions and contradictions, pouring scorn upon the curious mixture of refinement and vulgarity which many girls exhibited.[1]

In the description of the domestic education of a lady, it is inevitable that most attention be directed to the intentional aspects, not because they were of more importance in the total process of socialization, but simply because they alone comprised the aims, content and method of a distinctive type of education about which it is possible to generalize.

II

The instructors who took upon themselves the supervision and teaching involved in such an education were several. They included, of course, the parents, especially the mother, hired masters, occasionally brothers and sisters, and, if the Sunday sermon be considered a part of a girl's education, the local clergyman. By far the most common domestic educator, however, was the family governess.

It is not known how many women there were at the turn of the century seeking employment as domestic governesses. In 1850, the number of registered governesses was some

21,000, although there must have been many who were not registered.[2] For the young woman who had to earn a living in an occupation which gave her some degree of respectability and refinement, there were few alternatives to teaching in a school or for a family.

Fortunately, the increased wealth of the middle classes and their willingness to spend at least a part of it on the education of their daughters meant that the demand had increased with the supply. In London it was large enough for at least one enterprising woman to set up a placement agency and preparatory school for prospective governesses. Her advertisement read as follows:

> Female Agency - Mrs. Sass acquaints the Nobility and Gentry, that she continues to provide Families with Governesses, Ladies' Schools with Partners, Teachers, Apprentices, and Half-Boarders. Governesses and Teachers, French and English, may hear of situations by application at No. 1 King Street, Holborn, -- Letters (post paid) will be attended to immediately.
>
> Mrs. Sass receives into her Family Young Ladies to qualify them for situations as Governesses in Families, or Teachers in Schools. Proper masters are engaged to superintend the different branches of Education, and when qualified they are introduced to situations.[3]

The number of advertisements in contemporary periodicals, the popularity of the governess as a character in fiction, the number of female diarists and writers who found employment at one time or another as private governesses, all suggest that the occupation was a popular one. It seems probable that for many people the hiring of a private governess was becoming

something of a status symbol, no less important in demonstrating the prosperity of a household than the number of servants or the amount and quality of furniture. Thus, Elizabeth Appleton, complaining of the 'overstocking of the market' with incompetent young governesses, blamed it largely on the too high social aspirations of parents. Unable to afford a qualified governess, they hired virtually anyone as their children's teacher; and even so, many men went bankrupt because of their own or their wives' insistence upon having a private governess.[4]

There were, of course, other reasons why a family would prefer to employ a governess rather than send their daughter to a boarding school. As far as their moral climate was concerned, the schools did not enjoy a good reputation and doubtless many parents preferred to keep their daughters safe at home. The same was true of those parents who enjoyed their daughter's company or found her useful around the house.

Nor need the services of a governess cost any more than boarding school education; indeed, they might well be cheaper. "A governess may be had for any salary, from twenty pounds a year to two hundred", wrote Elizabeth Appleton.[5] Frequently, even wealthy families would hire a cheap, inexperienced girl to look after their children, boys and girls, when they were young, dismissing and replacing her with a well qualified "finishing governess" during the final years of their daughter's education.[6]

A governess, moreover, could perform a variety of services for her employers, quite apart from teaching the children. She was, in fact, often a combination of nursery-maid and domestic help, with teaching the least important part of her duties. Charlotte Bronte, for example, at one time accepted a position as domestic governess, and for the princely sum of twenty pounds (minus four pounds for washing) constantly supervised two "wild and unbroken children" as well as taking care of all her mistress' sewing.[7] And there is nothing in her recollections of the experience that suggests she considered it in any way unusual. When, for a trifling cost, a family could obtain a teacher, nursery-maid, domestic help, and status symbol all in one person, it is not hard to appreciate the great demand for governesses.

There were, of course, some families who paid their governesses well. Elizabeth Appleton herself, for many years employed as preceptress to the children of the Countess of Leven and Melville, was apparently very well treated. Since in the book she dedicated to the Countess she suggests as a fair salary for a well qualified governess a figure of £150 to £200, it is probable that this is what she herself had received.[8]

But such governesses and employers were the exception rather than the rule. Even rank and fortune did not guarantee a governess being treated decently, as Mary Wollstonecraft

discovered to her cost. Hired at a salary of £40 a year to teach the children of Lord and Lady Kingsborough, she was horrified to discover that the latter seemed totally indifferent to them. Yet as soon as she had obtained the children's respect and affection, she was summarily dismissed for usurping their mother's rightful place in their hearts.[9]

It is difficult not to feel sorry for the average governess. As Agnes Bronte remarked to her sister Charlotte,

> . . . none but those who had been in the position of a governess could ever realise the dark side of 'respectable' human nature; under no great temptation to crime, but daily giving way to selfishness and ill-temper, till its conduct towards those dependent on it sometimes amounts to a tyranny of which one would rather be the victim than the inflicter.[10]

Treated as one of the domestic servants, yet having little in common with them; denied the privilege of eating and conversing with the family; carrying little authority with her charges, whose parents were always hovering in the background ready to interfere at any moment; unable to entertain socially or to afford any kind of recreation outside the home; her only refuge from the constant humiliation she suffered a small room in some obscure part of the house; such is the conventional portrait of the life of a private governess in the nineteenth century. Conventional it may have been; but it had a firm foundation in fact. It is scarcely surprising that the oppressed governess should become for reformers something of a symbol epitomizing the wrongs inflicted upon single women in general.

Even in the best of families, the life of a governess was a rather ascetic one. In her advice to prospective governesses, Miss Appleton warned that, although they would probably be better treated than formerly and might even be permitted "to sit at table with the parents" of their pupils,[11] they would never lead a normal life.

> Society you are not to expect . . . . The company with whom you mix are all either your superiors, or are those who consider themselves as such. Of marriage and domestic comforts you should banish every idea. You cannot expect offers from men of birth and fortune; . . . therefore make up your minds to the deprivation of two grand female considerations; - society and settlement.[12]

All that Miss Appleton could offer as advice was not to "conjure up ideal misery, but strive to do your duty, and cultivate a contented mind."[13]

Despite the low salaries and dismal conditions of employment, there was no shortage of applicants for positions. The numerous products of the boarding schools who failed to find marriage partners and needed to earn a living were qualified for nothing else. What was there to do but teach others what little they themselves had learned? The plight of fashionably educated girls left without a fortune and consequently with few prospects of marriage was not an enviable one.

> Few are the modes of earning a subsistence, [wrote Mary Wollstonecraft] and those very humiliating. Perhaps to be an humble companion to some rich old cousin, or what is still worse, to live with strangers, who are so intolerably tyrannical, that none of their own

> relations can bear to live with them, though they should expect a fortune in reversion. It is impossible to enumerate the many hours of anguish such a person must spend. Above the servants, yet considered by them a spy, and ever reminded of her inferiority when in conversation with the superiors.[14]

Unpleasant as it was, teaching was preferable.[15]

The advertisements inserted in periodicals by would-be governesses make somewhat pathetic reading, so eager are the writers to display their meagre qualifications and please their employers.

> She is capable [reads a typical advertisement] of teaching the English Language grammatically, to keep them in practice of the French, and has a sufficient knowledge of Dancing, Music, and the Globes to render herself useful; or to act as English teacher in a respectable school.[16]

What had developed was a kind of vicious spiral. While a 'fashionable education' was all that was available to young ladies, there was no hope of obtaining a supply of well-qualified governesses. Nothing, in fact, could break the circle of poor qualifications, an overstocked market, and low salaries. There was more than a grain of truth in Lord Byron's bitterly satirical poem 'A Sketch from Private Life', which traced the gradual rise of a kitchen maid to maid in waiting, her master's mistress and, eventually "an only infant's earliest governess".

> She taught the child to read, and taught so well,
> That she herself, by teaching, learn'd to spell.[17]

Not until Queen's College was opened in 1848 was a course of training organized for future governesses, examinations

conducted and certificates granted to successful candidates, all indispensable measures if the social and financial position of governesses was to be improved.

III

In its aims and content, a girl's domestic education differed little from that given in the boarding schools. As Emily Davies was to remark later in the century, "To be amiable, inoffensive, always ready to give pleasure and be pleased" was the ideal presented to a young lady.[18] Thackeray's description of the life of a young lady, although meant to be satirical, was not too far removed from the truth,

> She breakfasts at eight; she does Mangnall's questions with a governess till 10; she practises till one; she walks in the square with bars around her till two, then she practises again, then she sews, or reads French, or Hume's history, then she comes down to play to papa, because he likes music whilst he is asleep after dinner.[19]

It was, of course, the ornamental branches of education which received most attention. Parents seemed to have lavished the same care and attention on the form and deportment of their daughters as the most fashionable boarding schools. Mary Butts, whose parents frequented that most rational, scientific and somewhat radical group, The Lichfield Circle,[20] recalled of her youth,

> Lady Jane Grey speaks of the severities to which she was subjected by her noble parents, the nips, and bobs, and pinches; but I experienced what I thought

> was much worse. It was the fashion then for children to wear iron collars round the neck, with the backboards strapped over the shoulders. To one of these I was subjected from my sixth to my thirteenth year. I generally did all my lessons standing in stocks, with this same collar round my neck; it was put on in the morning, and seldom taken off till late in the evening.[21]

There was nothing in the nature of this concern, or in the expense it involved, which limited such 'educational' activities to the homes of rank and opulence. It was, perhaps, the easiest aspect of the education of a lady to imitate. One suspects that admonitions such as "Hold yourself straight" and "Walk like a lady" were every bit as common then as now. For the socially ambitious parent, it was the most obvious and thus most important acquirement of his daughter.

Unfortunately for the parent of limited means, expert tuition in the accomplishments was not as cheap as deportment and carriage exercises. Here the wealthy could and did make good use of their money to purchase a truly exclusive education for their daughters. It was rare amongst such families for the governess to be entrusted with such important activities as teaching the various branches of music, dancing and drawing. To instruct the young lady, masters would be hired, sometimes whole batteries of them. According to Hannah More, for dancing there might be "a military serjeant" to teach marching, a professor "to teach the Scotch steps," another professor "of the French dances," and a finishing master to superintend them

all, "each probably receiving a stipend which would make the pious curate or the learned chaplain rich and happy."[22] Music, she went on, "which used to be communicated . . . to a young lady by one able instructor, is now distributed among a whole band. She now requires, not a master, but an orchestra."[23] And drawing, painting, japaning and modelling all had their specialist instructors, one or several of whom might attend a young lady in her home.

Obviously, there were few families who could have afforded to employ these batteries of masters. The expense of an ornamental education could, however, be decreased sufficiently to bring it within the reach of a great many of the middle orders of society. "This phrenzy of accomplishments", complained Hannah More, "is no longer confined within the usual limits of rank and fortune, the middle orders have caught the contagion, and it rages downward with increasing and destructive violence."[24]

The various branches of needlework, for example, required for their instruction little expense and might easily be taught by the mother or governess. Not unnaturally, it was the most popular accomplishment among middle class families. As Doctor Johnson noted, girls might grow up "in total ignorance of every thing past, present and future" just as long as the house was full of fire-screens, quilts, imitation tapestry, covers for side-saddles, curtains, all

displayed to company and earning praise from friends and visitors.[25]

The most common enterprise in needlework for a young girl, whether at home or at school, was the working of a sampler or exemplar. "Originally intended to provide patterns of stitches before pattern-books became readily available, . . . the working of samplers became the recognized accomplishment of every school-girl, of whatever social class."[26] Even today, English school-girls proudly carry home their samplers to admiring parents. Frequently, the sampler contained moralistic verses, like these taken from one worked by a nine year old girl in 1789.

> Dear mother I am young and cannot show
> Such work as I unto your goodness owe.
> Be pleased to smile on this my small endeavour;
> I'll strive to learn and be obedient ever.[27]

By far the most forceful justification of the necessity of including needlework in the education of a young lady was that of Mrs. West. "When we are not doing what is right," she asserted, "our frail natures continually urge us to do what is wrong." Fortunately, the needle was always available to prevent idleness and mischief. Needlework, she rejoiced,

> which is no interruption to conversation, which does not absolutely chain down attention, and fatigues neither the body nor the mind, is our constant preservative from lassitude; at the same time, . . . it is an invaluable ally to economy, neatness, and elegance.[28]

Musical accomplishments were more expensive, involving not only the purchase of instruments but some kind of tuition. Harps, spinnets and pianos were not cheap; neither were the services of a music master. Thus, a governess who could teach music well usually had little difficulty in finding employment. For those families who could afford one, the piano was the most popular instrument, and many girls seemed to have spent the major portion of their youth in practising. Mary Somerville recalled that as a girl she "rose early, and played four or five hours, as usual, on the piano."[29] And she never once played in public. One observer estimated that, after the age of six to eight, a girl practised on the average four hours a day, Sundays excepted. By the time she had reached eighteen, she had been at the piano for some 14,400 hours.[30]

Where there was a piano, and someone who could play it, the opportunities for dancing were plentiful. Thus, in Jane Austen's Persuasion (1818), the heroine, Anne Elliot, demonstrates her good nature by willingly playing country dances all evening for her cousins, who were "wild for dancing."[31] Although the latest fashionable steps would be known at first only by those girls whose parents could afford to employ a dancing master, they soon became 'public knowledge' and were enjoyed by the less opulent. For those girls who lived in the larger towns, the dancing academy

provided reasonably cheap individual or group instruction. The one attended by Mary Somerville in Edinburgh also held public dances on Saturday afternoons, at which the young ladies could display their grace and charms to parents and a band of young officers who made a regular appearance.[32]

For many young ladies, dancing was the principal form of physical recreation. There were few other suitable forms of exercise. Among the wealthy, riding was a generally approved of activity, although to be too dashing and knowledgeable about horses was somehow unfeminine. Thus, when Hannah More wished to construct a character for her novel who would embody all that was unladylike, she made her Miss Sparkes "something of a scholar and a huntress, a politician and a farrier," who could outride the squire and out-argue a philosopher.[33]

Part of the popularity of riding may well have been due to its not being readily available to everyone. The same was, perhaps, true of archery, which became a fashionable recreation for ladies of quality at the turn of the century.[34] Both riding and archery required expensive equipment, extensive and private grounds, and, if tragedy was to be averted, expert tuition.

In general, however, the most common form of physical recreation for young ladies was walking. It was healthy and good for the form and carriage. Taken with a suitable

companion, it provided opportunities for all kinds of serious reflections about nature and society. Many of the monitorial books of the period made the walk with the governess or parents the setting for their moral, religious and academic instruction.[35] No doubt, given a sensitive and competent governess, the daily walk around the neighbourhood could be a most stimulating and useful educational experience. It is doubtful, however, if in practice the walk was as enlightening and improving an activity as contemporary literature suggests it could be.

IV

As in the boarding school, the intellectual development of a daughter was the least important aspect of her domestic education. It could therefore be safely entrusted to a governess or mother. In Josiah Wedgwood's home, where the academic course of instruction was unusually rigorous, the three daughters spent their 'school-day' in the following manner. They rose at six in summer or seven in winter, and were allowed half an hour to wash and dress. Before breakfast they had an English lesson with their nurse. From nine to ten they practised French, and from ten to eleven they drew or painted. This was followed by two hours of gardening, riding or music practice. In the afternoon they had two more English lessons, between which Susan practised music and

Kitty had as much French as she could bear.[36] It is quite probable that the English lessons consisted largely of history and geography.

The day's itinerary suggested by Elizabeth Appleton for a governess with three girls to superintend is not significantly different. It is almost certainly very similar to that she herself devised and followed with the daughters of the Countess of Leven and Melville. Since Miss Appleton continually condemned a purely ornamental education, it seems likely that her allocation of time is more intellectually oriented than was generally the case. The three imaginary students are Ellen, aged sixteen, Ann, aged fifteen, and Susan, aged ten. Their day, or rather that of their governess, is to be spent as follows:

7:00 - 7:30 - Scripture reading 10 minutes - then listen to Ann and Ellen play Preludes for 10 minutes each.

7:30 - 8:00 - Ellen has her new lesson.) other one at
8:00 - 8:30 - Ann has her new lesson.) piano or slate,) or lessons. Susan) practising on slate.

8:30 - 9:00 - Hear lesson and correct slate exercises.

9:00 - 10:00 - Breakfast and recreation.

10:00 - 11:00 - Ellen practising piano - Ann writes in copy book and exercises completed. Susan reads English and French with maps and translates with governess.

11:00 - 12:00 - Ann practises piano - Ellen now working on slate etc. - Susan getting recreation.

12:00 - 1:00 - Ellen and Ann read English (3/4) and French (1/4) together with maps.

1:00-2:00 - Drawing and Dancing for Ellen and Ann. Susan has music lesson - while governess checks on others' drawing and dancing still.

2:00-3:00 - Dinner, recreation, or needlework.

3:00-6:00 - Walk, Gaultier's Game, or recreation.[37]

Despite all Miss Appleton's condemnations of an ornamental education, it is obvious that the accomplishments still loomed large in her view of the correct education of a young lady. One can only guess at the amount of time devoted to them in a home where they were highly prized. Presumably, it was much greater than that allocated by Josiah Wedgwood or Miss Appleton.

The great value which parents placed on the ornamental aspects of education meant that there was little time for anything else. As a parent remarked to an inspector later in the century, "It is all very well for my daughter to learn something of geology; or to read Shakespeare, but do you not think it of more importance that she should be able to sit down to the piano and amuse her friends?"[38]

What little academic instruction was given in the home differed little from that provided by the schools. History and Geography, the two principal subjects, consisted almost entirely of lists of dates, kings, battles, mountains, rivers, countries, easy to teach and correct, arduous and tedious to memorize. It was, of course, humanly impossible for a governess or mother to carry around in their heads

such vast quantities of factual information. What was required was a text-book of some kind. The desire among parents to give their daughters quickly and easily a superficial knowledge of subjects such as history, geography, botany, astronomy and heraldry, created a considerable market for books. "Swarms of Abridgments, Beauties and Compendiums"[39] appeared, each guaranteeing its possessor 'instant erudition', the acquisition of which would not interfere with the more important branches of education.

Both men and women, complained Elizabeth Appleton, had attempted to cash in on the public's desire to educate its daughters. Unfortunately, they

> wrote in haste, and in ignorance, upon various subjects. The works were eagerly published by the booksellers; and were purchased with avidity by women, now become mothers, who showered this trash upon their children, determined that they should hereafter be living obstacles to the reversion of the newly acquired privileges.[40]

Of such books, Mangnall's Questions was, perhaps, the best, and certainly the most popular in the schools. Its popularity was rivalled and perhaps exceeded, however, in domestic education by Mrs. Fanny Ward's famous The Child's Guide to Knowledge, which by 1869 had gone through 39 editions and by 1880, another 14. It was still being published in 1900. So popular and typical was its approach in the early part of the century that it merits some detailed consideration. Written to acquaint young people with "the

most commonplace subjects, and those which occur most frequently in almost every conversation",[41] it was ideally suited for memorization by generations of young ladies, whose knowledge was primarily to be determined by its 'conversational value'.[42]

The book is a curious and, to a modern reader, strangely fascinating compilation of completely miscellaneous information, consisting entirely of short questions and answers, with no divisions or headings. Each question provides a key word or subject for the next one. Thus the book begins

> Q. What is the world?
> A. The earth we live in.
>
> Q. Who made it?
> A. The great good God.
>
> Q. Are there not many things in it you would like to know about?
> A. Yes, very much.
>
> Q. Pray, then, what is bread made of?
> A. Flour.
>
> Q. What is flour?
> A. Wheat ground into powder by the miller.
>
> Q. What injury is wheat liable to?
> A. To three kinds of diseases, called blight, mildew, and smut.[43]

And so it goes on, through some 260 pages. The range of questions and answers can be gauged from the index, which begins,

> Acorns, Agate, Allspice, Ale, Aloes, Alabaster, Alum, Almonds, Alkali, Amethyst, Amber, Ambergris,

> Anise-seed, Anchovy, Apples, Apricots, Aquafortis, Arrack, Arrowroot, Artichokes, Arsenic, Asses' skin, Asparagus, Assafoetida, Asbestos, Ash-tree . . .[44]

The subject matter, consisting almost entirely of food and domestic matters, had obviously been selected with a female public in mind. It is interesting to speculate what Dr. Johnson and the Bas Bleu would have thought of conversations which limited themselves to the items found in Mrs. Ward's book.

By far the most important books in the formal domestic education of a young lady were those that devoted themselves to developing the correct attitudes, manners and morals of their young readers. Mrs. Taylor's Practical Hints to Young Females (1816),[45] which went through eight editions in two years is a good example. After the inevitable condemnation of boarding school education, the book continues with advice on how to behave with one's husband, the servants, visitors, and suggests methods for educating one's children and tending the sick. It concludes with further advice to husbands and stepmothers. As is to be expected from its popularity, its content is extremely 'orthodox'. The husband is to be "the first object of your attention",[46] and the servants are to be encouraged to read "Mrs. More's Cheap Repository."[47]

The celebrated Mrs. Teachwell's Female Guardian (1784)[48] is a similar work, containing observations on no less than

37 various subjects, including 'improving exercises', 'unassuming beauty', 'the dangers of boarding schools', 'sensibility', 'thoughtless cruelty', 'deceit', 'early rising', and 'hospitality'. Mrs. Bonhote's The Parental Monitor (1788), contains similar observations on an equally wide range of subjects.[49]

None of these books contains any 'academic' or 'ornamental' instruction.[50] Their total concern is their readers' character development; their tone is always pious and their advice cautiously conservative. As Mrs. Bonhote explained, her aim was solely

> to guard youth from error, . . . to strengthen in them those principles and habits of virtue, prudence, rectitude and self-denial, which time and experience will . . . serve to convince them are . . . absolutely necessary to happiness.[51]

Some monitorial 'text-books' for young ladies were concerned exclusively with the manners and behaviour appropriate for a lady. Two typical and popular works were The Polite Academy,[52] an anonymous work which by 1781 had reached a sixth edition, and Matthew Towles', The Young Gentleman and Lady's Tutor, (1770),[53] which apart from its domestic sales, was compulsory reading in 17 boarding schools, 8 of them for young ladies. Both works consist almost entirely of descriptions of the behaviour to be expected of a lady or gentleman in particular situations. Towle's book gives the most comprehensive treatment, detailing the proper

behaviour to God, to parents, to brothers and sisters, to servants, to masters and governesses, to superiors, to equals, to inferiors, to company, at home, when walking with company or alone, at meals, at cards. The directions are certainly explicit. Thus, the young lady or gentleman is instructed,

> When you receive Orders to go into the room where your Parents are, bow, stand still, upright and silent; look not at anyone that is in the Room, that is at any one particular Person, so as to stare or ogle at them, if you do, you will be guilty of ill Manners, ... You are never to speak to any one in the room unless they speak to you first, and then it is your Duty to speak in a soft and easy Manner, and begin with, Sir or Madam, and before you speak get up, stand upright, free from Action . . . play not with anything about you, viz. Buttons, Handkerchief, and the like; put not your Fingers in your Mouth, bite not your Nails, make no Faces, such as winking or blinking with your Eyes, drawing your Mouth with various Forms, smacking your Lips, Grinning etc., make no noise with your Feet, but sit upright; . . .[54]

The concluding section of the book deals with "Rules and Directions for Dancing a Minuet, genteel Standing, Walking, Giving, Receiving, Bowing, and to make a Curtsie, at coming in or going out of the Room." Also included are the six positions of the Fan and how to use it properly.[55]

The numbers of such books published and the several editions which most of them went through suggest that the market for such material was expanding rapidly. More and more parents were eager to buy books which seemed to guarantee genteel, polite behaviour, attitudes and knowledge. The need for such instructional material would scarcely be felt by those parents who were confident that they were already ladies

and gentlemen. In such households, books giving advice on how to become a lady would be superfluous. It seems likely that the majority of these books found their way into those homes where the parents felt themselves ill-equipped to provide such training.

Almost all the writers complain of the tendency of the middle and lower orders to imitate their betters. Yet, ironically, it was precisely those groups who purchased their books. Thus, the author of The Mirror of the Graces - or The English Lady's Costume (1811), in the midst of her profuse advice on how to develop a beautiful form and dress tastefully and fashionably, complains,

> The fashion of educating all ranks of young women alike, is the cause why all ranks of women attempt to dress alike. If the brazier's daughter is taught to sing, dance, and play like the heiress to an earldom, we must not be surprised that she will also emulate the decorations of her rival.[56]

It is doubtful, however, if the 'heiress to an earldom' would have felt it necessary to purchase a book on how to dress fashionably; it was the 'brazier's daughter' who needed the information and advice it contained.

V

The formal educational reading material of a young lady was supplemented by several types of recreational literature. By far the most important of these was the

novel. Somewhat paradoxically, the 'orthodox' view, presented in almost every monitorial text-book and periodical of the period, was that there were few activities more dangerous for a girl's moral well-being than reading novels. They were a form of "literary opium, that lulls every sense with delicious rapture," complained a correspondent of The Lady's Magazine.

> Novels [she went on] . . . are the most powerful engines with which the seducer attacks the female heart; and if we may judge from every day's experience, his plots are seldom laid in vain. Never was there an abler weapon for so black a purpose.[57]

Nor were such extreme and, to a modern reader, ludicrous opinions unusual.[58]

Despite all the criticism of the pernicious influence of the popular novel, it remained the dominant form of recreational reading for women. As James Lackington noted at the time, ". . . the increasing wealth, leisure and refinement of the middle classes had turned the women into readers, and it soon became 'no less necessary for a lady to unbend her mind than to unlace her stays'."[59] In 1771, the Monthly and Critical reviews alone dealt with no less than sixty new novels, and although their number declined in the early eighties, it soon built up again to new and higher levels.[60]

Much of the popularity of the novel may be attributed to the relatively new inventions of the circulating and

lending libraries. Novels were expensive to buy, and, as the country became more deeply involved in war during the nineties, their price increased steadily. The lending library brought the popular novels within the reach of many women who could never have afforded to own them. London, the headquarters of the book trade, was full of libraries and,[61] although the provinces were less well supplied, there were enough of them to guarantee even country readers an adequate supply of light reading.

Generally, reputable writers disassociated themselves from the libraries. They were, according to Mrs. Griffiths, the "slop-shops in literature,"[62] stocking only the most reprehensible kind of novels. By today's standards, the libraries were not cheap. Hookham's famous shop and library in New Bond Street, London, had a graduated subscription in 1788, ranging from sixteen shillings to two guineas a year.[63] The higher the rate, the more books one could borrow. However, for those who patronized them, the reprehensible literature and high fees were no discouragement. To have access to a virtually unlimited supply of novels was a luxury for which they were willing to pay handsomely.

In direct contrast to the delicate sentiments and refined respectability of the formal monitorial text-books, the typical novel was sensationalistic in the extreme.

> The novel readers at the end of the eighteenth century relished an emotional orgy, . . . they demanded and enjoyed scenes in which strong and

> varied passions exploded one after another like gaudy fireworks. . . . Rape, jealous frenzy and murder are staple ingredients of these works.[64]

However, due primarily to the influence of the Evangelicals, there took place in the last two decades of the eighteenth century important and far-reaching changes in public morality. On the surface, at least, these changes were reflected in the popular novel. As late as 1768, the only books reviewed by The Political Register were entitled Memoirs of the Seraglio of the Bashaw of Merryland, by a discarded Sultana, The Rape - a poem, The Plain Question - Was she ravished or not? and History of a late infamous adventure between a great Man and a fair Citizen.[65] Thirty years later, even if authors had dared to use such titles, no periodical would have reviewed them. And yet in the nineties, many of the most popular Gothic tales of horror were every bit as preoccupied with violence and sex; only the elements of terror and the macabre were new.

However much sober minded moralists might condemn the novels, the reading public, many of whom were young ladies, gobbled up whatever the writers could produce; good, bad, indifferent, it seemed to make little difference. Thus, properly or improperly, with parental approval or without it, the popular novel formed a staple ingredient in the recreational reading of most young ladies. Even Mrs. Sewell, raised in a strict Quaker family, confessed of her youth,

"We every now and then got a novel from the circulating library, but this being forbidden fruit, we devoured it in our bedroom."[66]

No doubt there were some households in which the daughters were limited to purely safe and instructive literature, excluding novels altogether.[67] More liberally minded parents may well have permitted their daughters to read the works of the more respectable novelists, such as Fielding, Richardson, Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, Mrs. Radcliffe, Sophia Lee and Clara Reeve. All these writers could justifiably have made the boast of Clara Reeve that she had always used her pen "on the side of truth, virtue and morality."[68] But parents who showed such discrimination were in a minority.

In view of the enormous number of purely 'sensationalistic' novels published, it seems likely that many young ladies had access to literature which scarcely accorded with the ideals presented in their formal 'intentional' education. For example, if in their text-books they were continually advised to be modest, chaste, suspicious of their feelings and always dependent upon the more solid judgement of a male relative, through much of their recreational reading they learned of the joys that seemed inevitably to follow the triumph of sensibility over sense, passion over reason. As Hannah More pointed out,

> Novels, with a few admirable exceptions, had done infinite mischief by so completely establishing the omnipotence of love, that the young reader was almost systematically taught an unresisting submission to a feeling, because the feeling was commonly represented to be irresistible.[69]

Whether such novels accomplished any real 'mischief' is open to considerable doubt. But it is true that the values and ideals presented in a young lady's formal educational reading frequently conflicted with those of her recreational literature.

This inconsistency of womanly ideals is equally apparent in contemporary periodicals for women. To some extent, this was inevitable. If a magazine was to acquire and maintain respectability, it had to adopt an orthodox, conservative approach to the social and economic position of women, and, more importantly, show itself to be solicitous about its readers' moral and intellectual welfare. But it had also to attract a large reading public, and this required the inclusion of a great deal of the sensational, the flippant and, occasionally, even the risqué. It had in fact to combine the virtues of the monitorial text-book with the popular elements in contemporary society and fiction. To be virtuous, 'popular' and internally consistent is never an easy undertaking.

The oldest and most 'serious' periodical was The Lady's Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, which began publication in 1749. Its objects, as stated in 1796, were

> to combine entertainment with instruction suitable to the elegance and delicacy of the Female Mind; to cherish the dawning understanding of early youth; and, carefully avoiding whatever may tend to indecorum or licentiousness, to instill the precepts of virtue, the only solid foundation of true happiness.[70]

Generally speaking, this particular periodical succeeded in limiting its content in accordance with these lofty aims.

Yet even The Lady's Magazine was forced to modify its content and format in order to attract the new elements in a rapidly expanding reading public. An examination of the tables of contents from the sixties through to the early 1800's is most illuminating. In the middle sixties, there was little to differentiate it from its companion work, The Gentleman's Magazine. The contributors were almost all male and the contents mainly instructive, consisting almost completely of travel literature and sermons on important subjects. The articles were fairly long and certainly not 'light reading'. There were no romantic stories, no serials, no gross sentimentality shown towards love, mothers, children or animals, no interest in fashion and dress, and little in female education. At this time, it must have been read by reasonably well educated and intellectually alive women. It would certainly have appealed to the Blue-stockings and their friends.

In the seventies, however, the whole character of the magazine underwent a change. Male contributions decreased, and short humorous or sentimental poems and serialized love

stories began to take up more and more space. The most popular subjects for articles were now love, dress, fashionable vices, and female education. For several years the magazine ran a monthly feature dealing with its readers' 'personal problems', in which 'The Matron', as this precursor of Ann Landers was called, dispensed the stock advice to worried parents and young ladies. Eventually, she was lured away to a rival publication. The whole tone of the magazine had become a curious mixture of piety and sentimentality; in a relatively short time it had been 'popularized', and, perhaps inevitably, somewhat vulgarized.

The market for such literature was certainly expanding. By the end of the century The Lady's Magazine had, at last, a rival, The New Lady's Magazine, or Polite, Entertaining, Fashionable and Complete Companion for the Female Sex, entirely devoted to their Use and Amusement. In its attempt to attract a large share of the market, the new periodical adopted a more sensationalistic approach than that of its rival. The usual reflections on female morality, manners, and education were present, as were the warnings of the dangers of seduction, unhappy marriages and atheism. But the content of the magazine was, in general, more overtly sexual and many of the articles and poems frank to the point of indecency.

The issue of 1792 is typical. It includes several articles on the education or miseducation of young ladies,

and condemnations of gaming, intemperate sleeping and female dissipation of time. Sprinkled throughout these most proper observations are dozens of brief poems praising love and its joys. Many of them are addressed to particular young ladies and are, in terms of the current notions of female modesty, highly suggestive, certainly not the kind of literature a young lady was supposed to enjoy. Thus, in one article, the reader is warned of the dangers of a kiss, "the first page of the preface to seduction and adultery;"[71] in the very next issue, however, appears a poem, the least indelicate verse of which reads,

> How great the bliss
> To snatch a kiss,
> From Betsy's lips so pleasing;
> While with her fan
> She taps my hand,
> And cries, "don't be so teazing-."[72]

It was in its news section that the magazine showed most clearly its blatant sensationalism. In the issue for September, 1789, for example, there is not a single word about the most important social and political issues of the day. Events in France are ignored as are their repercussions in England. There is not even a remark or comment on the Sunday School movement. Its newsworthy items consist of accounts of various coach accidents together with the injuries and deaths incurred in them, boxing matches, drownings, a number of suicides, murders and robberies, and a case of a man who kept his wife and mistress under the

same roof and took both of them to church with him every Sunday. The two most detailed accounts involve the rape of a girl of thirteen by a man who defended himself so well that he was acquitted, and a court case in which a young lady sued a man for seduction. Nothing is left to the imagination, not even when the defendant succeeded in intoxicating the girl and conducted her "to bed in a state of insensibility."[73]

In 1806, a third ladies' magazine appeared, entitled La Belle Assemblée or, Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine, addressed particularly to the Ladies. Apart from the greater interest shown in dress and fashion, particularly those from France, it differed little from its competitors. Like them, its contents consisted of many short items, moral tales, serialized novels, articles on the female character and education, criticisms of fashionable society, advice on the toilette, instruction in heraldry, botany and the fine arts, descriptions of London and Paris fashions, and, of course, long lists of marriages, births and deaths.

An interesting innovation of the magazine was its Monthly Compendium of Advertisements, which informed readers of the latest aids to beauty and taste. The great concern of women to look their best and cling to youth as long as possible is to be seen in the great number of advertisements for hair-lotions, charcoal concentrates guaranteed to whiten

teeth and eliminate bad breath, various types of soaps and bath oils, a miscellany of corsetry inventions, and false teeth. The bulk of this section, however, was taken up with advertisements for novels, although, of course, the magazine itself consistently condemned their pernicious influence on the manners and morals of women.[74]

Once again, there is not the slightest interest shown in the pressing social, political and economic issues of the day. As far as the ladies' magazines were concerned, England might never have been at war. Thus, the first edition of La Belle Assemblée contains a flattering description of Sunday in Paris, comparing that city to the imagined "fairy regions of bliss."[75] And a regular feature of the magazine all through the Napoleonic War was its review and illustrations of the latest fashions being worn in Paris.

The same periodical, however, also contains a great deal of anti-French sentiment, usually in the form of warnings against visiting Paris, and criticisms of French influence in English society and education.[76] There is, in fact, discernible in the magazine the same ambivalent attitude towards France and the French that has characterized the English ever since. The chauvinistic and pious condemnations of French manners and morals do little to disguise the fascination, sometimes amounting to a prurient interest, for Paris with its decadent morality, high fashion and culture, and care-

free gaiety. It represented everything that a respectable Englishman or Englishwoman was supposed to abhor; therein, perhaps, lay its peculiar attraction.

Whichever one of these periodicals a young lady came into contact with could only have served to confirm what her formal education had taught her, that her major preoccupation and interest in this life was winning, retaining and deserving the love and respect of a good man. To accomplish this, it was first necessary that she be pleasing and amiable; hence the great stress placed by the periodicals on ornamental acquirements, 'conversational knowledge', and beauty and fashion hints. It was no less necessary that she be a completely virtuous woman, able to fulfill all her filial, conjugal, domestic and religious duties. To this end appeared numerous articles on all these subjects.

Pervading all the contents of the periodicals was the almost overpowering atmosphere of excessive sentimentality and idealized love. So heavily charged is the air with emotion that at times it is difficult to know if the writer is intending to be satirical or not. An article entitled, 'The Oeconomy of Female Life', which appeared in The Lady's Magazine for January 1776,[77] characterises well the objectives and content of the three periodicals, and to a large extent of the education of a lady. It begins with a panegyric on love.

> Know ye not [the young lady is advised] that all things are in the power of love? Is he not a deity? And doth not everything that hath life kneel down to worship him.
>
> He it is, O woman! that hath given thee sovereignty . . . .[78]

There follows a lengthy section describing the 'Conduct of an Amour in its several Stages', which gives the most explicit and highly stylized directions for winning a young man's heart. Thus, the lady is instructed,

> When his eye pour [sic] out his heart before thee, turn thine upon the ground: when his breath parteth in a sigh. . ., pay no regard to it: when he droppeth . . . his head, as if too faint with an anguish to support it, is it not to thee for a triumph? When he thrusteth towards thee in the asembly; . . . draw thyself back, as if unwilling; endeavour to escape where there is no passage; and turning thy head from him, suppress an affected sigh. Let it be deep, and it shall shake his soul; and behold, sheweth it not thy neck to advantage? . . . So shall he go home in transport, and when he lieth down . . he shall say, "Is she not a charming creature".[79]

Whether or not this is satire, (and there is no good reason to suppose that it is) it adequately sums up the nature of many a young lady's recreational reading material, whether novels or periodicals.

It is extremely doubtful if such literature had any significant adverse affects upon young readers, although almost every social critic and moralist of the period attributed the supposed increases in unhappy marriages, elopements, seductions and prostitution to the popularity among young women of sentimental and sensationalistic reading

material. While such material could have done little to improve its readers either morally or intellectually, there is no reason to suppose that it did anything more than confirm, and perhaps strengthen, interests, assumptions and feelings which were already present.

VI

Like their recreational reading, the leisure time activities of young ladies were not always those suggested by her formal education as being most appropriate. It is, of course, extremely difficult to generalize about such matters. There may well have been some girls who almost fitted the archetypal image of the sedate young lady, pure in mind and soul, who was content to remain at home, busily engaged in embroidery or drawing, entertaining her family and friends with her musical skills or improving conversation, and dispensing good advice and material help to the local poor. But such a creature was an archetype, rarely, if ever, to be found in this world.

For the young lady who had 'come out' and was thus old enough to mix in society, infinitely more worldly and exciting recreations were available. For those girls whose parents could afford to 'bring them out' in style, the change was an abrupt one. Whether this most important event took place at sixteen, seventeen, or even eighteen, her

style of living was altered almost overnight. As Jane Austen noted in her Mansfield Park (1814), "nothing can be more easily ascertained" than whether a girl is 'out' or not.

> The distinction is so broad. Manners as well as appearance are, generally speaking, so totally different . . . . I could not have supposed it possible to be mistaken as to a girl's being out or not. A girl not out, has always the same sort of dress; a close bonnet for instance, looks very demure, and never says a word. . . . and except that it is sometimes carried a little too far, it is all very proper. Girls should be quiet and modest. The most objectionable part is, that the alteration of manners on being introduced into company is frequently too sudden. They sometimes pass in such very little time from reserve to quite the opposite - to confidence.[80]

Once 'out', those who lived in or could afford to visit the larger towns, particularly the fashionable centres like London, Bath, Brighton or Harrogate, enjoyed abundant opportunities for amusement. In such places and 'in the season', the life of a young lady was undoubtedly a gay one and thus a most proper target for the criticisms of moralists. A contemporary set of verses, entitled Female Dissipation of Time (1792) contains most of the amusements available to a young lady and is thus worth quoting in full.

> As unreserv'd and beautious [sic] as the sun
> Thro' ev'ry part of vanity they run;
> Assemblies, parks, coarse feasts in city halls,
> Lectures and trials, plays, committees, balls;
> Operas, exchanges, bridewells, drawing rooms,
> Installments, pillories, coronations, tombs;
> Wells, bedlams, executions, Smithfield scenes,
> And fortune-tellers' caves, and lions' dens;
> Tumblers and funerals, puppet-shows, reviews,
> Sales, races, camps, (and what's still stranger) pews.[81]

By 1820, due primarily to the influence of the Evangelicals and the growth of 'sentimental humanitarianism',

many of these amusements were no longer available and others had been virtually outlawed for respectable women. There had occurred, in fact, a considerable curtailment of the range of female recreation. Looking back on her youth, spent in Edinburgh at the turn of the century, Mary Somerville recollected rather nostalgically that "girls had perfect liberty at that time."[82] Even the austere and puritanical Mrs. Sherwood seems to have taken pleasure in recalling the 'old days' before propriety and decorum became the be-all and end-all of a woman's existence. One of the least decorous diversions enjoyed by the Lichfield Circle in the nineties, she remembered,

> consisted of spreading a large table-cloth on the upper steps of one of the wide, old-fashioned staircases, which being done, all the ladies present who were disposed for merriment seated themselves on the table-cloth in rows upon the steps, and then the gentlemen pulled, and down came the ladies, one over the other, to the utterconfusion of all order, and extinction of all decorum. And how many other freaks and gambols of the same refined nature were in like manner executed I know not, nor would answer for; but this I know, that the mothers and grandmothers of persons high in rank, and now living in the country, made parties in these diversions.[83]

Although opinion was beginning to harden about what activities were or were not permissible for respectable women, in the period under discussion the social life of most young ladies was a very gay affair. The transition from this existence to that of a dutiful wife and mother could not have been an easy one.

For those girls whose parents lived in the country and could not afford to visit the fashionable resorts for the season, life must have passed rather more quietly, although perhaps just as frivolously. Another set of verses of the period captures rather well the superficial gaiety and lack of purpose of a young lady's domestic life. It is entitled Les Amusements des Filles (1776) and includes the following lines.

> Skipping, frisking, running, walking.
> Laughing, giggling, whisp'ring, talking;
> Humming tunes, and taking shades,
> Fancying dress for masquerades;
> Writing sentimental letters,
> Ridiculing all their betters;
> Conning plays and magazines,
> Scrawling landscapes, working screens;
> Romping after beaux and fiddles,
> Making rebuses and riddles,
> Twisting curls, and frizing hair,
> Dressing caps and hats with air -
> These are what employ the fair.
> And when they've nothing else to do,
> Tagging rhymes, as I to you.[84]

There was little to differentiate one day from another for the country girl, and the unexpected visit, annual dance or relatively trivial occurrence must have assumed enormous significance.[85] Charlotte Bronte's description of her life at home may be taken as typical of a great many young ladies who, for various reasons, were unable to live in fashionable society.

> An account of one day [she wrote] is an account of all. In the morning, from nine o'clock till half past twelve, I instruct my sisters and draw; then we walk till dinner time. After dinner, I sew till tea-

> time, and after tea I either write, read, or do a little fancy-work, or draw, as I please. Thus, in one delightful, though somewhat monotonous course, my life is passed.[86]

No doubt such an existence was a delightful one, and for many young ladies not even monotonous.

However, for those girls who felt it important that they accomplish something in life other than merely winning a husband, such a life must have seemed a cruelly purposeless one. Fortunately, towards the end of the century, it became not only permissible but quite proper for a young lady to engage in some kind of social work among the lower orders. Helping superintend local Sunday schools and carrying donations of food, clothing and good advice to needy families were the principal forms this work assumed. Thus, Mrs. Trimmer was pleased to report in 1786 that her Sunday schools were enjoying excellent health. She went on,

> I cannot help attributing it to the great attention of young persons who regularly attend three times a day, and assist the teachers in instructing the poor children. . . . In order to encourage them to be cleanly, and dress suitably to their station in life, the young ladies make caps and handkerchiefs, which with their own hands they put upon those who deserve rewards. It is really pleasing to hear them, when assembled together, contriving little schemes for the advantage of their pupils, and expressing their wishes for the return of Sunday, instead of regarding that holy day as the interrupter of their joys.[87]

There was certainly no lack of 'good causes' to get involved in. Many women, some of them quite young, found some purpose in life actively supporting the Anti-Slavery

Association, helping run female hospitals and asylums,[88] visiting the poor and, occasionally, even prisoners.[89] Mrs. Sewell, who was engaged all her life in social work, recollected that as a girl she had supported the cause of the unfortunate chimney-sweepers; so great was her concern, she had "found courage to go round the neighbourhood to beg money to purchase one of the brooms now in use."[90] Elizabeth Carter and her friends in the 1790's found their 'useful employment' in establishing an institution for the relief of the poor, especially reduced housekeepers, in Westminster. She was proud to note that

> many ladies, living in the gay and fashionable world, of high rank, and even of youth and beauty, gave not only of their money, but what was much more important to them, their time, to the indigent, and seemed to think the loss of it for such a purpose no sacrifice.[91]

And, of course, then as now, one could always practise benevolence in the security and ease of one's drawing room simply by subscribing money to worthy causes.

The increasing ability and willingness of women to contribute financially to charity is evidenced by the subscription lists of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. In 1783, out of 103 casual subscriptions, 26 were from women; there were 139 full lady subscribers.[92] In 1791, out of 160 casual subscriptions, 38 were from women, and the number of full lady subscribers had risen to 216.[93]

This increase in the participation of women in charitable endeavours was due to several factors. The most important of these were the genuine humanitarianism and compassion of the age shown towards all oppressed creatures, human and animal, the feeling of panic over events in France and the fear of their repetition in England, and perhaps most important of all the growing influence of Evangelical notions of public and private morality amongst those who counted. For all those who wished to be numbered among the respectable members of society, and particularly for women, religion and good works were becoming increasingly important elements in their lives.

VII

It is extremely difficult to generalize about the religious education of young ladies, for the range of religious beliefs and their intensity was considerable. In the homes of the Evangelicals and the stricter dissenting sects, religion was probably the most important single influence on a young girl, affecting every aspect of her life.

It may be argued that the dissenters, particularly the Methodists, had no desire to educate their daughters as ladies. Had not Wesley himself instructed his followers, "You are no more to have the manners of a gentleman than a dancing master"?[94] And did it not follow that women should

be women, plain and simple, not fashionable ladies? Perhaps, for some of the stricter and less prosperous Methodists this was true. But, in general, as the prosperity of a Methodist increased so did his social aspirations for his children, especially his daughters. Not that they would be ignorant of religion; it was simply that their piety would be leavened with a liberal measure of the purely ornamental.

For the Church Evangelicals, there was no real contradiction between a fine lady and a religious woman. Indeed, the archetypal Evangelical household is that of Mr. Stanley in Hannah More's Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1809). In it are to be found

> a deeply religious atmosphere, Godly conversation, industrious use of time, family prayers twice daily, holy books much in evidence, and a conspicuous absence of such devices of the devil as cards, games, and music (except, obviously hymns).[95]

Yet Lucilla Stanley, the heroine of the novel, is every inch a lady, an accomplished conversationalist, with perfect manners and a highly developed sensibility controlled by an even more powerful dependence on religion and the advice of her parents.[96]

Unfortunately, the Evangelical belief in the innate depravity of children was not always tempered with the love and respect for childhood which characterized a Hannah More, William Wilberforce or Henry Thornton. There was some truth in Sydney Smith's assertion that strict evangelical surroundings

would be difficult under any circumstances.[97] In many homes, quite severe corporal punishment was commonplace, for boys and girls alike.[98] Even more to be feared, however, than a whipping was the disapproval of a Godfearing parent. The withholding of affection, the visit to a deathbed, perhaps even an attendance at an execution, could become powerful instruments in bringing the young to a sense of their wickedness and mortality.

It is doubtful if there could ever have existed in real life a father quite like Mr. Fairchild, the terrifyingly omniscient hero of Mrs. Sherwood's celebrated The Fairchild Family (1818).[99] He is, in fact, the embodiment of all that was most reprehensible in Evangelical religious education. Sangster sees the book as "the culmination of a school of writing [and] the last great Puritan work for children."[100] Its influence was enormous. Towards the end of the century, a popular literary journal asked various prominent men what two books had impressed them most during their childhood.

