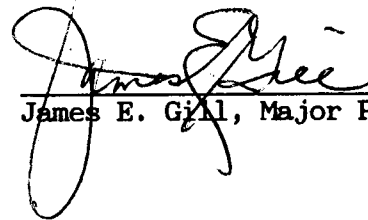
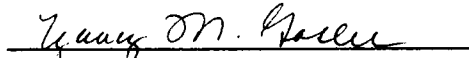
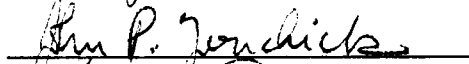
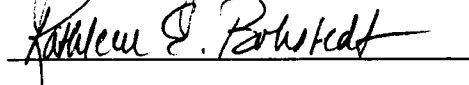


To the Graduate Council: I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Esther Powell Riley entitled "Resisting Writers: Four Eighteenth-Century Women Writers in Search of a Literary Voice." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.



James E. Gill, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor
and Dean of The Graduate School

RESISTING WRITERS: FOUR EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
FEMALE NOVELISTS IN SEARCH OF A
LITERARY VOICE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Esther Powell Riley

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ABSTRACT

Based on assumptions that people are born into language and that subjectivity is culturally constructed, this dissertation discusses novels by four women writers in the eighteenth century--two widowed, two separated from their husbands--who were forced to support themselves by writing patriarchy failed them. Using a psychoanalytic theory of reading, the study reveals how each woman's work amounts to a critique of patriarchy and an attempt to reconstruct female subjectivity in order to counter patriarchal ideology.

Chapter One explains the methods used to analyze the novels, essentially a Lacanian theory of language and gender. In addition, the chapter summarizes the position of middle-class females in eighteenth-century society.

Chapter Two discusses three novels by Penelope Aubin, The Strange Adventures of Count de Vinevil and His Family (1721), The Life of Madam de Beaumont, A French Lady (1721), and The Life and Adventures of the Lady Lucy (1726). Aubin's insistently reiterated images emphasize the precarious plight of the female in a male-dominated world and suggest that death may be preferable to being trapped in a woman's body.

Chapter Three analyzes Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady (1725), The Reform'd Coquet (1724), and The Accomplished Rake (1727) by Mary Davys. Davys's plots and characterizations interrogate accepted courtship practices and manipulate courtly romance conventions in order to negotiate a more honest relationship between man and woman.

Chapter Four examines Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote: The Adventures of Arabella (1752), Henrietta (1758), and Sophia (1762). Lennox's mock-heroic treatment of courtly romance exposes deceptive fictive images of woman. Lennox's novels repeatedly demonstrate that "feminine" discourse inevitably submits to "masculine" discourse and argue for a new discourse for men and women.

Chapter Five focuses on Charlotte Smith's Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle (1788), Desmond: A Novel (1792), The Old Manor House (1793), and The Young Philosopher (1798). Depicting failed marriages and the destructive effects of depriving ambitious and capable women of power, the novels suggest that a revolution in behavior is required for both men and women.

Chapter Six concludes that traces of these four writers' resistance against male form remain.

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WOMEN'S LIVES

In A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf describes how her search of English literature for female literary precursors unearthed very few. She writes of the Elizabethan period, "it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet" (41). She concludes that women, lacking education, freedom, privacy, and encouragement to write, had no opportunities to develop the "state of mind to set free whatever is in the brain" (51). There were women shut in their own rooms who wrote for their own satisfaction, Woolf notes, but it was not until the eighteenth century, she reports, that Aphra Behn opened the doors for women to publish:

Mrs. Behn was a middle-class woman with all the plebeian virtues of humour, vitality and courage; a woman forced by the death of her husband and some unfortunate adventures of her own to make her living by her wits. She had to work on equal terms with men. She made, by working very hard, enough to live on. The importance of that fact outweighs anything that she actually wrote The extreme activity of mind which showed itself in the later eighteenth century among women--the talking, and the meeting, the writing of essays on Shakespeare, the translating of the classics--was founded on the solid fact that women could make money by writing. (63-

65)

Penelope Aubin, Mary Davys, Charlotte Lennox, and Charlotte Smith, the four eighteenth-century women writers featured in this study, were likewise middle-class women whose financial vicissitudes forced them to enter upon literary careers. They were not revolutionaries or radicals; they were four married women whose experiences proved that the social system needed reform. They wrote in order to make a living, but they discovered along the way that their writing could be an instrument of social change. To varying degrees, each woman expresses in her writing both fear and anger caused by the failed promises of patriarchy. These writings reveal the tensions of the writers' struggles against society's attempts to marginalize them by limiting them to the domestic sphere and by denying them both an opportunity to support themselves by gainful employment and an outlet for self-expression.

This dissertation proceeds on certain assumptions about women's writing: that language is a vehicle of patriarchal culture, but that it is also a structure of the unconscious; that subjectivity is a product of culture; that human activity is a sign of both desire and repression so that the unconscious is an agent of the literary text.

PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER

New critical approaches to writing by women suggest that these works may yield new meanings and new truths, if, rather than examining the surface of the work and reading it literally, the critic looks for

what Macherey calls "the inscription of an otherness in the work" (79), that is, the echoes of, allusions to, and reactions to the background against which it was written.

Harold Bloom's theory of "literary anxiety" notes that no literary work is created in a vacuum; every work amounts to a silent interaction with the discourses that preceded it. So, too, are the works of female writers who were the trailblazers into forbidden territory--the "no-woman's land" of literature. From Aristotle on, literary theoreticians had emphasized that the power of the pen was exclusively male, and a long tradition of anti-feminist literature had insisted that women who trespassed into male territory were monsters (Rogers, Troublesome 1). Consequently, the prevailing social conventions discouraged women from expressing themselves literarily in a public way; they were encouraged instead to channel their need to write into the socially acceptable forms of letters and private journals.

Even after a few courageous (or financially desperate) women had broken into public print, however, female writers were inexorably barred from expressing their critiques freely; they still were governed by the literary constructs and social values of an overwhelmingly male-dominated society. And before they could feel free to write about the female condition and their discontent with it, they had to recognize and exorcise the images and metaphors by which they had been defined in male texts. Until that exorcism, the literary conventions had ratified the notion that women existed only to be acted on by men, both as literary subjects and as objects of physical desire. Woolf points out the paradox that women are absent from history, yet they have "burnt like

beacons in all the works of all the poets" (43). Since writing entails a process of self-definition, a coming to terms with self as autonomous and creative (Spacks "Imagining" 110), that process is blocked or impeded for the female writer until she can revise or otherwise come to terms with the patriarchal definitions in which she has been stereotyped as incapable of mastering language or incapable of creating. Even so, "self" is an ideological construct, the reproduction of social and political relations. Nussbaum writes: "their self-fashionings were inevitably bound up in cultural definition of gender--those assumed, prescribed, and embedded in their consciousness--as well as their subversive thoughts and acts of resistance to those definitions" (133). The split self is evident in the writings.

Psychoanalytic theory proposes a method for reading literary texts that can uncover suppressed and repressed messages. Psychoanalysts explain that language imposes gender construction at the most basic level of consciousness. According to Lacan, it is in language that the individual perceives him- or herself as an entity, that he or she gains an identity. Language identifies an individual's position in the family, his or her available social roles, and a range of discourses in which he or she is constructed. Thus the formulation of gender roles occurs unconsciously yet inevitably. As soon as a child perceives that it is "not-mother," it begins to learn all the behaviors associated with being a girl-child or a boy-child and these learnings are reinforced by nearly every encounter with another person. Additionally, the cultural system has very strong built-in inducements to conformity: peer pressure, public ridicule, and, in extreme cases, punishments

imposed by law. A nonconformist must possess great determination and strength (or great need) to overstep such bounds.

But Lacan's theory argues that the individual, once entered into the social order, is not a coherent entity; rather, entry into language necessitates a split between the "I" who speaks and the self of which "I" speaks. Between the "I" who speaks and the only partly-represented self who is spoken of lies the unconscious, the repository of repressed desires and emotions. Thus, as we see in literary texts, "the unconscious is a constant source of potential disruption of the symbolic order." Though language offers the possibility of expressing desires, at the same time, the user of language is blocked from articulating desires which are submerged in the unconscious. The split subject, therefore, is the site of contradiction. * Moreover, subjectivity is not stabilized in a single discourse but, instead, may move from stance to stance, altering discourse as it moves. Additional incompatibility may emerge if these stances conflict, oppose each other or are mutually exclusive. The ultimate result of such contradiction may be change--action taken to resolve the conflict (Belsey 50). Subversive ideas and themes embedded in literary works, then, may be interpreted as evidence of the author's unconscious desires. As such, they have the possibility of instigating social change. Until such change occurs, however, people caught in the disturbance may suffer a great deal of anxiety and stress. Women trapped in gender roles, individuals caught in class struggles or bound by racial stereotypes--all of these feel the pressure of contradictory discourses and react in different, often conflicted, ways. Some withdraw from the conflict and become mentally unstable;

others seek to resolve the situation through activism.

Psychoanalysts postulate that the unconscious always reveals itself in syntactical irregularities and, often, in what it does not say. The novels of these four writers reveal in the "dream" language of metaphor and in their omissions how early eighteenth century female writers used the dominant language of male-controlled literature to their own ends, struggling to gain control over a woman's story and its meaning. But it was not easy. The evidence of the battle and also of the suffering caused by the struggle can be found in their writing. The female writer who found herself inscribed within the conventions of the patriarchal literary establishment was forced to accept or reject what she found there; thus her writing can be construed as the product of an earlier reading. As Furman points out, "to study women writers as readers is to analyze their interaction with the cultural system, and to determine how their texts propose a critique of the dominant patriarchal tenor of literary expression" (5). Thus a psychological theory of reading breaks with traditional methods in that, rather than seeking to fill gaps and remove conflicts from the work, it looks for omissions, points of contradiction, and disruptions in order to expose the collisions between subjectivity and ideology (Belsey 57).