> Much divergence was discovered as regards the second of the two books named in each instance; but respecting the first there was an agreement little short of unanimity. Practically all those who voted had been brought up, in the fifties of the nineteenth century, and earlier, on 'The Fairchild Family'. They did not all like the book, but they had read it, and, it appeared, had read it thoroughly.[101]

The most famous section of the book concerns Mr. Fairchild's punishment of his three children for quarrelling over the possession of a doll. First,

> he whipped the hands of the three children till they smarted . . ., after which he made them stand in a corner of the room without their breakfasts; neither did they get anything to eat all the morning; and what was worse, their papa and mamma looked very gravely at them.[102]

Finally, when their father has discussed with them the story of Cain and Abel, they appear to have been forgiven. However, the real retribution is just about to begin. They are to be taken to see "one who hated his brother." The visit requires them to travel through a dark wood, and even Mr. Fairchild feels it necessary to calm the fears of the children. Finally they emerge through an overgrown garden and there

> stood a gibbet, on which the body of a man hung in chains; the body had not yet fallen to pieces, although it had hung there some years. It had on a blue coat, a silk handkerchief round the neck, with shoes and stockings, and every other part of the dress entire; but the face of the corpse was so shocking, that the children could not look upon it.[103]

The children are not permitted to leave until they have thoroughly inspected the scene and heard every detail of the events leading up to and including the execution.

To pass from the forbidding and somewhat terrifying atmosphere of the Fairchild family, or even from the home of the Bronte sisters whose father, in a fit of religious zeal and violent passion, cut up his wife's silk dress and burnt his daughters' leather shoes,[104] to the equally pious but so much more affectionate and happy domesticity of the Thornton household is like moving from darkness to light. The childhood of Marianne Thornton, whose father, Henry, was the

central figure in the Clapham Sect, suggests that the gloomy picture painted of the life of children in Evangelical homes needs to be lightened considerably.[105] Marianne's education was, of course, an extremely religious one, and deathbeds, family prayers, good works, regular attendance at church, and a serious attitude to life were part and parcel of her everyday existence. But this did nothing to lessen her sense of humour, her joy at living and the great affection she felt for her family. She was to become, in fact, the perfect gentlewoman, with none of the faults and weaknesses of a mere lady.

If anything, the Wilberforce household was an even happier one.[106] It had, of course, its religious ritual of morning devotions and evening prayers, and the unmistakable air of piety radiated everywhere by the leader of the Clapham Sect, Wilberforce himself. But it was also a place of good humour and constant laughter, in which 'the great man' invariably joined. He played cricket with his children, ran races with them, played blind man's buff, took them on innumerable excursions and picnics, and spent hours reading to them. If Marianne Thornton is to be believed, even family prayers seem to have been conducted in a somewhat lighthearted fashion.

> The scene at prayers is a most curious one [she wrote]. There is a bell which rings when Mr. W. begins to dress; another when he finishes dressing; upon which Mr. Barningham begins to play a hymn

> upon the organ and to sing a solo, and by degrees the family come down to the entrance hall where the psalmody goes on; first one joins in and then another; Lizzy calling out 'Don't go near dear Mama, she sings so dreadfully out of tune, dear', and William 'Don't look at Papa, he does make such dreadful faces'. So he does, waving his arms about, and occasionally pulling the leaves off the geraniums and smelling them, singing out louder, and louder in a tone of hilarity: 'Trust Him, praise Him, trust Him, praise Him, praise Him ever more.' Sometimes he exclaims 'Astonishing! How very affecting! Only think of Abraham, a fine old man, just a kind of man one should naturally pull off one's hat to, with long grey hairs, and looking like an old aloe - but you don't know what an aloe is perhaps: it's a tree - no a plant which flowers . . .' and he wanders off into a dissertation about plants and flowers.[107]

One can hardly imagine a Mr. Fairchild or a Mr. Theobald Pontifex approving of such levity and enjoyment, particularly on such a serious occasion.

The 'nominal Christians', as the Evangelicals called them, did not neglect the religious education of their daughters, for a proper concern for and reliance upon religion was generally held to be one of the essential characteristics of a lady. A standard ingredient of all the monitorial textbooks for young ladies is their insistence that all instruction be subordinated to true Christian principles, although these are seldom explicitly formulated. Some of the most widely read books for young ladies, such as Mrs. Chapone's celebrated Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773) and Mrs. West's Letters to a Young Lady (1806), were written entirely from a religious point of view and with the religious well-being of their readers their sole concern.

The benefits of religious instruction were not considered to be confined to the young ladies who received it. If a woman was to make her home a moral haven for her husband and children, if she was to affect them powerfully with her love of religion and morality, it was essential that she receive proper instruction when a girl.[108] Upon the effectiveness of this aspect of her education depended to a large extent the state of religion and morality in society at large.

Among the 'nominal Christians', the arguments brought forward to demonstrate the importance of religious instruction for young ladies were frequently of a rather worldly nature. No young woman, it was argued, could ever hope to win and retain the affection of a good man unless she showed herself to be truly religious. What other guarantee of her fidelity could she offer him? As one writer observed,

> Perhaps no woman was ever intrinsically good, whose education had no tincture of religion in it; he is rather a singular man, who ever possessed a cordial affection for any woman not in the habit of <u>going to church</u>.[109]

Since their example was certain to be imitated by their inferiors, they should beware of "seducing the lower orders of the community from their regard to the Sabbath."[110] Their attendance at church was thus important in setting an example, quite apart from any spiritual effects it had upon themselves.

The most common arguments in favour of a woman being especially religious were restatements of the views of Lord Halifax in his much read <u>Advice to a Daughter</u> (1688).[111]

Because of their supposed intellectual and moral inferiority, and the social restrictions they were subject to, women stood in particular need of the consolations offered by religion. Frequently, such arguments were accompanied by a strong anti-intellectual prejudice.

> How is it possible [wrote a correspondent of La Belle Assemblée] to conceive that a female can be an atheist? What shall sustain this reed if religion does not support her frailty? . . . Gentleness, meekness, tenderness, constitute a portion of the charms bestowed by the Creator on the mother of man, and to attractions of this kind philosophy is an inveterate foe. Shall women, . . . who seduces so powerfully by her ignorance, . . . attempt to withdraw the thick veil which enshrouds the Divinity?[112]

Whatever the reasons, most young ladies, even those who were not 'enthusiastically religious', did make some outward show of religious sentiment and observance, even if it was only attending church regularly. After all, it did provide an opportunity of appearing in public in one's most fashionable attire and outdressing one's rivals. Visitors to England were invariably impressed with the elegant Sunday clothes of women of all ranks.[113]

The part played by the clergy in the religious education of a young lady does not appear to have been great. The common practice of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[114] whereby the local parson catechised all the young people of the parish, was more and more neglected as the eighteenth century wore on.[115] Although the clergymen still approved candidates for confirmation and attested to their knowledge

of the catechism, the actual teaching devolved upon others. Thus, in Parson Woodforde's diary there is not a single reference to his having given catechetical instruction to the youth of Weston. He does, however, mention that thirteen young people came to him "to be examined against Confirmation." Not only did they all pass the examination; they were regaled with "cake and a Glass of Wine."[116]

As far as young ladies were concerned, catechetical instruction was a domestic matter, supervised by a governess or parent. As the Sunday School movement gained momentum in the 'eighties and 'nineties, and the educational energies of clergymen were taken up more and more with the local poor, the receiving of religious instruction from a clergyman or his assistant became almost unthinkable for the socially ambitious. Those who could afford something better for their children than a Sunday School or a Charity School, those, that is, who could afford 'private education', and who wished to have their daughters instructed in the Catechism, took good care to do so in their own home. Thus, the formal educational contacts between a young lady educated at home and the local clergyman seem to have been confined to the Sunday sermon. To some extent, such a conclusion is evidenced by the almost complete absence of references to such contacts in contemporary correspondence, diaries, memoirs and auto-biographies.

But the 'educational significance' of the cleric must not be measured merely in terms of the number of formal educational contacts established with young ladies. For the participation of the clergy in the social life of their parishes meant that young ladies enjoyed abundant opportunities to meet and converse with men of the cloth. Parson Woodforde, for example, seems to have concerned himself not at all with providing formal religious instruction for the young ladies of his parish. However, he did enjoy their company. His diary is full of references to his dining with them, escorting them to the theatre, attending dances with them and appreciating their singing at social gatherings.[117] Nor did he neglect to keep a careful note of their physical attractions, intelligence and conversation. There is no doubt that he did get to know the young ladies of his locality.

In this respect, he must have been typical of a great many clergymen. Indeed, for them, it was just as much a political necessity as it was a social duty to establish and maintain contacts with the ladies of their parishes. Upon such contacts and, perhaps, the ladies themselves, might depend his livelihood and preferment.

Whether or not these social contacts were of any religious value to the parties concerned must have depended entirely upon the character of the clergyman. Doubtless, there were some, who by their piety and improving conversation,

exercised some influence on the religious beliefs of young ladies. One suspects, however, that Parson Woodforde and his lady friends enjoyed each others' company and, of course, the food and drink, the cards, singing, dancing and plays, and left it at that. There is nothing to suggest that his companions attached any special significance to his being a clergyman, or that they received any spiritual rewards from their outings with him. And even a 'type' like the obsequious Mr. Collins (of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice), whose every commonplace remark ended up as a tedious sermon, could scarcely have imparted any real religious knowledge or conviction to his listeners.

For the vast majority of young ladies, religion seems to have been mainly a matter of prudent behaviour, good works, and regular attendance at church. Evangelicalism may have restricted their amusements, tightened up their manners and morals, and made it important that they give every indication of a vital religion. Whether it also produced significant spiritual changes in these young ladies is, at the very least, open to doubt.

VIII

By the time she was sixteen or seventeen, a girl's formal education was largely completed. Hopefully, she had acquired by then the knowledge and acquirements which were

held to characterize a lady. Her manners were polished; she understood the arts of fashion and dress; she was accomplished; she possessed an adequate supply of 'conversational information'; her sensibility had been heightened in such a way that she could not only 'feel' intensely but demonstrate her ability to do so; and she had been made familiar with, even if she did not practise, all the duties and obligations of a Christian daughter, wife and mother. This formal, intentional aspect of her education was fairly standardized, and not especially difficult to duplicate, even in those homes whose daughters seemed scarcely to qualify as prospective ladies.

The informal and unintentional aspects of her education varied considerably, however, and here social position, wealth, occupation, religion and geographical location were all important. Upon these depended her opportunities for enjoying fashionable amusements, mixing in polite society, making the right kind of friendships, and generally getting to feel and act like a lady. In determining the kind of life she would eventually lead they were, without doubt, the most crucial factors; for in deciding the social circles in which she moved, they also marked the limits of her marital prospects. The fact that the daughters of an earl and a brazier (to use a previous example)[118] had received a similar formal education in no way lessened the enormous social gap that existed between them. Their lives henceforth would have virtually nothing in common.

Yet it is still true that the brazier's daughter might consider herself a lady, or at the very least, lady-like; and justifiably so, for had she not gone through the appropriate course of training, and earned, or rather paid for, the right so to call and think of herself. If, as a busy wife and mother, or even a poorly paid and overworked governess she was forced to compromise with the ideals and hopes engendered by her early education, it is doubtful if she would ever cease to consider herself, or more importantly, her daughters, as anything but a lady.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See, 'Boarding Schools for Girls', Annual Register, 1759, pp. 424-426, cited by Josephine Kamm, Hope Deferred, Girls' Education in English History. Methuen and Co., London, 1965. p. 110.
Fanny Burney's cruelly satirical treatment of those most vulgar young ladies, the Misses Branghtons, in her Evelina, (1778) in Fanny Burney, Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World, The Century Co., New York, 1906. pp. 56 ff., 77 ff., and 172, and
Hannah More's description of the Bragwell daughters in her Two Wealthy Farmers; or The History of Mr. Bragwell, The Works of Hannah More, D. Graisberry, London, 1803, Vol. II. pp. 287-289.

[2] Kamm, op. cit. p. 170.

[3] La Belle Assemblée or, Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine, J. Bell, London, March, 1816. p. 15.
See too, Ibid. June 1816, p. 35.

[4] Elizabeth Appleton, Private Education; or a Practical Plan for the Studies of Young Ladies, with an Address to Parents, Private Governesses, and Young Ladies, Henry Colburn, London, 1815. pp. 15-16.

[5] Ibid. p. 13.

[6] Ibid. p. 14.

[7] E. C. Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Bronte, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1857. Vol. I. pp. 224 ff.

[8] Appleton, op. cit. pp. 10-11.

[9] Jacob Bouten, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Beginnings of Female Emancipation in England. H. J. Paris, Amsterdam, 1922. pp. 134 ff.

[10] Gaskell, op. cit. p. 190.

[11] Appleton, op. cit. p. 27.

[12] Ibid. pp. 28-29.

[13] Ibid. pp. 29-30.

[14] Mary Wollstonecraft, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters; with Reflections on Female Conduct. J. Johnson, London, 1787. pp. 69-70.

[15] Ibid. pp. 71-72.

[16] La Belle Assemblée, April, 1806. p. 11.

[17] Cited Ibid. April, 1816, p. 177.

[18] Cited by D. Beale, Report Issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls. David Nutt, London, n.d., c. 1869. p. 2.

[19] Cited by Beale, op. cit. p. xiv.

[20] Among its coterie, the group numbered many eminent men and women, including Thomas Day, Erasmus Darwin, Doctor Beddoes, Anna Seward, William Hayley, the Edgeworths, and Josiah Wedgwood.

[21] F. J. Harvey Darton, (editor), The Life and Times of Mrs. Sherwood (1775-1851) from the Diaries of Captain and Mrs. Sherwood. Wells Gardner, Darton and Co., 1910, pp. 33-34.

[22] Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799) The Works of Hannah More, D. Graisberry, London, 1803. Vol. IV. p. 44.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. p. 39.

[25] The Idler, 8 July 1758, quoted in Samuel Johnson, (editor W. J. Bate), The Idler and The Adventurer, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1963. pp. 42-45.

[26] Malcolm Seaborne, Education (Visual History of Modern Britain Series), Studio Vista, London, 1966. Plate 102.

[27] Ibid. (punctuation mine).

[28] Mrs. Jane West, Letters to a Young Lady: in which the Duties and Character of Women are Considered . . ., (1806) Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1811. p. 415.

[29] Martha Somerville, Personal Recollections from Early Life to Old Age, of Mary Somerville, John Murray, London, 1873. p. 50.

[30] Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. p. 45.

[31] Jane Austen, Persuasion, (1818), Airmont Publishing Co., New York, 1966. p. 40.

[32] Somerville, op. cit. p. 30.

[33] Hannah More, Coelebs in Search of a Wife, (1809), T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1813. Vol. II. p. 84.

[34] G. M. Young, (editor) Early Victorian England, 1830-1865. Oxford University Press, London, 1951. Vol. I. pp. 294-295.

[35] See, for example, Sarah Trimmer, The Robins: or, Domestic Life among the Birds, with anecdotes of other animals. (1786). C. S. Francis, New York, 1851.
Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories from Real Life, (1791), Henry Frowde, London, 1906.
Maria Edgeworth, The Good French Governess, Tales and Novels, George Routledge and Sons, London, n.d. pp. 283-360, and
Mrs. Sherwood, The History of the Fairchild Family: or The Child's Manual, (1818), T. Hatchard and Son, London, 1845. passim.

[36] Letter of Josiah Wedgwood, Dec. 1779, in Josiah Wedgwood, (editor K. E. Farrer), Letters of Josiah Wedgwood, printed for private circulation, London, 1903, Vol. II. pp. 442-444.

[37] Appleton, op. cit. p. 256.

[38] Beale, op. cit. p. v.

[39] Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, p. 111.

[40] Appleton, op. cit. p. 231.

[41] A Lady (Mrs. Fanny Ward), The Child's Guide to Knowledge, Hurst, Chance and Co., London, 1828. title page.

[42] See, for example, An Experienced Teacher, The Complete Governess: a Course of Mental Instruction for Ladies, Knight and Lacey, London, 1826. p. 8. and
Mrs. Matthias, Domestic Instruction on Useful and Interesting Subjects, Seeley and Burnside, London, 1829.

[43] Ward, op. cit. p. 1.

[44] Ibid. index.

[45] Mrs. Taylor, Practical Hints to Young Females, on the Duties of a Wife, a Mother, and the Mistress of a Family, (1816) Taylor and Hessey, London, 1818.

[46] Ibid. p. 11.

[47] Ibid. p. 41.

[48] A Lady, (Mrs. Teachwell), The Female Guardian, designed to correct some of the Foibles Incident to Girls, John Marshall and Co., London, 1784.

[49] Mrs. Bonhote, The Parental Monitor, William Lane, London, 1788, 2 vols.

[50] Other similar works of the period include Anonymous, The Female Instructor: or Young Woman's Guide to Domestic Happiness, Thomas Kelly, London, 1822.
Anonymous, Dialogues concerning the Ladies, to which is added, An Essay on the Antient Amazons. T. Cadell, London, 1785, and various reprints of a work originally published in 1695, A Lady, The Whole Duty of Woman or, A Guide to the Female Sex from the Age of Sixteen to Sixty, (1695) Hemming and Tallis, Stourbridge, 1815.

[51] Bonhote, op. cit. pp. iv-v.

[52] Anonymous, The Polite Academy: or, School of Behaviour for Young Gentlemen and Ladies, R. Baldwin and B. Collins, London, 1781. 6th edition.

[53] Matthew Towle, The Young Gentleman and Lady's Tutor, J. Fletcher, Oxford, 1770.

[54] Ibid. pp. 98-99.

[55] Ibid. pp. 177-199.

[56] A Lady of Distinction, The Mirror of the Graces - or The English Lady's Costume, B. Crosby and Co., London, 1811. p. 87.

[57] The Lady's Magazine, Supplement for 1780. p. 693.

[58] See also The Lady's Magazine, May 1812. pp. 222 ff. The Quarterly Review, John Murray, London, May 1809, No. II. pp. 304 ff. and
Hannah More, Coelebs, Vol. I. p. 245.

[59] James Lackington, Memoirs of the First Forty-Five Years of the Life of James Lackington, written by Himself. 1791, cited in J. M. S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800. Constable and Co., London, 1932. p. 2.

[60] Tompkins, op. cit. pp. 13-14.

[61] Ibid. p. 1.

[62] Cited Ibid. p. 3.

[63] Ibid. p. 2.

[64] Ibid. p. 59.

[65] The Political Register and Impartial Review of New Books, February, 1768.

[66] Mrs. Bayly, The Life and Letters of Mrs. Sewell, James Nisbett and Co., London, 1889. p. 45.

[67] A typical list of such material is to be found in the library of Mrs. Teachwell. Mrs. Teachwell, op. cit.

[68] Clara Reeve, The Old English Baron, (1777), F. C. and J. Rivington, London, 1810, p. iii.

[69] Hannah More, Coelebs, Vol. I., p. 245.

[70] The Lady's Magazine, January 1796, title page.

[71] The New Lady's Magazine, Dec. 1792. p. 566.

[72] 'Verses addressed to that Paragon of Beauty, Miss Betsy Russell' The New Lady's Magazine, Supplement for 1792, pp. 621-622.

[73] The New Lady's Magazine, Sept. 1789, pp. 499 ff.

[74] See, for example, 'Monthly Compendium of Advertisements', The New Lady's Magazine, April, 1806.

[75] La Belle Assemblée, 1806, Vol. I. p. 38.

[76] La Belle Assemblée, Dec. 1816, pp. 278-279, and pp. 286 ff.

[77] The Lady's Magazine, January, 1776, pp. 27 ff.

[78] Ibid. p. 28.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Jane Austen, Mansfield Park, (1814) Airmont Publishing Co., New York, 1967. p. 77.

[81] The New Lady's Magazine, Supplement for 1792, p. 529. See, also, Soames Jenyns, The Modern Fine Lady, R. Dodsley, London, 1751.

[82] Somerville, op. cit. p. 64.

[83] Darton, op. cit. p. 32.

[84] The Lady's Magazine, January, 1776. p. 47.

[85] It is the mark of Elizabeth Gaskell's greatness as a novelist that she was able to capture and convey the sense of excitement that ladies 'out of the world' felt at the slightest change in their environment. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of Jane Austen.

[86] Gaskell, op. cit. p. 128.

[87] Anonymous, Some Account of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Trimmer, C. and J. Rivington, London, 1825. pp. 139-141.

[88] See, for example, Catherine Cappe, Thoughts on the Desirableness and Utility of Ladies Visiting the Female Wards of Hospitals and Lunatic Asylums, London, 1816, and Catherine Cappe, Observations on Charity Schools, Female Friendly Societies, and other Subjects connected with the Views of the Ladies' Committee. W. Blanchard, York, 1805.

[89] Bayly, op. cit. p. 61.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Reverend Montagu Pennington, Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, F. C. and J. Rivington, London, 1807. p. 319.

[92] Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, Annual Report, F. C. and J. Rivington, London, 1783, pp. 48-53.

[93] Ibid. 1791, pp. 123-130.

[94] Cited by Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961. p. 48.

95 Paul Sangster, Pity My Simplicity, The Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children. The Epworth Press, London, 1963. p. 71.

96 Hannah More, Coelebs. passim.

97 Sangster, op. cit. p. 71.

98 Ibid. pp. 75-77.

99 Mrs. Sherwood, The History of the Fairchild Family, passim.

100 Sangster, op. cit. pp. 56-57.

101 Darton, op. cit. p. ix.

102 Sherwood, op. cit. p. 55.

103 Ibid. pp. 56-57.

104 Gaskell, op. cit. p. 51.

105 E. M. Forster, Marianne Thornton, A Domestic Biography, Harcourt Brace and Co., New York. 1956.

106 See the delightful account of the Wilberforce household in David Newsome, The Parting of Friends, A Study of the Wilberforces and Henry Manning, John Murray, London, 1966. pp. 30-37.

107 Ibid. pp. 33-34.

108 See below, Chapter VII, pp.354-358, and Chapter IX, pp. 462-463.

109 John Moir, Female Tuition: or, An Address to Mothers on the Education of their Daughters, J. Murray, London, 1786, 2nd. edition, pp. 267-268.

110 Anonymous, (Susan Nicklin), Address to a Young Lady on her Entrance into the World. Hookham and Carpenter, London, 1796. Vol. I. pp. 90-91.

111 George Saville, late Marquis and Earl of Halifax, The Lady's New Year Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter, (1688) Haude and Spener, Berlin, 1752. pp. 6 ff.

112 La Belle Assemblée, July 1806, pp. 300-301.

[113] R. Bayne Powell, Travellers in Eighteenth Century England, J. Murray, London, 1951. pp. 184-185.

[114] A. Tindal Hart, The Country Priest in English History, Phoenix House, London, 1959. pp. 43-45.

[115] N. Sykes, Church and State in Eighteenth Century England. Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1962. pp. 243-246.

[116] Rev. James Woodforde (editor John Beresford), Passages from the Five Volumes of the Diary of a Country Parson - 1758-1802. Oxford University Press, London, 1935. p. 379.

[117] See for example, Ibid. pp. 22, 31, 34, 38 and 42.

[118] See page 163, Chapter IV.

PART III

EDUCATIONAL IDEAS

I, to CHAPONE, the important task assign'd
To smooth the temper and improve the mind.
Through MORE I pointed to the paths of truth,
And raised her voice to guide unthinking youth;

'The Guardian Genius of Female Excellence' - from Aurelia; or The Contest. Cited in The New Annual Register, 1783. pp. 210-211.

Thus WOLLSTONECRAFT, by fiery genius led,
Entwines the laurel round the female's head;
Contends with man for equal strength of mind,
And claims the rights estrang'd from womankind;

John Henry Colls, A Poetical Epistle addressed to Miss Wollstonecraft. Vernor and Hood, London, c. 1793. p. 19.

See Wollstonecraft, whom no decorum checks,
Arise, the intrepid champion of her sex;
O'er humbled man assert the sovereign claim,
And slight the timid blush of virgin fame.

R. Polwhele, The Unsex'd Females: A Poem addressed to the Author of The Pursuits of Literature. Cadell and Davies, London. 1798. p. 13.

CHAPTER V

CRITICS AND CRITICISMS

I

It is somewhat paradoxical that in an age when the education of women was almost universally condemned, it was generally felt that at no other time and in no other place had the female sex been so distinguished for its learning. In an ambitious attempt to trace the course of women's education from the Garden of Eden to the present, the Reverend John Bennet, a severe critic of the contemporary educational practice, concluded that it was but a short while ago that "a very remarkable negligence prevailed in the culture of their [women's] understanding."[1] And yet, he found, by the end of the eighteenth century, Europe had become "the Paradise of the sex [and] Britain . . . the choicest spot of this Paradise."[2] The New Lady's Magazine, in its Prefatory Address of January, 1792, rejoiced,

> There never was an Age in which the Female Character was so celebrated for universal knowledge, as the present; and no Nation upon Earth has ever produced so many, and such distinguished Writers among the Fair Sex, as the Island which we inhabit.[3]

Everyone, noted another observer, "wishes to call forth the reasoning power of girls into action, and to enrich the mind with useful and interesting knowledge suitable to their

sex."[4] Mothers everywhere were reflecting "how small a portion of such information was in her youth imparted to herself."[5] Even the staid and cautious Quarterly Review joined in the self-congratulation.

> Whatever doubts may be entertained as to the advances toward knowledge that have been lately made by the male part of our species, it is, we think, impossible to deny that the female have made a great and rapid progress. Indeed, if we were called upon to mention the circumstance most advantageously characteristic of our own times, we should not hesitate to mention the improved education of women.[6]

Yet there was not one of these writers, or indeed any of the others of the period, who did not find some aspect of contemporary female education distressing or disturbing.

In order to explain the presence of a feeling of disquiet alongside such complaisance and pride, it is important to understand the diverse origins of the criticism. Generally speaking, the educational critics of the period fall into three major groups, each connected with and drawing inspiration from a major intellectual or religious development of the age. The groups may be conveniently characterized by the following names, 'the religious-moralistic school', 'the radical-feminist school', and 'the educational school'.

Perhaps the most important, and certainly the most numerous, were those who attacked contemporary female education primarily from a religious and moral standpoint. In their ideas and influence, it is not difficult to trace the

effects on English society of the Methodist and Evangelical revivals. Representative of the works produced by this school were Hester Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, (1773), Hannah More's Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, (1799), and Jane West's Letters to a Young Lady, (1806). Underlying these writers' criticisms, and those of their many supporters and imitators, was a profound belief in the innate weaknesses of the human personality, particularly that of women. Only a truly religious education could prevent these defects from disfiguring the soul and corrupting society. Thus, for Hannah More (1745-1823), the most important quality in an instructor of youth was

> such a strong impression of the corruption of our nature, as should insure a disposition to counteract it; together with such a deep view and thorough knowledge of the human heart, as should be necessary for developing and controlling its most secret and complicated workings.[7]

Nothing could be more absurd, for these writers, than the belief in human perfectibility which had emanated from that stronghold of irreligion, France, and was infecting England itself. Dangerously misleading to youth, asserted Mrs. West (1758-1852), were all those "systems of ethics, and treatises on education, which are founded on the false doctrines of human perfectibility."[8] She went on, "The hope of forming something superior to the present race of mortals, by merely human means, is one of the wildest theories that ever entered the brain of a visionary reformer."[9]

The critics belonging to this school had no desire to alter the legal, social and economic position of women; they were not, in any sense of the word, feminists. True, they wished to give women a more 'serious' attitude toward life, to make their influence on society an 'improving' one; and this caused them to advocate a more 'academically oriented' education for girls than was usually the case. But, like the Bluestockings, they saw intellectual improvement primarily as a means to moral improvement. Thus, although their criticisms of contemporary education were numerous and severe, they did not question the position of women in general. To have done so would have been to criticise the arrangements made by a benevolent Deity for the benefit of both sexes. They would all have sympathized with Mrs. Trimmer who, when brought into contact with radically feminist ideas, remarked coldly and somewhat complacently,

> Of the Rights of Women, [sic] I can now say nothing more than that I found so much happiness in having a husband to assist me in forming a proper judgement, and in taking upon him the chief labour of providing for a family, that I never wished for a further degree of liberty and consequence than I enjoyed. Miss Wollstonecroft [sic] is a woman of extraordinary abilities, I confess; I cannot help thinking they might be employed to a more advantage to society.[10]

Mrs. West was less charitable in her opinion of the book and its author, condemning them both for their "supereminent absurdity and audacity."[11]

Allied to this view of the nature and position of women was an equally conservative political and social ideology.

If they were concerned about the spread of the 'rights of man' doctrine, and the even more absurd rights of women and children, they were horrified at the crumbling away of what was for them a providential framework of society. Herein lay a justification for their criticism of the middle classes' attempts to ape the manners, fashions and education of their superiors. In doing so, they were stepping out of their sphere and helping tear apart the whole fabric of a society based on due rank and subordination. Thus, Mrs. West lamented that

> the middle classes, where temperance, diligence, and propriety used to reside, the favourite abode of rectitude, good sense and sound piety, have undergone a change within the last fifty years, which must startle every considerate mind; . . .[12]

It is not surprising that ardent feminists have always found the works of a Hannah More or Mrs. Chapone disappointing. To have been so well aware of the defects of female education, and yet to have failed to see the need for a radical alteration in the whole social, legal and economic position of women have seemed to them a most culpable sin of omission. Thus, a modern writer, lamenting the lack of true feminist principles among the Bluestockings (and failing completely to appreciate their major concern), observes,

> How insipid and uninteresting compared to her [Mary Wollstonecraft's] radicalism are the attempts at a partial reform of a Hannah More, the very limitations of which bring out more clearly the utter want of breadth, the narrow conventionality, which hampered the growth of the ideal![13]

'Insipid and uninteresting' as such views might appear to a

modern feminist interested in tracing the ideal of female emancipation, in their day they carried a great deal of weight with those for whom unconventionality was rapidly becoming a cardinal sin.

Criticising almost all of the same elements in contemporary female education but from an entirely different standpoint was a small group of 'radical-feminists'. The two most important writers of this school were Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), whose A Vindication of the Rights of Woman appeared in 1792, and Mary Hays (1759-1843), whose pleas for the recognition of female rights are to be found in Letters and Essays, (1793) and a work commonly attributed to her, Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women (1798). Sharing some of the ideals of this school was Catherine Macaulay Grahame (1731-1791); parts of her Letters on Education (1790) can certainly be interpreted as a demand for female intellectual and social emancipation. Although William Thompson's Appeal to One Half the Human Race did not appear until 1825, it deserves to be considered as an example of the works connected with the 'radical-feminist' school. Thompson himself admitted that he was "raising from the dust that neglected banner which a woman's hand [Mary Wollstonecraft's] nearly thirty years ago unfolded boldly."[14]

Providing the foundation for all the criticism of this school was the doctrine that 'the soul has no sex'. The prevailing psychological theory of the period, Associa-

tionism, could, if interpreted correctly, lend considerable weight to this position. As Helvetius had pointed out earlier in the century, there were no innate characteristics; whatever mental, emotional or moral qualities a man or a woman possessed came solely from their experiences, from, in its broadest sense, their education. The inferior social, economic and legal position of women could therefore not be justified by an appeal to their nature, nor to a divinely instituted providential arrangement based on the differing natures of the sexes. Women were as capable of intellectual and moral excellence as men. Their education should be based, not on their sex, but on their humanity. That women had continually been kept in ignorance and encouraged to waste their lives in frivolities was partly the result of a conspiracy among men. ". . . tyrants and sensualists," wrote Mary Wollstonecraft, "are in the right when they endeavour to keep women in the dark, because the former only want slaves, and the latter a plaything."[15]

The complete emancipation of women could also be justified by a comprehensive application of the Principle of Utility. It is true that James Mill (with the approval of Bentham), in his article on Government in the Encyclopedia Britannica, had excluded women and children from all political rights because their interest "is involved in that of their fathers, or in that of their husbands."[16] However, William

Thompson, an ardent utilitarian, insisted that Mill had "misapplied the principle [of utility] to the degradation of one half the human race."[17] Women, he believed, were already handicapped in their pursuit of wealth and happiness by physical inferiority and "occasional loss of time in gestation and rearing infants."[18] Man should not make things worse for them by preserving "the remnants of the barbarous customs of our ignorant ancestors."[19] If the Principle of Utility was to be applied completely and impartially, the social, economic and legal position of women, together with their education, required drastic alteration.

Such writers were not only criticizing the education of women; they were questioning the theological, philosophical and psychological assumptions upon which the whole structure of the social relationships between the sexes was based. They were radical reformers who, unfortunately for them and their ideas, came to the fore at a time when reaction was the order of the day. Yet it is doubtful, even if the French Revolution and subsequent war had not combined to produce a climate of opinion totally inimical to any idea suggesting reform, if such views could have gain widespread acceptance in England at this time. Englishmen, and especially Englishwomen, were not ready for doctrines which seemed to strike at the very roots of English society and religious beliefs.

The third group of writers is more difficult to

characterize. It includes all those writers whose criticisms of contemporary education proceeded from an educational rather than a religious or social-political standpoint. The most important of these writers, as far as female education was concerned, were Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), Elizabeth Hamilton (1758-1816) and Madame de Genlis (1746-1830). The works of these writers may be considered a part of the eighteenth century's attempt to construct a science of pedagogy and thus establish an education 'according to nature'. They derived their chief inspiration from Rousseau and the Associationist psychologists.

Madame de Genlis' Adele and Theodore, (1783), her most important work, is a complete restatement of the principles of Emile, applied in this case to the education of a young nobleman and his sister. Like Emile, the book contains not only prescriptions for a correct education but a great many criticisms of contemporary educational practice.

Elizabeth Hamilton's Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education (1801) gives a comprehensive treatment of Associationist psychology and its implications for educational method. Her interest in education as a science is also to be seen in her Hints . . . to shew the Benefits . . . of the Plan of Pestalozzi (1815). Unlike Bell and Lancaster, she affirmed, Pestalozzi had demonstrated his understanding of the development of the mind through association. His

principle was thus "universal and may be universally applied. . . . In a few words, it is simply attending to the Laws of nature."[20]

Sharing Miss Hamilton's concern to make education a science and to establish once and for all a correct educational methodology was Maria Edgeworth. As she pointed out in Practical Education, (1798), "To make any progress in the art of education, it must patiently be reduced to an experimental science."[21] To do this, she believed, it was not necessary to adopt any particular religious or political viewpoint. "On religion and politicks," she wrote, "we have been silent, because . . . we do not address ourselves exclusively to any sect or to any party."[22] If there was one criterion by which all educational practice ought to be judged, it was its practical utility for the concerns of everyday life. On this ground alone, Miss Edgeworth found a great deal to criticize in contemporary female education.

For this school of writers, the attempt to formulate a 'scientific' education based on Associationism and natural development proceeded without any real questioning of the position of women in society. Thus, in her Letters Addressed to the Daughters of a Nobleman (1806), Miss Hamilton's ideas seem to differ little from those of Mrs. West. For her, the acceptance of Associationism did not require her to believe in the perfectibility of man or woman; nor did it lead her

to the conclusion that there was something fundamentally wrong or unjust in the structure of society. Her aims of education were perfectly orthodox. In addition to "the attainment of everlasting glory,"[23] education should be "directed to the control of the malevolent passions, the subjection of irregular appetites, the cultivation of the intellect, and the improvement of benevolence."[24]

Madame de Genlis, following Rousseau closely, held a view of woman which was, to say the least, somewhat reactionary. Thus, in her The Rival Mothers, an "affectionate and virtuous wife" reflects of her husband,

> My master! how I love to give thee that title in its most extensive signification! my sovereign by election; whom I have made my master with such unspeakable joy! . . . O how wise and bounteous was Nature in creating us feeble and timid, and in conferring on man alone strength, courage and superiority![25]

Rousseau would have been well pleased with his disciple; Sophie herself could scarcely have made a prettier speech. Again, there is not the slightest interest shown in questioning the assumptions underlying the position of woman in society.

Maria Edgeworth's opinions regarding the female character are to be found in her Letters for Literary Ladies (1795), in which she concluded, "No woman can be happy in society, who does not preserve the peculiar virtues of her sex."[26] The desire for power and influence, she felt, was foreign to any intelligent woman,[27] who, if she wished to

achieve happiness, should conform her taste to that of her husband.[28] Miss Edgeworth had as little time for phrases like 'the rights of woman' as any of the 'religious-moralistic school' of writers.

Whichever of these three standpoints a writer adopted, he or she found little to approve of in contemporary female education. In view of their widely differing aims and interests, the critics showed a remarkable agreement in their censure of current educational practice. Frequently, the issues they raised and the criticisms they voiced are so similar as to appear identical. But while they may have agreed in their condemnation of the education of a lady, it is important to remember that they differed greatly as to what type of education should replace it.

II

The most commonly made criticism of female education concerned the undue emphasis placed upon accomplishments or the purely ornamental aspects of education. Not that any writer disapproved of accomplishments entirely. As Hannah More pointed out, "The customs which fashion has established, . . . when they are not hostile to virtue, should unquestionably be pursued in the education of ladies."[29] "Piety," she asserted, "maintains no natural war with elegance."[30] And Maria Edgeworth, whose criticism of accomplishments was both

restrained and penetrating, prefaced her remarks on the subject by informing the reader, "We are not going to attack any of them with cynical asperity, or with the ambition to establish any new dogmatical tenets in the place of old received opinions."[31] All that she wished to do was to "form some estimate of the position and relative value of what are called accomplishments."[32]

Miss Edgeworth's whole case against a purely ornamental education consisted of demonstrating the inadequacy of the arguments usually put forward to justify such an education. For most parents, she felt, there were four such arguments.

> Accomplishments, it seems, are valuable, as being the object of universal admiration. Some accomplishments have another species of value, as they are tickets of admission to fashionable company. Accomplishments have another, and a higher species of value, as they are supposed to increase a young lady's chance of a prize in the matrimonial lottery. Accomplishments have also a value as resources against ennui, as they afford continual amusement and innocent occupation.[33]

As far as the last argument was concerned, few women, after they became mistress of a household, found that they had either the time or the inclination to practise and enjoy the accomplishments they had spent so long in acquiring.[34] In advancing such an argument on behalf of an ornamental education, parents were either deceiving themselves or there existed "some secret motives more powerful than those which are usually openly acknowledged."[35]

Did accomplishments, then, improve a girl's chance of

marrying well? No, insisted Miss Edgeworth. No man "of superior sense and character" would consider them important when choosing a wife; "he is angry that you can rank them among her perfections."[36] Indeed, the value of accomplishments as qualifications for marriage and for entrance into fashionable society was falling steadily.

> Every young lady (and every young woman is now a young lady) has some pretensions to accomplishments. She draws a little; or she plays a little; or she speaks French a little. . . . Stop at any inn on the London roads, and you will probably find that the landlady's daughter can show you some of her own framed drawings, can play a tune upon her spinnet, or support a dialogue in French . . . .[37]

Since "it is the practise [sic] in high-life to undervalue, and avoid as much as possible, everything which descends to the inferior classes of society,"[38] the opulent have been forced to create new accomplishments, capable of being taught only by expensive masters. An exclusive education was thus obtained for their daughter, but at the cost of making it subject to the same whims and fancies which governed fashion and dress. Mere exclusiveness was surely a poor criterion for selecting the subject matter of education. There was, Miss Edgeworth concluded, no substance in the claims made for a purely ornamental education.

Such an analytical and moderated criticism of accomplishments was not typical. Most writers condemned their predominance in education not because the arguments for them were weak, but because those against them seemed to be so

strong. In its effects upon the female character, and thus upon society in general, a purely ornamental education was pernicious in the extreme. As a correspondent of The London Magazine complained, in a typically exaggerated characterization of a fashionable education,

> That miss may be thoroughly accomplished from head to foot, the aid of a foreign dancing master is called in. A French governess teaches her the language of that country . . . and, perhaps, poisons her mind with popery in the bargain. An Italian instructs her on the guittar. And a singing master teaches her to squeak, at least, if nature will not let her sing. She has also to instruct her, a monster . . . called a card-tutor, that she may know how to cheat genteely when she goes into polite company. By this time, . . . she is a perfect adept in several smaller . . . embellishments; . . . Such as to lisp; to mince some words, . . .; to be extremely near sighted; to toss the fan with elegance; to manage her snuff-box according to art; to stroak [sic] a monkey, to address a parrot, or to kiss a lap-dog with delicacy; to fall into agreeable tremors and confusions; . . . and be just ready, on some occasions, to faint away judiciously. And now for routs, assemblies, balls, operas, public gardens, masquerades, card-parties, ridottos, and theatres. In a word, for every dissipation that can exhaust money, stifle reflection, kill time, gratify the lust of the eye, and feed the pride of life.[39]

Such an education could not fail to produce a generation of women who expected to be and would, in fact, become idle creatures. As Sydney Smith pointed out,

> The system of female education, as it now stands, aims only at embellishing a few years of life, which are in themselves so full of grace and happiness, that they hardly want it; and then leaves the rest of existence a miserable prey to idle insignificance.[40]

Even in a man, idleness was reprehensible. But in a woman,

it was particularly dangerous; for from her idleness sprang a love of dissipation. Thus, it was held, an ornamental education tended to develop in women an addiction to sensual pleasures and public amusements, leading inevitably to irreligion and immorality. "Sentiment and chastity, "lamented Miss Hatfield, "are driven from the female bosom, in which immorality and voluptuousness triumph."[41]

The baneful social effects of this type of education were to be felt most forcefully in the home. By exhibiting life as a kind of contest in which prizes were awarded to those who excelled at being accomplished,[42] parents, governesses and the schools were producing women who were both unwilling and unfit to minister to their husbands, run a household, and raise their children properly. Women, complained Mrs. West, had deserted their proper sphere

> by sacrificing the interest and the affections of our families, not to be even an object of admiration, distinguished for elegant frivolity and expensive nothingness; but for the sake of starting in a crowd to run the race of folly, of echoing a forged tale of happiness and splendor . . . .[43]

Hazardous to morals, destructive of domestic life, an education based upon accomplishments was also frequently injurious to a girl's health. Required to engage in all kinds of 'unnatural exercises' to improve the shape, deliberately given a meagre diet to maintain it and induce an 'interesting' pallid complexion, their internal organs constricted by tight-laced stays, it was scarcely surprising

that young ladies only rarely enjoyed good health.[44] Nor were things any better when their school-days were over.

> It is surprising [complained Thomas Gisborne] that she, when grown up, should starve herself into shapliness, and overspread her face with paint, who was trained at a boarding school to swing daily by the chin, in order to lengthen her neck, and perhaps even accustomed . . . to peculiar modes of discipline contrived to heighten the complexion?[45]

Harmless as it may sound to a modern reader, in the late eighteenth century, 'overspreading the face' with paint was a most dangerous practice and often had fatal consequences. Fanny Burney noted in her diary that "poor Sophy P--- killed herself by quackery, that is, by cosmetics and preparations of lead and mercury, taken for her complexion, which, indeed, was almost unnaturally white."[46]

Even very young children had their health jeopardized by their being required to attend that innovation of fashionable education, the baby-ball. Yet what a travesty of childhood it was, thought Hannah More,

> to behold lilliputian coquettes, projecting dresses, studying colours, assorting ribands, mixing flowers, and choosing feathers; their little hearts beating with hopes about partners and fears about rivals; to see their fresh cheeks pale after the midnight supper, their aching heads and unbraced nerves, disqualifying the little languid beings for the next day's task; . . .[47]

Perhaps the most unusual 'medical' criticism of a fashionable education was that of Doctor Beddoes, who warned,

> Female schools of high fashion, where the conductors - angels defend us! - threaten to compleat [sic] their pupils in accomplishments, and to give

them finished manners, I take to be the most destructive . . . . The rapid succession of lessons cannot fail most materially to damage the mental organs.[48]

Whether or not 'the rapid succession of lessons' did, in fact, damage 'the mental organs', it certainly had other undesirable results. The vast number of accomplishments and subjects that a young lady was expected 'to make a proficiency at' inevitably lead to superficiality. What was worse, it was a superficiality of which she and her parents were completely unaware; it was ignorance of ignorance, a deplorable state in a woman. From it sprang pride and vanity together with a consequent lack of humility and modesty. In her Coelebs in Search of a Wife, Hannah More cleverly satirized this aspect of a fashionable education, and showed its effects on the character of the voluble Miss Rattle. On being questioned about her activities during the past winter, the young lady replies,

> I have not been idle, if I must speak the truth. One has so many things to learn, you know. I have gone on with my French and Italian of course, and I am beginning German. Then comes my drawing-master; he teaches me to paint flowers and shells, and to draw ruins and buildings, and to take views. He is a good soul, and is finishing a set of firescreens which I began for mamma. He does help me to be sure, but I do some of it myself, don't I mamma? . . .
>
> And then . . . I learn varnishing, and gilding, and japaning. And next winter I shall learn modelling and etching, and engraving in mezzotinto and aquatinta. . . . Then I have a dancing master, who teaches me the Scotch and Irish steps; and another who teaches me attitudes, and I shall soon learn the waltz, and I can stand longer on one leg already than Lady Di.... Then I have a singing master, and another who teaches me the harp, and another for the

> pianoforte. And what little time I can spare from these principal things, I give by odd minutes to ancient and modern history, and geography, and astronomy, and grammar, and botany. Then I attend lectures on chemistry and experimental philosophy, for as I am not yet come out, I have not much to do in the evenings; and mamma says there is nothing in the world that money can pay for, but what I shall learn. And I run so delightfully fast from one thing to another that I am never tired. . . . But I shan't have a great while to work so hard, for as soon as I come out, I shall give it all up, except for music and dancing.[49]

Not only had Miss Rattle's education left her unfit to be a good wife and mother; but if marriage and settlement passed her by, she was totally unprepared to earn a living. In her Letters of a Hindoo Rajah (1796), Miss Hamilton bitterly condemned an ornamental education for its failure to give young ladies the ability to make their own way in the world. In England, the rajah informs his correspondent, girls are

> wholly employed in learning a few tricks, such as a monkey might very soon acquire; - and these are called accomplishments . . . , but as to making any attempt at instructing the daughters of Christians in anything useful to themselves or society, the idea would be deemed . . . ridiculous . . . . No; in that country as well as in this all men allow that there is nothing so amiable in a woman as the helplessness of mental imbecility; and the women themselves are so well convinced of this, that they consider it an insult to be treated like rational creatures. . . . for this reason, when a family, by any one of those misfortunes occurring in a commercial country, happens to be reduced to poverty, the daughters of the family are either left a prey to gaunt-eyed indigence, or doomed to eat the bitter bread of dependence, administered with sparing hand, and grudging heart by some cold relative![50]

Ann Radcliffe's The Female Advocate (1799) is entirely

devoted to the plight of "the poor unfortunate woman who has seen better days".[51] If, for any reason, she could not find employment as a governess, only two alternatives remained. Either she frequented the theatre or pleasure gardens, "where abandoned females . . . attend to make their harvest, and gather in their unlawful plunder, to supply the ordinary wants of the ensuing day,"[52] or she took to begging in the streets. In her book, Miss Radcliffe cites the tragi-comic case of a young woman who accosted a group of men and begged for money, first in English and then in French. It transpired that she could also have asked in Italian and Latin![53] A major cause of her unhappy situation was undoubtedly her education, which, although expensive and fashionable, had proved to be useless. For such evils, asylums and magdalens were poor remedies. As Mary Wollstonecraft pointed out, "It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world!"[54]

Unlike most of her fellow critics, Miss Wollstonecraft was not content merely to point out the undesirable effects of an ornamental education. True, she condemned its harmful influence on domestic life, its failure to prepare young women to make their way in the world, and its general superficiality. But, at bottom, she had but one criticism, that the whole education of woman rested upon the false principle of there being a distinctive sexual character. To be always looked upon as a woman, never as a rational human being, was

both humiliating and, more important, "subversive of morality."[55] "The desire of being always women," she wrote, "is the very consciousness that degrades the sex."[56] This desire, sedulously encouraged by men throughout the ages, had given birth to and in turn been nourished by a system of female education based entirely on 'corporeal accomplishments' designed to render woman pleasing to others. "Taught from infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison."[57] Even an intelligent woman like Mrs. Barbauld had been 'taken in' and taught willingly to submit to this degradation. Had she not written, in a poem comparing a young lady to a bunch of flowers,

> Nor blush, my fair, to own you copy these;
> Your best, your sweetest empire is - to PLEASE.[58]

Such a view of woman and the education it implied for her suggested that she "was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever . . . he chooses to be amused."[59] As John Colls, a fervent disciple of Miss Wollstonecraft, pointed out,

> What then is Woman on the present plan?
> The splendid plaything of tyrannic man -
> His equal, only in a wanton hour,
> When lawless lust subdues the tyrant's pow'r;[60]

For Mary Wollstonecraft and her supporters, an education based upon music, dancing, drawing, needlework and French was intrinsically wrong; it implied that the good man and the good woman were totally different creatures, each

having distinctive interests, abilities and virtues, each requiring a different type of education. But just as "truth must be common to all"[61] so too should education be common to all. It should be concerned with developing the common humanity of boys and girls, not creating and cultivating sexual characteristics.