Discomfort with externally imposed conventions and metaphors cannot be entirely suppressed or concealed, psychoanalytic theory argues; these novels by early female writers reveal the tensions and hostilities that resulted from submission to the traditions of style and metaphor they inherited from their literary "forefathers," traditions which denied women autonomy, creativity, or subjectivity. The constraints within

which these women had to work were formidable. First were the material conditions of their middle-class lives as widows or wives of improvident husbands. Second, they had to overcome the fear of entering forbidden territory. Third, they faced loss of reputation at a time when reputation was nearly as important as life to them. Fourth, they had to remain within the boundaries of acceptable subject matter: it was not so much the fear of expressing themselves as it was the fear of being thought "revolutionary" that restrained them. Another restraint was the necessity for limiting themselves to "women's" subject matter while having to use male-devised plots, genres, and conventions. Perhaps these struggles to accommodate to the dominant form and style account for the "awkwardness," the "quaintness," the "limitedness" of the works. Certainly the guardians of predominantly male literary history pronounced their works short of the standards of the literary establishment. Gradually, however, as female writers worked with the conventions, they shifted the focus of their literary works so that they could revise the genre and its techniques to reflect more accurately and to examine more deliberately the condition of women. By the end of the eighteenth century, women were not only in print; they were offering radical revisions of patriarchal images and conventions.

SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER

Sociologists argue that a human being's subjectivity is influenced by the material world and the others with whom he interacts. In an unquestionably male-dominated society, the ways men and women perceive

themselves and each other not only cause the material oppression of women in terms of work and wages but also engage the deepest dimensions of personal experience. Because gender roles are the products of a lifelong training process that begins at birth, individuals are unlikely to question the rightness of apparently universally accepted practices; rather, they will be apt to accept them as natural and proper. Indeed, the ideas, images, and values which uphold and perpetuate the power of patriarchy are generally perceived as natural if they are perceived at all. Even though certain public values may be recognized, they may not be identified as patriarchy-supporting. Additionally, being able to identify ideology and its effects does not necessarily enable one to escape or even to challenge them.

Bourdieu's theory of the social construction of categories helps explain gender in terms of a social analysis of power. He argues that every established system tends to make its order appear natural and inevitable so that its arbitrariness goes unquestioned. The only way for reform to enter such a system is for crisis to develop, so that the tacit rules that govern behavior can become verbalized and analyzed, destroying the apparent self-evidence of the system and allowing social criticism to emerge. However, the dominant power will always struggle to preserve the status quo and to suppress the rebellion (Moi 1026-27).

Bourdieu considers gender divisions to be imposed by culture. By ascribing difference to biology, political powers attempt, ultimately, to control the behavior of members of a social group; that is, "the invocation of biology allows the social construction of sexual difference to appear motivated and 'natural,' [but] its real function is

to mask the true, socially produced power relations between the sexes, to present gender divisions as [unquestionable]" (Moi 1030). As a consequence, women appear to collude in their own oppression by accepting the apparent legitimacy of male power. Incidentally, it is important to acknowledge that the dominant group is not itself immune to the unconscious persuasions of ideology; men, too, are socialized into their gender roles and perceive them as natural and right.

A complicated process of conditioning is required to make the male-female hierarchy seem natural. Bourdieu notes that even the body is inscribed in social power relations: an elaborate process of educating children in gestures, manners, ways of dressing, playing, and moving impresses on them "an unspoken understanding of legitimate ways to (re)present their body to themselves and others" (Moi 1031).

Bourdieu points out that there are certain compensatory factors that can enhance the power of an individual low in the hierarchy. Although education is the ostensible means of gaining power, the lack of education can be counterbalanced by money, political power, or a network of "culturally, economically, or politically useful relations" (Moi 1025). Wealth and power made it possible for privileged women in the upper classes to suffer fewer restrictions on their movement and action than did their middle-class sisters.

These four middle-class female writers quickly learned to make use of these strategies. Aubin made a point of dedicating her work to prominent figures such as Queen Anne or the Duke of Marlborough (Todd 34). Davys was careful to cultivate an impressive list of literary patrons. She was one of the few popular writers in the period to

publish by subscription, but she was so successful with The Reform'd Coquet that she released all her later novels in the same way (DeBruyn 133). She also tried to sustain contact with Swift (trading upon his earlier friendship with her husband, by then dead), but Swift did not respond favorably. Lennox was friendly with several literary lions, notably Johnson and Richardson, who assisted her on numerous occasions. Smith associated with Cowper, Wordsworth, and Coleridge and was a guest at William Hayley's villa in a sort of artist's colony (Spender 226).

MATERIAL CONDITIONS

Material conditions had a profound effect on the lives of the four writers studied here. Because ideology is culturally produced, it is important to understand the milieu in which eighteenth-century women writers worked and lived if we wish to analyze their works.

First, most women wanted to be married, for marriage offered them both comfort and fulfillment--a secure home, an opportunity to have children and loving relationships, and a place in society (determined by the family's rank and social status). When the marital relationship was unsuccessful, however, women often found themselves prevented from remedying the situation because of patriarchal ideology.

The eighteenth century, rather than opening up opportunities for women as reforms were undertaken, had actually deprived them of freedoms. Reacting to political and religious instability prior to the Restoration, early eighteenth century society posited a strong patriarchal monarchy establishing the king as ruler of his people and

the father as ruler of his family. As the bourgeoisie emerged, Eagleton observes,

the decline of the relatively open, impersonal system of traditional kinship, with its primarily economic and genealogical rather than affective bonds, produce[s] . . . a considerably more closed, 'nuclear' family, whose patriarchal structure reinforces an authoritarian state and fulfils some of the religious functions traditionally performed by the state. (14)

As commercial, technological, and financial growth occurred, women were increasingly excluded from participation in these worldly activities. The new capitalist values did not unseat the aristocratic hegemony, but the economic system shifted away from being centered on household industry to external production of commodities--and women's connections with productive labor were gradually severed. When the new capitalist system developed, women became more defined by an idealized domesticity. Upper-class women became consumers of wealth; their rank allowed them to ignore the gradual shrinking of women's possibilities. Todd notes, "The[ir] exaggeratedly naughty fashions . . . elided that crucial social distinction of whore and lady, while refusing the role of woman as a domestic exemplar and subordinate wife" (Sign 21), but women in the lower ranks were more confined and limited than ever in their gender roles. Not only were women discouraged from capitalist enterprise, they were also excluded from the worlds of science and

knowledge. (They could be school teachers, but, prohibited from receiving higher education themselves, they were capable of teaching only the most elementary of students.) Unable to vote, women could not participate in political decisions. Under civil law, women had the right to possess estates and contract debts. Although common law defined a single woman when she reached the age of twenty-one as fem [sic] sole, equal with man, only a few women achieved that status in a time when fourteen was considered a marriageable age. When she married, a woman became fem couvert [sic]. She could not sue or be sued, sign contracts, or make a valid will without the assent of her husband. Although he could not dispose of any real property of his wife's, a husband assumed legal rights over his wife's property at marriage, and any property that she received (including wages) during marriage was legally his (Shanley 8). Women's superficial education conditioned them to think only of the adornment of their bodies; they were trained in frivolity, incompetence, and physical frailty. The effect was that English class society in the eighteenth century artificially constructed a "powerless, ghettoized, 'feminine' culture" (Eagleton 15).

Thus woman's sphere was limited to the home and her activity was limited to the duties of being a spouse and being a mother, or, if she had not yet reached marriageable age, of being a daughter and potential object of male interest. Worse, she was not allowed freedom in even those limited areas, but she must conduct herself there in socially acceptable fashion. The only sop offered to her was the often false promise of love-in-marriage. Indeed, marriage itself often proved to be a trap for women.

It was through marriage that both men and women officially entered society on their own rather than as an appendage of their families, but, while marriage granted autonomy to men, it withheld the same from women. As already explained, the law in general considered man and woman as one in marriage. During the eighteenth century as English society struggled to cope with the social changes instigated by the growth of capitalism, the family became the central apparatus of patriarchal society and it was within family that women were inscribed either as daughters, wives, or mothers. Though there are some who escaped the two latter stages of "female development" in the eighteenth century, they are invariably described as deficient and incomplete.

In addition, tactical problems for women increased during the eighteenth century. One result of the English Civil War was that a woman without funds had more difficulty in finding a husband. Many families had their wealth confiscated as a result of having made the wrong political alliances, depriving them of the power to provide a dowry for unmarried daughters. Moreover, daughters of city merchants were proving to offer unfair competition to destitute gentlewomen. Gender biases increased the hazards for gently-born women; it was perfectly acceptable for a young man to sacrifice birth for the sake of wealth, but indigent gentlewomen were deterred by tradition from crossing class lines. Furthermore, at the end of the seventeenth century, women outnumbered men by a ratio of 28 to 27 (Fraser 269), so that although society decreed only one fate, marriage, for women, many impoverished but gently-bred women were barred from attaining it.

Parental strictures on the making of matches had loosened

somewhat: no longer did parents make the choices without consulting their children. Ideally, the parents would arrange a marriage to which the young man and young woman would consent. At the least, it was assumed that no girl would marry without her parents' permission, and hardly anyone would consider marriage without having some guarantee of financial support (Poovey 13). Social practice decreed that the man always inaugurated courtship and that the woman remained passive; it was not respectable for a woman to express, much less act on, her desire. Not only was the woman deprived of the power to initiate marriage negotiations, but she gained few benefits from marriage when it occurred. Generally, as already explained, the rite entitled the husband to her body and to all her worldly goods. The most unqualified benefits for women appear to have been post-marital: Fraser reports that the happiest women appeared to be wealthy widows, guaranteed worldly ease without having to please or obey a master (271). These women were extremely reluctant to marry again.

Divorce was rare: people could separate, but a woman usually lost her dowry if she left her husband; unless a relative was willing to take her in, she had nothing with which to support herself unless her husband gave her a stipend for maintenance. She could go to work, but, realistically, she had to choose between dependence (waiting woman, companion or governess) or prostitution. Churches did grant "divorce from bed and board," but both parties were then prohibited from remarriage. A private Act of Parliament could grant a divorce from the bond of matrimony, but the suppliant must have a good deal of money and plenty of time to obtain one (Fraser 294-96). Finally, divorce or

separation almost certainly excluded a woman from participation in social life.

Gender bias also prevailed in adultery: a wife convicted of adultery lost not only her reputation and her home, but also her dowry; but men were not punished financially for the same act. Technically speaking, even in the eighteenth century a woman could be required to do public penance for fornication. The punishment was stringent because the possibility of a bastard undermined the policy of primogeniture, and since social status and, often, political power were determined by property, it was important to insure the legitimacy of all heirs.

Pregnancy, especially when a woman gave birth for eight or ten years sequentially, as many women did, posed serious risks to women. Contraception did exist; there were herbal remedies as well as the condom, introduced in the eighteenth century. Also, women believed that lactation prevented pregnancy, and people were aware of the effectiveness of coitus interruptus, but data on use of contraception at the time is scarce (Fraser 66-68). One reason for the almost annual pregnancies for a woman was the high incidence of stillbirths and infant mortality. Another was the stigma of infertility: failure to conceive was sometimes thought to be evidence of a woman's sinfulness. Although there are no valid figures for deaths in childbirth, many women died in labor and many more from diseases and debilitations caused by constant pregnancy. It should be noted that disinfectant, a factor that led to a sharp decline in maternal mortality, was not invented until 1867 (Fraser 453). Nevertheless, many women accepted marriage and the pain and perils it entailed over the alternatives: celibate dependency,

starvation, or prostitution.

If a woman had neither fortune nor husband, she might become a governess, a teacher, a companion, or a domestic servant. As female trades declined, the main growth industry for women was domestic service, the largest employer of women outside the home (Todd, Sign 204). Social conditions produced a large number of widows, abandoned wives, and unmarried mothers. Furthermore, there were fewer jobs for women than there were job-seekers, even though women were given the less desirable tasks and were paid less money than men who did the same work. Because it was assumed that married women with family responsibilities wanted temporary work, they usually did seasonal tasks; almost all single women were employed as servants (Clark 66).

If a woman lacked the qualifications or connections for employment in a respectable position, she might be forced to become a prostitute. Boucé writes that prostitution was rampant in the eighteenth century. In London, there were probably over ten thousand prostitutes, doing business openly in the streets with little fear of intervention (9). A step up the scale, the kept women of gentlemen often led better lives than the wives or servants of those same men. Some high-class courtesans won fame and respect, even appearing in public with their protectors. Wives often ignored these liaisons because, relieved of their husbands' sexual attentions, they might avoid pregnancy and the attendant pain and debilitation (10). However, prostitution had occupational hazards such as disease, inevitably decreasing income as the ravages of age became evident, and the possibility of unwanted pregnancies. In fact, pregnancy out of wedlock was another trap for

women. The law stated that illegitimate births had to be declared. A mother convicted of the murder of her child faced death (Todd, Sign 112). However, privileged women in the upper classes were often able to conceal illicit births as they traveled to foreign countries or vacationed in provincial areas. This kind of mobility, of course, was denied to women in lower classes.

Men often considered women fair sexual prey, whatever their condition. Rape was a crime punishable by death, but in practice, the deterrent seems to have been ineffective, particularly in cases where upper-class men used lower-class women as they desired.

It is evident that the life of the single woman who sought independence was fraught with perhaps more peril than that of the wife faced with annual pregnancy and possibly an unloving husband. Small wonder that women generally accepted the single life only as the result of the failure of the system: that is, when she was unable to procure a husband to protect her, or when the husband she procured either died without estate or was unable to provide for her. Additionally, when the system failed, it not only deprived a woman of the man cultural practice designated as her provider and protector, but it deprived her of the security of a home as well.

In the cases of Penelope Aubin (death of husband), Mary Davys (death of husband), Charlotte Lennox (separated from husband), and Charlotte Smith (separated from husband), the necessity of earning a livelihood led these women to writing. Earlier, a few courageous writers like Behn, Manley, and Haywood had opened the door to the male-dominated field of writing for publication. Those flamboyant women had

left their audiences with the notion that female writers were beyond the bounds of respectability, but their successors, notably Aubin and Davys, struggled to revise the image of the female writer.

Although frequently attracted by other genres, (Davys and Aubin wrote plays; Lennox did translations of the classics and wrote articles of literary analysis; Smith's passion was poetry), somehow they seemed compelled to write novels. Woolf argues that that is because all the literary training women had was in the "observation of character, the analysis of emotion" (67), but that is not true for these four writers, though they did lack the classical training to write poetry for an educated audience. Woolf does, however, make a cogent point: novels are, to some extent, a reflection of life, and their "integrity" consists in the reader's belief that what he or she finds in them is the truth. However, women's values are not the same as men's values, despite the fact that it is masculine values that prevail, in fiction as in life. The female novelist must have struggled constantly to make her "truth" conform to the values of patriarchal society (72-74), and, of course, she often failed to conform. Perhaps this accounts for the fact that early female fiction is so frequently judged minor, flawed, lifeless. Accepted social and literary theories that denigrated women's writing led women to mask their gender or to deprecate it and to adopt defensive stances in their writing. Moreover, that women did not achieve the levels that male writers did might be attributed to the constraints imposed by the conditions in which they lived. Certainly, poverty is an inhibiting factor: Smith, for example, preferred to write poetry, but the creative spirit could not be counted on to produce a

flow of poetry frequently enough to generate a regular and reliable income.

RECONSTRUCTING FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY

Literature offers a partial reflection of life--not a mirror image but an image growing out of the perceptions and biases of the writer. Citing Althusser, feminist critics argue that literature also contributes to the process of constructing subjectivity (Belsey 65, Barrett 68). Uneducated or unintelligent women might not question the narrowness of their options or even think about the quality of their lives, but bright and inquisitive women must have wondered why they were barred from all meaningful activity but marrying and breeding. These writers with the ability to manipulate language in persuasive fashion were capable of having tremendous influence on the ways in which readers would perceive themselves and their world.

These novels can be seen as vehicles for fantasy--they are flights of invention in which women trapped by their society's ideology play out various possibilities for accommodation or escape. So powerful is the grip of ideology, however, that often the rebellion remains only partially expressed or even completely suppressed in the work (though we can detect traces of its existence). Yet fiction can be used to propose theoretical resolutions to otherwise unreconcilable conflicts, as Fredric Jameson suggests in The Political Unconscious (133-37).

Likewise, Christine van Boheemen finds in the principle of mediation a crucial strategy of narrative logic. Fiction, she suggests, "uses characters or objects as things to think with, working out irreconcilable contradictions by means of rhetorical strategies which can only function or exist when embedded in a narrative process, in language" (94).

Thus when we examine the plots of eighteenth-century women novelists, we can expect to discover both a social critique and some suggested solutions to the problems presented there. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that fiction "creates and conveys its truths through plot." Authors' assumptions about life and living determine their plot structures; in novels, "attitudes towards such matters as relations of parents and children and the viability of power as a principle of social organization" and "struggles between 'masculine' and 'feminine' values" underlie the action (Desire 2). While eighteenth-century novels embody their society's myths, they also modify these myths in their plots to conform to the desires of the authors and also of the readers. Though many eighteenth-century women writers create plots that conform to patriarchal ideology, the revelation of the efforts required to achieve harmony may suggest a subversive message.

This dissertation is an examination of selected works by four women writers, representing the early-, mid-, and late-eighteenth century, in order to identify their revelations of traces of suppressed female voices. The signs of rebellion are slight in the early writers, but as the century progresses, the traces become clearer and the voices stronger, more confident. [It should be emphasized, however, that we

can trace no progressive development of women writers from the beginning. Writers attempted, by trial and error, to produce what the market wanted modified by their own literary theories and vision of the world. A survey of eighteenth century novels by females quickly reveals both the individuality of the writer and the writer's awareness of market trends. Allusions to works by both men and women appear frequently; just as frequently, new themes, new symbols, new ideas appear.] The first sign of defiance, of course, is the act of writing itself at a time when female writing was considered unladylike. Additional evidence of discontent with the patriarchal system emerges in the plotting (the nature of events represented in these fictions), the characterization, the narrative voice, and the reiteration of certain images, scenes, and themes. As the century progressed, women came to regard these novels as opportunities for them to speak through their characters and narrators to an audience denied them by social conventions that required women to remain modestly, discreetly silent. By the end of the century, however, the conservative backlash as a result of the atrocities of the French Revolution caused the more radical women writers to suppress their arguments that revolution could inaugurate a new order offering liberty and equality for women.

Chapter Two discusses narrative strategies of Penelope Aubin, who, early in the century, combined the didactic novel with the travel adventure to write books like The Strange Adventures of Count Vinevil and His Family (1721), The Life of Madame Beaumont (1721), and The Adventures of Lady Lucy (1726). Aubin's female characters are unbelievably pure and passive, but her plotting strategies call

attention to the precarious position of the female as a powerless person subject to the control of any and all men.

Aubin's plots are repetitive and fairly predictable; in fact, the repetitiveness is so insistent that it calls attention to itself: the plot usually centers on a married woman wrenched away from the security of home and husband, the traditional protectors of women. The plots emphasize the fragility of these protections by showing how easily they are lost. Once alone in the world, the female protagonist becomes a target for every lust-ridden male she meets, suggesting that women are the natural prey for predatory men. She is usually captured and imprisoned, emphasizing how little control she has over her own body. In fact, the logic of the plots suggests that women are harassed and punished merely for being women. Aubin's protagonists find being at large in the world so dangerous that they gladly return to marriage as a refuge from the perils of society; their experiences have transformed them into model passive and silent wives.

Aubin uses recurrent images to drive home the point that being female in patriarchy is a special trial: her females must disguise themselves as men in order to move about in the world; repetitive confinement images suggest that being in a woman's body is a form of entrapment; themes of burial, death, and rebirth imply that it is better to be dead than to be a woman. Mary Anne Schofield's Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind and John Bender's Imagining the Penitentiary offer useful explanations of masking, confinement, and burial images. Joseph Allen Boone's Tradition Counter Tradition discusses the uses of courtship and marriage plots in fiction.

Aubin's plots depict a world inimical to virtue; they offer a covert critique of patriarchal practice which sanctions exploitation and oppression of its weaker members. Her female characters are powerless--inscribed by and controlled by the culture in which they must live. The only hope Aubin offers her women is a stoic endurance, a trust that Providence will eventually rescue and reward them. Although her plots return women to their husbands at the end, there is a tacit acknowledgement that wedlock is another form of imprisonment and that the only real salvation they can expect is at death.