The writers of the period were unanimous in their condemnations of an ornamental education. From whatever standpoint one adopted, it was unacceptable; not only because of its harmful effects upon women and society, but because it rested upon mistaken notions of the nature of woman and her domestic and social obligations. Again, it should be noted that the unanimity was to be found only in the criticism. When it came to suggesting remedies and alternative types of education, the differences in their viewpoints became painfully obvious. Meanwhile, despite all the criticism, an education based upon accomplishments remained the principal type of education available for a young lady.

III

Despite their popularity with parents, the boarding schools were condemned by virtually every writer on female education. One or two, it is true, did hold favorable views of the schools. Erasmus Darwin, for example, felt that they provided an environment where emulation of one's superiors

in taste and learning could be developed and encouraged.[62] Elizabeth Appleton noted the same advantage and added that, since the school was the world in miniature, its students were furnished with a "deep insight into human nature."[63] She concluded that, although "private education is strongly to be recommended under a steady parent or prudent governess," a school "conducted upon principles of rectitude and piety" was much to be preferred to a domestic education given by a "half-bred nursery maid."[64] But such opinions were rare. For various reasons, some valid, others, perhaps, more questionable, the schools were severely censured by writers of every school of thought.

As noted previously, as far as the health of their inmates was concerned, the schools did not enjoy a good reputation. According to Dr. Beddoes and John Chirol, the two chief critics of this aspect of boarding school life, the girls were not even fed adequately. Chirol reported that in one school he had visited forty girls had been fed for two days on nothing more than a single leg of mutton,[65] while Beddoes noted that in his experience girls in boarding schools were frequently faint and nauseated with hunger. "Feeding," he observed, "is rendered almost as much a penance as learning."[66] What food was provided tended to be unhealthy, consisting largely of heavy puddings, bread and butter, and excessive amounts of tea. The practice of tea

drinking was particularly dangerous to health, thought Doctor Beddoes. It had induced all kinds of nervous disorders in females, totally unknown before its introduction into England. That it damaged the brain and stomach, and could eventually kill had been confirmed by many experiments upon animals.[67]

Many of the diseases contracted by girls at boarding schools were due to the gross inattention of governesses and teachers to their charges' person cleanliness. Baths were rarely, if ever, taken, and clothes left unwashed for weeks on end. "I have been informed by a credible person," wrote Chirol, ". . . that bed-linen in schools is scarcely changed oftener than every four or five months."[68] And when sickness did strike, the ignorance of governesses and the overcrowding in classrooms and bedrooms made an epidemic almost inevitable.

According to Chirol and Beddoes, other factors contributing to the general ill-health of girls attending boarding schools included standing for long hours, which led to an accumulation of blood in the lower extremities; working immediately after meals with consequent inadequate digestion of already indigestible food; the rapid succession of dry tedious lessons which adversely affected the mental organs; the lack of physical recreation; inadequate heating and ventilation; and, sounding rather odd to a modern reader, the excessively long summer holidays.[69] Although each of these factors might be relatively harmless in isolation,

thought Chirol, when they occurred together over a long period of time, they could have fatal consequences. Certainly, the boarding schools were no place for a future wife and mother, who would one day have to bear and nurse her own children.

By far the most frequently voiced criticism of the boarding schools concerned their effects on the morals of the young ladies who attended them. By concentrating almost entirely on giving their students 'acquirements' and accomplishments, the schools were developing women who cared for little else in life but pleasure and praise. Elizabeth Hamilton felt that they were reproducing the education given in an oriental despot's harem, producing young ladies

> Bred only and completed to the taste
> Of lustful appetence - to sing, to dance,
> To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye,
> Yet empty of all good, wherein consists
> Woman's domestic honour and chief praise.[70]

The Reverend John Bennet was equally severe and even more effusive. Not only did the schools destroy "innocence, simplicity and domestic worth, . . . they trample upon nature, and give us artificial creatures, artificial looks, and artificial smiles."[71] He went on,

> Almost everything in and about these seminaries, has a tendency to corrupt the heart. What is it these fair pupils are taught to pant for? Admiration . . . . What are considered as the steps to it? Elegant dress, appearance, equipage, wit, smartness, dancing, singing. In the mean time what becomes of the love of God . . . ? . . . Where, all this while is the mortification of, and religious government of

> their passions, indifference to the world, the discipline of their heart, thoughts, and imaginations, modesty, humility, heavenly mindedness, and all the lovely train of Christian and evangelical graces?[72]

In fact, all the criticisms made of a fashionable, ornamental education were also levied against the schools that provided it.

There were, however, other more specific moral criticisms of the schools themselves, quite apart from the education they provided. Where many girls were herded together, as they were in the larger schools, it was inevitable that some corruption of the innocent would occur. On this ground alone, Vicesimus Knox disapproved of a boarding school education.

> All sensible people agree in thinking [he observed] that large seminaries of young ladies, though managed with all the vigilance and caution which human abilities can exert, are in danger of great corruption. Vanity and vice will be introduced by some among a large number, and the contagion soon spreads with irresistible violence.[73]

Because of the indifference of governesses, inadequate supervision and the "promiscuous multitude of good and bad" girls admitted to the schools, it was all too easy, thought Thomas Gisborne, for "one worthless girl . . . to contaminate the great part of a school."[74] His opinion was shared by Henry Home (Lord Kames), who warned parents that boarding schools were "not a little hazardous for girls, who by their numbers escape strict attention; and who, in the most ticklish period of life, are more apt to follow bad example than good."[75]

Even more pernicious than the influence of a "worthless girl" was that of an ill-qualified governess, an unprincipled master, or an ignorant servant, any or all of whom might be found in a single boarding school. "Can anything be more injudicious," asked John Corry, "than to permit a needy adventurer to teach young ladies dancing, music or French?"[76] All too frequently, such masters engaged in clandestine affairs with the governesses, or, far worse, the students themselves. In many schools, according to Chirol, the young ladies were actually encouraged to intrigue with any young man they happened to come in contact with. Even young doctors, he thought, should be refused admission to the schools for the girls often feigned illness in order to be alone with a young man.[77] It was not surprising that seductions and elopements were common occurrences in boarding schools.

The alarmist note sounded by John Corry's The Unfortunate Daughter, (1803) a tale "of the seduction of a young lady from a boarding school,"[78] was echoed three years later by an anonymous work, The Female Revolutionary Plutarch. In one of the essays which comprised the book, the author recounted, in great detail and with considerable relish, "the disgusting particulars" of a boarding school in Paris, to which city "many misguided or ill-advised parents . . . sent their children . . . during the last peace, in consequence of the cheapness of education in that country."[79] For twenty

two years, the proprietors of the school had "seduced and encouraged their pupils to the most scandalous and dangerous excesses of debauchery."[80] At their trial, for they had eventually been brought to justice, one fifteen year old boy testified that he had been forced to deflower "between thirty and forty girls from nine to fourteen years of age,"[81] as well as having to sleep regularly with the governess. In ten years, eighteen pupils of the school had died of a singularly unpleasant and "lingering disease".[82] However, perhaps because the majority of writers on female education were women, such sensationalistic attacks on the boarding schools were not common.

Whether educated at home or at school, it was inevitable that a girl have some contacts with servants, whose vulgarity and nasty habits could all too easily infect her morals and manners. In a large school, however, the corruption would spread. As a correspondent of The Lady's Magazine complained, governesses invariably hired their servants at the cheapest rates,

> from which it may be justly concluded that they are the lowest, and the very dregs of the people; vulgar to the greatest degree in their language and manners, capable of anything that is treacherous and base for money. These wretches are admitted to the utmost degree of intimacy with young ladies, who are entertained with all the obscene discourse that can poison the ears of a young girl . . . .[83]

Mary Wollstonecraft agreed, and warned parents,

> In nurseries and boarding schools . . . a number of girls sleep in the same room, and wash together. And though I should be sorry to contaminate an innocent creature's mind by instilling false delicacy, or those indecent prudish notions which early cautions respecting the other sex naturally engender, I should be very anxious to prevent their acquiring nasty and immodest habits; and as many girls have learned very nasty tricks from ignorant servants, the mixing them indiscriminately together, is very improper.[84]

Since corrupt governesses, adventurous masters, promiscuous girls and ill-mannered servants were the rule rather than the exception in the boarding schools, parents would do well to keep their daughters safe at home. Such was the advice dispensed by the majority of the critics.

Those few writers who attempted to defend the schools invariably pointed out the beneficial results of competition and emulation, which, they believed, were a unique feature of school life. Their critics, however, condemned this supposed advantage. Competition among boys was excellent, thought Gisborne, but for girls it was quite improper, leading to exertions "which impair their health, . . . and prove ultimately to have impeded rather than to have accelerated their progress; . . ."[85] The less successful students grow daily "less anxious for the acquisition of knowledge . . . and sink into listlessness, inactivity and despondence."[86] Moreover, he asserted, emulation "stimulates and nourishes some of the darkest passions of the human mind,"[87] undermines Christianity, leads to self-conceit, a contempt of one's inferiors, a dislike of teachers and attempts to "conciliate their favour."[88]

The constant atmosphere of competition also gave rise to an unhealthy interest in the rank and fortune of fellow students, causing "haughtiness, malevolence, and insensibility."[89] Mary Somerville made the same criticism, recalling that on her arrival at a boarding school in 1789, at the age of ten,

> My future companions . . . came around me like a swarm of bees, and asked if my father had a title, what was the name of our estate, if we kept a carriage, and other such questions, which made me first feel the difference of station.[90]

Thus, according to the critics, the effects of a boarding school education upon the physical, intellectual and moral well-being of a young lady were disastrous. To the schools could be traced "the misconduct of women in society, their ignorance of their duties, their errors, their dissipation, and the general immorality and corruption of the age."[91]

> Hence [complained the Reverend John Bennet] from so many offensive breaths, all pent up together, proceeds a total putrefaction of the moral air. Hence swarms of novels to inflame their fancy, and effectually pave the way for their future seduction. Hence private correspondences, assignations, and intrigue. Hence, levity, giddiness, and a total forfeiture of that delicacy and softness, without which it is impossible for any woman to be lovely, ...[92]

It is surely a testimony to the strength of the boarding school as an institution in English education that, while undergoing such attacks for a century or more, its popularity grew rather than diminished.

IV

Of particular concern to many of the writers of the period was the relationship between developments in female education and the breakdown of the eighteenth century social structure. By the end of the century, it was apparent to many observers that 'the providential framework' of society was being threatened, not only by doctrines preaching the rights of man, but by the increasing wealth and social ambitions of the middle classes. No longer content with their assigned status in the social order, they were seeking to encroach upon the preserves of their betters. In itself, this was harmful to the stability of society; what was worse, however, was that their dissatisfaction had communicated itself to the inferior orders, so that the whole idea of rank and subordination was in jeopardy.

Clara Reeve, in her Plans of Education (1792), noted this development. Having described no less than seven orders in society, ranging from nobility down to the lower artizans and peasantry, she remarked that

> within every one of these orders of men, there is a graduation of property that raises the first step of it nearly to an equality with the next above it, and this increases the difficulty of keeping them within their proper bounds.[93]

While "in a well regulated state, a right and true subordination is beautiful, where every order is kept in its proper state,"[94] such was not the case in England. No one was content with his place; each aspired to the one above him.

A similar analysis of the situation is to be found in Mrs. West's Letters to a Young Lady. Apparently influenced by Mrs. Trimmer's Oeconomy of Charity,[95] she saw society as being composed of five classes, each having its characteristic virtues.

> All civilized states [she explained] have agreed in cherishing those privileged orders, whose rank or wealth has made them the proper patrons of learning and the fine arts, and the encouragers of all the happy efforts of mechanical industry. From persons thus circumstanced, society demands munificence, splendour, and hospitality. Liberality, elegance, and refinement, are the required characteristics of their immediate inferiors. The third degree should be content to be distinguished by benevolence, oeconomy, and propriety. Humanity, diligence, and frugality, become indispensable duties to the fourth class. Industry, humility and general good will are so suited to the lowest state of life, that when the poor part with these virtues, they deprive themselves of their best consolation and richest possessions.[96]

Unfortunately, each order no longer practised its characteristic virtues; all sought to be distinguished by munificence and splendor.

As Elizabeth Hamilton noted, wealth had arrogated "to itself that respect, which belongs to superior and intrinsic merit."[97] She went on,

> It is this prevailing sentiment which renders people whom fortune has placed in the middling ranks of society, ashamed of their station; and this false shame prompts them to live in such a manner, as may induce a belief of their opulence at the expense of their independence.[98]

To Mrs. West, the effects of this unhappy development were painfully obvious. Women who could scarcely afford it

entertained constantly, each trying to outdo the other in their hospitality; their houses were stuffed so full of furniture and "nic-nacs" that one could hardly move in the apartments; their clothes were chosen to "show their wealth, and proclaim their uselessness;" and all too often their husbands went bankrupt.[99]

Concurrently and closely connected with this alteration in domestic life, there had occurred profound and dangerous changes in female education.

> Every rank and degree of people [wrote Clara Reeve] bring up their children in a way above their situation and circumstances; they step over their proper place and seat themselves upon a higher form. They assume an air of consequence; and the children of farmers, artificers and mechanics, all come into the world as gentry. They send them to the same schools with the first gentry in the country, and they fancy themselves their equals.[100]

The lower orders of society, complained Miss Hatfield, were "overleaping the bounds by which they ought to be limited, and encroaching upon certain branches of education, belonging exclusively to ladies of rank and fortune."[101]

In many cases, even a boarding school for young ladies was not good enough for the daughters of the nouveaux riches; they required the services of a domestic governess, whose presence in the household would proclaim a family's affluence far more effectively than an absent daughter at school. Unfortunately, their taste in governesses was every bit as bad as their taste in literature, dress or furniture. Cheap

incompetent governesses were all too common. And even after employing the cheapest governess available, many a family still went bankrupt.[102]

Whether given at home or at school, a fashionable education was invariably 'a bad thing' for a girl of the middle or inferior orders. As Burton pointed out, many parents, in order to better their daughters' chances in life, placed them in schools

> where the same mode of tuition is pursued with respect to them, as to others of a higher class, whose fortunes, or probable situation in life, will enable them to appear in a superior style of living. The consequence to the former is often fatal; because the ideas they have imbibed are not compatible with that humble rank, or perhaps, employment, to which they are born.[103]

Or, as Miss Hatfield observed,

> fingers, which improperly have been taught to run over the ivory keys of a piano-forte, to guide the pencil, or to delineate a figure in embroidery, become very unfit for the hardy, yet more useful, work, of giving a polished neatness to the necessary articles of a plain and decent household.[104]

Too many daughters, complained Clara Reeve, had been taught to act out a part, without any means or hope of properly supporting it.[105]

The evil consequences of educating girls above their station in life were not confined to a disruption of domestic life. For what became of a young woman who was unable to settle down to home life and was completely unprepared to earn a living? The answer was painfully obvious; she fell an easy prey to adventurers and seducers.

> By the preposterous ambition [wrote John Corry] to educate young women of the subordinate classes, with the profusion of those in the highest ranks, many girls are utterly disqualified to fill their places and perform their duties in society; and, in a manner, prepared for seduction.[106]

His opinion was shared by an anonymous writer who firmly believed,

> Were girls of the plebeian classes brought up in the praiseworthy habits of domestic duties; . . . we should not be told of seductions, or ruins; the appearance of these young women would not attract the flatterer; and their simple hearts know not the desires of luxury and vanity.[107]

Perhaps the most forceful and almost certainly the most widely read condemnation of the practice of educating girls above their station was Hannah More's tract, The Two Wealthy Farmers, one of her tales 'for the middle ranks'. Since it contains all the criticisms that could possibly be made on the subject, it is worthy of some detailed consideration.

The two chief characters of the tale are Mr. Bragwell and Mr. Worthy, the former vain, unscrupulous and prosperous, the latter pious, honest and, of course, equally affluent. Mr. Bragwell and his wife are attempting to improve their own and their daughters' fortunes by contracting 'suitable' marriages for them. To this end, they have given them a fashionable education. As a result,

> of knowledge the Miss Bragwells had got just enough to laugh at their fond parents' rustic manners and vulgar language, and just enough taste to despise and ridicule every girl who was not as vainly dressed as themselves.[108]

Completely uninterested in the affairs of the household, the girls spend "the morning in bed, the noon in dressing, the evening at the harpsichord, and the night in reading novels."[109]

While one of the daughters, Betsy, is rejecting an honest and religious young man on the grounds that he cannot dance a Minuet de la Cour, her sister Polly, not to be outdone, elopes with a worthless strolling player, who has convinced her he is really a gentleman in disguise. Mr. and Mrs. Bragwell are distraught and their discomfiture is not eased by Mr. Worthy, who points out reprovingly,

> But, for what better husband was she qualified? For the wife of a Farmer she was too idle; for the wife of a Tradesman she was too expensive; for the wife of a Gentleman she was too ignorant . . . .[110]

Unfortunately, it is already too late to reform Betsy, and for her an even worse fate is in store. Overcome by the gaudy clothes and vulgar flattery of the objectionable Squire Squeeze, she agrees to marry him and goes off to London. Before long, Squeeze has spent all his own money and a good deal of Mr. Bragwell's. Hounded by creditors, he blows out his brains in front of his pregnant wife. Betsy is overcome with remorse and shock and, before long, expires, together with her baby.

Meanwhile, Polly, deserted by her husband, destitute and seriously ill, returns home with her young son. Too ignorant to earn a living by her own efforts, she has spent many months in a poor-house. Feeling she was about to die,

and brought to an awareness of her weaknesses, she has come back, a prodigal daughter, to beg forgiveness and a chance in life for her son. Mr. Bragwell is left with only a grandson; too late he has learned of the inevitable results of pride and ambition.

The message of Miss More, and, indeed, all those who wrote on the subject, was clear. Be content with what you are. Resist the temptation to rise in the world; and, above all, do not give your daughters an education to which their station in life does not entitle them.

V

There were, then, three major issues which concerned the educational critics of the period. Whatever their religious, social or political standpoints, they were unanimous in their condemnation of an education based upon accomplishments. They were also in general agreement in their criticisms of the boarding schools. In both cases, the principal ground for concern was the moral well-being of women and society in general. Although 'radical-feminists' like Mary Wollstonecraft and Evangelicals like Hannah More might differ in their notions of what constituted a truly moral woman and a truly moral society, they were in complete agreement about the demoralizing effects of contemporary female education, particularly as given in the boarding

schools. Finally, many writers, again with widely differing backgrounds and interests, denounced the downward extension of fashionable education to the middle and inferior orders of society. Some saw this development as part of a general attack upon the eighteenth century social structure, which, they believed, was the best devised by man or evolved in nature. Others were more concerned with its harmful effects upon domestic life and the moral and physical well-being of women.

In spite of the quantity of the criticism, its unanimity, and the prestige of many of the critics themselves, there is little to suggest that it produced any significant changes in the education of women. It is interesting, in this connection, to examine criticisms made later in the nineteenth century. In 1845, for example, Frazer's Magazine conducted 'An Enquiry into the State of Girl's Fashionable Schools.'[111] Its findings indicate that little had changed since the turn of the century.

Within these schools, the writer observed, "girls are taught to grasp after show and pomp, and as women can rarely acquire these for themselves, they are taught to look at marriage as the means of making their fortune."[112] Medical facilities were frequently non-existent, the food insufficient and of poor quality, and physical recreation almost entirely absent.[113] "Health", he complained, "is too often cruelly

sacrificed, either through culpable neglect or ignorance, or for the sake of gaining a few more wares for the marriage market."[114]

Accomplishments still occupied the most important place in the education of a young lady.

> What shall be said . . . to those who, undertaking to guide the very young, destroy in them the very sap of life for the sake of a few petty acquirements, that will never solace one hour of weariness, or fit them for one practical duty of life? Woman was ordained to be the help-meet of man; but this high calling is utterly overlooked in the present system of female instruction. . . . Their memories are quickened, their imaginations excited, their passions stimulated; but their understandings are left to slumber.[115]

The intellectual and moral calibre of the typical teacher should also give parents cause for alarm. Usually, she was a "mere girl . . . . set over other girls." Vulgar and impertinent, she often spread "moral infection amongst the young creatures with whom she is thrown into habits of familiarity."[116] No care was exercised in the selection of students; and, unfortunately, just "one evilly disposed girl can pollute all . . . her companions."[117]

Other moral dangers were present in the schools. Girls were allowed to flirt with masters, and sometimes became enamoured of other girls. The atmosphere of competition and emulation invariably contaminated an innocent creature's heart and mind. "Rivalry, shame, display, marriage, - these are the motive forces which make the wheels of school discipline go around."[118] Finally, he asserted, religious

instruction in the schools was either absent or of such a nature as to alienate the young from Christianity.

> As a little one confessed with considerable naiveté, when asked which day she liked best, -
> "Oh, Monday!"
> "And why?"
> "Because it is furthest off from Sunday."[119]

Almost identical criticisms of female education were to be made some twenty years later, when the Taunton Commission issued its report on secondary education in 1868.[120] Had the critics, who wrote so much and felt so strongly about the defects of a fashionable education at the turn of the century, lived to see how little effect their works had produced, they would, no doubt, have found it all very depressing. Indeed, they may well have felt it not worthwhile to suggest all the various schemes, plans and projects that were put forward at this time for the reformation of the education of a young lady.

FOOTNOTES

[1] A Clergyman of the Church of England (Reverend John Bennet), Strictures on Female Education: - chiefly as it relates to the Culture of the Heart. T. Cadell, London, c. 1780. p. 44.

[2] Ibid. p. 40.

[3] The New Lady's Magazine, January, 1792. Prefatory Address.

[4] Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex, T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1797. (2nd. edition) p. 59.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The Quarterly Review, Vol. X. No. XIX. October 1813 - January 1814. p. 32.

[7] Hannah More, Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1809) T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1813, Vol. II, pp. 96-97.

[8] Mrs. Jane West, Letters to a Young Lady: in which the Duties and Character of Women are considered. (1806), Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Brown, London, 1811. Vol. I. p. 24.

[9] Ibid. p. 281.

[10] Mrs. Trimmer to Mrs. M., July 12, 1792, cited in Anonymous, Some Account of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Trimmer, C. and J. Rivington, London, 1825, Vol. I. p. 24.

[11] West, op. cit. p. 196.

[12] Ibid. p. 140.

[13] Jacob Bouten, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Beginnings of Female Emancipation in England, H. J. Paris, Amsterdam, 1922. p. 100.
See too, Alice Zimmern, The Renaissance of Girls' Education in England, A. D. Innes and Co., London 1898. p. 13.

[14] William Thompson, Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men. Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, London, 1825, p. vii.

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[16] Cited in Thompson, op. cit. p. v.

[17] Ibid. p. viii.

[18] Ibid. p. x.

[19] Ibid. pp. xiii-xiv.

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[21] Maria and R. L. Edgeworth, Essays on Practical Education, (1798). R. Hunter, London, 1815. Vol. I. p. iii.

[22] Ibid. p. vi.

[23] Elizabeth Hamilton, Letters addressed to the Daughters of a Nobleman on the Formation of Religious and Moral Principles, T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1806. Vol. I. p. 7.

[24] Elizabeth Hamilton, Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, (1801), Wilkie and Robinson and G. Robinson, London, 1810. Vol. I. p. 7.

[25] Madame Genlis, Selections from the Works of Madame de Genlis: . . . James Cundee, London, 1806. pp. 10-11.

[26] Anonymous, (Maria Edgeworth), Letters for Literary Ladies, to which is added an Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification. J. Johnson, London, 1795, p. 59.

[27] Ibid. p. 55.

[28] Ibid. p. 73.

[29] Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, (1799) The Works of Hannah More, D. Graisberry, London, 1803. Vol. IV. p. 49.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II. p. 171.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid. p. 174.

[34] Ibid. pp. 175-178.

[35] Ibid. p. 178.

[36] Ibid. p. 179.

[37] Ibid. p. 183.

[38] Ibid. pp. 183-184.

[39] The London Magazine: Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer, Vol. XLV, August, 1776. p. 397.

[40] The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal, No. XXX, January, 1810. p. 308.

[41] Miss Hatfield, Letters on the Importance of the Female Sex: with Observations on their Manners and on Education. J. Adlard, London, 1803. pp. 67-68.

[42] More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. p. 43.

[43] West, op. cit. pp. 161-162.

[44] Erasmus Darwin, A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools, J. Chambers, London, 1798. pp. 105 ff. and
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[46] Frances Burney (Madame D'Arblay), Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, Henry Colburn, London, 1842, Vol. I. p. 244.

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[49] More, Coelebs in Search of a Wife, Vol. I. pp. 333-335.

[50] Elizabeth Hamilton, Letters of a Hindoo Rajah, cited in The Lady's Magazine, October, 1796, pp. 453 ff.

[51] Mary Ann Radcliffe, The Female Advocate or Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation. Vernor and Hood, London, 1799, p. 72.

[52] Ibid. p. 43.

[53] Ibid. pp. 113-115.

[54] Wollstonecraft, op. cit. p. 79.

[55] Ibid. pp. 10-11.

[56] Ibid. p. 109.

[57] Ibid. p. 50.

[58] Cited Ibid. p. 59.

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[65] J. L. Chirol, An Enquiry into the Best System of Female Education; or, Boarding School and Home Education attentively considered. T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1809. p. 28.

[66] Beddoes, op. cit. p. 30.

[67] Ibid. pp. 32-33.

[68] Chirol, op. cit. p. 30.

[69] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 41 ff., Beddoes, op. cit. pp. 28 ff., and Gisborne, op. cit. pp. 80-81.

[70] Cited in Hamilton, Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education. Vol. II. p. 17.

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[72] Ibid. pp. 144-145.

[73] Vicesimus Knox, Liberal Education; or, A Practical Treatise of the Method of Acquiring Useful and Polite Learning. Charles Dilly, London, 1781. p. 236.

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[75] Henry Home (Lord Kames), Loose Hints upon Education, chiefly concerning the Culture of the Heart. J. Bell and J. Murray, Edinburgh, 1781. pp. 11-12.

[76] John Corry, The Unfortunate Daughter: or, The Dangers of the Modern System of Female Education. B. Crosby and Co., London, 1803. p. 36.

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[81] Ibid. pp. 391-392.

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[83] The Lady's Magazine, February, 1776, p. 90.

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[88] Ibid.

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[90] Martha Somerville, Personal Recollections, from Early Life to Old Age of Mary Somerville, John Murray, London, 1873. p. 21.

[91] Chirol, op. cit. pp. xiii-xiv.

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[94] Ibid.

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[96] West, op. cit. pp. 180-181.

[97] Hamilton, Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, Vol. I. p. 239.

[98] Ibid. p. 258.

[99] West, op. cit. pp. 141-150.

[100] Reeve, op. cit. p. 60.

[101] Hatfield, op. cit. pp. 90-91.

[102] Appleton, op. cit. pp. 15-16.

[103] J. Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners. Printed for the author, London, 1793. Vol. I. p. 28.

[104] Hatfield, op. cit. pp. 90-91.

[105] Reeve, op. cit. p. 62.

[106] Corry, op. cit. p. 35.

[107] A Lady of Distinction, The Mirror of the Graces - or, The English Lady's Costume, B. Crosby and Co., London, 1811. pp. 87-88.

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[111] Frazer's Magazine for Town and Country, Vol. XXXI, June, 1845. pp. 703-712.

[112] Ibid. p. 703.

[113] Ibid. p. 705.

[114] Ibid. p. 706.

[115] Ibid. p. 707.

[116] Ibid. p. 709.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid. p. 710.

[119] Ibid. p. 712.

[120] For the Report's views of the state of female education, see D. Beale, Reports issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls. David Nutt, London, c. 1868. passim.

CHAPTER VI

THEORISTS AND THEORIES

I

There have been few periods in the history of English educational thought more rich in controversy than the turn of the eighteenth century. One of the clearest manifestations of this interest in education was the concern shown by many writers of the period about the current state of female education. Almost all these writers were dissatisfied with the prevailing system; consequently, they were not reticent in making proposals to reconstitute the education of girls, particularly that of those who insisted upon calling themselves young ladies.

Although the writers on this subject and the suggestions they made were legion, it is possible to detect certain common elements or positions adopted, roughly corresponding to the three schools discussed above.[1] Obviously, not all writers fit neatly into particular schools, and even representative figures show the influence of other streams of thought of the period. Nevertheless, in order to introduce some order into a discussion of their ideas, and to appreciate the reactions to them, it is convenient to group writers into particular schools of thought.

Generally speaking, the positions adopted make up a continuum, ranging from reactionary or conservative views of the nature of woman and the education most appropriate for her to extremely radical ideas on the subject. In the period under discussion, the 'orthodox' position tended to be to the conservative side of centre. As far as the respectable elements in society were concerned, any writer whose ideas approached too close to the radical end of the continuum was immediately suspect in his or her political and religious loyalty to the Establishment. The fact that a diversity of opinion did exist and that debate, much of it acrimonious, did take place, gives to the writers of this period "a liveliness and originality in strong contrast with their successors in the following . . . decades."[2]

II

An important and influential group of writers (all of them women) were those whose recommendations in the field of women's education proceeded from a conviction that, through a correct religious upbringing, women could exert a powerful and improving influence upon society. This was, in effect, the Bluestocking ideal broadened in scope to include not only those who excelled in the art of conversation, but all God-fearing Englishwomen. Significantly, the most important figures of this school were themselves, at one time, members of the Bas Bleu.

In this group of writers, Hannah More (1745-1833) occupied a central position. In the early 1780's, as a successful playwright and, according to Doctor Johnson, 'the most powerful versificatrix in the English language', she was lionized by fashionable society. A leading Bluestocking, she was sought after by such social giants as Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Vesey. She was on close terms with a number of highly placed ecclesiastics and some of the nobility. So great was her reputation that she was asked to draw up a course of studies for the ill-fated daughter of George IV, the Princess Charlotte.[3] By 1785, however, she had joined forces with the 'Saints' of the Clapham Sect, and devoted herself to good works, including the writing of a great deal of didactic, educational and devotional literature. Among her writings were three devoted exclusively to the education of a lady of rank and fortune. They were Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799), Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess (1805), and Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1809).

Miss More's whole conception of education was determined by her view of the human personality. She had nothing but contempt for Rousseau's belief that "the first impulses of nature are always right."[4] Writers whose works were based on this principle, she asserted,

> teach . . . no duty exists which is not prompted by feeling; that impulse is the mainspring of virtuous actions, while laws and religion are only unjust

> restraints; . . . Alas! they do not know that the best creature of impulse that ever lived, is but a wayward, unfixed, unprincipled thing! That the best natural man requires a curb; and needs that balance to the affections which Christianity alone can furnish, . . .[5]

Education was thus not concerned with merely developing a man's or woman's natural propensities; rather it should seek to direct and, if necessary, limit and control them. The process of education was a regulatory affair, with its aim the discipline of the manifestations of an innately corrupt nature. Thus, in Coelebs, the hero's mother defines education as

> that which inculcates principles, polishes taste, regulates temper, cultivates reason, subdues the passions, directs the feelings, habituates to reflection, trains to self-denial, and more especially that which refers all actions, feelings, sentiments, tastes and passions, to the love and fear of God.[6]

But while education should be based upon the recognition of the natural corruption of all human beings, it must also take into account and seek to develop "the proper excellencies" of each sex. Women had one unique talent and one special responsibility, influence over men. On their sentiments and habits depended "the general state of civilized society."[7] As a biographer of Hannah More has pointed out, the basic tenet of her Strictures is that "the regeneration of society on a christian basis could be achieved by the moral excellence of educated women."[8]

What kind of an education, then, would develop 'moral excellence' in a woman of rank and fortune? Obviously, it

must be, in every respect, a religious education. The Bible and catechism of the Church of England should be read daily.[9] Furnishing the young with a scheme of prayer[10] and frequent conversations on religious subjects[11] were other essential elements in a truly religious education.

Chief among the secular subjects was history. The moral benefits to be derived from its study were several and included gaining "a clearer insight into the corruption of human nature", showing "the plan of Providence in the direction of events," and contributing towards "a distrust of our judgement."[12] Geography, like history, was a subject well suited to provide moral and religious instruction. Together with natural history, it directed attention "to the goodness of Providence, who commonly adapts the various productions of climates to the various wants of the respective inhabitants."[13]

The instructional books recommended by Miss More for young ladies were not easy reading. Women, she believed, needed to read difficult works as a counterweight to their craving for "little amusing, sentimental books."[14] As a virtuous wife remarks in Coelebs, "the very tediousness of her historians had a good effect, they were a useful ballast to her levity, a discipline to her mind."[15] After a course of preparatory reading, young ladies should be able to "swallow and digest such strong meat as Watt's or Duncan's little book on logic, some parts of Mr. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, and Bishop Butler's Analogy."[16]

No matter what her rank or fortune, no young lady could afford to be ignorant of domestic economy.[17] The efficient running of a large household required that she supervise all the activities of her servants, understand their duties, and keep accurate accounts. Arithmetic was therefore an eminently suitable subject for girls, "a solid practical acquirement, in which there is much use and little display."[18]

Miss More did not entirely disapprove of accomplishments. "A well-bred young lady may lawfully learn most of the fashionable arts,"[19] as long as she recognized that they were the least important aspects of her education. "The profession of ladies, to which the best of their instruction should be turned, is that of daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families."[20] For such a profession, the accomplishments were not essential. Neither were the sciences and the learned languages, although for those who showed a marked aptitude for them, they were not improper.[21]

Particular care needed to be exercised in selecting leisure reading for young ladies. Biographies, travel literature and improving essays were generally safe, while of works of fiction, Don Quixote, the Odyssey, and Arabian Tales "delighted the fancy, without conveying any dangerous lesson to the heart."[22] Novels, however, were almost invariably unsuitable. Even the works of Shakespeare needed to be approached with caution, for they

> contain so much that is vulgar, so much that is absurd, and so much that is impure, . . . that he should only be read in parcels, and with the nicest selection. His more exceptional pieces should not be read at all; and even of the best, much may be omitted.[23]

In general, Miss More's proposed system of female education was one which included a great deal more intellectual content than was usual at that time. Her ideal was a rational, pious woman, who was alive to her domestic and social responsibilities, and whose sense, in the form of religious principle and mental discipline, governed her sensibility. There was nothing frivolous or sentimental in her ideas of woman and women's education. The education of a young lady was a most serious undertaking, determining not only her temporal and eternal happiness, but the whole character and well being of her country.

It would be a mistake, however, to consider Hannah More as a kind of gloomy Calvinist kill-joy, who recommended a severely authoritarian education based solely on the doctrine of original sin.[24] She was much opposed to the "harsh doctrine of paternal austerity"; she recognized the importance of appreciating "the individual character of each pupil"; she had an enlightened view of children's play, advising that they be left to "their own busy invention"; she abhorred dullness in teachers, if not in books; and she insisted that nothing could be learned without activity on the part of the learner. Like all the great christian teachers,

her understanding of original sin and her love of children were in perpetual conflict, with the latter invariably triumphant. It is significant, for example, that of the same Hannah More who asserted, "Children love fiction. It is often a misleading taste,"[25] a former pupil could write, "Good woman as she was, she taught me to believe in Tom Thumb nearly as implicitly as Joseph and his brethren."[26]

Contemporary reactions to Miss More's ideas were generally favourable. As early as 1787, Bishop Porteus of London recognized her abilities. "Where can we find anyone but yourself," he wrote, "that can make the fashionable world read books of morality and religion, and find improvement when they are only looking for amusement."[27] Following publication of each of her books, particularly those on education, she was deluged with letters congratulating her on her latest achievement. Elizabeth Montagu's response to her Strictures was typical. "You have most judiciously pointed out the errors of modern education," she wrote, "which seems calculated to qualify young women for whatever their god-fathers and god-mothers had renounced for them at their baptism."[28]

At the turn of the century, however, her strict views of religion did arouse some critical comment. The New Annual Register, for example, while admitting that her Strictures showed considerable erudition and literary merit, concluded that

> the system for which she is an advocate, partakes too much of the sentiments of Calvinism, or rather Methodism, to accord with our idea of rational scriptural religion; and the religious practice which she enjoins is more austere and puritanical than the genius of the Gospel warrants, or the spirit of the times will bear.[29]

The Edinburgh Review raised the same point in its review of her Coelebs. The author, complained the reviewer, is too strict.

> As it is, every man would wish his wife and his children to read Coelebs; - watching himself its effects; - separating the piety from the puerility; - and showing that it is very possible to be a good Christian, without degrading the human understanding to the trash and folly of Methodism.[30]

Her close association with the members of the Clapham Sect, her educational work among the poor, and her involvement in the Blagdon Controversy[31] strengthened suspicions that she was, in fact, 'Wesleying'. The Anti-Jacobin Review and Cobbet, in his Weekly Political Register, joined forces and for over a year subjected her and her friends to continual attacks, condemning these "puritans of the present day" for their attempt to infiltrate the Church and subvert the religious and political principles of patriotic Englishmen.[32]

Yet even at the height of these attacks, Miss More was treated with considerable deference. Cobbett, for example, while bitterly condemning the Evangelicals, referred to her as "a lady who has laboured . . . zealously in the cause of virtue and religion."[33] And when, from another quarter, liberals began to criticise and abuse her for

stirring up hatred of the French and bolstering a tottering government,[34] the friends of the Establishment quickly closed their ranks and softened their tone towards Miss More and her strict views of religion. By 1805, her reputation as a safe and instructive writer was as high as ever.

Less controversial but just as popular a figure as Hannah More was Hester Mulso (Mrs. Chapone) (1727-1801), whose best known work, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, appeared in 1773. Like all the much read and much praised writers of the period, her views of woman and female education were cautiously conservative. A husband, she insisted, "has a divine right to the absolute obedience of his wife,"[35] a right which is "founded upon some natural advantage and superiority of the man, which makes the law of obedience a wise, just, and merciful law, with respect to woman."[36] Like Hannah More, she deplored the influence of the ideas of Rousseau, whose works, she asserted, "are the most melancholy reading, as they show the most evident madness."[37]

Written to a fifteen year old niece, the Letters are a plea, not so much for the intellectual advancement of women, as for their moral and religious improvement. In the first letter, the young lady is informed that it is now time for her to put away childish things.

> You must either become one of the glorious children of God, who are to rejoice in his love for ever, or a child of destruction - miserable in this life, and punished with eternal death hereafter.[38]

The Bible, therefore, should be "the rule of your life, . . . your chief study and delight."[39]

Like Hannah More, Mrs. Chapone believed education to be a regulating force, enabling a young lady to control her heart and affections. It was thus concerned primarily with developing values, attitudes and dispositions. The niece was advised to beware of pride, vanity and oversensitivity to suffering. She was to pay particular attention to the preservation of her reputation, for "discretion is the guardian of all virtues."[40] To this end, she should "avoid intimacy with those of low birth and education."[41] Should a close friend fall into error, even she was to be shunned, "You must immediately withdraw from all intimacy and confidence with her."[42]

Since the "principal virtues of a woman must be of a private and domestic kind,"[43] household economy should be given precedence over the accomplishments. The young lady needed to be instructed how to run a household in accordance with her husband's fortune, to be an exact calculator, save money by the skillful use of the needle, avoid lying abed, choose servants wisely and regulate their morals and conduct.[44]

The accomplishments of dancing and French were, however, "useful and ornamental" and quite appropriate in the education of a young lady. Italian, writing, arithmetic, music and drawing were also permissible, provided they did

not interfere with the more important aspects of her education. Geography, chronology and history completed the subjects which might properly be included in the education of a lady.[45]

History was by far the most important of the academic subjects. Through its study, the girl would come to understand and appreciate the providential plan which through the ages had given England pride of place in the world.

> You may pass to every quarter of the earth and find yourself still in the British Dominion; . . . and, if we were to adopt the style of ancient conquerors, we might call it [England] the throne from which we rule the world.[46]

The daughters, wives and mothers of men who had gained such an empire had better things to do than waste their time in trivial amusements. They must show themselves to be worthy of the confidence placed in them by Providence - they must become aware of their country's destiny and strive to improve its religion and morality.

While Mrs. Chapone was concerned to improve the education of women, she was very much aware of the limits which should be set to female learning. The learned languages and sciences, for example, were "incompatible with our nature and proper employments."[47] She thus informed her niece,

> The dangers of pedantry and presumption in a woman - of her exciting envy in one sex, and jealousy in the other - of her exchanging the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar, would be, I own, sufficient to frighten me from the ambition of seeing my girl remarkable for her learning.[48]

Much as she disapproved of an education based on accomplishments, she had no desire to replace it with one which aimed to produce scholars. If women were to exercise an improving influence upon society, their intellectual improvement must be strictly subordinated to their moral and religious advancement.

Conservative and occasionally reactionary as these Bluestocking writers[49] appear to a modern reader, there is about their writings a certain lightness of tone, good humour and literary merit. They were, of course, intensely serious about their work; but their earnestness of purpose does not disguise their sense of proportion, their wit or their learning. They were, after all, educated women, who could hold their own in a gathering of such eminent conversationalists as Doctor Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The same cannot be said, unfortunately, for the later female writers of this 'religious-moralistic school', who, although their piety and seriousness was beyond question, lacked any sense of proportion and literary taste.[50] A prime example is Mrs. West (1758-1852), whose three volumes of Letters to a Young Lady (1806) went through four editions in as many years. While Mrs. West admitted that in writing the Letters she had referred to Miss More's Strictures, and would "feel flattered, if the reader should also trace an incidental and undesigned resemblance,"[51] there is in her

work none of Hannah More's cutting wit or clever use of satire. It is as though Mrs. West felt the subject of the duties and character of women of such moment that anything less than utter solemnity was out of place. The intense gravity that resulted inevitably gave rise to pretentiousness and extravagance, which did not escape the attention of the critics and reviewers.[52]

But if Mrs. West lacked the literary skills of Hannah More and Mrs. Chapone, she certainly shared their high opinion of the role of women in society. The centre of a woman's existence was the home; but from there her influence radiated out determining the whole moral character of society. Women were, in fact,

> legislators in the most important sense of the word. . . . Were we but steadily united in resisting the corruption of the times, the boastful libertine, the professed man of gallantry, the vapid coxcomb, the profane scoffer, the indecent jester, and all the reptile swarm which perverted pride and false wit will produce, would disappear.[53]

A girl's education should be conducted with one aim in mind, to produce a completely religious and virtuous woman, who would, in concert with other women, banish from society everything "offensive to decency" and "seductive to principles". It was important, therefore, that young girls be taught early in life "that if they pass the bourne of chastity, society will disclaim them, and to return to it will be impracticable."[54]

As far as the content of her education was concerned, religious instruction was, of course, most important, although even the Bible needed to be approached with some caution. Parts of it, in fact, were better omitted altogether. Solomon's Song, for example, "appears best suited to be the cabinet companion of a Horsley, a Bryant, or a Jones."[55] "The song of songs' was not alone in its banishment to a cabinet where it would rest under lock and key. Many biographies should accompany it, and almost all novels. So too should geography books which question the age of the earth, natural history books which cast doubt on the miracles, and (rather quaintly) mineralogy and chemistry books which remind young ladies "when natural preparations can assume appearances seemingly miraculous, we should scruple to call in an invisible agent."[56]

Provided, however, "a complete stock of religious knowledge has been acquired,"[57] and the books approved by a suitably qualified governess, there was no reason why a girl should not acquire some knowledge of history, geography, botany, astronomy and natural history. As for the accomplishments, only needlework was completely unexceptionable,[58] although if a young lady's station in life warranted it, the more genteel ones might be acquired.

The most significant common element in the works of these female writers was not the emphasis they placed on

formal religious and moral instruction; rather it was their concern to bring the women of England to an awareness of their calling in life, the moral uplifting of society. Their writings are a cry for action, an appeal to women to become alive to their responsibilities. There was nothing sentimental in their views of woman and female education. They were sober-minded, intensely serious champions of their sex, demanding for girls a more rigorous religious and, to some extent, intellectual training, not so that they could achieve their 'rights', but in order for them to perform their duties. In 1776, a writer for the Critical Review remarked of female novelists that "they seem to be animated with an emulation for vindicating the honour of women in general rather than for acquiring to themselves the invidious reputation of great accomplishments."[59] He could quite properly have made the same observation about the female writers on education.

III

Not unnaturally, the attitudes adopted by the male writers towards women and their education differed from those taken by the female. While they shared their piety and their concern to base the education of girls upon religious principles, their ultimate purpose was not the same. They had none of the stern moral purpose of the female writers; they were not championing a cause. There is nothing in their

writings to suggest that they had any conviction or, indeed, hope that a correct education would produce a generation of women who could, through their moral and religious purpose and resolution, 'regenerate society'. Their general aim was a simple one - to produce a virtuous woman whose life would centre upon the home, and more particularly, her husband. They were 'sentimentalists', whose 'romantic' notions of the female sex came usually directly from Rousseau. Their educational proposals were thus reactionary in the extreme. To gain and then please a husband, that was the chief purpose in life of a truly virtuous woman. It was also the major aim of her education.

Two of the most popular works produced by this 'sentimentalist school' were Henry Home's (Lord Kames') Loose Hints upon Education (1781), and Doctor Gregory's A Father's Legacy to his Daughters (1774).[60] Kames advised that a girl be employed "upon what will adorn her; she will apply to the needle more willingly than to reading and writing."[61] Many of his 'hints' are taken directly from Rousseau's Emile. For example, in discussing the 'flexible tongues' of females and their natural abilities in the art of conversation, Kames quotes Rousseau directly, although with no acknowledgement.[62]

> A man says what he knows; a woman, what is agreeable. Knowledge is necessary to the former, taste is sufficient to the latter. The politeness of men consists in offering service; of women in making themselves agreeable.[63]

Doctor Gregory's ideas were almost identical. Wit, he believed, was a most dangerous talent in a woman.[64] She should be cautious of displaying even good sense. ". . . if you happen to have any learning," he advised, "keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts and cultivated understanding."[65] Even her physical charms, if she wished to show them to most advantage, should be concealed. "The finest bosom in nature is not so fine as what imagination forms."[66]

Doctor Gregory's principal concern, and an understandable one for a dying father with two daughters to provide for, was to get them married. In his Legacy he pointed out to them "those virtues and accomplishments which render you most respectable and amiable in the eyes of my own sex."[67] Religious instruction, needlework, knitting and domestic economy should comprise the major part of a young lady's education. These were all that were required to attract a worthy suitor and make him happy. It was not necessary, he believed, for a girl to love a man in order to marry him, for since "nature has not given you that unlimited range in your choice which we enjoy, she has wisely and benevolently assigned to you a greater flexibility of taste on this subject."[68] And should it chance that she did love, or come to love, her husband, "let me advise you never to discover to him the full extent of your love."[69]

Women, according to Doctor Gregory, were born to be, above all else, dissimulators, hiding their learning, their charms, their love, and even their good health.[70] What she should constantly strive to be was what good men believed she ought to be. Thus, the character of woman and her education should depend on the current sentiments of men about women, although the writers themselves invariably justified their particular conception of woman by an appeal to her original nature.