Chapter Three looks at another early writer, Mary Davys, who creates more independent female characters; her plots indulge in wish-fulfillment fantasies in sequences wherein the female maintains control over the male for a period before submitting to patriarchal authority at the end. The chapter analyzes plot and characterization in The Reformed Coquet: Memoirs of Amoranda (1724), Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady (1725), and The Accomplished Rake (1727).

Davys's plots target romance conventions in order to expose the illusions such myths purvey to women. Davys's characterizations also aim toward a more pragmatic view of women; Davys deliberately underplays emotion and passion in her female characters and presents protagonists who are rational beings capable of subjecting feeling to reason. She also suggests that women can be agents of moral reform. Thus begins the slow process of debunking the misogynist view that women are creatures of passion while men are driven by reason. To that end, Davys insists that she writes "truth:" rejecting the artificial and stylized characters and dialogue of French romances, she writes of lifelike

characters in English settings and creates plots in which every scene is an organic part of the progression to the conclusion. Davys's plots revise the conventional male plot in order to expose the sexual politics at work there. Her plots all move to locate a place for the female that does not require her to submit to patriarchy, but, at the end, they seem to acquiesce as the central characters accept marriage as their lot (though whether Berina accepts Artander is debatable). Davys's ultimate hope was for women to rise to a level of equality with men in marriage. Again, Schofield's theories on masking and Miller's The Heroine's Text offer suggestions for analyzing these novels.

Chapter Four shows how in the middle of the century, Charlotte Lennox gives freer rein and longer duration to fantasy in creating a woman's world in opposition to the patriarchal world in which women is imprisoned. For example, the central character in The Female Quixote finds the world of chivalric romance more agreeable than a world in which she is reduced to a commodity to be owned by men; she controls the actions of her father, her uncle, and her lover for some four hundred pages before she can be "reeducated." Lennox also uses doubling of characters to compartmentalize aspects of the heroine's personality; that is, she creates several versions of the heroine (one passive, one aggressive, another resentful, for example), in order to siphon off unacceptable traits from the protagonist yet still be able to explore these emotions. Laurie Langbauer's Women and Romance gives helpful insights into Lennox's ambivalent attitudes towards romance in The Female Quixote (1752). The chapter also discusses Henrietta (1758) and Sophia (1762).

Like Davys, Lennox exposes the effects of patriarchal ideology on women: her novels reveal how female subjectivity is constricted by women's relegation to marginal positions in society. Lennox also attacks the social hierarchy based on bloodline rather than merit. Like Davys, she rejects the seductive attractions of romance, even though her plots reveal how strong those attractions are. Finally, Lennox exposes the sexual politics that allow the economic oppression of women and the exclusion of women from any meaningful power. Armstrong's and McKeon's ideas on the political history of the novel help to explain the ideas in Lennox's novels as products of culture. Boheemen's theory of the novel as family romance stress the connections between language, gender, and identity. Finally, Schofield (Masking), Todd (Sign of Angellica), and Spacks (Desire and Truth) give insights into the plotting and characterization in these novels.

Chapter Five deals with Charlotte Smith, an active feminist, who speaks more openly of women's resentments by putting women's words into the mouth of the male protagonist and by using the French Revolution and the struggles of the American patriots as vehicles for discussing the "rights of man [and woman]." Four of her novels reveal in content and tone that she thought of the novel as a vehicle for exerting influence on readers who might then bring about social, political, and moral changes: Emmeline (1788, Desmond (1792, The Old Manor House (1793), and The Young Philosopher (1798).

Like Lennox, Smith challenges patriarchy's economic exploitation of women. Smith is also concerned that family ties have been weakened by insistence on an ideology that values people by their bloodlines rather

than intrinsic worth as human beings.

Unlike our other women novelists, Smith experiments with male protagonists, using the masculine voice to offer a critique of patriarchy. Nevertheless, Smith's novels teem with women's stories, some hopeful, some pessimistic and hopeless. Her novels stress the destructive effect of depriving women of power and significance in the world. Like Aubin, Smith focuses on married women, but unlike Aubin's women who, like improbable cartoon characters, effect impossible escapes from unbelievable perils, these are women who stoically endure the debilitating drudgery of married life intensified by poverty and a husband's indifference or even hatred. Her novels also reveal how women prey on other women, unknowingly victims themselves of patriarchy's "divide and conquer" ideology. Diana Bowstead's article discusses the politicization of Smith's Desmond; Boheemen, Schofield, and Todd suggest tactics for reading Smith's novels as subversive.

Literary historians seems to think these women contributed little to the development of the novel: Watt calls Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding the "fathers" of the novel; even Michael McKeon's impressive study only glancingly notices women in ten pages on the "gendering of ideology." Most anthologies also ignore our eighteenth-century women (Austen is often labelled "nineteenth century"), except for a few recent anthologies edited by women (Gilbert and Gubar's Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, for example). But Spender's Mothers of the Novel and Spencer's Rise of the Woman Novelist and similar works have stimulated additional interest in women writers, the forerunners of the "fathers of the novel."

Although it was considered acceptable for women to write letters and journals long before the eighteenth century, it was in this period that women, frequently driven by financial need, entered the arena of publishing for profit, not on an equal footing with men, but with severe handicaps. Most of them had been barred from the educational opportunities which would have given them mastery of the "formal" language and the range of classical knowledge required to vie with men. Additionally, as Barrett notes, they had no connections with booksellers and therefore were blocked from publishing their work (77). It was not until the Enlightenment's emphasis on individual feelings gained currency that women discovered they had material to write about: excluded from learned argument, they could write of their own feelings and from their imaginations, but this, too, was a constraint, for their content was dictated by their social positions.

Despite these handicaps, however, women writers continued the struggle, and, although they did not achieve their goals in the next hundred years, they did not lose heart and retreat. Indeed, women writers are still in search of a literary voice.

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR: AUBIN'S PIOUS MORAL TALES

The female who was compelled by necessity or desire to become a novelist in the early eighteenth century had a number of objections to overcome. First, the fact that women's writing was discouraged, even scorned and mocked, would inhibit all but the most driven. Second, the popular women fiction writers' lives had somehow become associated with their works; thus, by association, a woman writer ran the risk of being labeled immoral if she dealt with any but the most lofty themes, and, excluded from opportunities to gain a classical education, most women were limited in types of presentation. Third, continued critical scorn for the novel as genre precluded achieving legitimacy in the world of letters. Finally, and perhaps the most intimidating barrier of all, was the necessity for using narrative types dominated by men's values and experiences, forms apparently inadequate for expressing women's feelings (Rogers 113). We will never know how many women were silenced by the formidable obstacles that stood between them and a successful writing career. A few did manage to find a voice; indeed, some women fiction writers like Penelope Aubin achieved great popularity during their time while at the same time smoothing the path for the women writers who were to follow them.

The details of Aubin's life are sketchy--we do know that she was born in London in 1679 and that she had published some poetry in the first decade of the eighteenth century, but it was not until 1720, when she was 41, that straitened finances as a result of her husband's death

required that she earn a living (Spencer 86). She published two novels in 1721 and inaugurated a new type of work, one that helped to dispel the idea that the novel was an inferior genre.

Like many other woman writers, Aubin was caught in a double bind: she counted on her writing for financial support, but she also was impelled by a need for self-expression. Happily, literature was her best opportunity as a middle-class woman to express herself publicly--it was her "pulpit, tribune, academy, parliament, all in one" (Warhol 166). Her dilemma was that in order to reach an audience, she had to have sales appeal. Her novels, therefore, were first and foremost designed to take advantage of current tastes of the reading public. Capitalizing on public revulsion from the erotic, near-pornographic novels by female writers such as Mary Delariviere Manley, Aubin wrote novels that were unabashedly didactic. At the same time, the novels also reveal an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the patriarchal ideology which the plots ostensibly affirm. Although on the surface the plots appear to ratify patriarchal inscription of women within a social structure that limits them to roles as obedient daughters, wives, and mothers, the metaphorical language of the plots suggests that women's position in life is so distressing that death would be preferable to life in male-dominated society. Thus the didactic message subverts rather than supports patriarchal ideology.

Aubin was not the first woman writer to create a female plot, but she was the first to make a deliberate effort to turn women's writing in a new direction. Her best-known predecessors, Behn, Manley, and Haywood, whose styles were probably influenced by their experiences

writing plays for the theatre, had written racy amorous novellas with suggestive scenes and language filled with sexual innuendo. As a consequence, the female novel was thought of as a low and immoral form. Aubin's novels were offered as a "systematic counter-statement against the fashionable novels of palpitating passion" (Richetti 219). In the preface to Charlotta du Pont she explains that her booksellers have encouraged her to write

'more modishly, that is, less like a Christian, and in a Style careless and loose, as the Custom of the present Age is to live. But I leave that to the other female Authors or Contemporaries, whose Lives and Writings have, I fear, too great a Resemblance.' (qtd. in McBurney 251)

In another preface, she opposes contemporary trends which she declares the result of loose living:

The air has infected some neighboring nations with the plague, but England has been infected with madness: we are turned Projectors, exceeded [sic] the French in extravagant whims, spend money unwisely, grown false as . . . Turks and Italians in lust, more religion and less sincerety than the Dutch. The knavish part of us are employed in getting money; the thoughtless searching for the improbable--the tales of fairies and elves. (Mme. de Beaumont vi)

The role of the writer, she argues, is to "study to reclaim our Giddy Youth; and since Reprehensions fail, try to win them to Vertue, by Methods where Delight and Instruction may go together" (Count de Vinevil 6). She combines a headlong rush from one adventure to another with moral reflections both in the prefatory material and in the narrator's commentary in the text to achieve her aims.