If not the most popular, by far the most typical of this school of thought was John Moir, whose Female Tuition appeared in 1784. Parroting Rousseau throughout the book, he noted that "nature seems to have meant them [women] for the still scenes of retirement;"[71] therefore, they should be "accustomed to the earliest habits of subjection and obedience."[72] The virtues most properly to be inculcated in young ladies were diligence, activity, a love for economy and simplicity.[73]

Although for Moir, as for all the male writers, "religion alone lifts the sex above the seduction of vice, and secures to them that confidence which originates in purity of mind and delicacy of behaviour,"[74] he was not, primarily, a religious writer. For him, it was nature that dictated the form female education should assume. "Nature only is lovely," he enthused, "and nothing unnatural can ever be amiable."[75] It was nature, for example, that had given women influence over men.

> Nature intended us to be led by their fancies, dance attendance on their wishes, and minister to their caprice. Who has not experienced their powers of persuasion? Do they not chide, or teize [sic] or look us into conviction, or good humour, at pleasure? Is not the eloquence of their eyes, their accent, their action, in every circumstance, on every emergency, calculated at once to fascinate or subdue, to agitate with passion, or to melt with rapture?[76]

For Mrs. Chapone and Hannah More, of course, it was precisely this kind of influence which ought to be checked and regulated by education. Women had a higher calling in life than playing the coquette and charming men.

Thus, although Moir and his colleagues paid lip-service to the ideal of female influence, and saw religion as the "glory of the sex",[77] their major concern was to render women pleasing to men. As Moir insisted,

> It is not enough to make your daughters good, you must also make them agreeable; and wherever the principles of innocence are out of danger, as complaissant and accomodating as possible. - Nature has constituted them the delight of the other sex, and it would ill become you to counteract, by negligence or inattention, her generous design.[78]

The intellectual improvement of women was of little concern to such writers. Moir devotes hardly any space to a discussion of what girls should know. For him, cleanliness, neatness, "inviolable decency" and the ability to please were all that were important.[79]

IV

Madame de Genlis (1746-1830) held views of women and

women's education that were scarcely an advance on those of Moir and the other writers of his school. However, her great interest in educational method entitles her to be considered as a member of the 'educational school'.[80] So high was her reputation as a teacher that, in 1782, she was appointed supervisor of the studies of the French princes, including Louis Philippe. While in this position, she published her greatest work on education, Adele and Theodore (1782).

The book was an immediate success in England, arousing favourable comment throughout fashionable society and educational circles. Fanny Burney was enchanted with it. After sitting up all night to read it, she advised a friend that it was

> a book you must purchase, for there are so many good directions about education, that, though the general plan is impracticable, except to very rich and very independent people, there are a thousand useful hints for folks in real life.[81]

The Edgeworths were equally impressed and, on their meeting the authoress for the first time, presented her with a new translation of the work.[82] There were few who would have disagreed with the opinion of a reviewer for La Belle Assemblée, who found her works for youth

> alike fascinating and instructive; they inculcate the principles of the purest morality; they breathe the sentiments of the most rational piety, and lead the juvenile mind, in a manner that is irresistibly attractive, to the love and practice of every social virtue. It cannot be surprising, that they should be read and admired in every country to which the knowledge of letters has penetrated . . .[83]

Madame de Genlis' private life, however, was not pervaded with the same piety and orthodoxy that characterized her writings. She was intensely vain and, perhaps worse for contemporary English readers, an educated French woman. At first lionized by fashionable society, she became by 1802 a social outcast. Miss Burney, who on first acquaintance in 1782 found her "the sweetest as well as the most accomplished Frenchwoman I ever met with,"[84] soon shunned her altogether. Even the tolerant Maria Edgeworth gained an unfavourable impression of her and confessed that she appreciated why Madame de Genlis was universally disliked.[85] Her personal reputation reached its nadir in 1806 with the publication of The Female Revolutionary Plutarch. In a vicious attack, the anonymous author grouped her with other French female pedants, like Madame Necker, Madame de Stael, and Madame Roland, implicated her in the French Revolution, insisted that she was pregnant when married at the age of fifteen, made her out to be a political intriguer, and hinted that Adele and Theodore had been written by someone else.[86] Despite her personal reputation, her writings retained their popularity throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, occasionally appearing in bowdlerized versions.[87]

Like many of the educational works of the period, Adele and Theodore is an 'epistolary novel', consisting of the correspondence between the Baron and Baroness d'Almane

and their friends. Almost the only topics of the letters are Adele and Theodore, the children of the noble couple, who are to be educated according to the principles laid down in Rousseau's Emile.[88] In Letter IX,[89] the Baroness gives her (and Madame de Genlis') views of the female character and the education of a lady.

> We must be very careful not to inflame the minds of women, or raise them above themselves. They are born for a domestic and dependent situation, and ought to possess mildness, sensibility, and a just way of reasoning. They should have resources against idleness, with great moderation in their inclinations, and no passions. Genius is for them a useless and a dangerous gift; it lifts them out of their proper sphere, or serves to disgust them with it;. . . a taste for learning makes them appear singular, and deprives them of that domestic simplicity and tenderness, and of that society of which they are so great an ornament. Formed for the management of household matters, and for the education of their children, dependent on a husband, who by turns requires their submission and their council, it is necessary that they should have method, prudence, patience, and a just way of thinking, that they may be able to converse with propriety on all subjects, and possess all those talents which render them pleasing; that they may have a taste for reading and reflection, without displaying their knowledge, and that they may feel the passion of love without giving themselves up to enthusiasm.[90]

If this were all Madame de Genlis had to say about the education of women, she could be dismissed, along with a host of male writers, as another 'sentimentalist'. However, as Fanny Burney pointed out, there are 'a thousand useful hints' on education contained in the book, most of which arise out of her concern to base educational method upon the child's 'natural development' as interpreted by Rousseau and Locke.

Her reading of these authors had convinced her that their educational ideas were identical. As she pointed out, "The English Philosopher seemed only to give his advice. Rousseau repeated the same things, but he did not advise, he commanded and was obeyed."[91]

The first principle of education "is not to be in a hurry; to teach children what they can easily comprehend, and never to neglect an opportunity of teaching them everything within their reach."[92] Thus, by the time Adele is twelve, she has received no formal instruction at all; she is unable to write well and has few ideas. Her natural inclinations have led her to read music, play upon several instruments, and draw "in a surprising manner for her age."[93] She has also learned to play happily and healthily, tend a garden and measure distances with the eye. Although "the word study is never mentioned, . . . there is scarce a moment in the day that they do not gain some knowledge; and certainly there never were children so perfectly happy."[94]

Adele is, in fact, a 'child of nature',[95] a healthy, innocent, artless (if very musical and artistic) young lady, whose very simplicity charms any male stranger she happens to meet. Before she is fifteen and before her education has taken a formal turn, she has won the heart of her future husband. She now enters polite company, takes in the theatre and attends lectures upon philosophy, chemistry and natural

history; she begins to read improving literature and learns to speak English and Italian. But as the Baroness is quick to explain,

> Do not imagine . . . that my intention is to make Adelaide learned; . . . I only mean to give her a little knowledge of these things, which may serve to amuse her sometimes, and prevent her being tired at any time, should her father, her brother, or her husband chuse to talk on such subjects.[96]

When she is eighteen, she and her brother are both married to exemplary young persons, and, like Emile and Sophie, settle down on their landed estate to enjoy each other's company.

It is, of course, impossible to do justice to a work like Adele and Theodore in a summary. It is much more than a novel; much more, even, than a treatise of education. It includes observations on the significance of children's play; how to keep children healthy; cruelty to animals; benevolence to the poor; the role and importance of the death bed in education; the discipline of natural consequences; the dangers of living in towns; domestic economy; preserving a reputation; how to end undesirable friendships; the correct treatment of servants; how to influence a husband; female sensibility; setting up charity schools for the local poor; and innumerable other matters of interest to women.

The comprehensiveness of the work may well have been a reason for its popularity. In combining the major ideas of Rousseau's educational thought with the more obvious

elements of English religious and humanitarian feeling, she had effected a considerable, if somewhat uneasy, compromise, one that assured her book a wide reading and favourable reception. And if the aims and content of the education she recommended for young ladies were scarcely an 'advance' on current practice, her enlightened ideas on educational method entitle her to be ranked with Basedow, Richter and Pestalozzi as a major popularizer of Rousseau's ideal of an education based on nature.

Like Madame de Genlis, Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) shows in her writings the influence of several streams of thought. In view of her upbringing and the contacts she enjoyed with various intellectual circles, this is hardly surprising. Her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, was much affected by Rousseau's thought; indeed, he raised his first-born according to the principles laid down in Emile. The family enjoyed a long and close friendship with Thomas Day, whose Sandford and Merton was the clearest and most influential exposition and application of Rousseau's educational ideas written in English. The Edgeworths were also connected socially and intellectually with the Lichfield Circle, where they came into contact with Erasmus Darwin, Josiah Wedgwood, Doctor Beddoes (who eventually married Maria's sister, Anna), and the Barbaulds. Maria herself corresponded with Elizabeth Hamilton and was a dear friend and confidante of the Romillys.

Through the latter she was introduced to utilitarian thought and the astonishing intellectual progress of the young John Stuart Mill. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is clear from her correspondence and writings that there was scarcely a contemporary work on education that she had not read, summarized and critically evaluated.

Maria Edgeworth was no romantic visionary who wished to reconstruct society through education. It was enough for her that it develop good wives and mothers, able to perform all their duties willingly and efficiently. With this aim in mind, she advocated a somewhat more rigorous intellectual training than was currently the case. Above all, she insisted that it must be an education based upon a scientific methodology. Her acceptance of Associationism meant that, for her, the moral and intellectual weaknesses of women could be traced to the implanting of wrong impressions during childhood. It also implied that a correct education would not only eradicate these weaknesses but replace them with moral and intellectual excellence.

Like the Bluestockings, Maria Edgeworth had little time for sentimentalist notions of women. Education should aim at producing a woman of sense rather than feeling.

> Women [she pointed out] from their situation and duties in society, are called upon rather for the exercise of quiet domestic virtues, than the splendid acts of generosity, or those exaggerated expressions of tenderness, which are the characteristics of heroines in romances.[97]

For this reason, particular care needed to be taken to "cultivate the reasoning powers at the same time that we repress the enthusiasm of fine feeling."[98]

A woman whose 'reasoning powers' had been cultivated would, however, in no way be a pedant. If Miss Edgeworth had little but contempt for a 'woman of feeling' and ridiculed "the nonsense of sentimentality,"[99] she had an equal aversion for 'literary ladies', who would invariably "be losers in love as well as in friendship."[100] Each sex, she believed, had its "peculiar virtues". Women were to exercise theirs in the domestic sphere, conforming their taste to that of their husbands, educating their children, and running a household.

Although she and her father disavowed "the design of laying down a system of education, founded upon morality exclusive of Religion,"[101] neither of them made any mention of religious instruction in their educational works. It would seem that for Maria Edgeworth, "the even temper, the poised judgement, the stoical serenity of philosophy,"[102] which characterized a truly virtuous woman, could be developed without any reference to revealed religion. And yet her ideal of a completely moral woman was every bit as strict as that of a Hannah More or even a Mrs. West. For example, in her epistolary novel, Letters of Julia and Caroline (1795), Julia, who is governed entirely by her feelings, eventually runs away from her husband. Caroline, her closest friend and a model of propriety, immediately informs her,

> I burnt your letter the moment I read it. Your past confidence I will never betray; but I must renounce all future intercourse with you. I am a sister, a wife, a mother, all these conditions forbid me to be longer your friend. In misfortune, in sickness or in poverty, I never would have forsaken you; but infamy I cannot share. . . . Your opinion is to be nothing to me or mine to you.[103]

Miss Edgeworth nowhere discusses the precise content of a girl's education. It should, she felt, vary according to the current state of knowledge, the prevailing views of a woman's capabilities, and, above all, the interests of her husband. Thus, she noted that

> many things, which were thought to be above their comprehension, and unsuited to their sex, have now been found to be perfectly within the compass of their abilities, and peculiarly suited to their situation.[104]

Botany was one such subject; chemistry, she hoped, would soon be another. The latter was a science well adapted to a woman's abilities and responsibilities, having infinite variety, requiring no bodily strength, not inflaming the imagination, and improving the judgement.[105] Moreover, she added, since "a good cook is only an empirical chemist, . . . the study of this science would surely produce a salutary reform in receipt books."[106]

A woman's knowledge and taste should depend, to a large extent, upon that of her husband; her education therefore should seek "to cultivate the general powers of the mind." As a sensible father remarks in her Letters for Literary Ladies,

> I do not desire to make my daughter a musician, a painter, or a poetess; I do not desire to make her a botanist, a mathematician or a chemist; but I wish to give her the habit of industry and attention, the love of knowledge and the power of reasoning; these will enable her to attain excellence in any pursuit of science or of literature.[107]

Thus, Practical Education has relatively little to say about the content of education. It is primarily a textbook on educational method. Whether the subject was grammar, classical literature, geography, arithmetic or mechanics, the method should be the same. Experiment, discovery, activity, a respect for the facts, applying what was learned to every-day concerns, these were the indispensable features of all truly educational endeavours.

Samuel and Anne Romilly, much impressed with the Edgeworths' educational ideas, followed their suggestions in the upbringing of their children. Writing to Maria in 1814, Anne reported that she had avoided cramming their little heads with information; she also confessed herself a little worried at their apparent backwardness. But, she reassured herself and Maria, "I do not forget that we have learnt from practical education [sic] that it is not of so much consequence what a child learns, provided we are able to excite in his mind a desire for improvement and thirst after knowledge."[108]

The works of Maria Edgeworth were generally well received in England. Her lack of emphasis on religious

instruction did, it is true, call forth some criticism;[109] but her eminently sensible and practical recommendations had a wide appeal, particularly among the liberal and non-conformist elements in society. The response of the Edinburgh Review to her Popular Tales was typical of reactions to her writings. Above all else, the reviewer noted, in her works she impressed on the minds of readers "the inestimable value and substantial dignity of industry, perseverence, prudence, good humour, and all that train of vulgar and homely virtues, that have hitherto made the happiness of the world."[110] In the field of women's education, she was, perhaps, one of the more important moderate reformers, a thinker who wanted something more substantial than the current fare of accomplishments but who did not demand, or even envision, a more independent social, political and economic position for the female sex.

Somewhat less restrained both in her criticisms and in her demands for an improved system of female education was Elizabeth Hamilton (1758-1816). An extremely religious woman, who found little to disagree with in the works of Hannah More or Mrs. Chapone, she was also firmly convinced that the Principle of Association could explain and thus enable man to control the character of human beings. To combine the religious convictions of a Hannah More with the philosophical and psychological theories of a Duggald Stewart

was no easy task. Perhaps inevitably, there appear to be certain inconsistencies in her thought.

Thus, she believed, "That a contempt of the female nature, and an overweening conceit of the male, are of the number of these hereditary prejudices, will . . . be no difficult matter to prove."[111] The 'sentimentalists' were wrong in their insistence that the desire in women to please and appear amiable was an 'instinct of nature'. It was an insult to the intelligence to be told that women had "no other purpose than to contribute to the pleasure, and submit to the authority, of the lords of Creation."[112]

Any argument that sought to justify innate sexual characteristics needed to be treated with scepticism. Lord Kames, for example, following Rousseau almost word for word, had pointed out that

> the differing instincts of the two sexes appear very early. A boy is continually in action; he loves a drum, a top, to ride upon a stick. A girl, wishing to be agreeable, is fond of ornaments that please the eye. She begins with a doll, . . . in due time the doll is laid aside, and the young woman's own person becomes the object of her attention.[113]

Miss Hamilton preferred a more 'scientific' explanation.

> As to the specific differences betwixt the instincts of the two sexes, which his Lordship and Rousseau take for granted, I confess I am somewhat sceptical, ... Here, as in many other instances, we find the inclinations, which we have inspired by means of early association, ascribed to original instinct.[114]

Dressing a doll and being praised for doing so had <u>caused</u> a fondness for ornament and a desire to please others.

The "premature distinction" thus made between the "pursuits and avocations" of boys and girls tended to increase "the pride and arrogance" of the former. "They soon cease to tolerate them [girls] as companions, but regard them as incumbrances at once troublesome and despicable."[115] Meanwhile, girls were taught, from early childhood, that "opinion is the idol they are . . . to worship. Opinion is their rule of life, their law of virtue; and fashion their only test of propriety."[116] The mental and emotional differences between the sexes were due solely to their experiences in childhood, not to their 'original nature'.

But having destroyed the grounds on which arguments for the existence of innate differences were based, Miss Hamilton refused to admit that the sexes should perform similar functions. Nature, she insisted, had made a distinction, one which rendered each sex "most fit and capable to fulfill the duties of its peculiar sphere."[117] Thus, although she disagreed with the 'sentimentalists', she also disputed the claims of the radical feminists. "By far the greater part of those, who have hitherto taken upon themselves to stand forth as champions of sexual equality, have done it upon grounds that to me appear indefensible, if not absurd."[118] Not content to argue that women were of equal moral worth and equal objects of Divine favour, they have insisted upon

> an equality of employments and avocations, founded upon the erroneous idea of a perfect similarity of powers. . . . They desire for their sex an admission

> into the theatre of public life, and wish to qualify them for it by an education in every respect similar to that of men.[119]

Ideally, there should be common elements in the education of boys and girls. Both men and women possessed the same faculties, perception, attention, conception, judgement, abstraction, taste, imagination and reflection.[120] The use of these faculties "as well as the limbs, must be acquired by exercise."[121] No one of them should be strengthened at the expense of the others. It was improper, for example, to develop a girl's imagination and taste, leaving her judgement pitifully weak. Boys and girls should be subjected to similar discipline. There should be "but one law of propriety, decency, modesty, and simplicity; one rule of humble submission and cheerful obedience."[122] Above all, both should be given a truly religious education and taught the danger of preferring present happiness to eternal well-being. A mere knowledge of Scripture was not enough. The "precepts of religion and virtue" must be transformed "into those habits of thinking and acting, which are termed ruling principles."[123]

Important as these common elements were, the education of boys should not be taken as a model for that of girls. Women ought not to lament their exclusion from, for example, a study of the learned languages; rather they should be thankful for their being spared contact with the prejudices

and false moral and religious principles of the ancients.[124] "Instead of murmuring at the circumstances under which they are placed, women ought early to be taught to turn those very circumstances to their advantage, by rendering them conducive to the cultivation of all the milder virtues."[125]

Unhampered by tradition and prejudice, mothers were in a position to devise an education for their daughters which would accord with Christian principles. "Meekness, gentleness, temperance, and chastity" had become known as the "feminine virtues";[126] they were also, and more importantly, the Christian virtues. If men chose to consider them unsuitable for their sex, and thus inappropriate in a boy's education, so much the worse for them, and society. Women must repair this deficiency. The female sex had a heavy responsibility; they alone had the opportunity of becoming the upholders of true Christian principles in society.

Thus, by a somewhat circuitous route, and despite the fact that at times she seemed to deny the existence of innate sexual characteristics, Miss Hamilton arrived eventually at fundamentally the same position as Hannah More. Rather than seeking to become the equals of men politically, socially, economically and educationally, women should devote themselves to their own moral and religious improvement in order to exert a beneficial influence on society. If they were to do this, their education must be shorn of its emphasis on

accomplishments, toughened up intellectually, and seek to develop an intensely religious woman, fully aware of her enormous domestic and social responsibilities.

V

One of the more interesting personalities and perhaps the keenest intellect among the theorists of female education was Catherine Macaulay Graham (1731-1791), the earliest and most respectable of the radical feminists. She wrote an eight volume History of England from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line, which was widely praised, and showed a lively and most unfeminine interest in political affairs, even daring to cross swords with Burke over his Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents.[127] The interest which contemporaries took in such an unusual woman was not lessened when, at the age of forty seven, she was married for a second time to a young man of twenty one. Yet her eccentricities, her political meddling, and even her radical ideas on female education did not lessen her reputation or respectability. Even Hannah More felt it necessary to pay her respects at a celebration in honour of Mrs. Graham's forty sixth birthday.[128] And the reviewers never ceased to speak of her with deference as something of a female prodigy, whose ideas deserved at least to be read, if not heeded.

Mrs. Graham's views of the female character and edu-

cation are set out in her Letters on Education (1790). Like Elizabeth Hamilton, she was convinced that

> without an adequate knowledge of the power of association, by which a single impression calls up a host of ideas, which . . . form a close and almost inseparable combination, it will be impracticable for a tutor to fashion the mind according to any particular idea he may frame of excellence.[129]

Unlike Miss Hamilton, however, she was willing to follow the implications of Associationism to their logical conclusions. Since every quality of the mind and character is determined by a particular combination of associations, "there is not a virtue or vice that belongs to humanity, which we do not make ourselves; and if their qualities should be hostile to our happiness, we may ascribe their malignancy to human agency."[130]

It followed also, according to Mrs. Graham, that there was "no characteristic difference" in the sexes.[131] Only the "fond prejudices" of men, to which women had all too willingly acceded, had prevented everyone from recognizing this simple fact. Chief among the culprits for the continuing popularity of this error was Rousseau.

> Never did enthusiasm and the love of paradox, those enemies to philosophical disquisition, appear in more strong opposition to plain sense than in Rousseau's definition of this difference. . . . In short, it is not reason, it is not wit; it is pride of sensuality that speaks in Rousseau, and in this instance has lowered the man of genius to the licentious pedant.[132]

By ascribing to each sex distinctive virtues, the sentimentalists had created a dual system of morality. But,

she insisted, since there is but one rule of right conduct and no 'characteristic difference' in the sexes, it followed, firstly, that

> true virtue in one sex must be equally so in the other. . . . Secondly, That true wisdom, which is never found at variance with rectitude, is as useful to women as men; because it is necessary to the highest degree of happiness, which can never exist with ignorance.
>
> Lastly, That as on our entrance into another world, our state of happiness may possibly depend on the degree of perfection we have attained in this, we cannot justly lessen, in one sex or the other, the means by which perfection is acquired . . . .[133]

It was most undesirable, therefore, for boys and girls to have different educational experiences. In infancy they should share common games and amusements, and even through childhood and adolescence there were many activities, walking, riding and dancing, that they could enjoy together. Their common education should extend to intellectual development; no differentiation of subject matter should be made solely on the basis of sex.

> By the uninterrupted intercourse which you will establish, both sexes will find, that friendship may be enjoyed between them without passion. The wisdom of your daughters will preserve them from the bane of coquetry. . . . Your sons will look for something more solid in women, than a mere outside; and be no longer the dupes to the meanest, the weakest, and the most profligate of the sex.[134]

Mrs. Graham's "injudicious and fanciful" suggestions, as one reviewer called them,[135] were not confined to a plea for equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. She went further, condemning "the total exclusion of every

political right to the sex in general", and expressing the hope that the improved education of women would soon enable them to achieve their "rational privileges."[136] It was probably just as well for Mrs. Graham's reputation that she died within a year of the publication of her Letters on Education. Before long such ideas were considered not only 'fanciful' but downright seditious. Her death may well have saved her from the obloquy that was heaped upon her disciple, Mary Wollstonecraft.

There have been few lives shot through with more unhappiness and tragedy than that of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797).[137] Her views of women and women's education may be considered in large part a direct and understandable response to the circumstances of her life. Her father was a drunken profligate who ill-treated his wife and daughters. When her mother died, Mary, barely twenty one, went to live with a friend, whose choice in husbands turned out to be every bit as unfortunate as her mother's. Before long, she moved into her sister's household, and here encountered, for the third time, the misery of a woman permanently coupled to an unfeeling husband. And when she did go out into the world on her own as a teacher and private governess, she found little but injustice and ingratitude.

Her experiences with the opposite sex were equally disastrous. Her first romance, with a dissenting minister,

ended quickly. In her early thirties, following her heart rather than her head, she conceived a passion for Fuseli, the painter, who although married, was quite willing to enjoy a purely 'intellectual flirtation'. Once again, Mary suffered the pangs of rejection. Within a year, however, while visiting Paris, she met and fell in love with an American, Gilbert Imlay. Although no formal ceremony took place, they soon considered themselves man and wife. In 1794, Mary gave birth to a daughter, and while her desire for Imlay and a settled domestic life grew daily, his noticeably began to cool off. When the inevitable break came, Mary attempted suicide. Finally, in 1796, she formed a connection with William Godwin, with whom she enjoyed a brief period of contentment and happiness. When she became pregnant, they quelled their distaste for the marriage ceremony and became legally man and wife. The final tragedy was not to be long delayed. Less than a month after giving birth to a daughter (later Mary Shelley), she died. Her whole life can, perhaps, best be summed up in a remark she made to Godwin less than a year before her death. The fact that, since her death, it has become something of a cliché does nothing to lessen its truth. "You talk of the roses which grow profusely in every path of life," she wrote, "I catch at them; but only encounter the thorns."[138]

The intellectual contacts which Mary Wollstonecraft

enjoyed increased her sense of dissatisfaction with the arrangement of society. While teaching at a school in Newington Green, she met and became a member of Doctor Richard Price's 'enlightened congregation'. Through Joseph Johnson, the publisher, she was introduced to Priestley, Tom Paine, and Godwin and his circle. From such people, she learned the language of social improvement and reform.

And yet, despite her frequenting these hotbeds of radicalism, she maintained until late in her life close contacts with her sisters and their families, whose orthodoxy was beyond question. For a while, she even made a friend of Mrs. Trimmer, whom she found "a truly respectable woman."[139] It is not generally appreciated that, as late as 1791, Mary Wollstonecraft's publicly expressed views of female education were, to say the least, 'unenlightened'. In her Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1787), and Original Stories from Real Life (1791), there was little to differentiate her from any of the other respectable female writers of the period.

Thus, in her Thoughts, she advised,

> The main business of our lives is to learn to be virtuous; and He who is training us up for immortal bliss, knows what trials will contribute to make us so; and our resignation and improvement will render us respectable to ourselves, and to that being, whose approbation is of more value than life itself.[140]

The book is, in fact, a monitorial textbook on lady-like conduct. Girls are instructed, among other things, to prefer "a man of sense and goodness" to a mere lover;[141] to confine

their activities and amusements to the domestic sphere;[142] to maintain a scrupulous observance of the Sabbath;[143] and to provide a proper example to the servants.[144] All the usual criticisms of fashionable life and education are present, including condemnations of boarding schools, artificial manners, card playing and the theatre. In its viewpoint, the book has much in common with Hannah More's Strictures on . . . Female Education.

In her Original Stories, the most worthwhile feature of which was a series of illustrations by William Blake, Mary Wollstonecraft sounds less like Hannah More, and more like Mrs. Sherwood. The central figure of the stories, Mrs. Mason, is certainly the grimmest governess ever portrayed in fiction and bears a striking resemblance to the Fairchild parents.[145] Given the task of educating two girls who have been neglected by their parents and corrupted by servants, Mrs. Mason is forced at first to allow them to ask questions, "a method she would not have adopted, had she educated them from the first."[146] However, her ability to deliver crushingly heavy sermons at the slightest provocation soon reduces the girls to dutiful and totally submissive silence. When they step on insects, they are lectured (for some eight pages) on the sin of cruelty to animals. When, during a violent thunderstorm, they show some apprehension, Mrs. Mason reproves them and observes with typical self-assurance,

> Should the flash that passes by us, strike me dead, it cannot hurt me. I fear not death! - I only fear that Being who can render death terrible, on whose providence I calmly rest.[147]

And when young Caroline is stung by a wasp and begins to cry with pain, Mrs. Mason is shocked at this display of what she calls "a weak mind - a proof that you cannot employ yourself about things of consequence."[148]

> Children early feel bodily pain, to habituate them to bear the conflicts of the soul, when they become reasonable creatures. . . . Those who, when young, weep if the least trifle annoys them, will never, I fear, have sufficient strength of mind to encounter all the miseries that can afflict the body. . . . If a tooth is to be drawn . . . determine resolutely that it shall be done immediately; and debate not, . . . After you have borne bodily pain you will have firmness enough to sustain the still more excruciating agonies of the mind.[149]

Mrs. Mason's views of children are, perhaps, best illustrated when Mary scolds a servant girl. The governess is horrified at such precocity, and sentences her pupil to the most awful punishment she can devise, banishment from her company for a while.

> By the time we return [she observes] you may perhaps have recollected that children are inferior to servants . . . . I have not as much respect for you as for them; you may possible become a virtuous character, - Many of my servants are really so already.[150]

Nor were Mrs. Mason's social and educational ideas any less conservative. A pride in one's family and 'blood connections', she believed, "most beneficial to society" and likely "to inspire high notions of honour, and to banish meanness."[151] "Music, drawing, works of usefulness and

fancy" should comprise one part of a young lady's education; the rest should be devoted to reading serious books and daily prayer and devotional exercises.[152]

The Thoughts on . . . Education and Original Stories were, of course, well received, demonstrating to one reviewer, "the good sense and piety of the benevolent writer".[153] Yet within a year of the appearance of Original Stories, Mary Wollstonecraft had written and published A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), the most radically feminist work of the period. No doubt she was encouraged by the generally favourable reception given to her A Vindication of the Rights of Man (1790), in which she attacked Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France. But by 1792, many of Burke's prophecies had been realized; ideas and suggestions which in 1790 appeared both reasonable and feasible were soon to be condemned as irreligious and seditious. Moreover, the Rights of Woman was not a coolly philosophical treatise on abstract rights; it was both a bitter condemnation of many of the most sacred institutions of society, and an impassioned plea for a new social relationship between the sexes. Its publication not only occasioned a break with her own sisters and their families, but set against her most of the writers of the period.

Yet there was still a good deal of common ground between Mary Wollstonecraft and other female writers. Like

them, she wished "to see woman placed in a station in which she would advance, instead of retarding the progress of those glorious principles that give a substance to morality."[154] Sounding very like Hannah More, she insisted,

> It is time to effect a revolution in female manners - time to restore to them their lost dignity - and make them, as part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world.[155]

What concerned her above all else was the moral improvement of society which, she believed, could only be achieved through a re-evaluation of the status and education of women.

Much of the Rights of Women is taken up with criticisms of the influence on public morality of "the prevailing notion respecting a sexual character."[156] The works of Rousseau, Doctor Gregory, Madame de Genlis, and even Mrs. Chapone were all criticized as having "a most baneful effect on the morals and manners of the female world."[157] All of them had ascribed to women distinctive virtues and thus a distinctive system of morality. All of them had justified an education which prepared women to be little more than "gentle domestic brutes."[158] But the good conduct of women could not be guaranteed by keeping "them always in a state of childhood."[159]

> . . . not only the virtue but the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and . . . women, considered not only as moral but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the same means as men.[160]

Education, she believed, should "enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent."[161] If educated correctly, women would not need to depend on the judgement of "so imperfect a creature as man."[162] Since virtue was dependent on knowledge, "let us endeavour to strengthen our minds by reflection till our heads become a balance for our hearts."[163] Once achieved, this 'balance' would ensure a woman the ability to judge for herself the worth of an action, to free herself from servile dependence upon others; her own conscience would be a sufficient guide to conduct.

Women would never achieve this independence while men enjoyed "a direct and exclusive appropriation of reason," and confined the female sex to an education and a world founded solely upon sentiment and feeling. Boys and girls should early be accustomed to enjoy the same recreational and educational activities. To shut up females together in nurseries, schools and convents was to engender an undue familiarity between girls and, more harmful, an excessive awareness of sexual differences.[164] "Were boys and girls permitted to pursue the same studies together, those graceful decencies might early be inculcated which produce modesty without those sexual differences that taint the mind."[165]

Since private boarding and day schools were both inefficient and expensive, the government, she advised,

would do well to establish co-educational day schools for all children between the ages of five and nine.[166] On completion of this common elementary education, those intended for domestic employment and "mechanical trades" would be removed. The others, presumably the children of middle class parents, would remain, pursuing a common course of studies in the morning, while in the afternoons, the girls would receive various forms of domestic training. Those of superior abilities and fortune should be free, at this stage, to attend private schools whose curricula would lead to the university.

During the elementary stage, all children would study botany, astronomy, reading, writing, arithmetic, natural history, natural philosophy, gymnastics, religion, history and politics. Particular care was to be taken to teach girls "the elements of anatomy and medicine."[167] It was also desirable that children of both sexes be informed of the details of human birth.[168] Delicacy, she insisted, should never be allowed to oppose, much less suppress, the truth.

These educational proposals were radical enough, and, on their own, would doubtless have produced a considerable reaction. But Mary Wollstonecraft did not confine herself to purely educational matters. She went further.[169] Although at present, she observed, "the whole system of representation

is . . . only a convenient handle for despotism" and most men were as poorly represented as women, one day the female sex would be granted political rights.[170] More immediately, women should expand their range of occupations beyond purely domestic concerns. There was no good reason why they should not serve society as doctors, nurses, midwives, businesswomen, or even politicians.[171]

In the name of justice, she demanded that the father of an illegitimate child be required by law to support both the child and the mother.[172] The legal provisions of the marriage code should be altered to give wives the same legal status as husbands.[173] She attacked inherited wealth; statesmen whose sole business in life consisted "in multiplying dependents and contriving taxes which grind the poor to pamper the rich;" the ideal of filial duty, which she called "only a selfish respect for property;" and those "indolent slugs who guard, by sliming over it, the snug place" in endowed schools and colleges, and preach popery under the guise of defending the Established Church.[174]

Not surprisingly, such outspoken attacks and radical proposals drew upon their author swift and severe censure. Even the liberal New Annual Register could not condone such a work, finding that it contained "singular and fanciful opinions, that we find objectionable."[175] As the tide of reaction reached full flow in the middle and late nineties,

both Mary Wollstonecraft and her Rights of Woman were subjected to increasing criticism. The culmination was reached in 1798, with the publication of Richard Polwhele's The Unsex'd Females, which, although possessing no intrinsic merit whatsoever, is noteworthy as an example of the virulence and extravagance of the criticism.

In indifferent verse and vast quantities of marginal gloss, Polwhele condemned Miss Wollstonecraft and her allies.

> Survey with me, what ne'er our fathers saw,
> A female band despising NATURE's law,
> As 'proud defiance' flashes from their arms,
> And vengeance smothers all their softer charms.
> I shudder at the new unpictur'd scene,
> Where unsex'd woman vaunts the imperious mien.[176]

The several love affairs of Mary Wollstonecraft, her illegitimate children, attempted suicide and undesirable connections provided excellent material for a cruelly inaccurate account of her life and opinions. Even her educational ideas were distorted by Polwhele. In one footnote, he attributes to her a suggestion obviously made by another writer.

> Miss Wollstonecraft does not blush to say, in an introduction to a book designed for the use of young ladies, that . . . 'it would be right to speak of the organs of generation as freely as we mention our eyes or our heads'. To such language our botanising girls are doubtless familiarised; and, they are in a fair way of becoming worthy disciples of Miss W.[177]

Co-educational botanising was, for Polwhele, the most vicious feature of "Miss W's' ideas. Even segregated botany did not accord with his opinion of female modesty. It was quite improper, he felt, that girls

> With bliss botanic as their bosoms heave,
> Still pluck forbidden fruit, with mother Eve,
> For puberty in sighing florets pant,
> Or point the prostitution of a plant;
> Dissect its organs of unhallow'd lust,
> And fondly gaze the titillating dust.[178]

Polwhele concluded by comparing Mary Wollstonecraft very unfavourably with such virtuous and judicious writers as Hannah More and Mrs. Chapone.

Some defense and support for Miss Wollstonecraft and her ideas was forthcoming. John Colls, in a Poetical Epistle, sang her praises, and Mary Hays (1759-1843), in her own works,[179] echoed all the views expressed in the Rights of Woman. But they could not save either Miss Wollstonecraft or her opinions from oblivion. By 1810, along with Godwin himself, she was a forgotten figure. It was not until the 1870's that she came into prominence again. By the end of the nineteenth century, she had become what she still is today, a champion "of the new faith who suffered martyrdom for the cause" of female emancipation.[180]

VI

As has been noted above, both the quality of governesses and the practice of educating all classes of girls alike were universally condemned. Thus, major concerns of many of the writers of the period were first, the necessity of obtaining an adequate supply of competent teachers, and secondly, the need to establish a system of schools that would cater for the varying requirements of particular social classes.

Some observers believed that, in order to raise the quality and remuneration of governesses, government action was required. An anonymous writer remarked in 1785,

> I could wish a plan was adopted by Parliament to restrain all . . . persons from the business of teaching, unless examined by proper persons that the Legislature should appoint; and those persons qualified, should have a certificate from such great authority. This would be the effectual means of rewarding persons of real merit.[181]

Some twenty years later, a similar suggestion was made by a correspondent of La Belle Assemblée.[182]

More in touch with the spirit of the times were those writers who based their proposals on an appeal to private effort and initiative. Catherine Cappe, for example, advised her Ladies' Committee to establish a seminary with the aim of

> educating young women, or rather of so completing their education, as to qualify them for teachers in boarding schools, and for supplying the places of foreigners, who at present, are so generally employed in that capacity.[183]

Having completed the two year course, the graduates of the school would receive certificates and, through the social contacts of the committee, be placed in suitable positions. Chirol made a similar proposal, advising the setting up of a Seminary for the Education of Private Governesses, which would be supported by public subscriptions. He also suggested the establishment of an Institution for Assisting Boarding School Teachers to take care of retired and penniless governesses and place those who were unemployed.[184]

Priscilla Wakefield's scheme to obtain qualified teachers was more comprehensive, although once again founded upon voluntary effort. It was necessary, she felt, to establish

> institutions for the express purpose of educating young women, of small expectations, for the office [of teaching]. These institutions should be sufficiently endowed, to provide masters in every useful science, and to furnish a well-chosen library, . . . and after a certain number of years, women only should be nominated to the charge of instruction. The effect of such seminaries would be a constant succession of female teachers properly prepared for their destination. . . . Another beneficial consequence would be, the affording a respectable subsistence to great numbers of young women, who are reduced to misery through want of employment, by enabling them to teach those sciences, which are exclusively taught by masters, an evil that calls loudly for redress.[185]

Little, if anything, was done about any of these proposals.

Miss Wakefield went on to discuss the second major issue, "the appropriation of schools to the different classes of society."[186] Since there were four broad classes or degrees in society, there should be four distinct types of education. The daughters of the nobility were best educated at home or in small, very expensive boarding schools.[187] Although they were to become women of leisure, they should be accustomed early to perform their social obligations. Whether educated at home or at school, they should attend the local female poor, patronise, inspect and issue reports on 'useful institutions' in the locality, and check on the treatment of female apprentices. While carrying out these

duties, they should be improving their minds with whatever subjects their parents deemed suitable. No knowledge was inappropriate for a lady of this class. By the time her schooling was completed, she should be in a position to "devote her time, her talents, and her fortune, to the improvement of public morals, and the increase of public happiness."[188]

The second degree, the opulent members of the middle class, needed to exercise restraint and economy, never seeking to confuse the distinctions between themselves and the nobility.[189] For the daughters of this class, domestic education and/or day schools were most proper. Domestic duties, cooking, dressmaking, medicine, the rearing of infants, all were essential elements in their education. English, arithmetic, bookkeeping, drawing and natural history were useful acquirements and, when married, a female of this class should study her husband's business. Like the daughters of the nobility, they should be encouraged to give pecuniary aid and attention to local charitable enterprizes and institutions.

The third class, those whose industry afforded them an adequate living but who were by no means wealthy, should send their daughters to day schools, where they would be taught "humility, sobriety, modesty of deportment, [and] an industrious disposition."[190] Reading, writing, arithmetic,

religious knowledge, geography, history and needlework should comprise their studies. As soon as their formal education was completed, it was best that they be apprenticed to trades and encouraged to earn their own living.

For the fourth class, the labouring poor, "economy, cleanliness, industry, and . . . good temper" were the cardinal virtues. Girls of this class should attend charity schools, Sunday schools or schools of industry, where they would learn that "the misery of the poor, like that of other ranks, chiefly originates in their vices."[191] They should be provided with all the skills and knowledge which would enable them to lead industrious and virtuous lives. Thus, religion, plain-work, knitting, mending, washing and ironing were the most suitable 'educational' activities for them.

Miss Wakefield's plan to establish distinctive schools and types of education for particular ranks or classes was not an unusual one.[192] Mrs. Trimmer, for example, who was particularly interested in the education of the lower orders, advocated a system which would assign girls and boys to the charity schools, schools of industry and Sunday schools on the basis of family occupation and earnings.[193] Such proposals arose primarily from a concern to re-establish the clear cut distinctions between ranks, which writers of the period believed had existed earlier in the eighteenth century. Thus, none of them made any provision for movement from

elementary to secondary levels of education, or for transfer from one type of school to another. The schools and the education they provided were to be as distinct from each other as the ranks they were designed to serve.

As was suggested above, the criticisms of contemporary education and the proposals put forward to improve it appear to have had little effect on the education provided by boarding schools and private governesses in the first half of the nineteenth century. But it would be a mistake to attribute to the writers of the period no influence or significance at all. Few of them confined themselves to a discussion of merely educational matters. Their opinions of women and women's education both reflected and, in turn, helped popularize new images of woman. There was, of course, no unanimous agreement reached about what was the nature of woman and her social and domestic obligations. But it is possible to detect in the literature of the period a growing consistency of opinions on the subject. If educational practice changed but little in the nineteenth century, it may, perhaps, have been partly due to the fact that parents found little discordance between the education they purchased for their daughters and the ideas they had acquired of the nature and function of women.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See Chapter V, pp. 205-215.

[2] S. C. Gordon, Demands for the Education of Girls, 1790-1865. Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London, Institute of Education, 1950. p. 3.

[3] Hannah More, Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess, T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1805. 2 volumes. (hereafter referred to as Hints).

[4] J. J. Rousseau, Emile. (1762) J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1966. p. 56.

[5] Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. (1799), The Works of Hannah More. D. Graisberry, London, 1803. Vol. IV. pp. 19-20. (hereafter referred to as Strictures).

[6] Hannah More, Coelebs in Search of a Wife, (1809) T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1813. Vol. I. p. 14. (hereafter referred to as Coelebs).

[7] More, Strictures, p. 1.

[8] M. G. Jones, Hannah More, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1952. p. 116.

[9] More, Strictures, p. 157, Coelebs, Vol. I. p. 383, and Hints, Vol. II. p. 301.

[10] More, Strictures, p. 173.

[11] More, Hints, Vol. I. p. 28.

[12] More, Strictures, p. 121.

[13] Ibid. p. 131.

[14] Ibid. p. 108.

[15] More, Coelebs, Vol. I. p. 381.

[16] More, Strictures, p. 114.

[17] More, Coelebs, Vol. I. p. 181.

[18] More, Strictures, p. 182. footnote.

[19] Ibid. p. 58.

[20] Ibid.

[21] More, Coelebs, Vol. II. p. 152.

[22] More, Hints, Vol. II. pp. 169 ff.

[23] Ibid. pp. 183-184.

[24] See, P. J. Miller, Educational Ideas and Practice of Hannah More: a Study in Evangelical Education, unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1965. pp. 190-194.

[25] More, Hints, Vol. II. p. 147.

[26] Cited Jones op. cit. p. 97.

[27] Bishop Porteus to Hannah More, 1787, in William Roberts, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Hannah More, Seeley and Burnside, London, 1836. Vol. I. p. 382.

[28] Doctor Doran, A Lady of the Last Century, (Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu), R. Bentley and Son, London, 1873. p. 354.

[29] The New Annual Register, 1799. pp. 273-274.

[30] The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal, Vol. XIV, No. XXVII, April - June 1809. p. 151.

[31] The controversy began as a dispute between a curate and one of Hannah More's teachers. Miss More's support of her teacher against the clergyman of the parish in which the school was situated raised the question of who should exercise ultimate control over schools attached to the Church. What began as a small local quarrel quickly became a matter of national interest, occupying the attention of periodicals and pamphleteers from 1800 to 1803.
See, Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961. pp. 187-233.

[32] The Anti-Jacobin Review and Literary Censor, June 1801, pp. 202 ff, and July, 1801, pp. 280 ff. and Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, 27 February 1802. pp. 174-175.

[33] Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, 27 February 1802. p. 175.

[34] See, for example, Sir Archibald McSarcasm, (William Shaw), The Life of Hannah More, with a Critical Review of Her Writings, T. Hurst, London, 1802. pp. 18-19.

[35] Mrs. Hester Chapone (Hester Mulso), A Matrimonial Creed addressed to Mr. Richardson, The Works of Mrs. Chapone to which is Prefixed an Account of Her Life and Character, John Murray, London, 1807, Vol. II. p. 149.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Mrs. Chapone, Works, Vol. I. p. 35.

[38] Mrs. Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773) Works, Vol. III. p. 3.

[39] Ibid. p. 14.

[40] Ibid. p. 83.

[41] Ibid. p. 90.

[42] Ibid. p. 99.

[43] Ibid. p. 110.

[44] Ibid. pp. 134 ff.

[45] Ibid. p. 166.

[46] Ibid. pp. 209-210.

[47] Ibid. pp. 168-169.

[48] Ibid.

[49] See, too, the views of Mrs. Barbauld, in Anna Laetitia Barbauld, The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, with a Memoir by Lucy Aiken, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London, 1825. Vol. I. pp. xvii-xxii.

[50] See too, Anonymous (Susan Nicklin), Address to a Young Lady on Her Entrance into the World. Hookham and Carpenter, London, 1796. 2 vols.

[51] Mrs. Jane West, Letters to a Young Lady: in which the Duties and Character of Women are Considered, . . . (1806), Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1811. Vol. I. pp. 283-284.

[52] See, for example, The New Annual Register, 1806, pp. 350-351.

[53] West, op. cit. p. 65.

[54] Ibid. pp. 239-240.

[55] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 56.

[56] Ibid. Vol. I. pp. 346-349.

[57] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 421.

[58] Ibid. pp. 416 ff.

[59] Cited by J. M. Thompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800. Constable and Co., London, 1932. p. 123.

[60] See too, the similar viewpoints and ideas expressed in Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex. 1797.
A Clergyman of the Church of England (Reverend John Bennet), Strictures on Female Education. c. 1780.
Reverend John Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, 1795.
J. Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners, 1793.
J. L. Chirol, An Enquiry into the Best System of Female Education. 1809.

[61] Henry Home (Lord Kames), Loose Hints upon Education, chiefly concerning the Culture of the Heart, J. Bell and J. Murray, Edinburgh, 1781. p. 133.

[62] See Rousseau, op. cit. p. 339.

[63] Home, op. cit. p. 135.

[64] Doctor Gregory, A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, (1774), John Sharpe, London, 1822. p. 28.

[65] Ibid. pp. 28-39.

[66] Ibid. pp. 46-47.

[67] Ibid. p. 7.

[68] Ibid. p. 67.

[69] Ibid. p. 71.

[70] Ibid. p. 43.

[71] John Moir, Female Tuition: or, An Address to Mothers on the Education of Their Daughters. J. Murray, London, 1786. p. 37.

[72] Ibid. p. 7.

[73] Ibid. pp. 48 ff.

[74] Ibid. p. 258.

[75] Ibid. p. 114.

[76] Ibid. p. 128.

[77] Ibid. p. 258.

[78] Ibid. p. 245.

[79] Ibid. pp. 154, 183 ff, 232 ff.

[80] See chapter V, pp. 212-215.

[81] Frances Burney (Madame D'Arblay), Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, Henry Colburn, London, 1842. Vol. II. p. 185.