One of the few early writers to write self-conscious prefaces, she makes her literary intentions clear. She is not apologetic or timid nor does she make excuses for invading male territory; instead, her prefaces aggressively depict the times as in need of correction. She acknowledges that contemporary novels are an inferior form and firmly separates herself from her female predecessors such as Behn, Manley, and Haywood, saying that she will write a new kind of moral fiction. Despite that resolution, however, she did not create new techniques or styles; for example, she borrows the plot of persecuted innocence from the amatory novellas and takes the travel/adventure plot from Defoe. For that reason, she has been judged inferior by critics who valued technical innovation. In her desperate situation, however, she could not risk dispensing with techniques that were proven market successes. At the same time, however, she did, whether consciously or not, use the novel as means for exploring the pathetic female powerlessness that resulted from an ideology that viewed women as objects for men to win, possess, and use as they pleased. Aubin has been credited with changing the tone of fiction, but her critique of male-dominated society has hardly been noticed. Instead, focusing on her novels' melanges of shipwrecks, desert islands, and exotic perils, critics suggest that her

novels are only imitations of their successful predecessor, The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, published in 1719.

The popularity of travel novels in those years reflects the century's growing curiosity about the world that surrounded England as well as a developing interest in the individual and his life experiences as he (assuming that women at that time remained near the domestic hearth and were not free to travel) makes his way through the world. The rage for scientific discoveries and its corollary emphasis on objectivity combined with the stern Puritan rejection of falsehood to produce a preference for first-person writing in the forms of diaries, journals, travelogues, memoirs, confessions, autobiographies and letters (Perry x-xi). The reading audience in early eighteenth century demanded books that informed them not only of the geographical facts of the world but also of the lives and achievements of others. As a direct result, titles of early fiction almost always suggested the "truth" of their contents: memoirs, letters, account, life, voyage, adventure or a like word was usually included. According to Watt, the travel novel "initiates that aspect of the novel's treatment of experience which rivals the confessional autobiography and outdoes other literary forms in bringing us close to the inward moral being of the individual" (75).

Not only did these fictions explore the consequences of modes of behavior, but they were, as Perry notes, "metaphoric expressions of testing limits" and also served as moral allegories about losing one's way and finding it again. Such writings appealed greatly to an audience imbued with the growing belief in the eighteenth century that reason, augmented by data collected empirically, could answer the

questions that religious dogma and traditional authority failed to satisfy (4-8). Richetti comments that the use of the term "history" and equivalent terms (life, adventure, account, travels) was an eighteenth century convention intended to avert the negative criticisms usually aimed at works of fiction. Aubin's predecessors had signed themselves as editors or compilers for the same reason, but though she signs her novels as author, thus acknowledging that they are imaginative creations, she claims "truth" in the philosophical sense of the word. The end of the preface to Count de Vinevil attests to this point: the reader is not expected to accept the events of the story as factual, but he or she is to believe in the "truth" that only unrelenting, absolute goodness will prevail (219). As a consequence, Aubin provides to her audience "true" stories of female life experiences, stories that may provide answers to the questions that women, whose movements were limited by patriarchy, could not answer for themselves.

Aubin's combination of the travel narrative with the providential fable proved fortunate, for it attracted a wide audience growing disenchanted with the repetitious romances and amatory novellas then on the market. Her blend of moral fiction and travel fiction was so successful that her booksellers rushed to put out a second edition to meet demand (McBurney 252). In the same year that Count de Vinevil was issued, she published a second novel, The Life of Madam de Beaumont, followed by The Noble Slaves, or The Lives and Adventures of Two Lords and Two Ladies Upon a Desolate Island (1722), The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda (1722), The Life of Charlotta du Pont (1723), The Life and Adventures of Lady Lucy (1726), and The Life and Adventures of

the Young Count Albertus, the Son of Count Lewis Augustus, by the Lady Lucy (1728).

Like Defoe, Aubin depicts the world as inimical to defenseless and innocent inhabitants; however, Aubin's virtuous protagonists are strictly limited in the kinds of defensive behavior they may engage in. Defoe's protagonists are resourceful, even exploitative. Aubin's, on the other hand, are permitted only tears, prayers, and faith. Her themes display a self-consciousness about the incarceration of women: they are not only confined in architectural structures but also confined in their bodies and their gender. Depicted as sexual objects, they can either submit or attempt to escape that identity by burying themselves, disguising themselves, or pretending to be dead. Thus, as a critique of male society, Aubin's novels emphasize how social structure has not only permitted, but encouraged the encoding of femininity as sexually vulnerable with no means of defending itself. They offer "scandalous, incriminating details of the far-from-utopic life most women lived at that time" (Schofield iv).

Aubin has subversively transformed the patriarchally-imposed values of passivity, self-denial and resignation into a kind of inverted heroism for women. Her female characters are not frightened, spineless women; they confront the elements in a struggle for survival, but they are unequal to their opponents in the sexual battle because they have been conditioned to submission and resignation to God's will (the higher patriarchy). If Aubin's plots did not depend on a miraculous intervention by Providence, her females would become Christian martyrs. Though the text overtly encourages women to submit and rely on

Providence for salvation, it subversively arouses the kind of sympathy that martyrs usually generate: oppressors have learned that it is dangerous to allow a victim's suffering to become public, for resistance can rally around a symbolic figure of suffering.

In addition, Aubin's version of the travel novel is different from the male plot; in the male-authored novel the male protagonist ventures into the world, suffers for the presumptuousness of his going off on his own and learns that in a social world he is not the master of his fate. He is, nevertheless, after learning to accept the constraints on his behavior, rewarded financially and thereafter rises to a higher position than that he came from. Aubin makes the woman's role, on the other hand, reactive rather than proactive. In the male narrative, physical mobility implied the possibility for upward mobility, but for women, physical mobility merely increased the opportunities for being molested. Her women are the representations of "an ideal of order, set against a reality made dangerous by the anarchic forces of power-mongering, lasciviousness, and corruption of all kinds in all realms of human endeavor" (Beasley 217). Therefore, according to Miller, the repressed content in these novels is not the heroine's will to eroticism, but her will to power, representing the author's desire for the power to revise the social structure that oppresses women (348). Even the sexual conflicts are about power rather than desire because the male sexuality Aubin depicts is so aggressive (Perry 21). The female characters have no carnal desire: they wish only to be pure; they become instead targets for the fleshly desires of the males. The males, almost invariably pirates, robbers, or Turks who hate Christians, seek

conquest and control. A female body is just another territory to invade and conquer. Even in the legitimacy of marriage, the female body is the possession of the proprietary husband. Thus the moral concern is at base about power and the approach is one that affirms the value of the female as the embodiment of moral integrity in a world preyed upon by rapacious unpropertied males or corrupt freeholders.

Appealing to the public was not Aubin's only consideration; she also wanted to avoid risking her personal reputation. Therefore, she made another artistic decision in addition to that of using the travel novel. She determined to avoid the style of the "warm" novel represented by Haywood's Love in Excess, the second most popular novel before Pamela (McBurney 250). Most critics have noticed that Aubin's heroines typically marry at the beginning of the novel. Traditionally, worldly activity has been masculine--particularly the kind of activity that Defoe had encoded in Robinson Crusoe: traveling, exploring, subduing the wilderness, and surviving through one's wits. In order to write travel fictions, Aubin necessarily was faced with the problem of maneuvering her heroines into a similar position--for they could not join the navy, wander in search of fortune or get jobs which required them to travel. Her solution was to marry them and then have their husbands die, abandon them, or be forced to abandon them in an alien land. These devices separate the female characters from their traditional defenses and pit them against forces they lack the power to defeat. Newton observes that the subject of power makes women writers uncomfortable; as a consequence, they approach it obliquely or disguise their remarks (7). For Aubin, that meant reversing the focus--showing

how powerless women are. Traditionally, women who have initiated action in literature have usually been punished. They are made prisoners, physically or psychically, or they go mad or become paralyzed into inaction. The perfectly normal and expected behavior for a man is to find himself and to carve out a space in which he can act with some freedom. If a woman behaves so, she is considered aggressive, "bad," even demented. So in these novels, circumstances beyond their control put women in positions where they must react or be destroyed. Probably such a device is necessary to avoid the clichés of the courtship novel and the emotional, "warm" scenes that accompany them. But Aubin's novels are not prototypes of the genre later called "domestic." Instead, though the protagonist is married and presumably under the protection of her husband, Aubin disrupts the marriage, separates the couple, and defers lasting happiness until both husband and wife can survive a series of tests. Thus marriage becomes a kind of metaphor for a winning of heaven on earth, to be attained only after a rigorous and continuous period of testing (Beasley 164). Aubin's plots have the suspended marriage hovering in the background as a reminder of the rewards for endurance and faith.

In addition, the plights of Aubin's female characters are unlike those of Manley and Haywood, who exploited the pathos of women in a male world, deceived and then abandoned for following their natural inclinations to indulge the passions. In fact, Aubin's good characters have no wayward passions; they have no desire other than to be pure and good. As a result, they do not have to struggle to resist their own desires; they have only to defend themselves from lust, cunning, avarice

and all the vices the world is infested with. And it is most often men who are so infested; whereas Manley and Haywood showed upper-class males exploiting lower-class women, Aubin depicts men all along the social scale succumbing to lust; only the priests in her novels remain chaste. Thus the novels covertly criticize the male-dominated social structure.

Recurring situations in The Adventures of Count de Vinevil, The Life of Madam de Beaumont, and The Adventures of Lady Lucy call attention to the predicament of the female: some event beyond her control wrests her from the security of her home and marriage, suggesting the fragility of her protection; she must defend herself against the perils of the world, emphasizing her vulnerability; and she is invariably captured and imprisoned or confined against her will, stressing that she lacks the power to maintain control over her own body. The logic of the metaphors suggests that women must be brought to an awareness of their powerlessness and then must be punished for being women. Bender notes that in the eighteenth century philosophers and social reformers shifted their focus from the intention to punish to the intention to reform: to "manipulate identity by recomposing the fictions on which it is founded" (38). This idea lies under the surface in Aubin's novels: the captivity the female protagonist must endure will prepare her to resume her place in marriage as a passive and grateful prisoner of wedlock (just another form of imprisonment) (Hinz 902).