[82] Augustus J. C. Hare, (editor), The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth, E. Arnold, London, 1894. Vol. I. p. 19.

[83] La Belle Assemblée, May, 1807. p. 232.

[84] Burney, op. cit. p. 344.

[85] Hare, op. cit. pp. 131-132.

[86] Anonymous, The Female Revolutionary Plutarch, J. Murray, London, 1806, Vol. I. pp. 275-351.

[87] See, for example, Mrs. Inchbald, The Child of Nature . . . from the French of Madame the Marchioness of Sillery, formerly Countess of Genlis, G. G. J. and J. Robinson, London, 1788, and
C. Butler, The Age of Chivalry: or, Friendship of Other Times: abridged and selected from The Knights of the Swan of Madam Genlis, S. Low, London, 1799.

[88] Madam le Comtesse de Genlis, Adelaide and Theodore: or Letters on Education (1782), C. Bathurst, London, 1783, Vol. I. p. II.

[89] This particular letter was quoted in full in The Lady's Magazine, 1786, pp. 40 ff.

[90] De Genlis, op. cit. pp. 28-29.

[91] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 54.

[92] Ibid. Vol. I. p. 52.

[93] Ibid. pp. 45-46.

[94] Ibid. p. 49.

[95] See Inchbald, op. cit.

[96] De Genlis, op. cit. Vol. III, pp. 142-143.

[97] Maria and R. L. Edgeworth, Essays on Practical Education (1798). R. Hunter, London, 1815. Vol. I. p. 380.

[98] Ibid.

[99] See Maria Edgeworth, Angelina: or L'Amie Inconnue, Tales and Novels, George Routledge and Sons, London, n.d. Vol. I. pp. 221-282, and p. v.

[100] Anonymous (Maria Edgeworth), Letters for Literary Ladies, to which is added An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification, J. Johnson, London, 1795. p. 34.

[101] Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I. p. xii.

[102] Anonymous (Maria Edgeworth), Letters of Julia and Caroline, J. Johnson, London, 1795. p. 7.

[103] Ibid. p. 63.

[104] Edgeworth, Letters for Literary Ladies. p. 65.

[105] Ibid. pp. 65-66.

[106] Ibid. p. 67.

[107] Ibid. p. 73.

[108] Samuel Henry Romilly, Romilly-Edgeworth Letters, 1813-1818. John Murray, London, 1936. p. 85.

[109] See, for example, The New Annual Register, 1799, pp. 272-273.

[110] Edinburgh Review, Vol. IV, No. VIII, July 1804. p. 329.

[111] Elizabeth Hamilton, Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education (1801). Wilkie and Robinson, and G. Robinson, London, 1810. Vol. I. p. 157.

[112] Ibid. p. 154.

[113] Cited Ibid. pp. 227-228.

[114] Ibid. p. 228.

[115] Ibid. pp. 176-177.

[116] Ibid. p. 179.

[117] Ibid. pp. 157-158.

[118] Ibid. pp. 171-172.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid. Vol. II. pp. 19 ff.

[121] Ibid. pp. 183-184.

[122] Ibid. Vol. I. p. 175.

[123] Elizabeth Hamilton, Letters addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman on the Formation of Religious and Moral Principles. T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1806, Vol. I. p. 12.

[124] Hamilton, Letters on . . . Education, Vol. I. pp. 184 ff. See too, More, Strictures, pp. 201-202.

[125] Hamilton, Letters on . . . Education, Vol. I. p. 171.

[126] Ibid. p. 169.

[127] Catherine Macaulay, Observations on a Pamphlet, entitled Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents. E. and C. Dilly, London, 1770.

[128] See, Six Odes, presented to That justly-celebrated Historian, Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, on her Birthday, And publicly read to a polite and brilliant Audience. R. Cruthwell, Bath, 1777. The copy in the possession of The Women's Service Institute Library contains several pencil notes of Hannah More.

[129] Catherine Macaulay Graham, Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects, C. Dilly, London, 1790. pp. i-ii.

This belief was central to the 'radical feminist' position. Thus, Mary Hays, the disciple of Catherine Macaulay Graham and Mary Wollstonecraft, insisted,

> Every man is born with sensation, with the aptitude of receiving impressions; the force of these impressions depends on a thousand circumstances, over which he has little power; these circumstances form the mind and determine the future character. We are creatures of education; . . . .

Mary Hays, Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796). Hugh M. Griffith, New York, 1802. Vol. I. p. 3.

130 Ibid. p. 11.

131 Ibid. p. 203.

132 Ibid. pp. 205-206.

133 Ibid. pp. 201-202.

134 Ibid. p. 50.

135 New Annual Register, 1790. pp. 250 ff.

136 Macaulay Graham, Letters on Education. p. 207.

137 The following account of the life of Mary Wollstonecraft is based upon the following sources.
R. G. Grylls, William Godwin and His World, Odhams Press, London, 1953.
Mary Wollstonecraft, Letters to Imlay, with Prefatory Memoir by C. Kegan Paul, Kegan Paul, London, 1879.
Ralph A. Wardle, (editor), Godwin and Mary, Letters of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, 1966, and
William Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Women, (1798). Constable and Co., London, 1928.

138 Wardle, op. cit. pp. 14-15.

139 Wollstonecraft, Letters to Imlay, p. xxiv.

140 Mary Wollstonecraft, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters; with Reflections on Female Conduct, J. Johnson, London, 1787. pp. 77-78.

141 Ibid. p. 84.

142 Ibid. p. 104.

[143] Ibid. pp. 124 ff.

[144] Ibid. pp. 118 ff.

[145] See Chapter IV, pp. 184-185.

[146] Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories from Real Life (1791), Henry Frowde, London, 1906. p. xx.

[147] Ibid. pp. 33-34.

[148] Ibid. p. 77.

[149] Ibid. pp. 77-79.

[150] Ibid. pp. 51-52.

[151] Ibid. p. 70.

[152] Ibid. p. 54.

[153] The New Annual Register, 1787. p. 278.

[154] Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, (1792), J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1929. p. 9.

[155] Ibid. p. 51.

[156] Ibid. pp. 10-11.

[157] Ibid. p. 109.

[158] Ibid. p. 23.

[159] Ibid. p. 24.

[160] Ibid. p. 44.

[161] Ibid. p. 25. (emphasis mine).

[162] Ibid. pp. 53-54.

[163] Ibid. p. 101.

[164] Ibid. p. 179.

[165] Ibid. p. 183.

[166] Ibid. pp. 174 ff.

[167] Ibid. p. 196.

[168] Ibid. p. 139. footnote.

[169] The same was true of her disciple Mary Hays, who traced "most of the faults, and the miseries of mankind, to the vices and errors of our political institutions," and who inveighed against all forms of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny over the mind. "Obedience", she insisted, "is a word which ought never to have existence."
Mary Hays, Memoirs of Anna Courtney, Vol. I. pp. 64-65.

[170] Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. p. 161.

[171] Ibid. pp. 162 ff.

[172] Ibid. p. 78.

[173] Ibid. p. 160.

[174] Ibid. pp. 157, 160, 168-169, and 176 ff.

[175] The New Annual Register, 1792. p. 298.

[176] Richard Polwhele, The Unsex'd Females: A Poem, addressed to the author of The Pursuits of Literature. T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1798. p. 6.

[177] Ibid. p. 9.

[178] Ibid. pp. 8-9.
Even more ludicrous to any one who has experienced the boredom of a long afternoon in school pulling flowers to pieces and labelling the parts are Polwhele's original lines on this subject.

> More eager for illicit knowledge pant,
> With lustful boys anatomize a plant;
> The virtues of its dust prolific speak,
> Or point its pistill with unblushing cheek.

[179] See, John Henry Colls, A Poetical Epistle addressed to Miss Wollstonecraft, Vernor and Hood, London, n.d. c. 1793. Mary Hays, Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous, T. Knott, London, 1793, and
Anonymous (Mary Hays), Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women, J. Johnson, London, 1798.

[180] Jacob Bouten, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Beginnings of Female Emancipation in England. H. J. Paris, Amsterdam, 1922. p. 129.

181 Anonymous, The Governess: or, Boarding Schools Dissected - A Dramatic Original, The Female Academy, London, 1785. p. 59.

182 La Belle Assemblée, March, 1806. p. 87.

183 Catharine Cappe, Observations on Charity Schools, Female Friendly Societies, and other Subjects connected with the Views of the Ladies' Committee. W. Blanchard, York, 1805. pp. 129-130.

184 Chirol, op. cit. pp. 85-86.

185 Priscilla Wakefield, Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex: with Suggestions for its Improvement. J. Johnson, London, 1798. pp. 50-51.

186 Ibid. p. 54.

187 Ibid. pp. 78-98.

188 Ibid. p. 97.

189 Ibid. pp. 99-139.

190 Ibid. pp. 140-175.

191 Ibid. pp. 176-182.

192 See, too, Clara Reeve, Plans of Education; with Remarks on the Systems of Other Writers, T. Hookham and J. Carpenter, London, 1792. pp. 64 ff. passim.
De Genlis, Adelaide and Theodore, Vol. II. pp. 157-158, and The Lady's Magazine, September, 1812. p. 405.

193 Sarah Trimmer, The Oeconomy of Charity, or, An Address to Ladies: adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England. J. Johnson and F. C. Rivington, London, 1801. pp. 20-35.

PART IV

IMAGES OF WOMANHOOD

Recipe for Making a Woman.

A flit of spirit, gleam of love,
A spot of polar white;
A tint of beauty stain'd above,
A ray of summer light.
A still small accent whispers o'er,
And music aids the birth;
A soul of glory beams before,
And Woman walks the earth.

Cited in The Lady's Magazine, December 1816. p. 579
(p. 531 wrongly numbered)

CHAPTER VII

THE WOMAN AS A LADY IN CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

I

Although educational theorists who have concerned themselves with education in general or with the education of boys in particular have frequently justified their recommendations by an appeal to the intrinsic character of man as a species, they have rarely felt it necessary to base their ideas on an explicitly stated doctrine of the original nature of the male sex. Quite the reverse has been true of those who have written about female education. Thus, the great interest taken in the education and duties of women at the end of the eighteenth century was accompanied by an equal attention to the nature of woman herself. Indeed, at this time, it was scarcely possible to discuss either female education or the responsibilities of the sex without reference to woman's physical, mental and emotional endowments.

As has been suggested above,[1] there were several positions adopted towards these topics and the issues connected with them. Important as these differences were, however, they were no more, and perhaps less significant than the areas of widespread agreement. For in the process of defining clearly the abilities and obligations of women, the writers of the period were setting strict limits both to

their education and to their functions in society. It was this limitation of their powers and pursuits which largely determined the social and economic position of woman and the character of her education throughout most of the nineteenth century.

II

As far as the physical nature of woman was concerned, it was generally agreed that she was the inferior of man. Even Mary Wollstonecraft admitted that "from the constitution of their bodies, men seemed to be designed by Providence to attain a greater degree of virtue."[2] There were very few writers who, like the anonymous author of Female Restoration (1780), attempted to argue woman's "natural equality with the men in everything," insisting that, given appropriate physical training, she could become as strong and robust as man.[3]

But if virtually unanimous agreement was reached about woman's physical inferiority, there existed a considerable difference of opinion about what conclusions might be drawn from this 'natural' disadvantage. Generally, the female writers admitted the inferiority and the fact that it set certain limits to her possible range of occupations and recreational activities. Others, however, particularly the 'sentimentalists', tended to use the self-evident physical

weakness of women as a basis for various inferences about the character and abilities of woman, and her proper or 'natural' relationship with the male sex.

Thus, one anonymous writer insisted that although "the Author of Nature has placed the balance of power on the side of the Male, by giving him . . . a body more large and robust", woman had been given a physical counterpoise, beauty, which more than compensated them for their lack of strength.[4] Indeed, their beauty, and thus their influence, was dependent on their weakness. This, in effect, was the position of Rousseau, who had pointed out in his Emile that

> The stronger party seems to be the master, but is as a matter of fact dependent on the weaker, and that, not by any foolish custom of gallantry, nor yet by the magnanimity of the protector, but by an inexorable law of nature.[5]

Therefore, "the more women are like men, the less influence they will have over men".[6] This, apparently, was what was in Doctor Gregory's mind when he advised his daughters never to make a boast of their good health and physical strength. As he explained,

> We so naturally associate the idea of female softness and delicacy with a correspondent delicacy of constitution, that when a woman speaks of her great strength, her extraordinary appetites, her ability to bear excessive fatigue, we recoil at the description in a way she is little aware of.[7]

Nor was the charm and beauty which men found in weakness the only compensation afforded women by nature. "We shall find," observed the Reverend John Bennet, "that, as

any creature is deficient in strength, it is always furnished with a proportionate share of art and contrivance."[8] Women, therefore, were "more artful, and fond of subterfuge than men,"[9] a disposition which was not the result of a faulty upbringing but which developed as a 'natural' consequence of their physical inferiority.

From the physical weaknesses of women, according to Madame de Genlis, had developed the system of chivalric morality. For when women willingly accepted their comparative lack of strength, they were following the "dictates of nature, who . . . gave charms even to their weakness." In that state, woman "appeared such an interesting being, that she could obtain all the aid and protection of courage and power, even without the attractions of youth and beauty."[10] Out of the differing physical constitutions of the sexes had arisen, in fact, the chivalric code, natural morality, according to which women "aspired only to the sweet and sacred appellation of obedient daughters, faithful wives, and affectionate mothers,"[11] and men found their peculiar virtues in affording them protection and performing valourous exploits on their behalf.

It was possible, therefore, by appealing to the physical nature of woman, not only to justify her exclusion from certain occupations and recreations but to construct a whole dual system of morality and education. In general,

however, the writers of the period devoted comparatively little attention to establishing connections between the physiological characteristics of woman and the prevailing or recommended system of education. What interested the educational theorist above all else was the development of the mind and personality. It was this concern that focused attention on one of the most widely discussed issues in female education, the innate mental and emotional characteristics of the sex.

III

It is not difficult to understand why writers on female education considered the ascription of distinct mental and emotional characteristics to the female sex so important. For those whose final court of appeal was either nature or 'natural tendencies', a system of morality which did not take into account the natural abilities and propensities of human beings was both artificial and unworkable. Without an adequate understanding of the natural endowments of the sex, it would be impossible to assign to woman her distinctive virtues. Nor were the 'proper excellencies' of the sex all that could be determined by an inquiry into the original nature of woman. Her domestic and social functions, her education, and her relationships with the other sex could also be adequately and irrefutably defined and delimited.

This kind of inquiry and its conclusions were made

both intelligible and intellectually respectable by their apparent connection with the prevailing faculty psychology. Whether the mind was conceived as composed of discrete faculties or as a whole possessing certain powers made little difference to the inquiry or its findings. Once faculties or powers such as reason and imagination had been established, it was possible to treat them as separate entities, which could be discovered in differing amounts or proportions in various minds and developed or retarded independently of each other. In other words, a writer could discuss a woman's taste and imagination quite independently of her judgement or reason, conceive of the former as superior to the latter, - and do exactly the opposite in the case of men. Moreover, these faculties or powers could be set up in oppostion to one another. In a sense, the acceptance of their existence made possible one of the characteristic concerns of the age in the field of female education, the conflict between reason and feeling, sense and sensibility, the head and the heart.

There were, fundamentally, two positions taken as to the mental and emotional characteristics of women. In his review of Thomas Broadhurst's Advice to Young Ladies on the Improvement of the Mind, Sydney Smith ably stated and defended one of them. There was, he insisted, no dissimilarity in the mental capacities of the sexes. Any apparent disparity could

> be accounted for by the difference of circumstances in which they have been placed, without referring to any conjectural difference of original conformation of mind.

> As boys and girls run about in the dirt, and trundle hoops together, they are both precisely alike. If you catch up one half of these creatures, and train them to a particular set of actions and opinions, and the other half to a perfectly opposite set, of course their understandings will differ, as one or the other sort of occupations has called this or that talent into action: there is surely no occasion to go into any deeper and more abstruse reasoning, in order to explain so very simple a phenomenon.[12]

Some five years later, another reviewer for the same periodical put forward quite a different view of the female mind. He noted that

> the surface of their minds, like that of their bodies, seems of a finer texture than ours; more soft, and susceptible of immediate impression. They have less muscular power, - less power of continued voluntary attention, - of reason - passion and imagination. But they are more easily impressed with whatever appeals to their senses or habitual prejudices. The intuitive perception of their minds is less disturbed by any general reasonings on causes and consequences.[13]

The mind of a woman was qualitatively different to that of a man, possessing some faculties or powers superior to his, and others markedly inferior. Just as it was impossible, even with appropriate exercises, to make a woman's muscles as strong as a man's, so too it was impossible to develop her naturally weak faculty of reason or judgement to an equality with that of man.

Sydney Smith's position tended to be adopted by all those writers on female education who stressed in their ideas the importance of the Principle of Association. However, the fact that many writers were in agreement that, as Miss Hatfield put it, "nature has generously done her part; and the

powers of the female mind are equal to the highest attainments,"[14] did not mean that they all drew the same conclusions from this position. The feminists, Catherine Macaulay Graham, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, maintained that since a woman possessed the same powers as a man, her virtues, responsibilities and pursuits should be similar to his. They therefore pressed for social, political and educational reforms that would give them equality with men. Above all, they insisted that women possessed the potential to become independent beings. Given a correct education, there was no reason why a woman should have to depend on the judgement of a father, brother or husband. Since nature had endowed the sexes with equal powers, woman had a 'natural right' to the same opportunities to achieve wealth, power and virtue as men.

But it was quite possible to believe firmly in the Principle of Association, to insist that there were no natural distinctions in the mental and emotional characteristics of the sexes, and yet to hold that nature or Providence had assigned 'characteristic excellences' to the sexes and intended women to be subordinate to men. As Madame de Genlis explained,

> Notwithstanding the equitable distribution of the most valuable gifts of the creator, . . . women, charged with the care of children, will always have in society a destination different from that of man. 'Tis Nature herself that prescribes for them a sedentary life, and devotes them to domestic occupations;

> 'tis Nature herself that excludes them from public offices, the functions of which could not be combined with the duties of a mother and a nurse. . . . This sublime plan of subordination of situation and of equality of faculties, constitutes all the charms of the delightful union between the sexes.[15]

This, in effect, was the position of Miss Hamilton and Maria Edgeworth. Both were sceptical of arguments which sought to establish innate or natural sexual distinctions in mental abilities, both believed that the sexes possessed equal powers or faculties, both attributed the character of woman to her experiences, to her education; yet both insisted that each sex had its 'peculiar virtues' and assigned to the female a subordinate, if equally important, position in society and the marital state.

If, for some writers, the appeal to nature demonstrated an equality of powers and faculties, for others it proved exactly the reverse. Nature, ever wise and benevolent, had not given men and women unique functions to perform, without also endowing them with distinct and appropriate mental and emotional attributes. On this point, both 'sentimentalists' and 'religious moralists' agreed. Once again, however, they constructed upon this common ground quite differing arguments about woman's domestic and social responsibilities and her education.

Typical of the sentimentalist position were Chirol's views of the female character.

> It is . . . generally allowed [he argued] that her intellectual powers are as different from his, as her physical properties. . . . She thinks but she can rarely meditate; she improves, but does not create; she feels more profoundly than man, but has not sufficient energy to depict her acute sensations. Her understanding, more subtle than solid, analyses, defines with more grace than accuracy, with more elegance than logic. - Such is the versatility of her mind, that, as the inconstant butterfly flutters from flower to flower, so her thoughts hurry on rapid wing from subject to subject, . . .[16]

These intellectual weaknesses were accompanied by "other defects, natural to woman, . . . curiosity, vanity, levity, imprudence, and an immoderate desire of pleasing."[17] These, in turn, gave rise to other flaws in her character, including indiscretion, loquacity, imprudence and coquetry.[18] Thus, women were not only intellectually but morally inferior to men.

Notwithstanding all these incapacities and faults, Chirol believed, woman "has received from nature a peculiar talent, ... It is a kind of instinct, an exquisite discernment, independent of reflection . . . ."[19] Moreover, Providence, although making women "delicate and feeble," had also endowed her with "industry, patience, sensibility, engaging manners, a love of cleanliness, economy, and retirement."[20] In doing so, Providence had clearly pointed out their function in life and the aim of their education. It was obvious, thought Chirol, that "they . . . are destined to constitute the happiness of the other half; . . . they were created for the domestic comfort and felicity of man."[21]

Woman's chief moral principle and her greatest characteristic virtue was "to find her happiness and glory . . . in the sacrifice of her inclinations, whenever circumstances require it."[22]

Chirol's views, which were essentially those of Rousseau, were shared by virtually every male writer on female education of the period,[23] and appeared regularly in articles on education written for contemporary periodicals.[24] The natural weaknesses of a woman required that she submit to the authority of man or to some external code of conduct, while her natural propensity and ability to please meant that she was intended to devote herself to the comfort and happiness of a good man. Only in this way could she 'fulfill her nature' and 'follow the plan of Providence'.

Like other female religious moralists, Hannah More's ideas of the female character were, superficially at least, very similar to those of Chirol. According to Miss More, each sex possessed 'its characteristic excellencies', "original works of difference stamped by the hand of the Creator,"[25] which enabled it to fulfill its proper functions in society. Women, she believed, would be wise

> to move contentedly in the plain path which Providence has obviously marked out to the sex, and in which custom has for the most part rationally confirmed them, rather than to stray awkwardly, unbecomingly, and unsuccessfully in a forbidden road. Is it not desireable [sic] . . . to be excellent women rather than indifferent men?[26]

What, then, were the 'proper excellencies' of a woman? Although Miss More admitted that until men and women "are put more nearly on a par in the cultivation of their minds, the shades of a distinction . . . between their native abilities can never be fairly ascertained,"[27] she was not reticent in ascribing to each sex distinct mental and emotional characteristics. Man, she asserted, had "a firmer texture of mind, . . . a higher reach, and a wider range of powers," which suited him for engagement in "the deep and daring scenes of action and of council."[28] His "faculty of comparing, combining, analysing and separating . . . ideas", and thus of pursuing an argument to its logical conclusion, was far greater than woman's.[29]

But she should not lament her "inferiority in those talents which do not belong to her;" she possessed "other requisites better adapted to answer the end and purpose of her being."[30] Her superiority lay in her "high degree of delicacy and quickness of perception," her intuitive tact, her "naturally soft and flexible heart," and in her feeling . . . more intimately the want of a strength which is not her own."[31] Having less "integral understanding" than a man, she was not inclined to be sceptical and did not acquire "a strong partiality for the manners of Pagan antiquity, and the documents of Pagan philosophy."[32] Moreover, she had been freed by Providence and the arrangements of society

from the temptations and dangers which men faced in their capacities as politicians, mathematicians, philosophers, astronomers and physicians. The weaker sex should "take comfort, that in their very exemption from privileges, which they are sometimes foolishly disposed to envy, consists not only their security, but their happiness."[33]

It was possible, therefore, to accept without question the intellectual inferiority of women and yet to deny that this weakness necessarily made them morally defective. Providence, in fact, seemed to have meant them to be morally superior to men, and had thus placed on their shoulders the responsibility for the religious and moral well-being not only of their households but of the whole of society. As Miss More herself pointed out, the Christian religion has not only made women "heirs to a blessed immortality hereafter, but has greatly raised them in the scale of being here, by lifting them to an importance in society unknown to the most polished ages of antiquity."[34]

Such a view of the powers of a woman had much in common with the form of moral intuitionism propounded earlier in the century by Hutcheson, Shaftesbury and Hume.[35] Moral judgement, like aesthetic taste, was not a rational process; rather it proceeded from an inner sentiment, from the emotions or feelings. Indeed, the 'meddling intellect' could so confuse the truth that feeling itself was a surer guide to right

conduct than reason. It was this point that Rousseau wished to make when he remarked that "the first impulses of nature are always right."[36] Thus, women, precisely because they were creatures of feeling, lacking the solid judgement of a man, tended to be, like the noble savage, more truly moral than men. As one female novelist pointed out,

> Women are religious as they are virtuous, less from principles founded on reasoning and argument, than from elegance of mind, delicacy of moral taste, and a certain quick perception of the beautiful and becoming in everything. This instinct, however, for such it is, is worth all the tedious reasonings of the men.[37]

By the end of the century, some modification of this rather extreme viewpoint had taken place. The emotional and religious excesses generated by Wesley's and Whitfield's appeals to the truth of feeling were ludicrous enough; it was even possible to smile at a duchess eloping with a footman because she felt it proper to give concrete expression to her 'immediate sensations'. But when the cult of sensibility was shown to be connected with the political doctrines and outrageous morality of the French Revolution,[38] it became obvious that the 'impulses of nature' required a curb. The feelings might well lead to a sympathetic and benevolent sensibility; but this same sensibility, if allowed to develop unchecked, would result in all manner of emotional excesses and eventually to a flouting of the laws of morality. Most writers agreed that a woman possessed more delicacy of mind

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and feeling than a man; nor did they dispute the fact that this native sensitivity made her more anxious to relieve distress and render service to others. But this female sensibility, it was generally recognized, needed to be controlled by religious principle, the judgement of a male relative, or the laws of propriety.

There were few writers, therefore, who did not subscribe to there being either innate mental and emotional differences between the sexes or, at the very least, a distinct and 'natural' differentiation in their destination or responsibilities. And by 1800 those few writers, who, like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, insisted upon an equality of powers and avocations, had been totally discredited both in their personal lives and in their writings. It was generally agreed by 'educationalists', 'sentimentalists' and 'moralists' that the intellectual development of woman was not intended to be equal to that of man. She was to be dependent for right opinion and conduct on some external source of sound judgement, her sphere of action was the home, her chief responsibility and most approved of quality, - moral and religious influence.

IV

From woman's original destination' and her naturally inferior faculty of reason sprang the first of her character-

istic virtues, submissiveness. Destined to be always subordinate to man, and instinctively prone to follow the dictates of her feelings, she should early be taught the necessity of submitting to a superior authority. As Moir pointed out,

> Women, especially, should be accustomed to the earliest habits of subjection and obedience. They are seldom enslaved, . . . but neither does it seem the intention of nature, they should openly at least assume the lead. Habits of attention and deference to some one, whom they ought to consider as their superior, is, on this account, the very best introduction they can have to that sort of life which most becomes them.[39]

According to Chirol, a girl should be made familiar "with the idea that she is born to be dependent;" she should "be trained to a rational obedience, founded on the conviction of her own weakness, and inferiority to man."[40]

It was just as well, therefore, that a girl be exposed to some injustices "to habituate her to those wrongs, which it is, unfortunately, too common for a wife to suffer from her husband."[41] Lord Kames made a similar suggestion. "Women," he advised, "destined by nature to be obedient, ought to be disciplined early to bear wrongs without murmuring. This is a hard lesson; and yet it is necessary even for their own sake."[42] As one anonymous writer pointed out, "The girl, who has not been taught to submit in childhood, will hardly be distinguished for her tractability when she becomes a wife."[43]

Thus, on the original and characteristic distinctions between the sexes rested the relationship between man and woman incorporated in the institution of marriage. "To love, honour and obey" were not empty words; neither were they a purely arbitrary command of God. Their authority could be shown to rest upon nature itself. In resigning herself to the will of her husband, a woman was fulfilling both a divine commandment and her own original nature. "The Quality which most shews a married lady to advantage," believed the Reverend John Bennet, "is a modest submission of her understanding to the man, whom she has not been ashamed to honour with her choice."[44] Or as Madame de Genlis more 'romantically' put it,

> The feebler creature undoubtedly loves not more, but she ought to love with greater submission; she is impressed besides with the sentiment of tender gratitude, and obedience is not only her duty, but likewise her security. Her attachment may be compared to the lively and submissive affection of a child; and that of a generous man resembles the sublime tenderness of a mother. Such is, such must be conjugal love.[45]

The subservient position of women, as Mrs. West pointed out, was not

> solely confined to the conjugal tie, nor does it only revert backward to the consecrated claims of paternity; our brothers, nay even our sons, will demand the privilege of Adam; and whenever we fix with them in a domestic residence, we must conform to their humours, anticipate their wishes, and alleviate their misfortunes. . . .[46]

That most women would rarely, if ever, "know the exercise of

free will" did not distress Mrs. West. "I acquiesce in the sapient conclusion," she wrote, "that to a conscientious mind 'command is anxiety, and obedience ease'."[47] Not that Mrs. West wanted women never to oppose their menfolk. For although "subservience is claimed from us by all our male relatives, . . . whenever thy err, either in morals or principles, a mild yet marked disapprobation is not pertinacity, but fortitude."[48]

Mild as was Mrs. West's suggested opposition, there were some writers who believed that even 'disapprobation' was too severe. Neither immorality nor injustice invalidated the claims of man to "that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart," which his wife owed him and which formed the basis for her "exalted freedom."[49]

> 'How meritorious are the soft, the gentle sufferings of a virtuous woman', cries Lady Mary Walker, 'who never torments her husband with complaints, but patiently waits the return of his reason, which will lead him to a sense of his faults, and the injustice he has done her'.[50]

It was precisely this 'characteristic virtue' of total submissiveness that the feminists attacked so bitterly. The very notion of submission degraded the sex, insisted Mary Wollstonecraft. "Of what materials can that heart be composed, which can melt when insulted, and instead of revolting at injustice, kiss the rod?"[51] Mary Hays was equally disgusted with the idea that women should submit even to injustice.

> There are no vices to which a man addicts himself, [she complained] no follies he can take into his head to commit, but his wife and nearest female relations are expected to connive at, are expected to look upon, if not with admiration, at least with respectful silence, and at an awful distance.[52]

Parents and husbands, insisted Mary Wollstonecraft, in their concern to obtain "blind obedience" had spread "a mysterious sanctity . . . around the most arbitary principle." But no argument and no principle could ever justify the subjection of "a rational being to the mere will of another."[53]

Such ideas were neither popular nor respectable. When William Godwin reproved Mary Wollstonecraft for confessing her humility with the exhortation, "Humble! for heaven's sake, be proud, be arrogant!"[54] he was giving her advice that was both unusual and, at that time, dangerous. It was scarcely calculated to enable her to live contentedly in society as it was then constituted. A proud and arrogant woman was, almost by definition, an unnatural, unprincipled creature, who had refused to accept the limitations of her own nature. She was a monster who threatened the whole 'providentially' arranged framework of society.

Closely related to a woman's characteristic virtue of submissiveness was her need always to act with propriety or decorum. In doing so, she was, in fact, submitting to an external and supposedly 'rational' control over her conduct. Since neither her feelings nor her inadequate reason or judgement were sufficient guides to correct behaviour, she

needed to refer to a rule, a standard of conduct, which, in making a decision for her, guaranteed her correct deportment. Only in this way could she achieve consistency of right conduct and thus preserve her own and her husband's reputation.

Women, insisted Madame de Genlis, "should be slaves to decorum . . . which consists in always demonstrating in public, and in the presence of witnesses a respect for religion, civility, and the laws and customs universally received."[55] For Hannah More, propriety was "the result of general excellence, . . . the criterion of true taste, right principle, and genuine feeling, in a woman."[56] In other words, for a woman, 'true taste' and 'right principle' lay in following closely the customary forms of behaviour as determined by the virtuous elements in society. As she pointed out in her Coelebs,

> To a correct mind, no one can be agreeable who is incorrect. Propriety is so indispensable to agreeableness, that when a lady allows herself to make any, even the smallest sacrifice of veracity, religion, modesty, candour, or the decorum of the sex, she may be shining, she may be shewy, she may be amusing, but she cannot, properly speaking, be agreeable.[57]

On a woman's observance of propriety depended her reputation. Women were not intended only to rely upon the superior judgement of men; they were also dependent on the opinion held of their charms and, more particularly, the price that others placed on their virtue. It was, in effect, this 'price' which constituted a woman's reputation. As

Rousseau had pointed out, and on this occasion, there were few who disagreed with him,

> A woman's honour does not depend on her conduct alone, but on her reputation; and no woman who permits herself to be considered vile is really virtuous. A man has no one but himself to consider and so long as he does right he may defy public opinion; but when a woman does right her task is only half-finished, and what people think of her matters as much as what she really is. . . . "What people will think" is the grave of a man's virtue and the throne of a woman's.[58]

A woman's quite proper concern to preserve a spotless reputation should not only reflect itself in her moral rectitude and the high opinion held of her and her family; it was thought to have a wholesome influence upon society in general. At the turn of the century, the connections between the emphasis placed upon propriety, the importance of preserving a reputation and the prevalence of 'public censure' as a means of obtaining uniformity of 'proper conduct' were close ones.[59] One of the chief dangers to a reputation, for example, was undesirable associations. It was now generally realized that, once a woman had broken the laws of propriety, she had injured her reputation. If the injury was a severe one, she had cut herself off from all intercourse with respectable women. A frequent admonition made by the writers of the period to young girls was to avoid all contact with women of doubtful reputation, even former close friends.[60] In doing so, they would not only shield their own reputations, but, by applying the pressure of public opinion on all women,

would help raise the whole moral tone of society. As one writer, justifying public censure, pointed out, it is

> calculated not only for the use and advantage of the present age, but for succeeding generations . . . . it is administered with a hope, and an intention, that it may operate more as an example to deter others, and even the parties concerned, from malpractices in future, than as a rod peculiarly suited for the back of a particular offender.[61]

For the feminists, such ideas were both unjustified and unjust. Morality, insisted Mary Wollstonecraft, was "undermined by sexual notions of the importance of a good reputation."[62] And the prevailing modes of preserving a reputation were even more harmful; they were "specious poisons, that encrusting morality, eat away the substance."[63] Women were taught, in fact, that virtue consisted in 'not getting found out', that their reputation was of more consequence than their actual conduct. Nor were the effects of public censure as a so-called moral force any less pernicious. It was seldom, Miss Wollstonecraft argued, original faults that corrupted women; almost invariably their moral downfall was due to the "venomous rancour of their own sex," which in denying them any intercourse with respectable circles, left them a helpless prey to the truly profligate and vicious elements in society.[64] Once again, however, this feminist viewpoint is notable mainly because it stands out in isolation from the main body of ideas of the period.

Scarcely less important than submissiveness and a love of propriety was modesty, "the most impressive of the graces

that can embellish a woman [and] the certain pledge of innocence or of virtue."[65] "Modesty," declared Miss Appleton, ". . . is an incorrupt mind breathing through artless manners, chaste words, humble self-opinion, unboasted good qualities, and propriety of deportment."[66] Female modesty was thus a pre-requisite for her strict observance of propriety. It also accorded well with the 'romantic' view of woman as a childlike creature, whose innocence required to be protected, an ethereal being whose feet ought scarcely to touch this grimy earth. As a male correspondent of The Lady's Magazine advised, let women

> learn this instructive lesson . . . , that half the esteem and veneration we show them, is owing to their modesty and reserve, and that a contrary conduct may make the most enchanting goddess degenerate in our eyes to a mere woman with all the frailties of mortality about her.[67]

One of the clearest manifestations of a girls' modesty was her ability to blush. It signified both her innocence (and thus, perhaps, her youth) and her delicacy of sentiment, both essential elements in true modesty. For Mrs. Bonhote, there was not

> a more captivating or interesting object than a young girl, who with timid modesty enters a room filled with a mixed company. The blush, which diffuses its crimson on her cheek, is not only the most powerful charm of beauty, but does honour to the innocence of her heart.[68]

The blush of modesty not only captivated; it cloaked the female with such an aura of purity that even the arch-enemy

of female virtue, the seducer, hesitated to draw near. Thus, one would-be poet observed of the 'blush of innocence',

> 'Tis conscious virtue's soft alarms
> Arous'd by Nature's laws,
> To guard her sacred, youthful charms,
> Endearing while it awes.[69]

In a woman's choice of clothing and personal adornment, propriety and modesty joined forces to forbid a too liberal display of her charms. Thus, Mrs. Trimmer, interpreting Saint Paul's remarks on female apparel,[70] observed,

> The points to be attended to in the apostolic advice, concerning women's dress, are modesty and propriety; such a choice of apparel as shall convey to the eyes of the beholder an image of a virtuous and delicate mind, in which vanity is totally subdued, and no desire of general admiration prevails; . . . And in all ages, it should be the endeavour of every modest woman to maintain the honourable distinction of her sex, by avoiding in her outward appearance whatever tends to the least degree, to bring an imputation on her character.[71]

Even those who believed that a woman's love of dress was "a laudable propensity", interwoven in the very nature of the sex,[72] insisted that it be manifested in a modest and proper self-adornment. An undue pride in dress was a most grievous fault in a woman. A contemporary hymn, 'Against Pride in Clothes', pointed out in verse that could scarcely be sung today with a straight face,

> Why should our garments, made to hide
> Our parents' shame, provoke our pride?
> . . . . . .
> Let me be dress'd fine as I will,
> Flies, worms, and flowers, exceed me still.[73]

The importance of female modesty in dress was not difficult to justify. In the first place, as the Reverend John Bennet pointed out of a woman's attractions, "too much exposure does not enhance their value. . . . Wherever delicacy throws its modest drapery, imagination always lends inexpressible charms."[74] Moreover, a woman who failed modestly to conceal her beauty, was openly advertizing her attractions, laying herself open to censure and danger. One anonymous writer pointedly, if metaphorically, warned his female readers,

> The rose is torn from its parent stem in all the pride of its beauty; the jessamine is scarcely permitted to blossom before it is plucked; and no sooner are their beauties faded, than the merciless hand which was so eager to obtain them throws them away with contempt; while the primrose, the humble violet, the lily of the valley, and the snowdrop, less exposed to observation, escape unhurt, and uninjured by the spoiler's hand.[75]

Nor were the evil effects of immodesty of dress confined to the wearer, for, according to Mrs. Trimmer, "if the female part of the world cease to pay regard to modesty and decorum, what will be the inevitable consequence, but the profligacy of the other sex, and the corruption of the rising generation."[76]

While Mary Wollstonecraft did not regard modesty as a distinctively sexual virtue, she did consider it the cornerstone of a proper system of morality, the "sacred offspring of sensibility and reason! - true delicacy of mind."[77] Indeed, there was scarcely a writer of the period who would

have disagreed with the sentiments of the lady who enthused,

> What is the eloquence of your beauty? - Modesty! What is its first argument? - Modesty! What is its second? - Modesty! What is its third - Modesty! What is its peroration, the winding up of all its charms, the striking spell that binds the heart of man to her for ever? Modesty!!![78]

Submissiveness, a love of propriety, and modesty, - these were the three absolute and quite unequivocal virtues of the female sex. All of them tended to give rise to externally devised controls over a woman's thoughts, feelings and conduct. And all of them, in a sense, stood opposed to her own unique contribution to the moral well-being of society, the delicacy and sensitivity of her feelings. For sensibility, as a characteristic female virtue, was equivocal. It had come to be regarded as 'an excellent thing in woman', just so long as it remained under the control of reason or propriety.

By the end of the eighteenth century, there were few writers who would have agreed completely with Mary Wollstonecraft's concept of sensibility. She thought of it as "the result of acute senses, finely fashioned nerves, which vibrate at the slightest touch, and convey such clear intelligence to the brain, <u>that it does not require to be arranged by judgement</u>."[79] This "immediacy of sensation outrunning thought,"[80] this sensibility, was not a sure guide to conduct. Overindulged, the feelings could destroy any sense of proportion, could lead to a flouting of propriety and eventually to down-

right wickedness. In The Anti-Jacobin for August 1, 1798, there is a well known cartoon which depicts a grotesque figure of Sensibility, wearing a cap of liberty and shedding tears over a dead robin. Under the figure's feet lies a crowned and severed head.[81] True, a finely tuned sensibility enabled its possessor to feel intensely the emotions of love, pity, disinterested benevolence, sorrow and piety. And these emotions were essential in a truly moral woman. But the feelings still required a curb; they still needed to be directed by reason.

So important was this subject to Hannah More, that she devoted a full chapter of her Strictures to the effects of an ill-directed sensibility. While she recognized that it would be "cruel to chill the precious sensibility of an ingenuous soul by treating with supercilious coldness and unfeeling ridicule every indication of a warm, tender, disinterested, and enthusiastic spirit,"[82] she warned that, if cultivated to excess, this same sensibility would lead a young lady into all kinds of moral faults. "Flippancy, impetuosity, and violence of spirit grow out of this disposition."[83] In fact,

> if we were to inquire into the remote causes of some of the blackest crimes in the annals of mankind, profligacy, murder, and especially suicide, we might trace them back to this original principle, an ungoverned sensibility.[84]

Love at first sight, injudicious and eccentric charities,

excessive flattery, too great a concern for mere physical well-being, the ease with which a young lady was duped by unprincipled men, all were indications of the triumph of the feelings over sound judgement, and all could be attributed to an ill-governed sensibility.[85] The passions or feelings, she insisted, were not given "to be used in the search and discovery of truth . . .; but to animate . . . to warmer zeal in the pursuit and practice of truth, when the judgement shall have pointed out what is truth."[86]

At the turn of the century, the 'touchstones of sensibility', those objects which called forth a woman's most delicate feelings and sympathies, were several, the deserving poor, the sick, women in distress, dumb animals and children. Kindness to animals and benevolence to the afflicted thus became cardinal virtues of the female sex.[87] Both were, in a sense, natural virtues, arising out of her native sensibility. Even the formidable Mrs. Mason, of Mary Wollstonecraft's Original Stories, was proud of her well-governed sensibility. While enjoying their daily walk, she and her charges come across a wounded bird. When the girls express a wish to take it home and care for it, Mrs. Mason lectures them on the dangers of an excessive sensibility. The bird is in agony and has little chance of survival. True sensibility demands that it be put out of its misery. "Saying so, she put her foot on the bird's head, turning

her own another way."[88] As Mrs. Mason explains, in a later lecture, "I, who never wantonly trod on an insect, or disregarded the plaint of the speechless beast, can now give bread to the hungry, physic to the sick, comfort to the afflicted."[89]

Mrs. Bonhote was equally forceful on the subject of cruelty to animals.

> The being who can plan the destruction of a little creature from whom they never received an affront, or sustained an injury, must be insensible to the finer feelings of the soul; and the ungentle mind which can delight in distress, the hand which can be employed to torture, the eye, which, unmoistened with a tear of pity, can behold a dog, a bird, a lamb, or even a worm writhing in agony of their inflicting, may one day become so hardened as to see the sorrows of a parent, a brother, or a friend, with the same insensibility and stoical indifference.[90]

For Mary Hays, a love of blood sports, including fishing, was a masculine characteristic, "more disgusting in a woman than all the Greek and Latin in the two universities."[91]

> Oh heavens! that a woman should mangle even a poor worm, <u>for her amusement</u>! and that too that she may by its means more surely entice the finny tribes into her merciless hands - there to meet an agonising death, when seeking by instinct their appropriate food, - and this too <u>for her amusement</u>![92]

Thus, despite the equivocal nature of sensibility, despite the danger of its degeneration into mere sentimentality and loosening the ties of propriety and ethical principle, it remained a distinctive female virtue, a woman's unique contribution to society's sense of justice and moral purpose. To feel intensely was an approved quality in a woman. It

was one of the tests of her femininity. A woman who shared a man's lack of delicate feelings was an unnatural creature, to be shunned by men and women alike.

There were two further characteristic female virtues of the period, domesticity and religion. It was generally agreed that women were intended to be, above all else, homemakers. It was the domestic sphere "in which female exertion is chiefly occupied, and female excellence is best displayed."[93] In contributing daily and hourly to the comfort of her husband, in caring for and educating his children, and in efficiently managing the household, a woman was fulfilling both the divine plan and her own nature.

There was scarcely a more unfortunate creature than a spinster. As the Reverend John Bennet pointed out,

> A single woman is . . . defenceless, . . . a pining solitary figure, . . . and she wanders through a wide, bustling world, uncomfortable in herself, uninteresting to others, frequently the sport of wanton ridicule, or a proverb of reproach.[94]

The desire of a girl to get married and establish a home was not only an instinct of nature; it was a necessary condition for one of her most distinctive virtues, domesticity. Once a woman was married, her 'tour of gaiety' should be terminated. Mrs. Chapone, in her Letter to a New-Married Lady, informed her correspondent that she was glad the young wife did "not consider marriage as a title to unbounded liberty and perpetual dissipation, instead of a solemn engagement to

subjection and obedience, to family cares and serious employments."[95] Thus, one of woman's 'peculiar excellences' was a wholehearted attachment to the home and a conscientious and willing fulfillment of her duties as a wife and mother. On this particular virtue of women depended the health and stability of the nation. Many of the ills that plagued England could be attributed directly to the lack of domesticity among its women.[96]

The exemplary female was always pictured in a domestic setting, usually surrounded by her children. "If I wished a lady's picture to appear to advantage," observed the Reverend John Bennet, "it should not be taken when she was dressing for an assembly, a levée, or a birthnight. She should be holding one lovely infant in her arms, and presenting a moral page, for the instruction of another."[97] It was precisely this picture, or one very much like it, that appeared as a frontispiece in many of the books on female education of the period.[98] Significantly it was not necessary that the husband figure in such a picture; his world, unlike that of his wife, ranged far beyond the confines of the home.

The "crowning gem of female graces"[99] and "the glory of the sex"[100] was religion. Piety, in a very real sense, was a distinctively feminine characteristic. In the first place, her native mental and emotional endowments seemed to

have prepared her to feel the need for and to accept without questioning the principles of revealed religion. Moreover, her other 'cardinal virtues', submissiveness, propriety, modesty, sensibility and domesticity, were themselves the distinctively Christian virtues. Christianity was "the great principle, or keystone" which drew together all the female graces into an integrated personal life. It was religion alone that guaranteed complete consistency of virtuous conduct. As Madame de Genlis pointed out, in deists and atheists,

> you may perceive . . . some natural virtues; but if they have strong passions you will never find them moral; and in the best among them, you will always discover a morality that has no steady foundation, full of inconclusive contrarieties and arbitrary principles, varying incessantly according to time, place and circumstances.[101]

It was possible, therefore, and many of the female writers, in fact, did so, to glorify all the characteristic female virtues, "the milder virtues," into a form of spiritual grace that guaranteed its possessor a morally superior existence. The ideal of a submissive, modest and sensitive female was so closely tied to the ideal of the Christian woman that to be a 'good woman' and an unbeliever was impossible.

Finally, and this was an argument advanced mainly by the male writers, women stood in particular need of religion because of the nature of their life here on earth. Doctor Gregory pointed out to his daughters, "Your whole life is often a life of suffering. . . . You must bear your

sorrows in silence, unknown and unpitied. . . . Your only resource is the consolations of religion."[102] The Reverend John Bennet was more explicit in detailing the tribulations of women and their need of religion.

> The timidity, arising from the natural weakness and delicacy of your frame; the numerous diseases, to which you are liable; that exquisite sensibility, which, in many of you, vibrates to the slightest touch of joy or sorrow; the tremulous anxiety you have for friends, children, a family, which nothing can relieve, but a sense of their being under the protection of God; the sedentariness of your life, naturally followed with low spirits or ennui, whilst we are seeking health and pleasure in the field; and the many, lonely hours, which, in almost every situation, are likely to be your lot, will expose you to a number of peculiar sorrows, which you cannot, like the men, either drown in wine, or divert by dissipation. . . . religion is the only true and unfailing resource, and its hopes and prospects, the only solid basis of consolation.[103]

From these original and characteristic virtues of the sex could be deduced all the other desirable qualities in a woman. They made up an impressive list of the 'passive virtues'. Chasteness, temperance, simplicity, amiability, compassion, fortitude, diligence, patience, selflessness, tenderness, attentiveness, quietness, discretion, frugality in expenditure, generosity, spotless cleanliness, all these and many more were counted by the writers of the period as distinctively female virtues. There was, perhaps, some truth in Mary Hay's bitter condemnation of 'what men would have women to be'.