A recurrent motif in the Aubin novels is the idea that women must on occasion dress like men to survive in the world. Whenever events beyond her control cause an Aubin female to lose the sanctuary of home

and protection of husband or father, she finds herself immediately besieged by rapacious men poised to attack the unprotected woman. The woman avoiding such ambushes learns that she must conceal her weakness--that is, her gender. The necessity of disguise implies that in a patriarchal world, it is safer to be a man than a woman; also, in a male-dominated world, a woman's body is a liability which must be concealed. Again and again, Aubin's plots have women who must travel alone in the world disguise themselves as men. Though such repetitions might suggest paucity of imagination, the metaphor insistently stresses the danger of being trapped in a female body away from the security of home and family. Often, however, the disguises fail and the female bodies are exposed in their vulnerability, suggesting that merely appearing to be a man is insufficient in a male-dominated world; disguises are flimsy protection and offer only temporary security.

Obviously, the confinement image represents a major theme in Aubin's novels. As Carnochan points out, the idea of confinement provides an ambiguous metaphor: eighteenth-century discoveries that annihilated the idea of a finite closed-off world and replaced it with knowledge of the infinite universe "produced double feelings of wanting to soar and not wanting to, hating confinement and cherishing it Eighteenth-century thought is a record of adjustments and strategies brought on by this new recognition of our natures" (8). Thus the confinement metaphor can express a need for a safe haven from an inimical world and at the same time it can represent the entrapment that was the "natural," i. e., social, result of being woman.

A third important theme in Aubin's novels is that of burial, death,

and rebirth. Many of the examples of imprisonment alluded to above are also examples of burial. A woman buries herself (in a cave, a humble cottage, a convent) voluntarily to avoid the perils of the world or to escape the notice of the world. Others bury her to "re-form" her views. Often the only way to escape the attention of the world is to feign death and to be "reborn" when danger has passed. Unlike the Christian archetype, however, the resurrected woman does not find life eternal; often her predicament is worse when she is "reborn" than it was before she "died." Ardelisa, for example, escapes from death at her father's house only to be captured by a Turk who intends to ravish her. Madam de Beaumont, likewise, does not succumb to the plague, but returns to life in the cave with her daughter--a literal burial alive.

As critiques of society, Aubin's novels document the degeneration of English land-based culture and the impending collapse of the moral idealism of the country. And, with some notable exceptions, it is the powerful who are most corrupt and the weakest whose virtue is under stress. Thus Aubin reinscribes the plot of male aggression in a world insistently hostile to virtue in order to offer a critique of the society which sanctions (or at least ignores) depredations on its weaker members. Her novels intimate that the honorable male is the exception, not the rule--and in story after story, her virtuous women and a few men struggle alone in a society whose predatory nature reveals the precariousness of goodness, the low value of human life, and the hypocrisy of publicly stated ideals of morality. Aubin notes in the preface to The Life of Madam de Beaumont, for example, that the story of a virtuous husband is an extraordinary one: "More surprising, in

Lord De Beaumont's story, he loved his absent wife so well that he refused a pretty lady a favor" (vii). The implication that it is the rare husband who remains faithful to an absent wife is aimed squarely at the opposite sex and at the patriarchal social structure within which the female is inscribed. Likewise, in the preface to The Life and Adventures of the Lady Lucy, Aubin pleads with all married men to "consider, from Albertus's Story, the Dangerous Effects of Jealousy, and not to give credit to Appearances, but to examine well into the Truth of Things, before they treat a Wife unkindly, or abandon her." She goes on to urge wives not to give their husbands cause for jealousy nor to blame their husbands for unkind behavior when it is the wives who are at fault, but she hastens to add, "I own a Husband's Cruelty often occasions a wife's infidelity" (xi). Even when women transgress, then, the cause can be found in the master-slave marital relationship sanctioned by society.

Beauty is the only overt power permitted these female characters--and it is depicted as a destructive one because it attracts predators. What culture holds valuable--beauty and chastity--is that which endangers women. The implicit lesson is that women must mask and conceal their only social value in order to survive. Richetti notes that the social myth insists that chastity is a "valuable commodity" because it insures the purity of bloodlines and that, as a consequence, failure to adhere to the moral code is swiftly and severely punished in novels (40). A basic conflict dramatized in these novels is a latent criticism of social, "masculine" corruption and hypocrisy which allows and/or secretly relishes the exploitation of women, and a submerged

sexual hostility towards the masculine ethos that permits the destruction of helpless, beautiful, and virtuous females.

Paradoxically, the assets that women must protect and at the same time display are the very qualities that bring destruction upon them. What Aubin usually suggests is that burial or death would be preferable to being female and is therefore desirable. Behn and Haywood had suggested that sex was a self-destructive female urge, but Aubin suggests that being female itself is destructive because femaleness is a "covert invitation to violation" (London 113).

As a female writer invading the dominion of males, Aubin is unable to condemn overtly the system which makes such aggression possible. Her resistance to patriarchy shows itself indirectly, however, as the female characters in her novels endure, because they have no resources to combat, the depredations of the men they encounter. Aubin's repeated references to the themes of burial, confinement, death, and disguise finally undermine the pose of the novel as an uplifting story designed to inspire virtue in the reader. Despite her wish to be entertaining (Madam de Beaumont viii), Aubin paints a bleak picture of life for the female. Those who were distracted from this subtext by the rapidly moving plot and the exciting adventures advertised by the title pages of her novels probably never noticed the critique of patriarchy or realized that what they were reading was really a subversive manual for the revision of society.

THE SURPRISING ADVENTURES OF COUNT DE VINEVIL AND HIS FAMILY (1721)

Aubin was careful to entitle her first novel in such a way to attract the maximum readership but, at the same time, she insisted upon announcing its moral emphasis. Thus, the title page of The Adventures of Count Vinevil does promise many adventures to the readers who enjoyed Robinson Crusoe, but the preface attests to the writer's highly religious purpose: "to reclaim our giddy youth" (6). The fact that the novel swerves from the traditional male plot is immediately apparent. First, it has a female protagonist rather than a male one. Second, it calls attention to the precarious situation of the female in the world, but rather than suggesting that she will live by her wits, transcend her troubles, and be happy, it implies that she will survive only by the intervention of divine providence. Third, Aubin's female characters are given greater range of action than they are in the male plot, but not greater freedom; on the contrary, most of their efforts are directed toward attempts to escape from imprisonments of various sorts. Finally, rather than using the first person narrative form as many male authors do, she uses a didactic narrator, only occasionally interpolating first-person narratives to illustrate a moral point or to extend the narrative.

Aubin's novels emphasize that woman alone in the world is at risk. Marked with the name of the father, The Strange Adventures of Count de Vinevil and his Family has as its central plot the story of a female

alone in a world intent on her destruction. Although the title implies that the count will be the central character, his daughter Ardelisa quickly emerges as the protagonist. Described as "fair as Venus," Ardelisa is also described as learned, wise, and prudent above her age or sex. Her character, however, is not congruent with her appearance: although she resembles a goddess of love, she does not act like one nor does she wish to be one. She has the "softness of women but the courage and constancy of a hero," a quality necessitated by her beauty and by the fact that her father, whose social responsibility is to protect his daughter, puts her in danger by taking her to Turkey.

From the beginning the plot works to separate the young woman from those designated by society as her natural defenders. At the opening of the novel Ardelisa is under the protection of her father, but the count is murdered on page 37. Just before his death, Ardelisa marries his ward, the Count de Longueville, but her husband's ship is blown out to sea, and an act of God separates the bride from her husband; the remaining three-quarters of the novel concerns the fate of this unprotected woman cast adrift in a world filled with predatory males. Such a plot quickly subverts the eighteenth-century notion that the male is the appropriate protector for the female. The almost simultaneous loss of both husband and father calls into question the validity of a plan whose loophole is so easily exposed.

Thus, rather than the typical male plot of a protagonist who leaves home to make his fortune and test his honor in the world, Aubin creates a female plot whose protagonist is forcibly separated from home, father, and husband, who must defend her honor and endure until she can find

another worthy protector. Unlike the male plot which gives a sense that the protagonist is invulnerable and will always survive, the didactic female plot suggests that the protagonist will always be beset by perils and that all the reader can hope is that the heroine will rise above them with dignity (Miller 346).

About halfway through the book Aubin introduces Violetta to act as a foil to Ardelisa. This interpolated story features another woman alone in the world; as her name suggests, Violetta will be the violated one. Both Ardelisa and Violetta are motherless: each begins her story under the care of her father. Both are thrust defenseless into the world when the men responsible for their safety are unable to protect them.

The first lesson the predatory world teaches the woman is that physical beauty, which convention dictates is a necessity for attracting a husband, is also a liability. When Count de Vinevil takes his daughter and his ward to Turkey, the younger man orders his wife-to-be to conceal her face and to confine herself to her father's house so she will not arouse the desires of lustful Turks. Theoretically, her father's house should be adequate protection against the possessive gaze of the infidel, but the male stronghold is penetrated and set afire.

Bereft of father and husband, Ardelisa disguises herself as a man to escape further notice. The disguise does not prevent capture, however; and when her captor rips off her shirt he instantly discovers she is female. The exposé, rather than titillating the female reader, is an index of female helplessness and a reminder that woman's body is liability as well as asset.

Because disguise is virtually her only protection in the world, Ardelisa resorts to it again when she and Violetta escape from the seraglio. The two women, disguised as men, set sail to search for Ardelisa's husband. Their protectors are three men, a priest and a servant whose positions render them harmless to the women, and the captain of the ship, a surrogate father. In this case, the disguise is equally impotent: the ship is destroyed in a storm and the helpless travelers are cast ashore on a deserted island.

Aubin emphasizes that masquerading as a male is only a temporizing solution: Ardelisa did not avoid attracting the attention of the Turks, nor did she evade capture. The male disguise is useless against the power of the natural world, too; Ardelisa's voyage is interrupted by a storm which pays no attention to the apparent gender of people aboard the ship.

If merely altering the form of the body is unsuccessful, then pretending that the body no longer exists may achieve the invisibility that the unprotected woman seeks. Although Ardelisa escapes after her father has been murdered and his house burned, the consul's wife lets it be known that the defenseless young woman was killed by the attackers who murdered her father. The pretended death prevents further search for Ardelisa, but it does not conceal the most dangerous evidence of her presence: her female body. Ardelisa recognizes that her most important female asset is also her curse: "My fatal Face has been our Destruction," she wails (40). The logic of the metaphor suggests that only actual death provides certain escape from male aggression.