> What a chaos! - What a mixture of strength and weakness, - of greatness and littleness, - of sense and folly, - of exquisite feeling and total insensi-

> bility, - have they jumbled together in their imaginations, - and then given to their pretty darlings the name of woman![104]

If anything, the list of a woman's vices was even longer. Any attitudes, dispositions or activities which seemed to conflict with her cardinal virtues could be labelled as immoral. Thus, vanity, affectation, frivolousness, pedantry, impoliteness, forwardness, arrogance, cruelty, insensitivity, oversensitivity, indelicacy, dissipation, deceit, pride, curiosity, idleness, loquacity, ambition, impiety were all looked upon as peculiarly vicious in a woman.

Nor were these vices condemned solely because they were the opposite forms of her virtues. There were other, more positive grounds for their censure. Not unnaturally in a period of national crisis, domestic life, the health of which depended on the wife and mother tended to be regarded with considerable appreciation as a stabilizing force in society. Any threat to the 'traditional' notion of the marital relationship and the sanctity of the home was considered a menace to society in general. Many of the vices of women were condemned as such precisely because they were conceived as being totally inimical to their domestic responsibilities and a stable family life.

Moreover, and this was particularly true of the female writers, the consciousness of woman's importance as the guardian of the purity of domestic life and the 'legislator

of public morality' resulted in a new ideal of the honour and dignity of the sex. Any behaviour which tended in the least way to lessen the esteem in which the sex was held was to be condemned outright. Thus, the most pointed and frequently cruel 'shafts of malice' of the female writers were loosed not against men but against women. The female profligate, the vulgar and insensitive woman, the atheist and the pedant were censured or ridiculed not only because of their harmful influence on domestic life and the moral well-being of society. They were undermining the dignity of woman herself, particularly that aspect which reflected itself in her relationships with the other sex.

V

Once the 'natural propensities' of the sex had been discovered and her 'special excellencies' determined, her obligations and duties were clearly and incontestably evident. Indeed, the domestic and social obligations of women, as interpreted by the writers of the period, were so intimately connected with the prevailing views of the female character as to be inseparable.

In the domestic sphere, her paramount duty was to her husband. As has already been noted, she should, in all important decisions, modestly submit her understanding to his superior judgement, and pay particular attention to the

preservation of her reputation. It was her special responsibility to attach her husband to the home, which should, therefore, exceed in attractiveness the most alluring distraction offered by the world outside. She must do everything in her power to make domestic life pleasant for her husband. Mrs. Chapone advised her newly-married correspondent,

> By a reserved and modest use of his indulgence, by always preferring his company, and that of his friends, to public diversions and assemblies, by studying his taste rather than your own, and making the gratification of it your highest pleasure, you must convince him that your heart is his own.[105]

The instructions continued: never enter into a quarrel with him;[106] maintain a friendly and respectful relationship with his mother, taking care that "no complaint from either of you disturb his peace;"[107] encourage him to "read with you, to practise music with you, or to teach you a language or a science;"[108] and, above all, never trouble him with unpleasantness of any kind.

> Do not disturb him with the details of your grievances from servants or tradespeople, nor with your method of family arrangement. But . . . let nothing of this kind embitter his meals . . . . When he returns to his own house, let him there find everything serene and peaceful, and let your cheerful complacency restore his good humour, and quiet every uneasy passion.[109]

And should the husband, "good Mr. B.," still not find domestic life satisfying and indulge in infidelity,

> what then must be your recourse? - Not rage and exclamation - not sullenness and pride - not an appeal to the world, which would laugh at your complaints - nor even to your friends, who cannot help

> you, unless by a separation, which would publish and complete your misfortune! - The comforts and helps of religion, with a firm resolution not to be driven from the path of duty, can alone support you under such a sorrow.[110]

In fact, of course, if the new-married lady made home life attractive enough, there would be little danger of Mr. B's 'finding his pleasures' outside the domestic sphere.

The pious, happy household, the creation of the wife, was the most powerful guardian of virtue and the only adequate counterpoise to the wickedness of the outside world frequented by her husband. It was her duty, therefore, to influence her husband in religion and morality, to combat the effects on his character of his enforced contracts with society. As Thomas Gisborne observed of the ideal wife,

> Let her unaffected mildness, her ingenuous tenderness, place before his mind a forcible contrast to the violence, the artifice, the unfeeling selfishness, which he witnesses in his commerce with the world. Let the cheerful tranquility of domestic pleasures stand in the place of trifling and turbulent festivity abroad. Let his house . . . be the abode of happiness; and he will have little temptation to bewilder himself in seeking for happiness under another roof.[111]

The responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the conjugal tie was thus placed squarely on the shoulders of the wife. It was her duty to help preserve and, if necessary, restore the religious and moral principles of her husband. If he strayed from the path of probity, if he became a dissolute philanderer, the fault must be located, not in the man, but in the home, or rather the wife, who had failed to live up to her responsibilities.

The subordination of personal interests which a wife owed her husband was to be extended to her children. One of the characteristic concerns of the age was the filial relationship, particularly that between a mother and her children. There were few of the writers on education of the period who did not, in one way or another, subscribe to the Associationist view that the character of human beings depended largely, if not exclusively, on the impressions received in early childhood. "It is in this respect," noted Elizabeth Hamilton, "that the influence of the mother produces the most lasting and the most important consequences."[112] On her, therefore, devolved the major responsibility for the physical and moral well-being of the rising generation.

It was not only 'scientific psychology' which stressed the importance of the mother-child relationship. The appreciation of the significance of motherhood is also clearly linked to the 'cult of sensibility' and the romantic image of childhood.[113] Once the child had become one of the 'touchstones of sensibility' and a symbol of man's lost innocence, it was almost inevitable that the mother should be regarded in a new light. In the mother-child relationship, religious feeling, sensibility and the instinct of nature joined forces to produce a holy and somewhat mystical bond.

Although Froebel's Mottoes and Commentaries of . . . Mother Play did not appear until 1843, in them is to be

found the clearest and most extreme form of this sentimental and religious conception of the mother and her child. And, in fact, his remarks on the subject would not have been entirely out of place earlier in the century. In motherhood, he insisted, a woman achieved her fullest emotional and religious fulfillment.

> Have you ever asked yourself, O thoughtful mother, what means the fervent glow which both warms and illuminates your soul as you sit gazing upon the dear child lying so peacefully in your arms? . . . It is because, if not with the vision of the intellect, yet with the premonition of the heart, you survey your child's life in its unity, and realise that each detail of his experience will continue to influence his history with a power that augments as life proceeds.[114]

> Recall the feelings which were awakened in you by the sight of your first born child. . . . Were they not the well-springs of ineffable joy? Did they not stir your soul with a blessedness too deep for utterance? Did they not transfigure you into a being of nobler and fairer mould? Did not your outer semblance take on a new, strange beauty born of the celestial purity of your transfigured soul?[115]

The child, in all its innocence and simplicity, demanded more than mere care and attention. The act of suckling a child, for example, had a deeper significance than merely satisfying its need for sustenance.

> It is not food alone,
> Thy little one
> Asks for from out thy store -
> He craves far more.
> With instincts deep and true,
> He asks from you
> That which you first must have,
> If you would give -
> A love God-sent,
> That grows with being spent![116]

In the importance attached to the simple act of suckling a child is to be detected a significant change in the idea of the mother-child relationship. Before the appearance of the romantic image of childhood, that is roughly up to the publication of Rousseau's Emile in 1762, it had been considered neither fashionable, nor even important, except in an economic sense, to suckle one's children. After all, what were wet-nurses for? And even when Rousseau's treatise appeared in England advising mothers of their duty to suckle their children, what seems to have mainly interested female readers were the dietary considerations. Thus, young Francis Coape, who between 1778 and 1793 assiduously read and made notes on any work in vogue at the time, found the most remarkable fact brought to light by Rousseau was that "the milk of those women who live chiefly on vegetables, is more sweet and salutary than that of carnivorous females."[117]

By the end of the century, however, a woman's willingness and ability to suckle her child had come to be regarded as the hallmark both of her sense of responsibility as a mother, and her femininity. One anonymous writer pointed out,

> Let not husbands be deceived; let them not expect attachment from wives, who, in neglecting to suckle their children, render assunder the strongest ties in nature. Neither conjugal love, fidelity, modesty, chastity, nor any other virtues, can take deep root in the breast of a female that is callous to the feelings of a mother.[118]

Even the feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft, insisted that the wife "who . . . neither suckles nor educates her children, scarcely deserves the name of a wife, and has no right to that of a citizen."[119]

Whether one followed Locke and the associationists, who argued that the character depended on the "particular regimen during the first year of infancy,"[120] or whether one accepted the romantic notion of motherhood and stressed the natural and holy bond that united a mother and child, it was clear that the major responsibility for the religious and moral well-being of children, and thus mankind, belonged to the mother. No wish 'to live in the world' and enjoy herself, no desire to achieve economic independence should be allowed to interfere with her commitment to and fulfillment of this duty.

A woman's obligation to exert a powerful moral and religious influence was not confined to her immediate family. She had also to assume responsibility for the welfare of her servants. Not that she should allow her family any familiarity with them. There were few things more dangerous than allowing children to mix freely with servants. According to Madame de Genlis, a girl can only learn from them "trifling and absurd expressions, low sentiments, and a taste for bad company."[121] However, the mistress of the house was expected to do her best to correct their faults, particularly those of the

female servants. Insist that they join the family in prayer and devotional exercises, provide them with a little library of improving literature, give them formal instruction in their duties to God and man, - such was the typical advice given to wives by the writers of the period.[122]

The final major domestic duty of a wife was to run her household efficiently, delegating as little responsibility to her servants as possible. Industry and economy were thus two essential qualities in a good wife. "We ought to accustom ourselves," advised Madame de Genlis, "never to pass an instant in absolute idleness, to have always some little kind of work for those occasions which . . . are called spare minutes."[123] Moreover, she continued, a wife should take particular care to do everything as cheaply, quickly and efficiently as possible. Even letters could be addressed and sealed "in an economical way."[124]

Most writers agreed that the domestic accounts were the wife's responsibility. But she should remember, warned Gisborne, that it was not her own money she was spending.[125] "Be regular in requiring, and punctual in examining, your weekly accounts. Be frugal without parsimony; save, that you may distribute."[126] In the latter connection, it was important that she avoid the temptation to offer indiscriminate hospitality. Improvements in transportation, Gisborne explained, have given women "facility of access and inter-

course" and exposed them to the "danger of acquiring a habit of continual visiting."[127] Apart from its damaging effects on family life, this habit had caused many women to live beyond their, or rather their husbands', means. The friendships and recreations of wives should be confined to and enjoyed in the domestic sphere.[128]

It seems apparent that the domestic functions which a wife was expected to fulfill hardly accorded with the notion of a woman as a 'frail reed', whose mental, emotional and physical endowments scarcely bore comparison with those of a man. Not only was she charged with responsibility for the physical and moral well-being of her husband and children, and expected to tend them in sickness, grapple with their problems, sympathize with them in their troubles, and lead them to religious conviction and rational pleasures; she had also to be a good manager, supervising servants and settling accounts. And all this she must do with the conviction that it was these duties which comprised her raison d'etre, her 'special excellences' and unique functions.

Outside the home, the obligations of women were few. Her responsibility to set a good example to her own sex has already been mentioned.[129] A strict attendance to all the proprieties, regularity in affairs, a proper observance of the Sabbath, the public censure and disavowal of any acquaintance whose conduct merited reproach, all were considered as

duties peculiar to the sex. A woman's chief social obligation, however, and the one which occupied most of the attention of contemporary writers, was benevolence. The Reverend John Bennet advised his readers,

> Compassion is the highest excellence of your sex, and charity is the most sacred root from which it springs. The soft bosom of a woman, throbbing with sympathy, or the eye glistening with crystal drops of pity, are some of the finest touches of nature's pencil.[130]

But, as several writers were quick to point out, the feelings of compassion and benevolence should be clearly distinguished from charitable and philanthropic activities. The forms that benevolence should take were to be determined by reason or judgement, not blind emotion.[131] It was improper, for example, to give money to the poor when the mood took one or in amounts which were determined by the strength of compassion called forth by their plight. As Mrs. West pointed out,

> Indiscriminate relief is worse than injudicious; it is prejudicial. . . . Society . . . cannot be benefited by introducing expensive refinements into humble life; and it is melancholy to reflect, that habitual alms, if very liberally bestowed, often corrupts the manners of the individual whom it particularises.[132]

In fact, few of the writers of the period, in their discussions of the charitable duties of women, devoted any attention to giving money directly to the poor. True benevolence involved activity and work, not mere alms-giving.

The most commonly advocated form of philanthropy for

upper and middle class women, both young and old, was the support and supervision of local schools for the lower orders. "Nothing is so likely to promote harmony amongst the different ranks in society," insisted Mrs. Trimmer, "as a proper intercourse between young people of the higher and lower stations in life."[133] The presence of young ladies in a charity school, a school of industry or a Sunday school would be a powerful improving and refining influence on the children, although Mrs. Trimmer was quick to reassure her readers that such contacts could "never refine them to such a degree, as to put them on a level with young ladies, who have a regard to real refinement."[134]

Nor should young ladies be discouraged from this duty by exaggerated tales of the dangers to health involved. True, the children were occasionally dirty and the schools not completely clean; but, as Mrs. Trimmer pointed out, "Surely there is not so much <u>contagion in dirt</u> as some people are apt to imagine."[135] And besides, disease was powerless to strike us down "without the direction of an over-ruling Providence."[136] For the Reverend John Bennet, there was not "a greater charity within the sphere of a young lady, than to visit the girls in these useful seminaries, in order to correct their foibles, encourage their dawning virtues, and stimulate them to improvement."[137] The uncomfortable cellars, poisonous smells and dirty children were, he admitted, not

very inviting, but the benevolent visitor should remember that "the merit of the action is, doubtless, in proportion to its unpleasantness."[138]

Older women should do far more than just visit the schools. Their superintendence and control of such institutions were vital to their success.[139] Only women had the requisite knowledge to detect abuses, correct moral disorders and remove prejudices. If Elizabeth Hamilton is to be believed, this particular responsibility seems to have been taken very seriously. In 1815, she reported that

> of the numerous charity schools on a small scale established throughout England and Ireland, more than three fourths have been instituted and endowed by ladies; and of the larger schools that have been erected since the introduction of the improved methods of teaching, [the monitorial schools] those appropriated to girls are, almost without exception, superintended by ladies only.[140]

Catherine Cappe believed that the supervisory activities of ladies ought not to be confined to educational institutions. A lady's duty to concern herself with the physical and moral well-being of her sex required that she also visit and help superintend the female wards of hospitals and lunatic asylums. The usefulness of such institutions depended entirely upon "the care, integrity and propriety with which they are conducted."[141] Lady visitors were well fitted to detect wrongdoing and to introduce "decency in conversation and behaviour."[142]

> A lady visitor in an hospital or Asylum, should be to that institution what the kind judicious Mistress of a family is to her household, - the careful inspector of the oeconomy, the integrity, and the good moral conduct of the housekeeper and other inferior servants in their various departments. Are there not many things relating to the cleanliness, proper clothing, and a thousand other less obvious matters of great consequence to the sick, into which a male visitor, from motives of delicacy, cannot inquire, and which, if there are no lady visitors, must be left entirely to the uncontrolled superintendence of the nurse or matron?[143]

To effect the needed reforms in such institutions, it was desirable that ladies band themselves together in local committees, whose power and influence would be far greater than that of any individual. It is surely one of the most striking illustrations both of the great upsurge of genuine humanitarianism and the new ideal of woman that the lunatic asylum, which not long before had been a place where ladies might enjoy an afternoon's entertainment, was now an institution where they were expected to engage in 'useful works' among those less fortunate than themselves.

According to Mrs. Cappe, one of the most beneficial contributions which a Ladies' Committee could make to the welfare of women of the lower orders was to help them establish Female Friendly Societies. In such societies, it was important that

> there should always be a proportion of Honorary Members, these being essential (in a Female Benefit Club at least) to the well conducting of the business, to the preservation of complete order, to the superintendence of visiting the sick, and to the giving a general example to all, of moderation, benevolence and kindness.[144]

Such aid to the poor was particularly efficacious, inculcating in them "a laudable spirit of independence" and teaching them the benefits of industry, self-help and saving.

This, in fact, was the aim of the More sisters in setting up Female Clubs in the impoverished Mendip villages which they had undertaken to Christianise and humanise.[145] In return for their small weekly contributions, the members received a lump sum on their marriage, sick and death benefits, and a set amount of money at their laying-ins. They also enjoyed regular meetings and an annual feast.[146] But such advantages were insignificant compared to the great lesson they were learning, that God helps those who help themselves, that their physical well-being depended not on the generosity of the rich but on their determination to provide for themselves.

There were several other forms of philanthropy recommended by writers of the period as being particularly suitable for women. Visiting the local aged and infirm in order to give aid and comfort was a most worthy undertaking.[147] "Another excellent mode of charity," noted the Reverend John Bennet, "is dispensing little, religious tracts amongst your poor neighbours."[148] Those "little, plain, useful treatises" produced by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge were particularly appropriate. In one of her tales for the middle orders of society, A Cure for Melancholy, showing the

way to do much Good with little Money, Hannah More suggested several ways in which 'a good woman' could help improve the condition of the local poor.[149]

Mrs. Jones, a widow in straightened circumstances, is distressed by the state of the local villagers. She consults the vicar and is advised that her best contribution to their welfare lies, not in giving them money, but in going out into the parish and engaging in 'useful work'. Mrs. Jones sets out to see what can be done. She immediately discovers that the local baker is selling underweight loaves. After convincing the villagers that it is not unbecoming a man or a woman to inform on cheats and criminals, she has the wicked baker prosecuted. Realizing that many of the poor are paying a great deal more than things are worth by buying on credit, she visits them all and persuades them to deal with a store that sells for cash only. Before long, she has encouraged the rich to buy only the most expensive cuts of meat, leaving the cheap joints for the poor. She has cut down attendance at the local ale-house, and dissuaded the villagers from drinking tea. Finally, she revives the local charity school and sets up a Sunday school, taking it upon herself to visit the local rich to obtain subscriptions. Those members of the middle ranks who really desire to alleviate the condition of the poor are urged to "go and do likewise."[150]

The fact that Mrs. Jones was a widow is significant.

The question of how much time and attention a wife should devote to philanthropic activities was one which tended to be ignored by the writers of the period. They seem to suggest, however, that it was not proper for a mother with young children to devote herself to anything or anyone but her family. But for the young lady or spinster, the widow and the mother whose children had left home, the most useful and suitably feminine activity was wholehearted involvement in some form of philanthropy. Her exclusion from any economic or political functions left her peculiarly well situated to undertake this most valuable social service.

One further point in connection with the duties of women, as conceived by the writers of the period, needs to be mentioned. Almost without exception, when discussing the education of a future wife and mother, the writers refer to a girl as a young lady. And, generally speaking, their recommendations for the aims and content of her education justify their use of this title. In their treatment of her social obligations, particularly that of philanthropy, they continue to refer to her as a lady. However, the same writers, in their analyses of the domestic duties of a wife and mother, invariably refer to her as a woman, never a lady. And, in fact, the domestic functions of a woman, as outlined above, do seem somewhat inappropriate for someone with the rank of a lady.

What, then, did it mean to be a lady? And what did it mean to be a woman? To be a woman, in the full sense of the word, was not only to be a member of the female sex. To have a home to look after, and a husband and children to care for, - these were, as they perhaps still are, essential elements in achieving the full status of a woman. It was in these commitments that she expressed and fulfilled her nature, her womanhood. Thus, in her 'natural sphere', the home, surrounded by her family, she was conceived of and referred to as a woman, no matter what her rank.

To be a lady, however, was something more. Johnson, in his dictionary, gave three meanings for the word 'lady'.[151] First, "the title of lady properly belongs to the wives of knights, of all degrees above them, and to the daughters of earls, and all of the higher ranks." Secondly, it signified "an illustrious or eminent woman." Finally, it was "a word of complaissance used of women." To be 'ladylike' was to be "soft; delicate; elegant."

Between the publication of Johnson's dictionary in 1755 and the end of the century, the word 'lady', while retaining all its old meanings seems to have broadened its scope to include any woman of refined and elegant manners. No longer did it primarily denote social rank; its use involved the attribution to a woman of a particular set of characteristics. Thus, on any occasion and in any situation

where a woman could demonstrate elegance and refinement, she was entitled to be regarded as a lady. When entertaining guests, in church, at school, attending the theatre, calling on poor neighbours, and, even more so, on rich ones, - at all these times she was a lady, not a woman.

There is surely more than a mere verbal distinction involved here. The fact that a word has acquired a new and important meaning generally indicates much wider changes in the life and thought of the period. The growing wealth and refinement of the middle classes, the greater possibility of their purchasing for their daughters a 'fashionable education', the general increase in literacy, the widespread concern to uplift society morally, the humanitarian feeling of the age, all had combined to make the word 'lady', this term of complaissance, applicable to a vastly greater number of women than had previously been the case. The terms 'lady' and 'ladylike' had acquired much the same meaning which they have today; they had become, in fact, vulgarized.

The precise relationship between these ideas of woman and the actual lives of women in the period is not easy to determine. There is, it is true, a marked resemblance between the ideal of woman as presented by the writers of the period, and what has come down to us as 'the typical Victorian woman'. But it would be a mistake to look for and, perhaps, a bigger one to think one had found any flesh and blood

creature who fitted the description of the archetypal female. If such women are to be discovered, it is in the literature of the period, particularly the novel, where ideal type females are to be found in abundance. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it was in the novels of the period, in the lives of heroines and minor heroines, that the prevailing views about women, their strengths and weaknesses, their virtues and vices, and the peculiar problems they faced as women, were presented in a form that enabled them to reach and influence vast numbers of upper and middle class females in England.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See Chapters V and VI.

[2] Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. (1792), J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1929. p. 31.

[3] A Lady, Female Restoration by a Moral and Physical Vindication of Female Talents, J. MacGowans, London, 1780. pp. iii and ix.

[4] Anonymous, The Female Instructor: or Young Woman's Guide to Domestic Happiness, Thomas Kelly, London, 1822. p. 1.

[5] Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile, or Education, (1762), J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1966. p. 323.

[6] Ibid. p. 327.

[7] Doctor Gregory, A Father's Legacy to His Daughters, (1774), J. Sharpe, London, 1822. p. 43.

[8] A Clergyman of the Church of England (Reverend John Bennet), Strictures on Female Education: chiefly as it relates to the Culture of the Heart, T. Cadell, London, n.d. c. 1780. p. 126.

[9] Ibid. p. 125.

[10] Madame Genlis, Selections from the Works of Madame de Genlis; Consisting principally of Precepts, Maxims, and Reflections, Moral, Religious and Sentimental. James Cundee, London, 1806. pp. 69-70.

[11] Ibid. p. 125.

[12] The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal , Vol. XV., No. XXX. January, 1810. pp. 299 ff.

[13] Ibid. Vol. XXIV, No. XLVIII. February 1815. p. 337.

[14] Miss Hatfield, Letters on the Importance of the Female Sex: with Observations on their Manners and on Education. J. Adlard, London, 1803. pp. 28-29.

[15] De Genlis, op. cit. pp. 110-111.

[16] J. L. Chirol, An Enquiry into the Best System of Female Education: or Boarding School and Home Education attentively considered, T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1809. pp. 4-6.

[17] Ibid. p. 92.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. pp. 7-8.

[20] Ibid. pp. 10-11.

[21] Ibid. p. 16.

[22] Ibid. p. 17.

[23] See, for example, Bennet, op. cit.,
Reverend John Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady on a Variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects. T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1795,
John Bowdler, Junior, Thoughts on the Proposed Improvement of Female Education, (1808). Select Pieces in Verse and Prose, G. Davidson, London, 1816. Vol. I. pp. 88-113,
J. Burton, Lectures on Female Education and Manners, Printed for the Author, London, 1793,
Thomas Gisborne, An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex, T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1797,
Gregory, op. cit.
Henry Home, (Lord Kames), Loose Hints upon Education, chiefly concerning the Culture of the Heart. J. Bell and J. Murray, Edinburgh, 1781, and
John Moir, Female Tuition: or, An Address to Mothers on the Education of Daughters. J. Murray, London, 1786.

[24] See, for example, The Lady's Magazine, March, 1780. pp. 153-155, May 1780, pp. 250-251, and the Supplement for 1796, p. 594, and
La Belle Assemblée, July, 1806. pp. 300-301.

[25] Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, (1799), The Works of Hannah More, D. Graisberry, London, 1803, Vol. IV. p. 193.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid. p. 198.

[28] Ibid. p. 195.

[29] Ibid. p. 197.

[30] Ibid. p. 195.

[31] Ibid. pp. 196-197.

[32] Ibid. pp. 200-201.

[33] Ibid. p. 202.

[34] Ibid. p. 203.

[35] See Chapter II, pp. 58-60.

[36] Rousseau, op. cit. p. 56.

[37] Frances Brooke, Emily Montagu, (1769), Vol. I. p. 225. cited in J. M. S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800. Constable and Co., London, 1932. p. 94.
See too, Gregory, op. cit. pp. 11-12.

[38] See the cartoon in The Anti-Jacobin Magazine and Review, August 1, 1798, described below pp. 343-344.

[39] Moir, op. cit. p. 7.

[40] Chirol, op. cit. pp. 240-241.

[41] Ibid. p. 142.

[42] Home, op. cit. p. 228.

[43] Anonymous, Dialogues concerning the Ladies, to which is added, An Essay on the Antient Amazons. T. Cadell London, 1785. pp. 13-14.

[44] Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, pp. 189-190.
See too, Gisborne, op. cit. pp. 226-229.

[45] De Genlis, op. cit. pp. 10-11.

[46] Mrs. Jane West, Letters to a Young Lady: in which the Duties and Character of Women are Considered, chiefly with a reference to Prevailing Opinions, (1806). Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1811. Vol. I. p. 74.

[47] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 366.

[48] Ibid. p. 361.

[49] Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, (1790).
Cited in Tompkins, op. cit. p. 88.

[50] Ibid. p. 158.

[51] Wollstonecraft, op. cit. p. 93.

[52] Anonymous (Mary Hays) Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in behalf of Women, J. Johnson, London, 1798. p. 51.

[53] Wollstonecraft, op. cit. p. 168.

[54] W. Godwin to Mary Wollstonecraft, Aug. 22, 1796, cited in Ralph A. Wardle (editor), Godwin and Mary, Letters of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, 1966. p. 23.

[55] Madame de Genlis, La Bruyere the Less: or, Character and Manners of the Children of the Present Age, T. N. Longman and O. Rees, London, 1800. pp. 195-196.

[56] More, op. cit. p. 4.

[57] Hannah More, Coelebs in Search of a Wife, (1809), T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1813. Vol. I. pp. 96-97.

[58] Rousseau, op. cit. p. 328.

[59] See 'The Utility of Public Censure briefly Considered', La Belle Assemblée, Sept. 1806. pp. 393-396.

[60] Mrs. Hester Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, (1773), The Works of Mrs. Chapone to which is Prefixed an Account of Her Life and Character, John Murray, London, 1807. Vol. III. pp. 99 ff.
Anonymous (Maria Edgeworth), Letters of Julia and Caroline, J. Johnson, London, 1795. p. 63, and
West, op. cit. Vol. I. pp. 239-240.

[61] La Belle Assemblée, Sept. 1806. pp. 394-395.

[62] Wollstonecraft, op. cit. p. 144.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid. p. 150.

[65] De Genlis, Selections, p. 173.

[66] Miss Appleton, Early Education: or The Management of Children considered with a View to their Future Character, G. and W. B. Whittaker, London, 1821. p. 155.

[67] The Lady's Magazine, Jan. 1797. p. 12.

68 Mrs. Elizabeth Bonhote, The Parental Monitor, William Lane, London, 1788. Vol. I. p. 52.

69 La Belle Assemblée, October 1816. p. 178.

70 See, 1 Tim., ii. 9, 10.

71 Mrs. Trimmer, The Guardian of Education, July 1803. p. 404.

72 La Belle Assemblée, March, 1806. p. 79, and December, 1806, p. 581-582.

73 Anonymous, The Female Instructor, p. 234.

74 Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. II. p. 2. See too Gregory, op. cit. pp. 46-47.

75 Anonymous, The Female Instructor, pp. 2-3.

76 Mrs. Trimmer, The Guardian of Education, July, 1803. p. 405.

77 Wollstonecraft, op. cit. p. 133.

78 A Lady of Distinction, The Mirror of the Graces - or The English Lady's Costume, B. Crosby and Co., London, 1811. p. 137.

79 Mary Wollstonecraft, The Cave of Fancy, Works, 1798, cited in Tompkins, op. cit. p. 95 (italics mine).

80 Tompkins, op. cit. p. 95.

81 The Anti-Jacobin Magazine and Review, August 1, 1798.

82 More, Strictures, p. 235.

83 Ibid. p. 241.

84 Ibid. p. 240.

85 Ibid. pp. 241-258.

86 Ibid. p. 241.

87 This newly developed sensitivity towards suffering and concomitant sympathy for every species of animal was not confined to women. Richard Lovell Edgeworth, for example, despite his passionate interest in 'experimental science' and

nature, was filled with remorse at having killed and mounted butterflies, and discontinued the practice.* His friend, Thomas Day, was even more convinced that killing any animal unnecessarily was iniquitous. One delightful anecdote will suffice to illustrate his conviction. Sir William Jones, an eminent lawyer, discovered a large black spider in his chambers. Having an aversion to this particular insect, he cried out,

> "Day, kill that spider, kill that spider," "No" said Day, with that coolness for which he was so conspicuous, "I will not kill that spider, I do not know that I have a right to kill it. Suppose when you are going in your coach to Westminster Hall, a superior being, who, perhaps, may have as much power over you as you have over that spider, should say to his companion, "kill that lawyer, kill that lawyer". How should you like that, Jones? I am sure, to most people, a lawyer is a more noxious animal than a spider."**

* - Augustus J. C. Hare, (editor), The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth, Edward Arnold, London, 1894. Vol. I. p. 21.

**- John Blackman, A Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Day, John Bedford Leno, London, 1862. pp. 29-30.

[88] Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories from Real Life, (1791), Henry Frowde, London, 1906. p. 4.

[89] Ibid. p. 8.

[90] Bonhote, op. cit. pp. 123-124. See too Appleton, op. cit. p. 121.

[91] Anonymous, (Mary Hays), op. cit. p. 184.

[92] Ibid. p. 183.

[93] Gisborne, op. cit. p. 2.

[94] Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. II. p. 162.

[95] Mrs. H. Chapone, A Letter to a New Married Lady (1777). J. Sharpe, London, 1822. p. 105.

[96] West, op. cit. Vol. I. p. 141 and p. 161, and Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, pp. 215-216.

[97] Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. II. pp. 216-217.

[98] See, for example, the frontispiece illustrations for two contemporary editions of Fenelon's On the Education of Daughters.

Abbé Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray, (translated by A.L.L.), On the Education of Daughters, (1688), W. Darton, Jun., London, 1812, and
Reverend T. F. Dibdin, (translator), Fenelon's Treatise on the Education of Daughters, Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, London, 1805.

99 West, op. cit. Vol. II. p. 408.

100 Moir, op. cit. p. 258.

101 De Genlis, La Bruyere the Less, p. 150.

102 Gregory, op. cit. p. 13.

103 Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. I. p. 7.

104 Anonymous, (Mary Hays), op. cit. p. 47.

105 Chapone, Letter to a New Married Lady, p. 108.

106 Ibid. pp. 118 ff.

107 Ibid. pp. 116-117.

108 Ibid. p. 114.

109 Ibid. p. 112.

110 Ibid. p. 122.

111 Gisborne, op. cit. pp. 332-333.

112 Elizabeth Hamilton, Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, (1801), Wilkie and Robinson, London, 1810. Vol. I. p. 4.
See too, Burton, op. cit. p. 92.

113 See Peter Coveney, The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature, Penguin Books, London, 1967. pp. 37-51.

114 Friedrich Froebel, (translated Henrietta R. Elliot), The Mottoes and Commentaries of Friedrich Froebel's Mother Play, (1843). D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1912. pp. 60-61.

115 Ibid. p. 64.

116 'The Child at its Mother's Breast', Ibid. p. 49.

[117] Frances Coape, (Mrs. William Smith), Notebook kept between 1778 and 1793. Manuscript in the possession of the Women's Service Institute Library, London.

[118] Anonymous, The Female Instructor, p. 91.

[119] Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 160.

[120] Appleton, op. cit. p. 14.

[121] Madame la Comtesse de Genlis, Adelaide and Theodore: or Letters on Education, (1782) C. Bathurst, London, 1783. p. 127.

[122] Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. II. pp. 228 ff. Gisborne, op. cit. p. 275, and Mrs. Taylor, Practical Hints to Young Females, on the Duties of a Wife, a Mother, and a Mistress of a Family, (1816), Taylor and Hessey, London, 1818. pp. 36 ff.

[123] De Genlis, La Bruyere the Less, p. 92.

[124] Ibid. p. 94.

[125] Gisborne, op. cit. p. 279.

[126] Ibid. p. 275.

[127] Ibid. pp. 286-287. See too Bonhote, op. cit. pp. 115 ff.

[128] Gisborne, op. cit. p. 290.

[129] See above, pp. 337-340.

[130] Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. I. p. 151. See too, Thomas Broadhurst, Advice to Young Ladies on the Improvement of the Mind and the Conduct of Life. Richard Cruttwell, Bath, 1808. pp. 5-6.

[131] More, Strictures, pp. 253-254.

[132] West, op. cit. Vol. II. p. 346 ff.

[133] Sarah Trimmer, The Oeconomy of Charity, or, An Address to Ladies; adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England. J. Johnson and F. C. Rivington, London, 1801. p. 67.

[134] Ibid. p. 71.

135 Ibid. pp. 71-72.

136 Ibid.

137 Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. I. p. 156. and Gisborne, op. cit. pp. 219-220.

138 Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. I. p. 156.

139 Elizabeth Hamilton, Hints addressed to the Patrons of and Directors of School: . . . to shew . . . the benefits of the Plan of Pestalozzi, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1815. pp. 41 ff.
Trimmer, Oeconomy of Charity, pp. 92-93, and
Catherine Cappe, Observations on Charity Schools, Female Friendly Societies, and other Subjects connected with the Views of the Ladies' Committee, W. Blanchard, York, 1805. pp. 15 ff.

140 Hamilton, Hints, p. 42.

141 Catherine Cappe, Thoughts on the Desirableness and Utility of Ladies Visiting the Female Wards of Hospitals and Lunatic Asylums, (original), London, 1816. p. 2.

142 Ibid. p. 4.

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146 'Articles of Agreement to be Observed by a Society of Women, held in the Parishes of Shipham and Rowberrow, in Somersetshire; commencing in September 1792.' cited in The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, (editor Thomas Barnard), Of the Education of the Poor, A Digest of the Reports of the Society. W. Bulmer and Co., London, 1809, pp. 115-116.
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148 Bennet, Letters to a Young Lady, Vol. I. p. 157.

149 Hannah More, 'A Cure for Melancholy', Stories for Persons of the Middle Ranks, The Works of Hannah More, D. Graisberry, London, 1803. Vol. II. p. 435.

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CHAPTER VIII

LITERARY MODELS OF WOMANHOOD IN THE POPULAR NOVEL

I

The way in which contemporary opinions about woman, her character and duties are reflected in the popular novel is closely related to its development as a literary form during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1740, Samuel Richardson published the first part of Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded, and inaugurated a period which has come to be regarded as the true beginning of the history of the English novel. Over the next thirty years, the works of Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Goldsmith and Smollett gave to the novel a prestige which it had not previously enjoyed.

By 1770, this brief and prestigious episode in the history of the novel had come to an end. As far as literary merit was concerned, the next half century saw a marked decline in this type of literature. With the exception of the works of Jane Austen, the novels published between Humphry Clinker (1771) and Waverley (1814) have deservedly suffered the greatest indignity that posterity has to offer, neglect.[1]

The decline of the novel may have been connected with its popularization. The increased geographical and social mobility of the second half of the century coupled with the

growing literacy, wealth and leisure of middle class women had produced, perhaps for the first time in history, a large reading public, eager for entertainment and willing to pay for it. Whatever this new reading public lacked in taste, it more than made up for in appetite. There had come into existence an insatiable demand for 'entertaining' literature. It is not surprising that quality was frequently sacrificed to quantity.

Among the new breed of novelists which appeared to satisfy this new demand were high-born ladies, middle class wives and spinsters, farmers' daughters, milkwomen, even schoolboys.[2] None of them experienced any difficulty in disposing of their works to booksellers and libraries. And if the fees were often pitifully small, so too was the time and effort required to write another piece of entertaining literature.

The novel, which was primarily concerned with a world of sentiment and feeling, had come to be regarded as peculiarly suited to a woman's powers and abilities. To a large extent, its writing passed into their hands. From women and thus, by implication, from the novel the age did not expect any great contribution to 'topics that require investigation and labour'.[3] A woman's strength lay in her delicacy, sympathy and imagination; for displaying these qualities as a novelist she could expect to be praised by the reviewers. What men

expected from the female novelist was "a glimpse into that ideal world of the affections, which they hoped was inhabited by their woman-kind."[4]

Despite the failure of the period to produce literary giants in the field of novel writing, it did see several important developments in the form of the novel itself. The domestic novel, with its sentimental love story, and transcript of contemporary manners, both of which the age inherited from the first half of the century, became the standard types. The works of Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen may be considered as belonging to this tradition. The purposes of the writers of such novels were to teach morality, impart information, and educate the emotions of their readers. Their major themes were thus didactic and full of sensibility.

As the century wore on, the didactic elements in the novels became more and more obtrusive, expanding themselves to embrace ethics, politics and especially education. Rousseau's La Nouvelle Heloise (1761), had demonstrated how well suited was the epistolary novel for telling a love story and at the same time expatiating on education. There was certainly no lack of imitators; by the end of the century it was frequently difficult to detect the plot amid the interminable bouts of sermonizing and lectures on 'useful and improving subjects'.

To these newly instituted forms of the novel were

added others. In 1764, Horace Walpole published his Castle of Otranto. Almost overnight he changed the word 'Gothic' "from an adjective of opprobrium into an epithet of praise."[5] So great was its impact on the reading public and the writers of the day that what had been a diminutive trickle of works containing things medieval and mysterious soon became a full flood of truly Gothic novels.

The reaction against eighteenth century rationalism (and the notions of morality it embodied), which the Gothic novel is held to represent, was not in the early stages of its development wholesale. When Kenneth Clarke insists that "the Gothic novelists screamed - screamed in complete reaction to everything stuffy and probable,"[6] he is only partially correct. The early Gothic novelists, Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe, although their works exhibit most if not all of the Gothic tendencies and preoccupations, also embody in their writings the most cherished eighteenth century values and prejudices.

In the preface to the first edition of Otranto, Walpole showed himself as keen to fulfill what were considered to be the proper functions of a novelist as any moralist of the day.

> I have no doubt [he wrote] that the English reader will be pleased with a sight of this performance. The piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue that are inculcated, the rigid purity of the sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are but too liable.[7]

Similar sentiments were to be expressed by Clara Reeve in her The Old English Baron (1777), and Mrs. Radcliffe in The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794).[8]

Not until the publication of Lewis' The Monk in 1795 was the didactic element in the Gothic novel weakened. To achieve its avowed intention of horrifying the reader, the later Gothic novel overstepped 'the modesty of nature' and indulged "in a farrago of frightfulness."[9] Not that the moral purpose was ignored completely. Even in such a work as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818), the didactic element is present and made abundantly clear to the reader.

In the early 'nineties, the values and purposes of the novel and of society itself began to be questioned and rejected by a small group of writers who have quite properly been called 'a revolutionary school'. For these writers, the moral purpose of the novel was its primary justification. As Thomas Holcroft, whose Anna St. Ives (1792) may be considered the first of the revolutionary novels, proudly asserted, "Whenever I have undertaken to write a novel, I have proposed to myself a specific moral purpose."[10]

To the enlightened and politically radical works of Holcroft were added Robert Bage's Man as He Is (1792) and Hermsprong, or Man as He Is Not (1796), William Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794), Mary Wollstonecraft's The Wrongs of Women (1798), and Mary Hays' Emma Courtney (1796). In such

works, the revolutionary novelists arraigned society on a criminal charge of corrupting and despoiling the lives of men and women.

Against the prevailing female virtue of submissiveness they put forward the ideal of self-assertion; to propriety and decorum they opposed feeling and passion; against the sanctity of the home and the permanence of the marriage tie they asserted the claims of personal integrity and ease of divorce; against the idea that marriage was the only career in which a woman could fulfill herself, they insisted that the female sex could be of use to society and express her individuality in a variety of occupations and professions.

It was bad enough to find men openly advocating such principles in works which could all too easily fall into the hands of younger readers; but the presence of women in the revolutionary school shocked the orthodox beyond measure. Mary Hays' definition of chastity as "individuality of affection"[11] was no less horrifying than Mary Wollstonecraft's claiming sympathy for an adultress in her The Wrongs of Women. Here were heroines asserting themselves, following their passionate natures, relaxing the marriage tie, meddling with important political, social and religious issues, and all presented in a favourable light. What was worse, the authors of such works were themselves engaging in these activities.

The death of Mary Wollstonecraft in childbirth, and the no less unfortunate premature baldness and loveless life of Mary Hays must have seemed appropriate and satisfactory to their orthodox contemporaries. For it became no less important to discredit such people and their ideas than it was to defeat revolutionary France and Napoleon.

The 'anti-philosophic novels' were numerous, highly praised, widely read, and completely victorious. Against the pernicious and revolutionary doctrines of Godwin and his friends they upheld the old values of the sanctity of domestic life and the ancient ties of filial obligation and obedience.[12] Adding power to these salvos delivered against the new ideas was the whole arsenal of the reviews. The Anti-Jacobin, by far the most vehemently anti-philosophical, helped put the liberal Analytical out of business, reformed the Critical and made the Monthly play safe.[13] Its attitude can be gauged from its reaction to Mary Hays' Emma Courtney. The reviewer noted, "On the style of her writings it is needless to remark; who stays to admire the workmanship of a dagger wrenched from the hand of an assassin."[14]

With very few exceptions, then, the popular novels were characterized by a heavy emphasis on the moral content. Any author of the period would have been proud to boast with Clara Reeve that she had always used her pen "on the side of truth, virtue and morality."[15] No doubt the obtrusive didac-

ticism of the novels was a major cause of their literary shortcomings and of their rapid demise in the nineteenth century. Yet it is just this didacticism which gives to them much of their historical significance.

The novels of the period stand in a peculiar relationship to the age in which they were written. Prior to the appearance of the revolutionary novels, the pressing issues of the day tended to be ignored. Slavery, the American War, political radicalism, Methodism, the effects of enclosure, the movements for popular education received little or no attention in the popular novel. This was particularly true of the novels written by women. The world they described was a limited one; its centre was the home, its boundaries the fashionable resorts, pleasure gardens and opera. The male world of action and business made its presence felt every now and again; but it remained somehow obscure and inpenetrable to the female novelists.[16]

Not that the world they dealt with was, in any way, a dull one. Jane Austen's realistic "familiar cabinet pictures"[17] were not typical of the vast majority of the novels of the period. Sensationalism there was in abundance. Rape, jealousy, murder, incest, madness, duelling, and, of course, tender love were staple ingredients of most of them. But sensationalism only rarely joined forces with propaganda for a cause.

And when the 'philosophers' and 'philosophesses' did take to the novel as a medium for promulgating their revolutionary principles, the world of women they described was just as narrowly circumscribed. The same sensational events were portrayed; only the character of the heroine and her relationship to the male sex were altered.

In the hands of the female writers, the novel was not meant primarily to mirror life. It did, of course, contain accurate observations of contemporary life and manners. But in the lives of the heroine and hero it was an ideal world which the novelist portrayed, a world where virtue would find the just reward it was all too often denied in real life, and where vice would receive its proper reckoning. It was, in fact, a world where women could look for and find "ideal pleasures and ideal revenge."[18]

For the purposes of this study, an examination of the ideal of woman and her world as presented in the popular novel is particularly valuable. The novels' heavy didacticism makes them a fruitful source of educational ideas. Moreover, and more importantly, in them is presented with great clarity the image of woman. Here are to be found archetypal and exemplary females who, because of a correct upbringing, face and successfully resolve the problems unique to their sex. Here too can be seen their opposite forms who invariably come to a bad end. Finally, among the many minor heroines

can be detected every conceivable stock type of female, from the pedant to the empty headed if fashionably educated miss, from the creature of exquisite sensibility to the boor, from the ideal mother to the dissipated and heartless parent.

II

There were very few novels published during the period which did not contain an exemplary heroine. However, despite their number, these model young ladies are very much alike in their social origins, circumstances, characters, education, the problems they face, their responses to these problems, their triumph over misfortune and the forces of evil, and in their eventual happy marriages.

Generally, the young heroine is introduced to the reader as an attractive young lady whose background, fortune and connections give her a wide selection of prospective husbands. And if, like humble Fanny Price in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park (1814), she lacks these qualifications, she is soon taken into a family where her charms more than compensate for such deficiencies.

Whether rich or poor, the exemplary heroine is never faced with the problem of earning a living; her one great purpose in life is the selection of a suitable husband. The major plot of almost every novel of the period hinges upon the marriage of the heroine. The art of the novelist lay in

contriving as many unusual obstacles to the happy event as possible, and then one by one have them successfully surmounted by the heroine and her lover.

To engage the reader's sympathy for her, and perhaps to avoid dealing with that somewhat awkward and uninteresting relationship between a mother and a daughter, the heroine is usually an orphan, placed in the care of a guardian, aunt or uncle. And if the parents are alive when the novel opens, it is seldom that they survive for more than a chapter or two. The most fascinating relationships for the novelists were those between a woman and a man,- between a daughter and father, young girl and guardian, young lady and lover, wife and husband, helpless victim and all-powerful tyrant, mother and son.

Before the inevitable 'husband hunt' commences, the formal education of the heroine has been completed and her character fixed. She is virtuous, modest, a lover of books and conversation (though not so well read and profound as to qualify as a pedant or Bluestocking). She possesses all the desirable accomplishments in due moderation and has a 'natural' taste for what is proper and delicate together with a corresponding aversion to anything gross or unseemly. She is acutely conscious of her duties; she respects and obeys her parent or guardian and shows sympathy and benevolence to the poor and afflicted. In her life, she exemplifies all the eighteenth century notions of 'prudential morality'.

Usually her early life has been spent and her education completed in the country. Only when she has imbibed all the values and virtues of domestic life in a rural setting is she allowed to enter the harmful life of the town. Thus, the worthy Mr. Villars, the guardian of Fanny Burney's Evelina, having given his charge a correct education in the country, can safely consign her to the care of Lady Howard, who will introduce her into fashionable society.[19] Similarly, Belinda Portman, the heroine of Maria Edgeworth's Belinda (1801), cannot be corrupted by the machinations of her aunt, Mrs. Stanhope, "for she had been educated chiefly in the country and had early been inspired with a taste for domestic pleasures."[20]

Of particular interest is the education given Emily St. Aubert, the heroine of Mrs. Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), for she was to become, for many people, the most truly feminine of all fictional heroines.[21] Her father and mother had wisely decided to educate their daughter themselves, away from the frivolities of the town. Early they had discovered that she possessed "uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence." Unfortunately, "with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace."[22]

> St. Aubert had too much good sense to prefer a charm to a virtue; and had penetration enough to see that this charm was too dangerous to its possessor to be allowed the character of a blessing. He en-

> deavoured therefore to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command; to teach her to regret the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination, upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way.[23]

Thus, although accomplished in all the "elegant arts," Emily's understanding is "cultivated with the most scrupulous care." St. Aubert

> gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature: He taught her Latin and English chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets. . . . "A well informed mind," he would say, "is the best security against the contagion of folly and vice."[24]

She is introduced to the delights of botany and to the contemplation of the "stupendous works" of nature. From her father she learns the simple and sublime joys of communing and feeling one with nature.

> It was one of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature; nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood walks, that skirted the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon the heart, and lifted her thoughts to the God of Heaven and Earth. In scenes like these she would often linger alone, wrapt in a melancholy charm, till the last gleam of day faded from the west; till the lonely sound of a sheep-bell, or the distant bark of a watch-dog, were all that broke on the stillness of the evening. [Here] were circumstances that wakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm and poetry.[25]

St. Aubert's major aim in the education of his daughter is to counterbalance this 'enthusiasm' and the overwhelming feelings it arouses with 'sound judgement' and a more detached view of things. Yet he must be careful not to destroy her

sensibility for it is the major source of a woman's charms. He explains to her,

> I would not annihilate your feelings, my child, I would only teach you to command them; for whatever may be the evils resulting from a too susceptible heart, nothing can be hoped from an insensible one.[26]

Even on his deathbed, St. Aubert continues to lecture Emily on the use and abuse of sensibility.

> "Above all, my dear Emily" said he, "do not indulge in the pride of fine feelings, the romantic error of amiable minds. Those who really possess sensibility ought early to be taught that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance. . . . I would not teach you to become insensible, if I could; I would only warn you of the evils of susceptibility, and point out how you may avoid them. . . . Always remember how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude, than the grace of sensibility. . . . Sentiment is a disgrace instead of an ornament, unless it leads us to good actions."[27]

His words do not fall on deaf ears. Henceforth, Emily's relationships with people and her responses to events are determined by her awareness of the importance of controlling her feelings, of rationally evaluating her own and other people's thoughts and actions.

And this is true of every exemplary heroine. Each one possesses the distinctively feminine trait of feeling intensely the emotions of love, fear, pity, joy and sorrow; but rarely, if ever, are these feelings allowed to function as guides to conduct. Her actions invariably accord with what she believes are the dictates of reason and propriety.

A dominant theme of the novels, and one which appears

consistently in the lives of the heroines, is the conflict thus engendered between the emotions and judgement, between the heart and the head.[28] The contrast between the life of reason and the life of feeling is to be seen most clearly in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility (1811), in which the "strength of understanding and coolness of judgement" of Elinor Dashwood is opposed by the passion and enthusiasm of her sister Marianne, who is generous, amiable, interesting, "everything but prudent."[29]

Inevitably, the sisters view life in profoundly different terms, the one never straying from the path marked out by judgement and probity, the other frequently ignoring propriety and common sense to follow the promptings of her feelings. Thus, when reproved by Elinor for accompanying Willoughby, her lover, to his house unchaperoned, Marianne insists,

> If there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong and with such conviction I could have had no pleasure.[30]

The most doctrinaire moral intuitionist could scarcely have phrased it more aptly.

When Willoughby callously deserts her to marry for money, her grief is just as overpowering as her joy had been. She becomes an object of pity, incapable of maintaining even the appearance of self-respect and dignity. She indulges herself in her sorrow,

> Misery such as mine has no pride. I care not who knows that I am wretched. The triumph of seeing me may be open to all the world. Elinor, Elinor, they who suffer little may be proud and independent as they like -- may resist insult, or return mortification -- but I cannot. I must feel -- I must be wretched.[31]

In direct contrast, Elinor, when informed in strictest confidence that her beloved Edward is engaged to the shallow and designing Lucy Steele, bears her grief in private. Indeed, so great is her sense, so detached her analysis of the situation, that on considering Edward's fate, "she wept more for him than for herself."[32]

In the life of a heroine, the opposition of sense to sensibility could take many forms. Part of the artistry of the novelist consisted in contriving situations where the claims of heart and head were both so powerful that the heroine must experience untold agony of mind before resolving the conflict. Frequently, the mental and emotional tension is too great and the virtuous young lady can do nothing; in such cases, she usually feels faint, reels and falls senseless. In a situation where reason was not able to master the immediate emotional response, what else could she do? Her swoon not only demonstrated the strength of her feelings, it proved that she was desperately trying to do the right thing, to control her emotions with judgement. A young man could do worse than marry a woman who fainted, or felt faint, when under emotional stress.

The most difficult personal conflicts faced by a

heroine were those that she faced before her marriage. Indeed, it was these conflicts which provided the material out of which were constructed the plots of the popular novels.

A common theme was the age-old contest between filial duty and love. The tradition of the seventeenth century romance, in which the hero's sense of honour invariably triumphed over his love for the heroine, had been kept alive in the novel. Heroine after heroine performs the ancient ritual of submitting generously to the call of duty, renouncing with profuse tears and considerable self-approbation all the claims of her heart.

Thus, Emma Fitzowen and her lover, Edmund, the heroine and hero of Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron (1777), repress their feelings for each other until the last few pages of the novel. Edmund, to gain his rightful inheritance and revenge the death of his father, must apparently oust Emma's father from his estates and deprive him of much of his fortune. Both the lovers realize that their filial duty takes precedence over the emotion of love.

The problem faced by Mortimor Delville and his beloved Cecilia, in Fanny Burney's Cecilia (1782), is even more complicated. If Cecilia is to bring to Mortimor the fortune he so desperately needs to repair the family estates, he will be obliged, by the terms of her uncle's will, to take Cecilia's

family name. Yet duty requires that the ancient Delville name, of which his parents are justifiably proud, be preserved; it should certainly not be destroyed merely because Mortimor has happened to fall in love with Cecilia. Interestingly, Mortimor is quite willing to sacrifice his filial obligations for the sake of love. It is Cecilia who is required out of a sense of duty to his parents to refuse to marry him.

The claims of a guardian were every bit as strong as those of a parent. When Emily St. Aubert is forced by her uncle, the tyrant Montoni, to part from the noble Valancourt, perhaps for ever, she is torn between her love and her duty to her aunt, who although a shallow schemer is still her duly appointed guardian.

Ironically, once again it is the male who is unable to control his feelings. Wallowing in despair, self-pity and tears, Valancourt proposes that they be secretly married. Emily's reactions are typical, and highly illustrative of the exemplary heroine's fortitude and strength of mind. For a moment, her "reason [was] obscured by the illusions of love and terror."

> She spoke not; her cheek was cold, and her senses seemed to fail her, but she did not faint. . . . After a few minutes, she drew a deep sigh, and began to revive. The conflict she had suffered between love and the duty she at present owed to her father's sister; her repugnance to a clandestine marriage, her fear of emerging on the world with embarrassments. . . ; - all this various interest was too powerful for a mind, already enervated by sorrow, and her reason had suffered a transient suspension. But duty, and good

> sense, however hard the conflict, at length, triumphed over affection and mournful presentiment: . . . she acted, perhaps with something more than female fortitude, when she resolved to endure a present, rather than provoke a distant misfortune.[33]

Even during their highly emotional farewell, amid all the tears and heartbreak, Emily maintains her sense of decorum.

> Convulsive sobs again interrupted his words, and they wept together in silence, till Emily, recollecting the danger of being discovered, and the impropriety of prolonging an interview, which might subject her to censure, summoned all her fortitude to utter a last farewell.[34]

Generally speaking, the exemplary heroine never marries against the wishes of her own and her lover's parents or guardian. For the popular novelists, the "rebel marriage was not . . . the vindication of love; it was merely the victory of passion over reason and duty."[35]

Closely connected with this type of conflict is that arising from the opposing claims of love and good sense or propriety. In the popular novel, if not in real life, the heroine invariably sacrifices love on the altar of public probity.

When Emily St. Aubert is informed (incorrectly the reader later learns), that Valancourt has fallen prey to the charms of Paris and has taken to gambling, she feels herself obliged to break off all connection with him.

Belinda Portman, in Maria Edgeworth's Belinda (1801), faces similar problems. She is much attracted to Clarence Hervey, a charming and good-natured rake, but until he has

proven himself a reformed character she will show him no encouragement. Falsely believing him to be beyond any hope of reclamation, she permits the advances of the amiable, prosperous and handsome Mr. Vincent. But no sooner has she begun 'to feel' for him than she discovers his addiction to cards, billiards and gambling. Again her love of propriety and good sense conquers her feelings and she refuses to see him ever again.

Even the delightfully unpredictable Emma, in Jane Austen's novel of that name, cannot maintain any affection for a man who has behaved improperly. When she learns that Frank Churchill, who has recently been flirting with her and to whom she is much attracted, is secretly engaged, she is outraged.

> Impropriety! Oh! Mrs. Weston, it is too calm a censure, much, much beyond impropriety! It has sunk him - I cannot say how much it has sunk him in my opinion. So unlike what a man should be! None of that upright integrity, that strict adherence to truth and principle, that disdain of trick and littleness which a man should display in every transaction of life.[36]

In Jane Austen's Persuasion (1817), Anne Elliot's difficulties in reconciling her feelings with what she believes to be the requirements of propriety are especially severe. She and Captain Wentworth had fallen in love some eight years before the action of the novel commences. Her lack of fortune and connections and his lowly rank had caused her, out of prudence and obedience to the wishes of

her guardian, to break off the connection. Now he has returned and she soon discovers that her affection for him is just as powerful as it ever was. It requires, however, a series of extremely fortuitous events to overcome their pride and sense of decorum, and to force them to admit their love for one another. Throughout the novel, whenever they are together, Anne is beset by the conflict between what she feels for him and what she believes is the proper attitude to adopt towards a former lover and rejected suitor.

And when, eventually, Anne, at the age of twenty eight, is engaged to her Captain, she will not admit that she made a mistake in refusing him in her youth. As she explains to him,

> I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and wrong . . . ; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was . . . right in being guided by the friend. . . . To me she was in the place of a parent. . . . I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. . . . But I mean that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up. . . . I have now . . . nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion.[37]

Even the social duties of the heroine were affected by the opposition of heart and head. Almost instinctively, she feels intensely for any oppressed or unfortunate creatures and cannot rest until she has done her best to alleviate their distress. But she must always be aware of the danger

of bestowing indiscriminate bounty. Beneficence, true charity, lay in applying judgement or the general rule to the practice of benevolence.

The archetypal ministering angel is Fanny Burney's Cecilia, although it transpires that even angels are fallible if they are women.

> A strong sense of DUTY, a fervent desire to ACT RIGHT, were the ruling characteristics of her mind; her affluence she therefore considered as a debt contracted with the poor: . . . Many and various, then, . . . were the schemes which her fancy delineated; now she supported an orphan, now softened the sorrows of a widow, now snatched from iniquity the feeble trembler at poverty, and now rescued from shame the proud struggler with disgrace.[38]

And, in fact, Cecilia does succeed in alleviating the distress of several worthy individuals and families.

Unfortunately, her delicate feelings get the better of her judgement, with disastrous results. When one of her guardians, the worthless and unscrupulous Mr. Harrel, who has got himself hopelessly in debt, threatens suicide, she agrees to give him security for a bond of over £8,000. She is duly reprimanded by the selfish but, in this case, judicious Mr. Monckton.

> You have been grossly imposed upon: and pardon me . . . unaccountably to blame. Was it not obvious that relief must be temporary. . . . You have therefore deprived yourself of the power of doing good to a worthier object, merely to grant a longer date to extravagance and villainy.[39]

Mr. Monckton is, of course, correct. Before long, Harrel has gambled away everything and, rather than go to prison, shoots himself.

The exemplary heroine, in fact, for all her moral rectitude and great intelligence, for all her power of self-criticism and ability to detach herself from a situation, still demonstrates the characteristic weakness of her sex. She possesses an extraordinary facility for self-deception. Despite all her virtues, she is not an independent creature, capable of judging correctly the right course of action. And, since she is the exemplar of her species, this apparent failing can be seen to constitute, upon closer inspection, the distinctive charm of the sex.[40]

Of no heroine is this more true than Jane Austen's Emma Woodhouse. Emma's seeming ability to stand back from an event and determine rationally the best thing to do simply means that she has a greater chance of misinterpreting the actual state of affairs and consequently devising plans that will go awry.

Thus, after considerable deliberation and completely ignoring the advice of her mentor, Mr. Knightly, she convinces herself that Mr. Elton can be made to fall in love with her protégé, Harriet Smith. She is considerably discomfitted when he confesses his love for her, Emma. No sooner has she recovered from the shock than she has imaginatively married off Harriet to Frank Churchill, although they are both in love with other people.

It is only then that she discovers that she herself

is in love with Frank. The arguments she uses to arrive at such a conviction illustrates well the way in which a woman could use 'sense' to support 'feeling' and thoroughly deceive herself.

> This sensation of listlessness, weariness, stupidity, [she reflects] this disinclination to sit down and employ myself, this feeling of everything's being dull and insipid about the house! I must be in love; I should be the oddest creature in the world if I were not.[41]

Thus does Emma succeed in translating boredom into a temporary but, for her, a very real attachment to a man she soon comes to despise.

Not until the end of the novel does she discover that she has loved the upright Mr. Knightly all along. At last, she is brought to her senses and becomes aware of her deficiencies.

> Every moment had brought a fresh surprise; and every surprise must be a matter of humiliation to her. How to understand it all! How to understand the deceptions she had been practising on herself, and living under! The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart.[42]

And yet in relinquishing all claims to be fit to decide her own and other people's destinies, she finds complete satisfaction and, more important, security. After all, she has now the advice of her beloved Mr. Knightly to rely upon. "What had she to wish for? Nothing but to grow more worthy of him, whose intentions and judgement had been ever so superior to her own."[43]

In her self-deception and the good end to which she

comes, Emma is typical of most exemplary heroines. In Pride and Prejudice (1813), Elizabeth Bennet, perhaps the most intelligent and self-assured of all Jane Austen's heroines, falls ready victim to the charms of the dissolute Wickham, and continues to despise the noble Darcy. When she discovers the truth about them, like Emma, she must go through the process of self-revelation and humiliation.

> Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd. "How despicably have I acted," she cried, "I who have prided myself on my discernment - I, who have valued myself on my abilities, . . . ! How humiliating is this discovery! Yet how just a humiliation! . . . Till this moment I never knew myself.[44]

Again like Emma, she emerges from her humiliation a more docile and tractable woman, ready to submerge her opinions and will in those of the proud, judicious and frequently tedious Mr. Darcy.

This prudent submission of her understanding to the superior judgement of her husband is typical of all Jane Austen's heroines. Marianne Dashwood, renouncing all her youthful enthusiasm, is, at nineteen, married to Colonel Brandon, whom Willoughby has rather spitefully described as "the kind of man . . . whom everybody speaks well of, and nobody cares about,"[45] and whose integrity, industry and benevolence are beyond question. Her sister, Elinor, eventually marries her beloved Edward Ferrars, who resembles Colonel Brandon "in good principle and good sense, in dispo-

sition and manner of thinking."[46] And the romantically inclined Harriet Smith is saved from herself by her marriage to a Mr. Martin, of whom the reader learns little save that he is a respectable farmer who "reads the Agricultural Reports"[47] and "is open, straightforward, and very well judging."[48]

The resolution of the problems and conflicts faced by the unattached female is to be achieved only in marriage. The good sense, sound judgement and moral integrity of her husband is the surest corrective for her weaknesses, and the safest avenue of escape from her unprotected situation. By the generous act of submission - in a sense, by repressing her individuality - she achieves her 'exalted freedom'.

Perhaps for this reason, none of the popular novels describe the life of an exemplary heroine and her husband. Her separate existence, as far as the novel is concerned, terminates with her marriage. And while her life as a dutifully submissive wife is doubtless full of domestic bliss, for the modern reader it has lost much of its interest and charm.

III

While weak and wicked minor heroines abound in the popular novels, there were comparatively few attempts made to deal with what may be called 'the unexemplary heroine' as

a major character. The few 'histories' of such women that were written attempted to fulfill the same didactic purposes as other types of novels. Virtue must be rewarded and vice punished. Thus, the unexemplary heroine must come to a bad end. More importantly, the reader must be made to feel that her fate was not only proper but reasonable. Some attention had to be paid, therefore, to the causes of her failings.

In connection with this last point, there were generally speaking, two kinds of explanation which could be given. Either the novelist could trace the heroine's downfall to some original defect in her character, or the major portion of the blame could be laid upon her faulty upbringing and/or the harmful effects of society. Maria Edgeworth's Almeria (1802) and Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791) illustrate these approaches to the theme of the 'unexemplary heroine'.

Almeria Turnbull has no one to blame for her misfortune but herself. Brought up in the country and heir to a large fortune, she has everything in her favour. Her closest friends, the Elmours, are the most virtuous people imaginable. Ellen, the daughter of Mr. Elmour, undertakes to educate Almeria herself, supplying her with books, showing her every new drawing and print, and letting "her into those little mysteries of art which masters sometimes sell so dear."[49] Most important, in this happy and pious household,

Almeria has every chance of imbibing correct principles. Frederick, Ellen's brother and a prospective model husband, is much attracted to Almeria and, at first, his affection is returned.

Unfortunately, Almeria inherits her fortune, and the flaws in her character quickly begin to reveal themselves. Before long, she has deserted her respectable but far from wealthy friends and their solid rural virtues for the more exciting business of ascending the social ladder.

> She learned philosophically to consider her fortune as a thing so immediately associated with herself, as to form a part of her personal merit. Upon this principle, she soon became vain of her wealth, and she was led to overrate the consequence, that riches bestow on their possessor.[50]

Impervious to the advice and pleas of her old friends, she enters the circle of the local head of fashionable society, Lady Stock. When she visits London, however, she discovers that her ladyship is a very small fish in a very big pond. As Miss Edgeworth explained,

> In the land of fashion, "Alps on Alps arise", and no sooner has the votary reached the summit of one weary ascent, than another appears, higher still and more difficult of attainment. Our heroine now became discontented in that situation, which but a few months before had been the grand object of her ambition.[51]

As soon as she can, Almeria cuts herself off from Lady Stock, and allies herself with the socially superior Lady Bradstone, only to desert her in turn for the higher circles of Lady Pierrepoint.

And so it goes on. To gain another step on the social ladder, she dissipates much of her fortune and all of her youth in "balls, suppers, dinners, déjeunes, galas, and masquerades." Without even realizing it, she arrives "at an age, when she could no longer, with any propriety, be called a chicken . . . . anyone not used to the wear and tear of fashionable faces, would have guessed Almeria's age to be seven and thirty instead of seven and twenty."[52]

She consistently refuses the proposals of good men, "who might even at this late period in her life have recalled her from the follies of dissipation, and rendered her permanently happy."[53] Eventually, she is left "to that misery which she had been long preparing for herself,"[54] and can still be seen, the reader is informed,

> haunting some place of public amusement, or stationary at the card table. Wherever she may be, she is despised and discontented, one example more among thousands, that wealth cannot purchase, or fashion bestow real happiness.[55]

Mrs. Inchbald's A Simple Story is a much more subtle analysis of the fate of an unexemplary female. It is, in fact, two stories, one tracing the history of the unhappy Miss Milner, and the other that of her daughter, who turns out to be a model of virtue and propriety. The study of Miss Milner is certainly the best treatment made in the period of the life of a woman who, despite all her charms and considerable abilities, finds it impossible to escape the legacy of her early education.

Like many of the novels of the period, the action begins with the death of the heroine's only surviving parent, her father. Mr. Milner, "a member of the Church of Rome", had agreed to his wife's request that their daughters be brought up in her religion, that of the Established Church. He had faithfully kept his word and reared their only child as a Protestant. On his death, Miss Milner is placed in the care of her father's closest friend, Mr. Dorriforth, a Roman Catholic priest and close relative of a Catholic peer.[56]

By this time, her education has been completed and her character fixed. Unfortunately both tasks have been accomplished in a Protestant boarding school,

> from whence she was sent with merely such sentiments of religion, as young ladies of fashion mostly imbibe. Her little heart employed in all the endless pursuits of personal accomplishments, had left her mind without one ornament, except those which nature gave, and even they were not wholly preserved from the ravages made by its rival, Art.[57]

Not surprisingly, therefore, Miss Milner has acquired a great many faults.

> From her infancy she had been indulged in all her wishes to the extreme of folly, and habitually started at the unpleasant voice of control -- she was beautiful, she had been too frequently told the high value of that beauty, and thought those moments passed in wasteful idleness during which she was not gaining some new conquest -- she had besides a quick sensibility, which too frequently discovered itself in an immediate resentment of injury or neglect . . . .[58]

Dorriforth, of course, finds a great deal to disapprove of in her conduct, particularly her treatment of her many

admirers. However, Miss Milner, much to the amazement of those who know her, is extremely tractable and obedient in her guardian's presence. She passionately desires to have him think well of her, and intuitively knows how to behave to captivate him.

Dorriforth's understanding, his good looks, his integrity and, above all, his imperviousness to a woman's charms affect Miss Milner powerfully. Before long, she has fallen in love with him. Her education has given her no principles to govern her feelings and "she loved Dorriforth without one conscious check to tell her she was wrong."[59]

When he inherits the title of Lord Elmwood and, being convinced that it is his duty to preserve the earldom in a Catholic family, allows the Church to relieve him of his vows, Miss Milner's joy knows no bounds. No impediment now remains to their marriage; she has only to work her charms upon him and he will be hers. And, in fact, she experiences little difficulty in capturing the heart of the proud, pious and somewhat inexperienced Lord Elmwood. Thus, two obviously incompatible people are bound together -- and by nothing more than their passion for each other.

But Miss Milner is still not satisfied. Her insatiable pride demands that her lover become her slave. She reflects,

> Are not my charms even more invincible than I ever believed them to be? Dorriforth, the grave, the sanctified, the anchorite Dorriforth, by their force is animated to all the ardour of the most

> impassioned lover -- while the proud priest, the austere guardian, is humbled, if I but frown, into the veriest slave of love.[60]

She resolves deliberately to assert her independence, to ill treat him, in order to test his love and discover just how much power over him she can exert.

But Dorriforth is, by no means, a weak man. The battle between their wills becomes a cruel one, each inflicting upon the other agonies of mind. Despite all the distress it causes her, Miss Milner knows exactly what she is doing. She sincerely loves Dorriforth but is powerless to prevent her pride in conquest from alienating him. He demands respect and, in important matters, obedience and submission. Miss Milner will give him none of these. As she explains to a friend, "As my guardian, I certainly did obey him; and I could obey him as a husband; but as a lover, I will not."[61]

When, in defiance of his orders, she attends a masquerade ball, Dorriforth breaks off their engagement and resolves to leave the country. Miss Milner is duly chastened and genuinely repentant. In all sincerity she admits the justice of his action and even admires him for it. For a time, they resign themselves to the separation.

Neither of them, however, has succeeded in breaking their hold on the other. When the moment comes for Dorriforth to take his final leave of her, their passion breaks down all codes of propriety and decorum. Miss Milner col-

lapses in tears, Dorriforth confesses that he cannot part from her, and they are married on the spot by his closest friend, a Catholic priest.

But even in the ecstasy of the first few days of their married life, Miss Milner feels "an excrutiating shock; when, looking on the ring Lord Elmwood had put upon her finger, in haste, when he married her, she perceived it was a -- MOURNING RING."[62]

And, of course, the marriage is doomed. Their miserable life together is not even touched upon in the novel. Mrs. Inchbald explains: "We left Lady Elmwood in the last volume . . . a loving and beloved bride. -- We begin this volume, and find her upon her death bed."[63] The action of the novel has switched to a time seventeen years after the marriage, when "the beautiful, the beloved Miss Milner . . . is no longer beautiful - no longer beloved - no longer - tremble while you read it! - no longer - virtuous."[64] Dorriforth, meanwhile, has become "a hard-hearted tyrant, . . . an example of implacable rigour and injustice."[65]

The remainder of the novel, in which Matilda, the only child of the marriage, who possesses all the charms of her mother and none of her faults, is reconciled to her father and finds herself a model husband, is, in fact, a separate story. The tragedy of Miss Milner and Dorriforth is complete in itself, reaching its climax and conclusion with the

triumph of passion over good sense and the marriage of a proud and uncompromising man to a vain and equally proud coquette.

The causes of the tragedy and unhappiness that invariably characterize the life of an unexemplary heroine are not hard to find. They consist almost entirely of her lack of those very qualities which guarantee to her opposite form temporal and eternal well-being. The exemplary heroine, with all her beauty and sensibility, is modest, humble and submissive; her counterpart, on the other hand, has an abundance of pride, vanity, ambition and self-assertiveness. Her one great failing is her refusal or inability to submit, either to propriety or to a man of good sense.

The message preached by the orthodox popular novelists to the women of England was a clear and simple one. Confine one's aspirations, thoughts and conduct within the bounds marked out by public probity and sound judgement, refuse to give heed to the promptings of pride and vanity, and above all, learn to find one's happiness in a complete submission to "that superiority of judgement and of nice discrimination, which are the more peculiar prerogative of men."[66]

IV

One of the didactic techniques employed by the orthodox popular novelists was the introduction into their works

of a variety of minor characters who were intended to represent 'types' from society. 'The light transcript of contemporary manners', of which the novels of Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth are examples, was a common form of fiction in the period.[67] In such novels, the minor heroines assume an importance out of all proportion to their role in developing the plot. In the novelist's treatment of these characters are to be detected widely held opinions about what constituted desirable or undesirable qualities in a woman.

The differences in the conception of minor heroines by Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth are significant and interesting. Miss Burney, esteemed if junior member of the Bas Bleu and enjoying access to royal circles, was thoroughly familiar with and at home in fashionable society. Her observation of character types was first hand and acute. Moreover, her Evelina (1778) and Cecilia (1782) were written before the French Revolution had split people into parties; before even the Evangelical Revival had begun to affect the middle and upper orders and divided them into 'saints' and 'sinners'.

Her minor characters are treated satirically, often cruelly, but usually with not too heavy a didactic purpose. They tend to be ridiculous figures of fun, and only rarely harmful. Miss Burney's 'malicious humour' is directed principally against boorishness, stupidity and the fashionable follies of women.

Thus, for Cecilia, she apparently conceived her characters as 'types' who were to exemplify some human failing or weakness.

> If one may judge from the extant scraps of paper showing tentative lists of dramatis personae for her later novels and plays and from the internal evidence of Cecilia itself, the preliminary cast for the minor action of that novel was almost certainly first filled with such bloodless cyphers as a Miss Rattle, a Miss Voluble, a Miss Supercilious, a Mrs. Nonchalant, a Mrs. Vulgarity, and a retired tradesman (a 'rich business leaver-off) . . . .[68]

While her minor heroines are 'representative figures', they are not made to represent too much. They are still unique individuals and very real people.

Maria Edgeworth, however, brought up in the 'scientific', rationalistic and strictly moral atmosphere of her father's household and the Lichfield Circle, was almost always the pedagogue and moralist. Moreover, she was writing later in the century, when the lines of thought were more sharply drawn, and it was not only possible but virtually inevitable that individuals be treated as members of parties, political, religious and even educational. As a result, her minor heroines are made to represent not just foibles and eccentricities but issues and positions. The 'types' she introduces and ridicules belong to schools of thought. Her didactic purposes are thus obvious and often obtrusive.

The vulgar and insensitive young lady whose family was striving to reach above its station was a common enough figure

in contemporary fiction.[69] By far the most realistic and cruellest characterization of the 'bourgeouis' Miss is that given of the Branghton sisters in Fanny Burney's Evelina. Indeed, beneath the humour there is a certain bitterness and disgust of the inelegant gaucherie of middle class families who believe that they can purchase manners and an entrée into polite society.

The daughters of a city man who "is very contracted and prejudiced" and overfond of making money, the Branghton sisters are pretty, good-natured, ignorant, "very giddy" and totally lacking in sensibility and good taste. Evelina reports to her guardian that on being introduced to them, they began

> very freely, to examine my dress, and to interrogate me concerning it. "This apron's your own work, I suppose, Miss? but these sprigs a'n't in fashion now. Pray, if it is not impertinent, what might you give a yard for this lutestring? - Do you make your own caps, Miss?" and many other questions equally interesting and well bred.[70]

Both sisters loathe the country, although they have scarcely visited it, and advise Evelina to "get a good husband" so that she may remain permanently in town. Before long, their insensitive questions about the death of her father reduce Evelina to tears, much to their astonishment.

When they insist that she accompany them on their first visit to the opera, Evelina is reluctant to expose herself in public with her vulgar if prosperous cousins.

Forced to join them, she is humiliated by their manners and behaviour. They complain loudly about the price of admission, openly discuss other people's dress, criticize the performance, are annoyed because it is sung in Italian, and displeased to find Evelina enchanted with it all. After what seems, to them, an eternity of "jabbering", singing and "out-of-the-way postures", the opera concludes and they loudly give their opinion of the evening.

> Miss Brangton . . . declared that she was not genteel enough to admire it.
>
> Miss Polly confessed, that, if they would sing English, she would like it very well. The brother wished he could raise a riot in the house, because then he might get his money again. And, finally, they all agreed that it was monstrous dear.[71]

Although she despises them and all they stand for, Evelina cannot shake herself loose; they insist on accompanying her everywhere.

The Branghtons will forever be hanging onto the fringes of polite society, being both attracted and repelled by its elegance and code of manners. Their money has given them access to some parts of the fashionable workd, but they will never feel at home in it. And the more estranged they become, the greater will be its fascination and the louder their criticisms of its shortcomings.

For the fashionably educated young ladies who are 'at home' in the Beau Monde Miss Burney shows more sympathy. They are indelicate, flippant, affected, scheming and ignorant.

But they are, apparently, in their proper sphere. While Miss Burney's heroines are amused by them, they are never disgusted.

Thus, in Cecilia, the fashionable Miss Larolles is treated solely as a comic character. She has been totally corrupted by town life but her adaptation to it has been made so completely and so effectively that she cannot be conceived as existing outside of it.

She is the leading member of that group of young ladies, called by the cynical but insightful Mr. Gosport, "the Volubles". According to him,

> The TON misses . . . who now infest the town, are in two divisions, the SUPERCILIOUS, and the VOLUBLE. The SUPERCILIOUS . . . are silent, languid, and affected, and disdain all converse but with those of their own set; the VOLUBLE, like Miss Larolles, are flirting, communicative, restless, and familiar, and attack, without the smallest ceremony, everyone they think worthy their notice. But this they have in common, that at home they think of nothing but admiration, and that everywhere they hold in supreme contempt all but themselves.[72]

Cecilia's fortune and brilliant marital prospects hold a magnetic attraction for Miss Larolles, who cannot be discouraged from pressing her friendship upon the young heiress. Totally lacking in propriety, she continually astonishes the rather unworldly Cecilia with her indelicate conversation. Having attended an auction of the belongings of the bankrupt Lord Belgrade, she loudly reports to Cecilia,

> Lord, how glad I am to see you! So you would not go to the auction? Well, you had a prodigious loss, I assure you. All the wardrobe was sold, and all Lady

> Belgrade's trinkets. . . . I was ready to cry that I could not bid for half a hundred of them. . . . I would not but have been them for the world. Poor Lady Belgrade! You really can't conceive how I was shocked for her. All her beautiful things sold for almost nothing.[73]

With scarcely a pause for breath, Miss Larolles continues her monologue, passing from one improper topic of conversation to another.

> But whereabouts is Mrs. Mears? O, I see her now! I'm sure there's no mistaking her; I would know her by that old red gown half a mile off. Did you ever see such a frightful thing in your life? And it's never off her back. I believe she sleeps in it. I am sure I have seen her in nothing else all winter. It quite tires one's eye. She's a monstrous shocking dresser.[74]

Miss Larolles has no existence outside of fashionable society; she must be among people. Like others of her sort, she cannot live away from town.

> I hate the country so you've no notion. I wish with all my heart it was under ground. I declare, when I first go into it for the summer, I cry so you can't think. I like nothing but London - Don't you?[75]

In time, she will, presumably, go on to ensnare some foolish (and extremely rich) young man. For the Misses Larolles of Fanny Burney's world, despite their frivolousness and ignorance, have very worldly heads upon their young shoulders. Not for Miss Larolles a man whose fortune is not equal to his and his wife's tastes. She will live her life blissfully unaware of its lack of utility, its selfishness and its irreligion. However, Miss Burney does not condemn such creatures to an 'unhappy end'; rather she treats them

as objects of humour, ridiculing them for the vapidity of their lives.

But Miss Burney was too 'good' a woman not to punish vice somewhere in her novel. Upon the empty head of the undomesticated Mrs. Harrel falls the tragedy that most novelists represented as the inevitable consequence of dissipated living.

The childhood friend of Cecilia, Mrs. Harrel had married young and apparently well, making "an immediate transition from living in a private family and a country home, to becoming mistress of one of the most elegant houses in Portland Square."[76] When Cecilia meets her old friend, she is shocked at the change in her.

> She found her insensible to friendship, indifferent to her husband, and negligent of all social felicity. Dress, company, parties of pleasure, and public places, seemed not merely to occupy all her time, but to gratify all her wishes.[77]

Before long, she and her husband are hopelessly in debt and resort to sponging off the sensitive Cecilia. Finally, even her resources are no longer sufficient and Mr. Harrel shoots himself, expiring painfully among the people he had considered his friends. His parting letter is suitably edifying, and includes the inevitable reproach.

> A good wife perhaps might have saved me, mine - I thank her! tried not. Disengaged from me and my affairs, her own pleasures and amusement have occupied her solely. Dreadful will be the catastrophe she will see tonight; let her bring it home and live better.[78]

Mrs. Harrel, considerably chastened and sunk in self-

pity, is forced to go to relatives in the countryside she despises, where, a widow with no resources or prospects, she will live out her days in loneliness and obscurity.

She has, in fact, received her just desserts. Her lack of understanding is, of course, neither uncommon nor culpable; neither is her failure to find herself a completely virtuous husband. Such handicaps were the lot of many women. Her guilt is to be found in her lack of domesticity and her desire to live above her station and income. The former alienates her husband and denies him the wholesome influence of domestic life; the latter causes her to get involved in a competition for social prestige which neither she nor her husband have the resources to win.

As was noted above, Miss Edgeworth's minor heroines tend to be more broadly conceived than those of Miss Burney. Frequently they are nothing more than caricatures of an already stereotyped figure. On occasions, however, she domonstrates a fine sense of the ridiculous, particularly in her Moral Tales, where she lampoons, rather than moralizes about, the weaknesses and stupidity of women.

In her Angelina: or L'Amie Inconnue, the 'shafts of ridicule' are aimed very effectively at "the nonsense of sentimentality."[79] Miss Angelina Warwick, "though she judged so like a simpleton was a young woman of considerable abilities."[80] Only her education, the literary content of

which had consisted entirely of "works of imagination" had prevented her from developing her faculty of judgement. Possessed of an over-developed and quite ungoverned sensibility, she is fair fame for any wild schemer.

Unfortunately, she has begun a correspondence with a certain Araminta, whom, although they have never met, Angelina considers her soul-mate. Araminta's influence upon Angelina is scarcely a settling one; she is, in fact, a believer both in the Cult of Reason and the Cult of Sensibility.

> What are legal technical formalities, [she writes] what are human institutions, to the view of shackle-scorning reason! Oppressed, degraded, enslaved, must our unfortunate sex for ever submit to sacrifice their rights, their pleasures, their <u>will</u>, at the altar of public opinion; . . . .[81]

Angelina is easily converted to such views and, deserting her worthy guardian, sets out for Wales where she will join Araminta and live in seclusion away from the pernicious influence and restrictive customs of the town. After a disappointingly uneventful journey, Angelina arrives "with inglorious safety" at Cardiff. Her disillusionment is about to begin.

When a young Welshman enters the inn, in which she is lodging, and begins to play a merry tune upon his harp, she is disappointed.

> Angelina cast upon him a look of contempt. "He in no way fills my idea of a bard! - an ancient and immortal bard! - He has no soul - fingers without a

> soul! - No 'master's hand', or 'prophetic fire!' - No 'deep sorrows!' - No 'sable garb of woe!' - No loose beard, or hoary hair, - 'streaming like a meteor to the troubled air!' - 'No haggard eyes!' - Heigho! -[82]

When eventually she succeeds in running Araminta to earth, her disenchantment is even greater. Araminta's real name, she discovers, is a most unromantic Miss Hodges. Even more disturbing, she takes large quantities of brandy in her tea, has "a face and figure which seemed to have been intended for a man,"[83] sits crosslegged in an armchair, and has just accepted the proposal of a most inelegant Quaker, who agrees to submit himself to her will for the rest of his life. One "stifling embrace" from the drunken Miss Hodges is enough to begin Angelina's cure of the sickness of sentimentality. It is only a matter of time before she returns to her guardian, a more tractable and prudent female who will now willingly consume vast quantities of 'serious literature' as a counter-weight to her over-active sensibility.

In Belinda (1801), Miss Edgeworth adopts a more serious approach to the same issues. While satisfactorily resolving her problems and working out her relationships with her guardian, the dissipated Lady Delacour, and her lover, Clarence Hervey, Belinda comes into contact with a variety of minor heroines. Among them are Harriot Freke, a representative of the school of Reason, and Virginia St. Pierre, the unfortunate prey of an overdeveloped sensibility.

Harriot Freke embodies all the imagined vices of that strange breed of woman, the champion of female rights. Embarrassingly frank in conversation and convinced that she has all the rights of a man with none of the responsibilities, Harriot will do anything provided it affords her amusement. Unlike Araminta, she is not merely a comic character. Dedicated to the pursuit of selfish, sensual pleasures, vindictive towards those who resist her, vicious beyond any hope of reformation, she is a powerful corrupter of any young girl whom she can entice into friendship.

When she visits Belinda to persuade her to join a party at a local country house, their meeting becomes a battle between virtue and vice. Harriot tries to win Belinda's friendship by flattering her. When this tactic fails, she begins to pour scorn on all Belinda holds dear. Learning that Belinda loves to read, she examines her books.

> "What have you here?" continued Mrs. Freke, . . . exclaiming as she reviewed each of the books on the table in their turns, in the summary language of presumptuous ignorance. "Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments - milk and water! Moore's Travels - hasty pudding! La Bruyere - nettle porridge! . . . Poor thing! who bored you with all this talk?"[84]

Discovering that the worthy Mr. Percival is the culprit, she switches her attack upon him, trying to shock him out of his self-assurance. In rapid fire, she insists that "all our politeness is hypocrisy," "all virtue is hypocrisy," "shame is always the cause of the vices of women," and that

"women blush because they understand." Although Mr. Percival ably defends virtue and propriety, Harriot cannot be stopped. She goes on to assert that she is "a Champion of the Rights of Women" and "an enemy to their delicacy," and that "both sexes [should] call things by their right names."

Eventually, she finishes her diatribe, "getting up and stretching herself so violently that some part of her habiliments gave way. 'Honi soit qui mal y pense!' said she, bursting into a horse laugh."[86] Belinda is horrified, and concludes that "her friendship is more to be dreaded than her emnity."

Harriot is a caricature of the kind of female virago that any champion of women's rights was considered to be. In terms of the attitudes and prejudices of the day, such women were considered to be not only ridiculous and eccentric, but dangerous, spreading abroad doctrines that were pernicious in their effects upon society. Harriot was, in fact, something of a conventional portrait.

In tracing the history of Virginia St. Pierre, Miss Edgeworth introduces another stream of contemporary thought, sentimentalism, which completely opposes that represented by Harriot Freke. If taken to extremes, however, it is every bit as dangerous to a young lady's well-being.

The development of Virginia's character is the result of certain events in the life of Clarence Hervey. Visiting

Paris just before the Revolution, "when luxury and dissipation were at their height," he found himself disgusted with the Parisienne belles, "who were full of vanity, affectation, and artifice, whose tastes were perverted, and whose feelings were depraved."[87] At the same time, he had read Rousseau's Emile and been charmed by the description of Sophie; so much so that he "formed the romantic prospect of educating a wife for himself."[88]

Returning to England, he discovers Virginia, who is living alone with her grandmother in a cottage in the New Forest. Clarence is apparently the first man she has spoken to, and he is captivated by her blushes and expressions of "artless simplicity." When the grandmother dies, Clarence determines to cultivate this natural sensibility and prepare himself the ideal wife.

Virginia is entrusted to the care of an elderly matron. She sees no one except her keeper, an elderly clergyman and Clarence. She develops just as Clarence hoped she would, and he is excited by her simplicity. "'What a difference,' thought he, ' between this child of nature and frivolous, sophisticated slaves of art.'"[99] He has failed to perceive that there is more "ignorance and timidity" in Virginia than "sound sense of philosophy".

Not until she is seventeen does he realize that he has omitted to teach her to write. When he attempts to do

so, he learns that she is not as intelligent as he had believed. He reflects that "a wife without capacity or without literature could never be a companion suited to him, let the beauty of her sensibility be ever so exquisite and captivating."[90]

It is at this time that Clarence first meets Belinda. In comparison with her, "Virginia appeared to him but an insipid, though innocent child; the one he found was his equal, the other his inferior; the one he saw could be a companion, a friend to him for life, the other would merely be his pupil, or his plaything."[91]

> Belinda had cultivated taste, an active understanding, a knowledge of literature, the power and habit of conducting herself; Virginia was ignorant and indolent, she had few ideas, and no wish to extend her knowledge; she was so entirely unacquainted with the world, that it was absolutely impossible she could conduct herself with that discretion, which must be the result of reasoning and experience. . . . The virtues of Virginia sprang from sentiment; those of Belinda from reason.[92]

Fortunately, Virginia's emotional attachment to Clarence is based only on gratitude, although she is not aware of this until she is reunited with her father and the man she 'really' loves, a Captain Sutherland, who appears on the penultimate page of the novel but whom she apparently knew when a young girl. Virginia, it is agreed, will gradually be introduced into the world and one day become a fit wife for the captain.

Virginia, it would appear, has been the victim of an absurd philosophy, first promulgated by Rousseau. To try to protect a young lady by keeping her locked away from all

contact with the world was disastrous, particularly if her reading matter were not strictly supervised. A weak head and a soft heart, although superficially attractive, were no protection against the evils of society which would one day have to bé faced. And, more to the point, no man of sense could permanently interest himself in such a creature.

Like the exemplary heroines of the popular novel, the minor heroines were usually highly idealized types, interesting not only for what they were, but for what they represented. They were intended to serve not only a literary purpose but a moral and didactic one. As well as acting as antidotes for the poisonous opinions which were circulating throughout society at the turn of the century, they were to inform the female readers of the weaknesses of their sex, the dangers of an improper education, and, above all, the contempt in which good men and women held those who lowered the dignity of woman, particularly in her relationships with the other sex.

V

In opposition to the ideals of womanhood put forward by the orthodox novelists were the views of the 'revolutionary school' of writers. The opinions of Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays were minority ones. They were, however, considerably 'advanced'

and especially important in the reaction they drew forth from their more conservative countrymen and women. The revolutionary heroines were few in number but of great interest and significance.

Thomas Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792) has been called "the first English novel which embodies a revolutionary moral, social, and political program," and Anna herself the first of the revolutionary heroines.[93] Although she is the daughter of a baronet, Anna has renounced all the vice and folly of her class, and dedicated herself to "the universal cause: the progress of truth, the extirpation of error, and the general perfection of mind!"[94] Like Holcroft and Godwin themselves, she is both a necessitarian and a perfectibilist. "By the laws of necessity [she argues] mind . . . is continually progressive in improvement. As they accumulate knowledge, men will in time become immortal, free from bodily pain and passion, and almost exempt from moral error."[95]

To hasten the coming of the New Jerusalem, all men and women should strive together to reclaim the fallen members of society. The more vicious they are, the greater their need of moral reformation. No claim upon an individual stands prior to the 'cause'; the duty to parents, the rights to property, political obligations, even love itself, none of them must be allowed to stand in the way of progress of the human race towards its inevitable, if distant, golden age.

Anna is in love with Frank Henley, who, although the son of a gardener, exhibits not a single human weakness or failing. Her father wishes her to marry the dissipated Coke Clifton. Realizing that the talents of Coke could be employed for the benefit of society, Anna resolves to obey her father and dedicate herself to the moral reclamation of the man he has chosen for her. Even the worthy Frank cannot wholeheartedly agree with such devotion to the cause. He unselfishly agrees, however, to help Anna in her mission. The plot is thus an interesting variation on the traditional theme of the conflict between love and honour. Anna's duty to help perfect society and the claims of filial obedience are opposed by her love for Frank.

Despite all the efforts of Anna and Frank, Clifton shows an unexpected stubbornness in clinging to his vicious way of life. He simply will not be reformed. In fact, in his many discussions with Anna, he frequently succeeds in thoroughly confusing the unsophisticated young lady. When he realizes that she will not marry him until he is reformed, and that he cannot possess Anna by fair means, he resolves to rape her. Frank is held captive by ruffians and Clifton is free to achieve his dastardly purpose. In a climactic battle in which Frank fights for his life and Anna her honour, Clifton is severely wounded. Only then does he feel the first pangs of remorse and become tractable to the rational

arguments of the forgiving couple. The conflicts are finally settled. Anna and Frank will marry, and together with their convert, work to usher in the new Age of Reason.

Anna emerges from the novel as a far more complex character than her orthodox counterparts. She cannot be dismissed as a literary model of the so-called 'philosophesses' that were held to be plaguing society at the end of the eighteenth century. She is certainly not a Miss Hodges. It is true that, for her, Reason and Justice are the ultimate court of appeal in any argument. But for all her regard for 'rational demonstration', she shows herself to be subject to the same confusions and errors which characterize her sex in the orthodox novels of the day. So prone is she to error that, on one occasion, the astute Clifton convinces her, almost syllogistically, that she ought to yield to him before marriage. She is saved from Clifton and herself only by a most fortuitous interruption.

Moreover, she is a creature of the most delicate sensibility, fearful and often unsure of herself. She is, in fact, a most feminine heroine. Only Frank Henley is completely master of himself and possessed of universal benevolence and unerring judgement. Anna, like other members of her sex, can finally resolve her problems only by marrying a man superior in judgement to herself.

However, unlike other heroines, Anna is a woman with

a commitment which stands about love, marriage and domestic concerns. Her world is a wider one than that prescribed by the home. Nor is she hesitant about expressing her opinions and arguing their justice. Echoing Godwin, she enveighs against the "destructive system of individual property," insists upon the natural equality of all men, and that "the mind has no sex." She voices, in fact, many of the opinions of Harriot Freke, although she shares none of the latter's indelicacy or vices. It is in her dedication to an ideal which takes precedence over her role as a wife and a mother that Anna differs most markedly from the orthodox heroines. And it is in this respect that she is entitled to be regarded as a revolutionary and highly unorthodox literary model of womanhood.

Mary Wollstonecraft's The Wrongs of Women: or Maria (1798) presents a different type of revolutionary heroine. Her purpose in writing the novel was the same as that which inspired her A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, to exhibit "the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial claims and customs of society."[96] Whereas Holcroft's Anna St. Ives is a reasoned and somewhat coldly logical argument for a society based upon pure Reason, The Wrongs of Women is an impassioned plea for common decency and justice for the oppressed sex. Its appeal is directed almost entirely to the heart, not the head.

Maria is certainly not a female philosopher; unlike Anna St. Ives, she is not committed to any abstract theories of political and social radicalism. Her demands for recognition as a human being arise solely out of her own desperation and anger at her experiences as a daughter, wife and mother.

Her history is a sad one. As a child she suffers from the strict regimen imposed by her tyrant father. Early in her life she is made painfully aware of her subordinate position as a female. Her brother is doted upon by the family, while she and her sisters are treated with cold indifference. "Such indeed is the force of prejudice," she recalls, "that what was called spirit in him, was cruelly repressed as forwardness in me."[97] Only her uncle shows her any kindness or respect.

When her mother dies, Maria finds life at home unbearable. She quickly succumbs to the flattery and pretended virtue of George Venables. Hastily and foolishly she marries him and is taken off to London. For this one mistake, she is condemned by the cruel and archaic laws and customs of society to a life of misery.

Once in London, George's coarse manners and complete lack of understanding and principle soon reveal themselves. His drunkenness, lechery and general grossness disgust Maria. And when he learns of her influence with her rich uncle, his "distasteful fondness" is even less tolerable than his brutality.