A second case of pretended death occurs when Ardelisa's servant

sets fire to Osmin's harem in hopes that searchers will assume that the occupants perished in the flames and that no one will notice that the two captives are missing. The narrator does not reveal whether this ploy works or not; the two women disguise themselves and set sail, making a land search for them futile.

The other incident of pretended death in this novel is motivated by another kind of desire for invisibility. Separated from her husband only moments after the marriage and kept away from him for several years, Ardelisa finally discovers that he has retired from the world into a Franciscan monastery. Her experiences in the interim have exposed her to the dark underside of male desire; perhaps Ardelisa is afraid to risk entrusting herself to any man. At any rate, she has a priest tell the count that she is dead: if he is content without her, she will not interrupt his peace, but will remain "dead" to him. Her ruse reveals her ambiguous feelings about embarking on life as a wife. It is also the one assertion of power that Aubin allows her heroine; Ardelisa does not choose to have a husband who remains with her for duty's sake only. The count's verbal and physical reactions to news of her death (he vows to withdraw from the world and then he faints, a symbolic death) convince her that he loves her. If the loss of his wife causes his "death," then he can be reborn into marriage, and Ardelisa, freed from the necessity for disguise and rescued from near-death, can be reborn into wedlock, itself a form of confinement.

A third insistent motif throughout Aubin's novels is imprisonment or burial alive. The careers of both Ardelisa and Violetta demonstrate that, though perhaps an unpleasant experience, confinement does offer

some refuge from aggressive males, but that the refuge is only temporary. For example, despite the fact that Ardelisa confined herself to her father's house in Turkey, Turks coming to his house to transact business became aware of her beauty and tried to seize her. Her father failed in his role as protector. Similarly, Violetta's father had placed her in a convent to secure her against the Turks, but even that sanctuary was invaded by the infidels and they took her prisoner.

Both young women are imprisoned in Osmin's seraglio. This confinement, however, offers no refuge, for the women face the constant threat of Osmin's desire. Ardelisa, who had promised her husband to resist to the death any attempt by an infidel to defile her, resolves to kill her captor, but she providentially escapes before her resolution is put to the test. Though readers sympathize with beleaguered innocence, there are limitations upon what actions females can take to defend themselves. In order to demonstrate Aubin's thesis that Providence will save the Christian stoic, Ardelisa must remain passive and patient; she cannot be the agent of her escape.

Violetta, in contrast, has been Osmin's prisoner for two years and has had a son by him, but the child has died. Until she met Ardelisa, Violetta had comforted herself that she had merely submitted to necessity, but, having seen Ardelisa's courage, she realizes that she has complied too readily. In fact, she confesses, she had even looked on Osmin "with a wife's eyes" (91). Violetta represents purity and beauty also, but she is fallen: whereas Ardelisa will resist dishonor to the death, Violetta has submitted to superior force.

The two women, desperately seeking the protection of an appropriate

male after their escape from the burning harem (alluded to above), are shipwrecked on a desert island. During the time the women are confined here, their virtue is safe, but provisions run low and they nearly starve. They are providentially rescued by Violetta's sea captain father, the figure patriarchy designates as protector. Originally unable to preserve her from harm, he is now able to remove her from a situation that is dangerous; he has been unable to preserve her chastity but, with the help of God, he can save her life.

With the providential rescue of the two women, both plots of defenseless women dovetail into one story of domestic felicity. The captain of their wrecked ship has fallen in love with Violetta and is willing to marry her. He stands out in sharp contrast to Ardelisa's husband, who had ordered her to kill herself rather than be possessed by another. Captain Feuillade is willing to overlook Violetta's past, for she is not pre-engaged and the "villain who possessed her person had no title to it but lawless force" (116). As soon as she ascertains that Osmin is dead (and therefore she cannot be guilty of technical bigamy), she agrees to marry Feuillade. Thus Violetta's trials in this plot are ended; she is brought back under the protection of a morally acceptable male, however incompetent he may be to protect her.

At the end of the novel, the narrator comments, "Divine Providence . . . rewarded them according to their merit" and adds that the two lords and their ladies live in "perpetual" happiness and friendship (138). The next year, Violetta has a son and Ardelisa has a daughter. Though the proverbial happy ending has been imposed, Aubin has made a subtle point about the value of chastity (a value determined by the male

establishment): Providence apparently does not judge Violetta as less meritorious than Ardelisa. Ardelisa, of course, was married and Violetta was not, although she interpreted her relationship as a kind of marriage ("looked on him with a wife's eyes"); Violetta was violated and Ardelisa was not, but the important point to note here is that Violetta is not punished for having yielded. She is happily restored to her father; she is able to marry successfully and have a male heir. As we shall see in other plots, Aubin punishes swiftly and severely a female who willfully transgresses, but Violetta is not punished for a sin she did not commit. Of course, this was in direct contradiction of the female situation in early eighteenth century, when the woman was always considered guilty of transgression but the man was never so much to blame.

In addition, Aubin allows Ardelisa to plot a subtle punishment for the husband who so condescendingly told his wife: ". . . let me not be so completely curs'd, to hear you live, and are debauch'd forgive me, Ardelisa, I know your Vertue's strong, tho you are weak, but Force does oft prevail" (28). Throughout the story Ardelisa is the actress in plots imagined by men except this once: here she writes the plot and has the pleasure of observing the pain the news of her "death" gives her husband. The purpose is not so much to punish him as it is to establish her value to him. If he expresses happiness (or insufficient grief) over her death, she plans to disappear quietly rather than to live with a man who does not love and desire her. However, having been allowed momentary control, she is quickly silenced and subdued into domestic "felicity."

Feminist critics have recognized that endings can represent repression of alternate possibilities as well as resolution in narrative. Here, the assertive narrator exercises absolute control over the characters--just as eighteenth-century social patterns demanded submission and acceptance from society's powerless members. Thus the narrator overtly affirms dominant social attitudes of the time while at the same time her suppression of the female voice raises questions about the justice and humanity of such a social system.

Aubin's stated purposes were to entertain and to win her readers to virtue, not to revise social structure. In fact, it is possible that she did not consciously set out to write a critique of eighteenth-century social patterns. Nevertheless, the text reveals curious inconsistencies that suggest repressed criticisms. For example, despite their central position in the plot, these women have little opportunity to speak for themselves--and when they do speak, they often have set speeches which seem not to be genuine expressions of female emotion. Ardelisa, for example, has no voice until she and her father and lover arrive at Constantinople. Her words then are in response to her lover's fears:

'My dear Lord, I did not dare to tell my Father what I thought of his design, but I, like you, have had a dread e'er since we left our native Land. I shal be wholly govern'd by you in all things, and rather chuse to confine my-self from all Conversation, than give you the least disquiet: but, alas! should my Father's new Undertakings, his trading

occasion your Absence from me, what must I do? or who shall protect me from the Infidels [sic] Insolence?' At these words, she remain'd silent, a Flood of Tears interrupting.

(18)

Aubin here is following the conventions of the male plot in which the female is submissive and weak. But, despite her words, Ardelisa's actions are not passive or indecisive. When her father is murdered, recognizing that her alternatives are to die or to find her husband, she dresses herself as a man and strikes off into the countryside to hide herself. Later, she has initiative enough to hire a ship to go to search for her husband. Thus Aubin undercuts the traditional male plot by permitting her females greater range of action than females generally were allowed either in fiction or in life. It required contrivance to put them into a position where they could travel and move freely across the country, but once in that position, Aubin's females demonstrate that they are capable of action.

In this case, however, Ardelisa's abilities to act decisively and to speak boldly appear only when she is dressed as a man. In feminine dress, she reverts to the submissive demeanor she has been conditioned to present to men. When she and her servants are captured by Osmin she is in disguise; the spokesman for the group, she is resourceful and inventive. When he removes her shirt and discovers her sex, however, she reverts to "female" behavior and falls at his feet, begging for death or freedom. Thus, as Zomchick notes, "The public sphere, which demands . . . transvestism . . . for survival, corrupts femininity" (550),

that is, Ardelisa is forced into "masculine" (aggressive, self-directed) behavior in order to survive. Aubin's plot stresses the artificiality and inadequacy of the culturally-constructed gender role for women.

The reader is not permitted insight into Ardelisa's thinking, for the narrator's voice imposes a distance between the reader and Ardelisa; her story is told in third person. In addition, she is often silenced by the authoritative narrator. Ardelisa's silence is especially noticeable in moments of emotional crisis; at such times the narrator pulls back from the scene and ceases to report to the reader. The first incident occurs when Ardelisa and her servant Nannetta, fleeing for their lives from Mahomet, the Turkish prince who has killed the count, find refuge in the forest with a Catholic priest disguised as a Mohammedan mendicant. That night, the narrator coyly notes, the two women "convers'd so piously, and express'd themselves so excellently, that it is a pity the World is not favour'd with a Recital of all they said" (54). The remark is curiously at variance with Aubin's professed purpose: if she intends to display models of Christian heroism, why does she emphasize the loss of speech here by regretting the fact that the reader is deprived of it, when it is obvious that she is the one who chooses not to allow it to be heard?

A second peculiar silence occurs when Osmin has had Ardelisa and Nannetta taken to the women's quarters to change into women's clothing and await his return. In a set speech, Ardelisa concludes that "Death's but a Trifle in Comparison to Infamy" (66). The narrator, awkwardly contriving a close for the chapter, says that "we" will withdraw and

leave Ardelisa and Nannetta passing the night in pious talk. On the surface, it appears that the narrator is willing to report the melodramatic speeches when Ardelisa is wringing her hands and bewailing her fate but avoids revealing what Ardelisa has to say to her servant, a woman who was nobly educated and whom Ardelisa treats as an equal (53-4). Perhaps it was because subconsciously Aubin was unable to approach Ardelisa as a real human being with doubts and fears and preferred to gloss over the scene. On the other hand, perhaps the strong message of sexual fear cannot be repressed, but piety can be relegated to summary or notation. Also, it may be that an audience accustomed to fast-moving plot would be alienated by long passages of moral discourse.