Even so, although she is annoyed with herself for her weakness in submitting to him, Maria finds herself pregnant. It is only then that she realizes that she is fettered to a man she despises. "Marriage had bastilled me for life," she laments.[98]

When she learns that her husband has accepted money as payment for turning a blind eye to his best friend's attempts to make love to her, Maria can stand it no longer. She escapes from the house and attempts to live alone. But George is a vindictive man. He publishes her desertion in the newspapers and threatens "with the utmost severity of the law"[99] any person who gives her shelter. Fearing that her baby daughter will be taken from her, Maria determines to leave the country. However, on her way to the coast, she is drugged and, on George's orders, incarcerated in a lunatic asylum. Her child is, of course, taken from her. Despite her protests, she can do nothing to convince the attendants of her sanity. She is to be kept there at the pleasure of her husband.

In the asylum, Maria meets the virtuous and courageous Darnford, a young man, who like her has been unjustly locked away from the world. Their mutual esteem and affection grow daily and it is not long before they are in love. Their relationship is not one based merely on passion; theirs is a pure, almost spiritual love, a union of souls.

> He felt the fragrance of her breath, and longed, yet feared, to touch the lips from which it issued; spirits of purety [sic] seemed to guard them, which all the enchanting graces of love sported on her cheeks, and languished in her eyes.[100]

And when, eventually, they do kiss, "desire was lost in more ineffable emotions."[101]

Worried about the fate of her daughter, Maria persuades an attendant to investigate what has happened to her. She is informed that her beloved Matilda is dead. Her only link with her husband has now been broken. Darnford and Maria make their escape and live together as man and wife, defying public opinion.

But Maria's tribulations are not over. The "dogs of law" are set upon them. They are ordered to appear in court, Maria to answer a charge of adultery and Darnford one of depriving George of her consortium. Still Maria will not submit. She composes an impassioned speech which she has read out to the court.

> I exclaim against the laws which . . . force women, . . . to sign a contract, which renders them dependent on the caprice of a tyrant, whom choice or necessity has appointed to reign over them.
> .....
> I wish my country to approve my conduct; but, if laws exist, made by the strong to oppress the weak, I appeal to my own sense of justice, and declare that I will not live with the individual who had violated every moral obligation which binds man to man.[102]

Not only does she defend her conduct and that of Darnford; she claims a divorce.

In his summing up, the judge dismisses Maria's plea. He denounces

> the fallacy of letting women plead their feelings, as an excuse for the violation of the marriage vows. . . . We did not want French principles in public or private life - and, if women were allowed to plead their feelings, as an excuse or palliation of infidelity, it was opening a flood-gate for immorality. What virtuous woman thought of her feelings? - It was her duty to love and obey the man chosen by her parents and relations. . . . Too many restrictions could not be thrown in the way of divorces, if we wished to maintain the sanctity of marriage; and, though they might bear a little hard upon a few . . . individuals, it was evidently for the good of the whole.[103]

At this point the novel abruptly terminates. From notes left by Mary Wollstonecraft after her death, it is apparent that Maria, despite further injustices, continues to fight for the integrity of her conduct and feelings, devoting her life to her daughter, who, it transpires, is still alive.

Some seven years after the publication of Maria, a Mrs. Tewsh brought a petition for divorce against a husband who was, if anything, even more brutal than George Venables. Lord Eldon's judgement was that "he never recollected a more favourable representation given of any woman; but yet, upon general grounds of public morality, he felt it his painful duty to give a negative to the original motion."[104] The Bishop of St. Asaph was of the same opinion. Sounding very much like the judge who had reprimanded Maria, he ruled that "however hard the rule might press upon a few individuals, it would, on the whole, be better if no bill of this kind was passed."[105]

Nor were such judgements out of touch with public opinion at that time. Maria's demands were considered every bit as unreasonable and dangerous as those of Anna St. Ives. Even the liberal minded Elizabeth Hamilton pilloried the female philosophers and their demands in her Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800).[106]

The revolutionary heroines enjoyed but a brief existence. By 1800, they had disappeared from fiction, and the exemplary heroine, dedicated to preserving the purity of domestic life, fulfilling all the duties of filial and marital obedience, willing to submerge her identity in the lives of her husband and children, and perfectly content within the limited world assigned to her, reigned supreme and without rival in the popular novels.

VI

It is impossible to assess accurately the influence of the literary models of womanhood presented to the female reading public. It is evident that, as far as the orthodox heroines were concerned, the novelists were giving expression to opinions, values and prejudices already formed and widely accepted, rather than promulgating new ideas.

However, two facts concerning the popular novels need to be stressed. First, they show a great consistency in the image of womanhood they reflect. The number of revolutionary

heroines can be counted on the fingers of the hands, while the orthodox types were almost as numerous as the novels themselves. The novel reader could have experienced little confusion about what constituted an ideal young lady or married woman, - at least, that is, in fiction. Moreover, no doubt was left in the reader's mind as to the nature and limits of a woman's world. Essentially, it was one characterized by submission and passivity. Its centre was the home; the further she departed from this haven of the female sex, the more hazardous to her moral well-being it became. It had few points of contact with the male world of ambition, business and action, which remained, for the female novelists and their readers, a remote and mysterious existence, best ignored altogether.

If, in fact, the popular novels did exercise any influence upon the attitudes and aspirations of women, the consistency of their opinions and viewpoints must have been an important factor.

Secondly, the novels, whatever their literary shortcomings, were read. Indeed, they were virtually ubiquitous. The numbers of novels published, the increase and success of lending libraries, the frequency with which contemporaries condemned the 'pernicious influence' of the novels, the many women of the period who recall in their diaries, correspondence and autobiographies having been devoted novel readers in their

youth, all suggest that the popular novelists reached a large and probably youthful and impressionable reading public. They were certainly a most important means of popularizing the ideas expressed in more formal works on the nature and obligations of women, and of diffusing throughout the middle classes an ideal of woman which was to affect profoundly her position and her education throughout much of the nineteenth century.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Wilbur L. Cross, The Development of the English Novel, MacMillan Co., New York, 1934. p. 82.

[2] J. M. S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800, Constable and Co., London, 1932. pp. 20 ff. and p. 118.

[3] Ibid. p. 126.

[4] Ibid. p. 125.

[5] D. P. Varma, The Gothic Flame, A. Barker, London, 1957. p. 13.

[6] K. Clarke, The Gothic Revival, Penguin Books, London, 1966. pp. 32-33.

[7] Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, (1764), F. C. and J. Rivington, London, 1810. p. 180.

[8] Clara Reeve, The Old English Baron (1777), F. C. and J. Rivington, London, 1810. p. 174, and
Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), Oxford University Press, London, 1966. p. 672.

[9] Varma, op. cit. p. 131.

[10] Cited in Rodney Baine, Thomas Holcroft and the Revolutionary Novel, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1965. p. 5.

[11] Mary Hays, Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796), Hugh M. Griffith, New York, 1802. Vol. II. p. 46.

[12] Examples of such novels were Elizabeth Hamilton's Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800), Jane West's A Tale of the Times (1799), George Walker's Vagabond (1799), Isaac d'Israeli's Vaurien (1797), and Mrs. Charles Lucas' Infernal Quixote (1800). See Tompkins, op. cit. pp. 320 ff.

[13] Tompkins, op. cit. pp. 327 ff.

[14] Cited Ibid. p. 327.

[15] Reeve, op. cit. p. iii.

[16] Tompkins, op. cit. p. 128.

[17] The Edinburgh Review (1818), cited in Ian Watt, (editor), Jane Austen, A Collection of Essays, Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1964. p. 3.

[18] Tompkins, op. cit. p. 129.

[19] Frances Burney, Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World (1778), George Bell and Sons, London, 1907. pp. 4-10.

[20] Maria Edgeworth, Belinda (1801), Tales and Novels of Maria Edgeworth, G. Routledge and Sons, London, n.d. Vol. III. p. 1.

[21] E. Railo, The Haunted Castle, Humanities Press, New York, 1964. pp. 283-284.
The fact that Jane Austen in her Northanger Abbey (1817) treated Emily as a 'type' to be satirized suggests that she had acquired a deeper significance than that attaching merely to a character in a novel.

[22] Radcliffe, op. cit. p. 5.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. p. 6.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid. p. 20.

[27] Ibid. p. 80.

[28] See above, Chapter II, pp. 57-60 and Chapter VII, pp. 344 ff.

[29] Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (1811), Frank S. Holby, New York, 1906. Vol. I. p. 6.

[30] Ibid. p. 93.

[31] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 33.

[32] Ibid. p. 188.

[33] Radcliffe, op. cit. pp. 154-155.

[34] Ibid. p. 155.

[35] Tompkins, op. cit. p. 148.

[36] Jane Austen, Emma (1816), Hamish Hamilton, London, 1957. pp. 405-406.

[37] Jane Austen, Persuasion (1817), Airmont Classics, Toronto, 1966. p. 185.

[38] Frances Burney, Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress (1782), George Bell and Sons, London, 1906. Vol. I. p. 52.

[39] Ibid. p. 286.

[40] Rousseau had made the same point, when he asserted, You are always saying, "Women have such and such faults, from which we are free." You are misled by your vanity; what would be faults in you are virtues in them; and things would go worse, if they were without these so-called faults. Take care that they do not degenerate into evil, but beware of destroying them.
J. J. Rousseau, Emile, or Education (1762), Everyman's Library, London, 1966. pp. 326-327.

[41] Jane Austen, Emma. p. 265.

[42] Ibid. p. 420.

[43] Ibid. p. 486.

[44] Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, (1813), T. Nelson and Sons, London, 1930. p. 185.

[45] Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, Vol. I. p. 68.

[46] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 287.

[47] Jane Austen, Emma, p. 25.

[48] Ibid. p. 58.

[49] Maria Edgeworth, Almeria (1802), Tales of Fashionable Life, J. Johnson, London, 1809. p. 4.

[50] Ibid. pp. 42-43.

[51] Ibid. pp. 45-46.

[52] Ibid. p. 112.

[53] Ibid. p. 153.

[54] Ibid. pp. 153-154.

[55] Ibid. pp. 154-155.

[56] A Simple Story was the first novel to contain major characters who were Roman Catholics. Mrs. Inchbald "has struck out a path entirely her own," stated the Gentleman's Magazine," . . . her principal character, the Roman Catholic Lord, is perfectly new. . . ."
Cited in Elizabeth Inchbald, A Simple Story (1791), Oxford University Press, London, 1967. p. xi.

[57] Elizabeth Inchbald, A Simple Story, p. 45.

[58] Ibid. p. 15.

[59] Ibid. p. 74.

[60] Ibid. p. 138.

[61] Ibid. p. 154.

[62] Ibid. p. 193.

[63] Ibid. p. 195.

[64] Ibid. p. 194.

[65] Ibid. p. 195.

[66] A Clergyman of the Church of England, (Rev. John Bennet), Strictures on Female Education, chiefly as it relates to the Culture of the Heart, T. Cadell, London, c. 1780. pp. 106-107.

[67] Cross, op. cit. p. 93.

[68] J. Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney, Clarenden Press, Oxford, 1958. p. 166.

[69] See, for example, the description of Miss Fenshaw in Maria Edgeworth, The Good French Governess, Tales and Novels, George Routledge and Sons, London, n.d. Vol. I. pp. 335-339. and Hannah More's history of the Bragwell daughters, discussed above, Chapter VI. pp. 238-240.

[70] Frances Burney, Evelina, p. 65.

[71] Ibid. pp. 92-93.

[72] Frances Burney, Cecilia, Vol. I. p. 37.

[73] Ibid. p. 40.

[74] Ibid. p. 41.

[75] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 149.

[76] Ibid. Vol. I. p. 29.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid. p. 421.

[79] Maria Edgeworth, Angelina: or L'Amie Inconnue, Tales and Novels, George Routledge and Sons, London, n.d. Vol. II. p. v.

[80] Ibid. p. 226.

[81] Ibid. p. 225.

[82] Ibid. p. 230.

[83] Ibid. p. 264.

[84] Maria Edgeworth, Belinda, p. 220.

[85] Ibid. pp. 221-222.

[86] Ibid. p. 223.

[87] Ibid. p. 351.

[88] Maria Edgeworth's close friend, Thomas Day, had made a similar experiment, with equally disastrous results. See, John Blackman, A Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Day, John Bedford Leno, London, 1862. pp. 63-64.

[89] Maria Edgeworth, Belinda, p. 360.

[90] Ibid. p. 364.

[91] Ibid. p. 368.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Baine, op. cit. p. 43.

[94] Cited Ibid. p. 44.

[95] Cited Ibid.

[96] Mary Wollstonecraft, The Wrongs of Women: or Maria, A Fragment, Posthumous Works of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, J. Johnson, London, 1798. Vol. I. Preface.

[97] Ibid. p. 145.

[98] Ibid. Vol. II. p. 34.

[99] Ibid. p. 81.

[100] Ibid. Vol. I. p. 72.

[101] Ibid. p. 73.

[102] Ibid. Vol. II. pp. 147 and 152.

[103] Ibid. pp. 155-157.

[104] Cited in Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard', Journal of the History of Ideas. Vol. XX, April, 1959. No. 2. p. 201.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Tompkins, op. cit. pp. 318-319.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION: THE EDUCATION OF A LADY, ITS THEORY, PRACTICE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The major purposes of this study, "to describe and, as far as possible, to explain the educational provisions made for middle and upper class Englishwomen, together with the ideas associated with these provisions between 1770 and 1820,"[1] have already largely been accomplished. The description has been given and, to the extent that explanation is involved in description, the practice and ideas of the period have been accounted for. It remains, however, to make explicit what has been implied by the structure of the study, -- that is, to discuss the relationships between its several parts. For it is clear that no historical explanation can be given of either the practice or the theory if they are treated in isolation from each other, or from the context of the age and the views held of women in the period. In addition, some brief consideration will be given to the significance of the developments in practice and theory for the Victorian age.

Consider the practice of the period in the field of women's education. The education of a lady was being made available to and, in fact, received by an increasing number of middle class females. The evidence for such a conclusion is considerable.

First, the number of boarding schools for young ladies increased dramatically at this time. Secondly, the wide variation in fees charged by the schools suggests that many of them catered for a predominantly middle class clientele. And if the education provided by the more expensive schools was often superior in quality, there is no evidence to suggest that it differed in kind from that given in the cheaper ones. All the schools purveyed the same commodity, the education of a lady.

Thirdly, the increased publication and circulation of monitorial and subject matter text books, all written for and addressed to young ladies, suggest that a growing number of families were feeling it important to obtain for their daughters formal and relatively standardized instruction in those values, dispositions and accomplishments which were held to be the characteristics of a lady.

Finally, the growth and creation of a middle class female reading public provided a new and continually expanding market for the women's periodical and novel. Such works helped diffuse throughout the middle classes the ladylike code of manners, conduct and taste, as well as giving semi-formal moral and religious instruction. Equally important, they played a major part in creating a frame of mind, a view of woman and her world, which determined her expectation of life and thus her felt educational needs.

What, then, were the causes of this 'popularization' of the education of a lady. Two factors immediately suggest themselves, the increased prosperity of the middle classes, and their tendency to imitate their social superiors.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the middle classes improved considerably their economic position. Put simply, they found themselves with more money to spend. This new wealth gave to middle class women opportunities for leisure and refinement they had not enjoyed previously. In many ways, a woman's household duties had been considerably lightened. No longer had she a major responsibility for the manufacture of food and clothing. And with the appearance of the boarding school and private governess, the rearing and education of her daughters passed out of her hands.

Frequently the loss tended to make her life more idle. As Gordon rather bitterly points out, "idleness was given social prestige and became the lot of conventional middle class women."[2] Whether the freedom from old duties be regarded as leisure or idleness, it did give to young women an expectation of life which made 'an education' necessary in a way it had never been before.

No doubt, many middle class girls who were educated as ladies discovered that marriage did not, in fact, bring them leisure. Despite the cheapness of domestic help, a great many middle class wives and mothers still must have

spent their days toiling with laundry, housecleaning, preserving, rearing young infants and cooking. Indeed, in performing such duties she was doing no more than fulfilling her function as a woman.[3]

But their determination to cling to the ideals of refinement and good breeding inculcated in their youth meant that the fiction of a ladylike mode of existence was preserved intact. Thus, it was agreed in social intercourse that a lady was exempt from all menial employments. When visitors arrived, all traces of such activities were put away. When she dressed for company, the middle class wife or daughter ceased to be a mere woman; she became a lady.

This desire to pose as a lady was one manifestation of the general tendency of the middle classes to imitate their social superiors. In the popularization of the education of a lady, this imitative tendency of the middle classes was just as important as their increased wealth and leisure. Where upward social mobility is widely accepted as an end to be striven for, such a tendency is natural and perhaps inevitable. The aristocracy largely determined taste and fashion in dress, furniture, food and drink. And in the same way it seems likely that they provided the model for the education of a daughter.

In this respect, the education of a middle class girl differed markedly from that of her brother. It is true that

many of the private schools established for the sons of middle class families in the early nineteenth century directed their advertisements to 'young gentlemen', and offered instruction in such genteel accomplishments as French, music, dancing and drawing.[4] But such subjects were never allowed to take precedence over more 'valuable' pursuits. However inept the instruction given in the small boarding schools and academies for middle class boys, what Matthew Arnold was later to refer to as the 'philistinism' and 'love of money-making' of this class[5] directed the education it purchased for its sons to mainly utilitarian ends. A boy had to make his way in the world; for him leisure and refinement were expensive luxuries of which his education took but little account.

But what were looked upon as 'expensive luxuries' for a son were considered necessities for a daughter. For her a genteel 'non-utilitarian' education was essential -- that is, if she was eventually to enjoy leisure and refinement as a wife and mother. Freed from the irksome and constricting pressures of vocational preparation, the formal education of a daughter was allowed to proceed upon the all too frequently false assumption that she would never be faced with the problem of earning a living, or even of having to perform heavy household duties. So long as her education gave her the values, dispositions and accomplishments of a lady and

enabled her to marry well, it had performed its major functions.

What had happened was that the nouveaux riches had taken as their model of female educatic. an aristocratic and largely archaic type, appropriate, perhaps, at some time in the past for a woman of independent means, but hardly adequate for a girl who would one day be forced to spend her life running a household or making her way in the world as an 'unprotected' spinster. This is the justification for the often made claim that the popularization of the education of a lady set back the course of female education and the achievement of women's rights for at least half a century, -- that it was a time of "hope deferred."

Yet it is extremely important not to lose sight of the fact that developments in female education during the period were a direct response to the felt educational needs and demands of parents and their daughters. However violently feminists and educational purists have condemned the education of a lady, those who paid for it and those who received it seem to have been generally well satisfied.

The boarding schools and private governesses were extremely sensitive to the demands made upon them by parents. For it is especially true in education that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. Where parents paid directly for their daughter's education, they expected and felt they were enti-

tled to have their requirements met. This attitude persisted throughout the nineteenth century. Thus, Mr. Stanton, one of the commissioners for the 1864-1867 Schools' Inquiry Commission found that the headmistresses of the boarding schools at Bath and Clifton denied him entrance to their schools on the grounds that "no one had any right to interfere between them and the parents of their pupils, who were, and ought to be, the sole judges of what was the proper course of education for their children."[6]

Primarily for this reason, the schools and private governesses remained insensitive to the criticisms levelled at them, and generally indifferent to the 'enlightened' proposals of contemporary educational theorists. Thus, the Report of the Schools' Inquiry Commission (The Taunton Report), published in 1868, echoed the criticisms and many of the recommendations made at the turn of the century. The considerable gap that existed in the nineteenth century between the theory of female education and the practice raises the question of the general relationship between the two. What was, in fact, the connection between the educational ideas and the educational practice? And what light does this connection throw upon the general relationship between the two?

The traditional dualism in education, theory and practice, frequently takes theory for granted.[7] It is assumed

that whatever goes on in the school-room has behind it a theoretical justification, which originates in or, at the very least, implies particular metaphysical, epistemological and ethical viewpoints. The great educator approach to history of education has encouraged this belief. For it is difficult to avoid the temptation to trace causal connections between the philosophical and educational opinions of 'great thinkers' and the educational practice of the period.

Occasionally, such a connection can be shown to have existed. In the period under consideration, for example, the educational theories of Pestalozzi were incorporated into the national systems of elementary education of Prussia and the Netherlands.[8] At the same time, the 'theories' of Bell and Lancaster were translated into practice in England, much of Europe and the United States. In these instances, the practice can be shown to be not only connected with but actually derived from a theory. Moreover, the theory is accessible; it can be examined in the writings of its author. One can read Lancaster's Improvements in Education and 'see' the theory behind the practice in the monitorial schools.

Such is not the case in the field of female education at this time. There is no doubt that the period was characterized by a great interest in the education of girls, an interest which manifested itself in a considerable outpouring of writings on the subject.[9] The vast majority of these

works were highly critical of contemporary developments in female education, condemning the conditions in the schools, the incompetency of teachers and governesses, the mixing and subsequent confusion of social classes, the paucity of academic instruction and the undue emphasis placed upon accomplishments.

In addition, there were many proposals made for the reconstruction of female education. The precise nature of the recommendations varied according to which current intellectual or religious movement most affected the theorist. 'Schools' of thought did exist, each putting forward fairly consistent ideas on the subject. There was certainly no lack of theory in the period.

And yet it is not possible to establish any obvious connections between a particular theory expounded in the period and the education of a lady. This is not to say that those engaged in female education did not have good <u>reasons</u> for what they were doing, any less than did the parents who paid for the education of the girls who received it. But these reasons did not correspond to any formally constructed theory of education recommended in any publication of the period.

The fact that the education provided by boarding schools and private governesses was determined by parental demand and not the criticisms and proposals of theorists

does much to explain the gap between theory and practice. Another factor accounting for the inability of the theory to influence practice was the lack of any organizational structure to female education. Thus, the rapid spread of the ideas of Pestalozzi and Lancaster and their translation into practice could not have taken place without their being adopted by powerful organizations. In Prussia and the Netherlands it was the State which incorporated Pestalozzi's ideas into the elementary school system, promulgating his methods in normal school training programmes, and forcing upon the schools a specific subject matter and methodology. The National Society and the British and Foreign School Society, accepting the theories of Bell and Lancaster respectively, exercised a similar control over the training of their teachers and the operation of their schools. The theories, in fact, became 'institutionalized'. Whatever violence was done to them in the translation into practice, however much administrators and teachers misinterpreted them, some form of the theories did permeate down into practice.

No institutionalization of any theory of female education was possible - for there was no institution. The very idea of the State exercising control over the education of middle class females would have either horrified or amused most Englishmen and women. Nor at this time were there any private agencies which concerned themselves with

the education of middle class girls and which could have served to put into practice a particular theory of female education.

The thousands of teachers in boarding schools and the private governesses were bound together in no organizational structure. They operated independently of each other, with no awareness of subscribing to any theory of education. There were no training programmes and no power structure to enforce uniformity in curricula and methodology. The proprietors of schools, teachers and governesses owed their livelihoods and thus their allegiance to no one but their employers, that is parents. It was the consistency of the educational demands of parents that imposed uniformity upon the education provided by the schools and governesses.

Whatever theory lay behind the educational practice of the period is to be found, not so much in the criticisms and detailed proposals of contemporary writers on female education, as in the aspirations of middle class parents for their daughters. The theory, in fact, is to be detected in the way the public interpreted both the ideal of womanhood and the concept of a lady. For, as has already been pointed out, it was not enough that daughters become good women; they must also learn to be ladies.

To some extent, both interpretations are mirrored in the many formal works on female education published in the

period and in the contemporary popular novel. The orthodox theorists and their public were in complete accord about what constituted the exemplar of the female sex. It was generally agreed that the cardinal virtues of a woman were submissiveness, propriety, modesty, domesticity, sensibility and religion. The ideal of a woman as a gentle, uncomplaining, frail creature, completely chaste in thought and deed, and devoted to her husband and children was one assented to by virtually every respectable Englishman and woman.

To a considerable degree, this view of woman was reflected in, and in turn helped determine, the educational practice of the period. Certainly, no girl educated in a boarding school or at home by a private governess could have grown up in ignorance of what constituted the archetype of her species.

Just as powerful an influence on educational practice was the great desire of parents to have their daughters acquire both a husband and the more obvious and easily displayed attributes of a lady. Nor were the two unconnected. If a girl was to marry well, it was important that she receive instruction in correct speech, polite manners, proper deportment and, above all, musical and artistic accomplishments. The more evident the attribute, the greater its value, both on the marriage market and in the competition for social status.

It was the overwhelming emphasis placed on a girl's preparation as a 'husband hunter' and a lady that gave rise to the inconsistencies between her formal education and both her later life and the ideal of womanhood. In the first place, the stress on becoming a lady meant that the gap between the classroom and life was often a wide one. The contribution of a girl's formal education to her efficiency as a wife and mother was extremely small. As a correspondent of Fraser's Magazine complained later in the century, woman had been ordained to be the "help-meet" of man; yet "this high calling is utterly overlooked in the present system of female instruction."[10]

Secondly, and, for post-Freudian generations, far more significant, the contradiction between some aspects of a girl's education and the current ideal of womanhood may have given rise to psychological problems which had their origins in sexual maladjustment. It is, unfortunately, all too easy to attribute neurosis, sociosis, repression and psychosis to a culture or a people who lived blissfully unaware of the fact that they were, in our terms, psychologically sick. Victorian prudery and hypocrisy have received more than their fair share of attention from an age which finds it increasingly difficult to identify with or even understand 'the Victorian frame of mind'.

There does appear, however, to have been some incon-

sistency in a girl's education both in the period under discussion and throughout the nineteenth century. On the one hand, her education was overtly sexual in nature, heavily geared to giving her all those attributes and charms which would draw upon her the attention and win the heart of a young man. Her back was straightened, her waist diminished and her bust developed. In all kinds of ways, some obvious, some subtle, she was taught that happiness in life could only be achieved by obtaining a husband and bearing his children.

And yet the ideal of womanhood required not only that she be kept in ignorance of anything connected with sex or procreation, but that the very idea of her even thinking of such subjects was somehow foreign to her nature.[11] Any suggestion that a woman, one's daughter or, even more horrifying, one's mother, could ever entertain an 'impure thought' was considered nothing less than a gross libel on the female sex.

If, in fact, the neuroses of the middle class ladies who visited Breuer and Freud in the eighteen-nineties were present in a great many women of the age, and if, in fact, these neuroses did originate in sexual maladjustment, then it may be that the discontinuity between a girl's sexually oriented education and the ideal of womanhood to which she was expected to subscribe was of considerable importance.

Much of the significance of developments in female education between 1770 and 1820 has already been touched upon. It remains to attempt a brief assessment of their influence upon the education of girls and the image of womanhood which helped govern this education in the Victorian period.

By 1820, the pattern of education provided by boarding schools and private governesses was so firmly established that the strenuous efforts of educational reformers and feminists were able to make but a slight impression on it. Not that the work of such people as Miss Buss, Miss Beale, Emily Davies and Frances Power Cobbe was ineffectual. Progress towards a more academically oriented secondary education for girls was being made. But such 'spectacular' advances as the founding of Bedford College in 1849, the Cambridge Syndicate admitting girls to its examinations in 1865, the recommendations of the 1868 Schools' Inquiry Commission Report, the Endowed Schools' Act of 1869, and the establishment of the Girls' Public Day School Company in 1872 should not be allowed to obscure the fact that, for the vast majority of middle class girls, the by now traditional education of a lady continued virtually unaltered.

Recollections of life and work in a girls' boarding school in the 'sixties and 'seventies suggest that little had changed since the turn of the century.[12] Mangnall's Questions, the daily two-by-two walk, the tightly laced

waists, the interminable French and music lessons, the great stress on politeness and decorum, all were still very much in evidence. And, in fact, it is difficult to imagine how any widespread changes could have been effected until the prevailing image of womanhood was called into question and shattered.

But the ideal of the lady-like woman forged in the fierce debate of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries withstood all threats to its ascendancy, becoming one of the most characteristic features of the Victorian frame of mind.[13]

Although it is possible to trace virtually all the Victorian attitudes towards women back to the earlier debate, by far the most influential view of a woman's character and responsibilities expressed at the turn of the century was that which looked upon her as the guardian of domestic and social morality. The home was to become the cornerstone of Victorian social life, -- in the words of Ruskin, "the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division."[14] This "sacred place", this "vestal temple"[15] was to be protected and presided over by a high priestess, the wife and mother, whose purity and religiosity radiated out into the atmosphere of her household, spiritually cleansing her menfolk.

Thus, in the 1840's, Mrs. Ellis echoed the sentiments

of the great majority of her middle class countrymen and women when she assigned to her sex the major responsibility for the moral well-being of the men of their families. Safe at home from the temptations and nastiness of the world of action and business, women were peculiarly well situated to develop a greater "moral power" than men, a power which should be "of essential service in aiding the judgement of their husbands, brothers, or sons, in those intricate affairs in which it is sometimes difficult to dissever worldly wisdom from religious duty."[16]

By the 'sixties, when Ruskin issued his panegyrics on women and their moral and inspirational influence on men,[17] this primarily Evangelical and religious-moralistic viewpoint had been adulterated (or, perhaps, enriched) by a considerable measure of Romanticism, Gothicism and nostalgia for the Age of Chivalry. The Victorian young lady who sent her lover off to distant parts of the globe to root out barbarism and irreligion and spread the benefits of civilization, trade and Christianity was not far removed in type from the fair maiden who had once charged her noble knight not to return to her until he had severed an appropriate number of dragons' heads and rescued an equal number of captives.

If there did exist such a creature as <u>the</u> Victorian woman, she was conceived and brought to birth, not suddenly

with the accession of the queen in 1837, but in the intellectual, religious and educational developments which took place at the turn of the eighteenth century.

The education of a lady and the various ideas associated with it have not received a 'good press' from historians of education. And, of course, in terms of the twentieth century pedagogical ideals, the practice and theory of the period do seem reactionary, inefficient, prejudiced, 'unscientific' and unprogressive.

But there was a credit side to the ledger, one that sometimes tends to be overlooked. The extension of formal education to middle class women had not only given them a rather severe notion of respectability and public probity; it had also made them literate and developed in them fresh tastes and new aspirations. Above all, it had given many of them a sense of their importance as wives and mothers.

No doubt, the vast majority of women made but poor use of their recently acquired advantages. Confined to the home, denied access to higher education and restricted to a literary diet of novels and women's periodicals, it is hardly surprising that they became rather hum-drum, ignorant and entirely conventional middle class women.

There is, moreover, considerable evidence to suggest that the Victorian home was every bit as tension and crisis ridden as any before or since. Alongside the portraits and

photographs of tightly-knit family groups, 'the cult of the double bed', the absence of divorces and the almost idolatrous worship of 'home, sweet home', must be placed such bitter exposés of domestic life as Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh, and John Galsworthy's The Forsythe Saga. The marriage and home life of Theobald and Christina Pontifex were, no doubt, every bit as typical as those of the Brownings, or indeed, of Victoria and her beloved Albert...

Nevertheless, the Victorian lady did cling to and maintain an ideal or standard of refinement in her home. It is, perhaps, appropriate that a genuine lover of the Victorian Age and much of what it stood for, E. W. Stratford, should be given the last word, however exaggerated a key it be pitched in, on the subject of the Victorian woman and her preoccupation with manners, respectability, decorum and domestic refinement. It was all to their credit, he insists, that busy middle class wives and mothers managed "to make their parlours and drawing rooms sacrosanct from the grossness of masculine intercourse." In doing so, they were performing "a similar function to that of the monasteries in the Dark Ages, little islands of civilization, however primitive, in a sea of barbarism."[18]

Whatever may be said against the education of a lady, and despite its many shortcomings, it did provide a firm and reasonably durable bed-rock for that "little island of civilization", the Victorian home.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See Chapter I, p. 1.

[2] S. C. Gordon, Demands for the Education of Girls, 1790-1865, unpublished M.A. thesis, Institute of Education, London University, 1950. p. iv.

[3] See, above, Chapter VII. pp. 359-360.

[4] See Malcolm Seaborne, A Visual History of England, Education, Studio Vista, London, 1966. Plate 121.

[5] Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (1869), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966. pp. 98-128.

[6] D. Beale, Reports Issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls, David Nutt, London, n.d., c. 1869. p. III.

[7] See the discussion in Charles J. Brauner, American Educational Theory, Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1964. pp. iii-iv, and pp. 1-5.

[8] Hugh M. Pollard, Pioneers of Popular Education, John Murray, London, 1956. pp. 74-100.

[9] See Appendix B, p. 492.

[10] Fraser's Magazine, June 1845. p. 707.

[11] See J. H. van den Berg, The Changing Nature of Man, Introduction to a Historical Psychology, Delta Books, New York, 1964. pp. 140-188., and
Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1963. pp. 341-393.

[12] See the reminiscences of Mrs. Kate Leigh and Mrs. Alice Barton in M. A. Douglas and C. R. Ash, The Godolphin School, 1726-1926, Longman's Green and Co., London, 1928. pp. 25-28, and 30-32.

[13] See Houghton, op. cit.

[14] Cited Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Mrs. Ellis, The Women of England, their Social Duties and Domestic Habits, (1839), Fisher, Son, and Co., London, 12th edition, n.d., p. 51.
The longevity of such a view of woman and her 'duties' is well illustrated by the commencement address given at Smith College in 1955 by one of the acknowledged spokesmen of democratic liberalism, Adlai Stevenson. "Women," he remarked, "especially educated women, have a unique opportunity to influence us, man and boy." Such an influence is best wielded by a wife and a mother. Her great role in life is to "inspire in her home a vision of the meaning of life and freedom, . . . to help her husband find values that will give purpose to his specialised daily chores. . . ."
Cited in Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, (1963), Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1967. pp. 53-54.

[17] See Houghton, op. cit. p. 350.

[18] Esme Wingfield-Stratford, Those Earnest Victorians, (1930), Apollo Editions, New York, n.d. pp. 53-54.

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APPENDIX A

PROSPECTUSES AND ADVERTISEMENTS FOR EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY BOARDING SCHOOLS.

1. Advertisement for a 'Boarding School for Young Ladies', established in Oxford, August, 1758. Cited in Dorothy Marshall, English People in the Eighteenth Century, Longmans, Green and Co., London. 1956. p. 124.

   The young ladies are "boarded and instructed in the Rudiments of the English Tongue, and taught Dresden and all manner of Needle Work in the neatest Manner for £11 a year, and Two Guineas Entrance. The utmost Care and Attention are to be had to their Conduct and Behaviour in general, as well as to their Improvement in the above mentioned Particulars. Writing, French, Music and Dancing are also taught at the same School for an additional, but easy Expence.

2. "The Plan of a School, commenced February 20, 1764, by Mrs. Mease, in Mile's Court, Bath." Cited in N. Hans, New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966. pp. 199-200.

   Young Ladies boarded and educated on the following conditions:

Fees:	Per Quarter	Entrance
Board and Washing	5 guineas	3 guineas
French	1 ..	1 ..
Writing	1/2 ..	1/2 ..
Geography	1 ..	1/2 ..
Drawing	1 ..	1 ..
Dancing	1 ..	1 ..
Music	1 1/2	1 ..

   Day scholars taught to read English, to read and speak French and to do various sorts of needlework at one guinea per month, and one guinea entrance. As the number of scholars to which Mrs. Mease has limited herself, is nearly completed, she hopes it will not be taken amiss, if she henceforth declines receiving any young ladies, who are not intended to learn all the branches taught in her school.

   Care will be taken to give the young ladies a grammatical knowledge of their own language; to choose such books, both in English and French, as may convey instruction to

their minds, at the same time that they assist them in the knowledge of the languages; and various methods taken to imprint the useful particulars on their memories. By proper exercises they will be taught to write English with ease and propriety, which will lead them to reason and reflect, while it improves their style. Attention will be given to the dispositions of the young ladies; in order, as far lies in the power of a School-Mistress, to correct their faults and cultivate their virtues. Great care will also be taken to instruct them in the principles of their religion, and to render them sensible of the extent of moral duties. The young ladies, who are of sufficient age, will be made to keep journals of the employment of every hour; and, at the end of each day, the governess will write a testimony of their good or bad behaviour, that every parent may judge of the progress made, and the methods used in her daughter's education, and have an opportunity of rewarding or discountenancing her, as her conduct shall deserve; which cannot fail of proving more effectual towards the correction of her faults, than any punishment inflicted at School.

3. "Terms of Mrs. Masquerier's Boarding School, Upper End of Church Lane, Kensington." (c. 1770). Cited in A. E. Richardson, Georgian England, A Survey of Social Life, Trades, Industries and Art. Books for Libraries Press, New York. 1967. p. 15.

Board including French, English, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, Needlework, and Dancing for Twenty Guineas a Year and One Guinea Entrance. Parents or Guardians may depend on the utmost care taken of the Young Ladies' morals and manners and a particular kindness shown to their persons.
N.B. The [?] is genteel and the situation remarkably beautiful. To those who do not chuse to learn all the above branches a reasonable reduction will be made.
A Shilling Stage to Holborn, Wood Street and the Bank several times a Day.

4. "Terms of A Seminary of Female Education - opened in Tottenham, Middlesex, in 1788, - by Mrs. M. Scriven. Cited in Clara Reeve, Plans of Education: with Remarks on the Systems of Other Writers. T. Hookham and J. Carpenter, London. 1792. p. 186.

For boarding, washing, etc., learning grammatically the French, English, and Italian language; the belles-lettres; the use of the globes; history; music, dancing, singing, drawing, and painting; and every other necessary, FIFTY POUNDS a year, - Holidays twice a year, Christmas and Midsummer -.

[The school also promised an examination at the end of each year, rewards, separate beds, separate apartments for the sick, medical attendance, and no extra money to servants and teachers.]

5. Advertisement for a Boarding School at Newark. c. 1800. Cited in Malcolm Seaborne, Education, A Visual History of Modern Britain. Studio Vista, London. 1966. plate 103.

Mrs. Girton's Boarding School, Newark. Young Ladies are Taught Embroidery, Tambour, Pearl, and Ribbon work. Curious Buckles, etc. Figures, Animals, Fruit and Flowers, in Cloth, Satin, Silk, etc.
Writing, Music Dancing, etc. by able Masters.

6. Advertisement for a Boarding School, taken from a book of poems by A. Flowerdew, dated 1803. Cited by Hans, op. cit. p. 250.

At No. i. Upper Terrace, High Street, Islington, a limited number of young ladies are educated on the following terms: Board including French, English and Needlework - 30 guineas per annum. Day boarders - 14 guineas. Day scholars - 6 guineas. Writing, Geography, Drawing, Music and Dancing on the usual terms.

7. Advertisement for a "Seminary for Young Ladies, Albion House, Epson." 1808. Cited in Doctor C. Willet Cunnington, Female Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century, William Heineman, London, 1935. p. 308.

The Public are respectfully informed that the above Establishment is now wholly superintended by Mrs. Riley. Her terms for the education of young ladies are as follows:-
For the English and French Languages grammatically, Astronomy, Geography, the use of the Globes, projection of the Sphere, History, ancient and modern, and Needle-work, Thirty-Five Guineas per annum; no entrance. Writing,

Geometry, Drawing, Music, Singing and Dancing, taught by Masters of eminence on approved terms. Mrs. Riley dispenses with the usual technical routine of promises and professions, convinced that to those acquainted with her course and stile of instruction, such is not necessary, and to those who are not, egotism ought not to recommend her; upon the opinion of her friends and the consciousness of her Pupils, therefore, she rests her claims as a Preceptress of Youth.

8. Extracts from the Prospectus for Madame Aubert's Boarding School for Young Ladies in Paris, (c.1816) in the possession of the Institute of Education Library, University of London.

Their [the pupils] time is divided between music and drawing, between the dance, the essential study of the french language, history, geography, writing, arithmatic [sic] and the different works of the needle which must fill up the leisure hours of young persons.
Whatever concerns religion is conducted by an elderly nun . . . and nothing is neglected for the preservation of purety [sic] of the mind. There are four repasts a day, that is every four hours, after which a walk in the garden.
The care of extreme cleanliness is overlooked by the Governess and teachers themselves, who sleep in the dormitories and never lose sight of their pupils.
.....
Dancing, music, drawing, italian and english by the best professors in Paris - . . . Embroidery on silk coton [sic] and twist included in price. . . . No young Lady goes abroad but with approved persons, or on a note from her friends.

9. Prospectus for Miss Steele's Boarding School at Witham, Essex, (c. 1820), in the possession of the Women's Service Institute Library, Fawcett House, London.

Terms of an Establishment for a select number of Pupils by Miss Steele, Witham, Essex. Board and Grammatical Instruction in the English Language, Geography, History and Needlework, 36 Guineas per Annum. Entrance 2 Guineas. Washing, four Guineas per Annum.

French	1 1/2	guineas
Italian	1 1/2	..
Drawing	1 1/2	..
Dancing	1 1/2	..
Music	1 1/2	..
Writing	1 1/2	..
Use of the Globes	1 1/2	..

Entrance to each, 1 guinea.
Tea, if required, four Guineas per Annum. A single bed two Guineas per Annum.
Parlour Boarders fifty Guineas per Annum - No deduction during Absence - Bills settled half yearly. It is requested that each young Lady be provided with a Dessert and Tea spoon, a Knife and Fork, and six Towels. A quarter's notice is expected previous to the removal of a Pupil.

APPENDIX B

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FORMAL WORKS PUBLISHED BETWEEN 1700 AND 1820 ON THE CHARACTER, DUTIES AND EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

Note:-

This bibliography was compiled from the catalogues of the British Museum Library, the Women's Service Institute Library, Fawcett House, the bibliographies of the M.A. theses of M. Gordon and E. M. D. Morris, and secondary works dealing with the education of women. It does not include subject matter textbooks, articles from periodicals, the many reprints of earlier works or novels which concern themselves with the above issues. The chronological distribution of such works is as follows:

Period	No. of 1st Editions	Approx. % of Total	Period	No. of 1st Editions	Approx. % of Total
1700-1710	8	4	1760-1770	16	8
1710-1720	2	1	1770-1780	23	11
1720-1730	6	3	1780-1790	25	13
1730-1740	6	3	1790-1800	41	20
1740-1750	13	6	1800-1810	35	17
1750-1760	12	6	1810-1820	13	7
	47	24%		153	76%

1700. G. Savile, Marquis of Halifax, The Lady's New Year Gift, or Advice to a Daughter.
1701. A Lady (W. Kendrick), The Whole Duty of Woman.
1703. Anonymous, The Ladies' Catechism, useful for all eminent females.
1705. Doctor Drake, Legacy for the Ladies.
1705. Thomas Brown, A Legacy for the Ladies.
1705. D. Smith, On the Education of Ladies.
1706. Anonymous, Female Grievances Debates.
1708. Fenélon, (Trans. G. Hickes), Instructions for the Education of a Daughter.

1714. A Lady, Religious and Christian Advice to a Daughter.
1718. Anonymous, The Female's Advocate.

1720. Anonymous, The Ladies' Tutor.
1721. Elizabeth Drake, An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex.

1722. J. Essex, The Young Ladies' Conductor.
1723. D. Bellamy, The Young Ladies' Miscellany.
1724. Elizabeth Jocelyn. A Mother's Legacy to her Unborn Child.
1727. J. Swift, The Furniture of a Woman's Mind.

1732. Anonymous, Conjugal Duty.
1732. F. Bruys, The Art of Knowing Women: or the Female Sex Dissected.
1733. Lord E. Lyttleton, Advice to a Lady.
1735. A. Pope, On the Character of Women.
1738. Anonymous, Advice to the Fair . . . on dress, converse, and Marriage.
1739. W. W., Letter to a Lady in Praise of Female Education.

1740. A Father, The Young Lady's Companion: or Beauty's Looking Glass.
1740. W. Wilkes, Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady.
1740. Anonymous, Dialogue between Married Lady and a Maid.
1743. L'Abbé Dancourt, The Ladies' Preceptor.
1743. Gentleman of Cambridge, The Ladies' Preceptor: or Letter . . . upon Politeness.
1744. E. Moore and H. Brooke, Fables for the Female Sex.
1744. Sophia, Beauty's Triumph: or the Superiority of the Fair Sex . . . proved.
1745. A Norfolk Gentleman, Advice to Ladies.
1745. D. Fordyce, Character and Conduct of the Female Sex.
1745. D. Fordyce, Dialogue concerning Education.
1747. E. Heyward, The Female Spectator.
1749. S. Fielding, The Governess: or Little Female Academy.
1749. E. Heyward, Epistles for the Ladies.

1750. Anonymous, An Essay on Gallantry - with a seasonable admonition to the young ladies.
1751. A Lady, The Oeconomy of Female Life.
1752. Anonymous, The Accomplished Governess.
1752. Anonymous, Some cursory remarks of the Improvement of well-conducted Female Education.
1752. A Lady, Maxims and Cautions for the Ladies.
1753. John Hill, The Conduct of Married Life.
1753. DuBoscq. M., The Accomplished Woman. (1630).
1753. Anonymous, The Lady's Companion - An Infallible Guide to the Fair Sex.
1753. Anonymous, An Address to the Ladies on the indecency of Appearing at immodest plays.

1754. Anonymous, Two Epistles on Happiness: to a young lady.
1757. Madame le Prince de Beaumont, The Young Misses' Magazine.
1758. A Lady, Female Rights Vindicated: or the Equality of the Sexes Proved.

1760. 'Portia', The Polite Lady: A Course of female education.
1760. Society of Young Ladies, The Juvenile Tatler.
1761. Lady Pennington, An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughter.
1761. Gentleman of Oxford, Address to Persons of Fashion.
1762. Lady Barbara Montagu, Millenium Hall.
1763. Anonymous, An Essay on Woman in 3 Epistles.
1765. James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women.
1765. Feyjoo Y. Montenegro, An Essay on Women - Physiological and Historical defence of the fair sex.
1765. Anonymous, Dialogue concerning the subjection of Women to their husbands.
1765. J. Brown, On the Female Character and Education.
1765. W. Walsh, Dialogue concerning Women, being a defence of the sex.
1766. Mon. de Gravines, The Ladies' Friend.
1767. Hugh Smith, Letters to Married Women.
1767. Anonymous, Clio-or a Discourse on Taste - addressed to a Young Lady.
1767. J. Bland, An Essay in Praise of Women: or Looking Glass for Ladies.
1768. J. Longhorne, Precepts of Conjugal Happiness - addressed to a Lady on her marriage.

1770. Anonymous, The Ladies' Miscellany.
1770. Anonymous, The Modest Lady's Garland.
1770. M. Towle, Young Gentleman's and Lady's Private Tutor.
1771. T. Marryot, Sentimental Fables for the Ladies.
1771. M. S. Montague, Original Essay on Women.
1772. T. Hull, Genuine Letters from a Gentleman to a Young Lady.
1772. Anonymous, New and Elegant Amusement for Ladies of Great Britain.
1773. Hester Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind.
1774. J. Gregory, A Father's Legacy to his Daughter.
1774. E. Moore, Fables for the Female Sex.
1774. Hugh Kelly, The School for Wives.
1774. F. P. New Reflections on the Errors committed by both Sexes.
1774. Anonymous, Letter from a Father to his Daughter at a Boarding School.

1776. J. Fordyce, Character and Conduct of the Female Sex.
1776. A Lady, Sentimental Discourse of Religion and Morality.
1777. Mrs. H. Cartwright, Letters on Female Education addressed to a Married Lady.
1777. Hester Chapone, A Letter to a New Married Lady.
1777. Hannah More, Essays on various subjects for Young Ladies.
1777. Anonymous, Laws Respecting Women.
1777. Anonymous, Letter to a Lady on Pregnancy and Management of Infants.
1779. Anonymous, The Polite Lady: or a course of Female Education.
1779. James Rice, Plan of Female Education.
1779. The Polite Lady, A Course of Female Education.

1780. Emilia, On Female Accomplishments.
1780. Henry McKenzie, Girls' Education.
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