Ardelisa is silenced a third time when she and her husband are reunited at the end of the novel. As Count de Longueville rushes into the room where his wife sits, Aubin writes, "Excess of Joy did for some time lock up their Tongues, so that they continued silent, but at length they both recover'd, and brake forth in words so tender and so passionate, that none but Lovers can conceive" (136). The narrator allows Ardelisa to speak, but in words that are unheard by the reader. One reason for the intervention of the narrator between the protagonist and the reader at these deeply emotional moments may be to avoid personalizing Ardelisa. Throughout the novel she has remained an impossibly pure and almost inhuman character. Her speeches are set speeches, tending toward the melodramatic; the reader is not allowed to approach her inner workings at all. Ardelisa does not tell her story directly or explain her actions or thoughts; always it is the narrator who interprets.

On the other hand, Violetta has more opportunity to speak for herself--her narrative is in first person. The reader is told directly how she responds to her situation: how she had tried to rationalize her behavior and how, when confronted by Ardelisa's response to a similar situation, she is filled with self-doubt and recrimination. Although readers are trained to avoid equating the narrator's voice with that of the writer, the reader yet recognizes that the writer has created the narrator to engage with the created world; Tracy argues, "the manner in which the narrator is involved in the textual world functions, from a psychoanalytic perspective, as a model of the writer's explicit and implicit relationship with the reader" (17). Therefore, a narrator's contradictory or ambiguous behavior toward a fictional world is similar to the writer's behavior toward his reader. The narrator's subtle distancing of the reader from Ardelisa suggests a withholding of affection, if not approval. Having Violetta tell her story in first person makes her more human and more believable. Contemporary readers were interested in tales of "real" people, and first-person narrative fostered a certain intimacy between the reader and the speaking character. Further, first-person narration allows the character to divulge inner feelings and thoughts. The result is that Violetta becomes more interesting and less of a stock character; she acts as a palpable foil to the altogether more "private" and virtuous Ardelisa.

Despite her morality, Aubin does not condemn Violetta for her involuntary breaking of the moral code. A prisoner, Violetta could only obey or die; choosing the former, she believed herself married (even if it was to a brute). Thus, when Violetta proposes to postpone her

marriage to Feuillade for six months while she does penance in a convent for her "fall," Aubin has Ardelisa urge her to marry right away, and we never hear of the convent or the penance again. The plot also grants Violetta a "happy" ending despite her unsanctioned sexual behavior.

THE LIFE OF MADAM DE BEAUMOUNT, A FRENCH LADY (1721)

Within the same year, Aubin published The Life of Madam de Beaumont, a French Lady. This time, the title names a female as the focus of the plot, yet, curiously, Madam de Beaumont's story is told in the first four chapters and she recedes into the background while her daughter (and, briefly, her husband) becomes the protagonist. In a doubling device, Aubin produces two versions of the heroine. The first version removes herself or is removed from the world; the second version is the exemplar of the unprotected female at large in the world. Madam de Beaumont (hereinafter referred to as Belinda I) is married and forcibly separated from her husband; the following fourteen years she spends either living in a cave or imprisoned in a tower. Her daughter (hereinafter referred to as Belinda II) grows up in the cave, marries the first man other than their servant that she sees and spends the remainder of the narrative fending off the amorous advances of her husband's cousin, her own cousin in disguise, and the leader of a band of robbers. Both Belindas are reunited with their husbands at the end of the novel.

Aubin warns in the preface to Madam de Beaumont, "England is rich in vice. . . he that would keep his integrity must dwell in a cell"

(vii). True to the warning, the novel offers an even bleaker picture of women's options than did Count de Vinevil: the good female characters can bury themselves, figuratively or literally, spend their lives fending off predatory men, or pine away and die for unrequited love. Again, the insistent motifs of burial, disguise, and imprisonment resonate through the novel. In an innovative move, Aubin has both of her female characters endure imprisonment and threats of physical abuse while they are pregnant. Traditional reverence for motherhood and respect for the pregnant woman render these scenes doubly shocking.

Madam de Beaumont, Belinda I, exemplifies the buried life. Her mother, a Protestant married to a Catholic, had her daughter secretly baptized a Protestant. Orphaned at twelve, Belinda I had been "buried" in a convent by her guardians despite their promises to her late father never to force her against her inclinations. Here the threat of Catholicism seems to be more psychological than religious: the attempts to control Belinda's mind and her body represent oppressive inscription of the female; they are remediated by her rebirth into the world when she elopes with Count de Beaumont.

Her marriage, precipitating her into the world and into womanhood, also brings on additional oppression. When Belinda I becomes pregnant, her father-in-law begins to pressure her to become Catholic so that her child can be properly baptized. In fleeing the insistent demands of her father-in-law she is shipwrecked. The sailors transfer her furniture, clothing, and jewels into a cave where she decides to remain when she hears that the uncle she was on the way to seek refuge with has been declared a traitor. Fearing her father-in-law in France and political

repercussions in England, Belinda I voluntarily accepts a buried life in the cave.

Before accepting isolation for the rest of her life, however, Belinda I decides to go to France to try to locate her husband. Like the women in Count de Vinevil, she realizes that she must conceal her sex when she goes out into the world. Disguised as a man, she returns to the home of her husband, where she learns that he believes her to be dead. Here, the pretended death, rather than concealing her from an oppressor, prevents her husband from seeking her. The disguise, too, works against her. Suspected as a spy, she is arrested, and when the magistrate recognizes her, he sends her to her nemesis, her father-in-law. Believing her responsible for the disaffection of his son, the father-in-law imprisons Belinda I in the tower of a castle by the sea. For two years she languishes there until Providence sends her a priest who disguises her as a monk so she can escape. This time, the disguise works. To avoid punishment, the jailor's wife reports that Belinda I has died of a plague and thus unwittingly protects her from pursuit. Again, the device of the feigned death suggests that the way for women to escape oppression is to die. When Belinda I returns to the cave, her child and servant greet her as if she has risen from the dead. Her resurrection is brief, however, for she elects to remain in the buried life of the cave until Providence restores her husband to her. The reversal of the burial theme emphasizes the inadequacy of woman's position in the world to which burial is preferable.

Belinda I remains literally buried, making her home underground with her daughter and servant. The two women live in relative luxury,

but completely shut off from the world. As long as they avoid contacts outside the cave they are safe, and for fourteen years the mother and daughter have only each other for company.

The serene and Edenic life of the cave, however, is too tame for Belinda II. Never having experienced the oppression that made her mother prefer burial to life, Belinda II is seduced by her first introduction to life in society. "What a ravishing thing is Society," she cries, unaware of her double entendre. Awakening to the enticements of life outside the cave, she desires to enter the world; she fails to heed her mother's admonition that the world is full of perils and that marriage brings cares, not security. Rejecting life in the cave, she comes to discover that voluntary burial may be preferable to involuntary imprisonment.

The mother is "reborn" in the daughter, but not to a life any more free from oppression, for the daughter must strive as valiantly as the mother to retain her virtue and to remain in control of her own body. The mother's tactic for survival is to bury herself; the daughter must rely on men to set her free from her captors. Belinda I is never described, but Belinda II is said to be "fair as Diana" (13). Belinda II is rightly compared to Diana, for after she leaves the womb-like security of the cave she is forced to wander with two other women in wild and desolate places and to stab a wild kid with her knife and eat its raw flesh and drink its blood in order to survive. She also shares with Diana the quality of chastity; though Aubin marries her off at fourteen, ten days after they marry the already-pregnant Belinda is separated from her husband. From that time on, she must defend her

honor in one encounter after another, revealing the range of treatment women can expect from men in eighteenth-century society: at the lower end of the spectrum is the lust-maddened Glandore; at the upper end and more honorable, but still a threat, is Mr. Hide.

Just as Aubin had demonstrated that Ardelisa's marriage to the Count de Longueville guaranteed no safety, so does she show here that Belinda II's husband affords her no protection. Like the incompetent fathers in Count de Vinevil, Lluelling is unable to protect his wife; he entrusts her to the care of his nephew, whom he has treated like a son. But Glandore has been corrupted by the city "where he, like most Gentlemen of this Age, had forgot the noble Principles, and vertuous Precepts, he brought to Town with him, and acquir'd all the fashionable Vices that give a Man the Title of a fine Gentleman" (56).

Completely insulated from the cynical behavior of the haute monde, Belinda II is innocent and virtuous. But it must be noted that her innocence is her greatest handicap, for, ironically, Glandore easily "charm[s] her Vertue asleep" (58) and she trusts him as a bother. His response is to draw a gun on her and demand her submission. Her only defenses, prayers and tears, are ineffective. He has his servant bind and gag her and place her in a coach. Clearly, he will have his way with her when he gets her alone.

The pell-mell pace of the plot tantalizes the reader with the hope that Providence will intervene, but the hope is short-lived. A band of robbers sets upon the coach and kills Glandore, momentarily rescuing Belinda, but now she finds herself in the power of a number of ruthless men rather than the one. She is rescued almost immediately, however, by

a band of honest Welch rustics who take her to their landlord's house for refuge. Relieved at first, she suddenly perceives that her host, though far more refined and honorable than Glandore, means to detain her in order to win her love. She is confined in a velvet prison this time-- but nevertheless a prison.

Aubin juxtaposes these two episodes to make a point: Belinda is clearly prey in both cases. In the hands of Glandore, a lawless and unscrupulous man, she is powerless. He knows she is pregnant, for example, but rather than respecting the sanctity of motherhood, he recognizes its value as a contraceptive, for he cannot impregnate her if she is already pregnant. In contrast, Mr. Hide's response is that he would rather die than see her in the arms of his happy rival. Learning that she is married and pregnant, he faints and goes into a decline. Thus in a relationship with an honorable man, Belinda II's power is lethal, though she chooses not to exercise it. Yet despite possessing the power of life and death over Mr. Hide, she cannot save herself. Upon leaving his house to make her way home, Belinda II is set upon by brigands and once again made prisoner. Though she persuades two caretaker women to flee with her, they end up lost and starving in a wilderness and only a providential rescue by her husband can save her.

At the end, both Belindas are restored to their husbands. Count de Beaumont is now a marquis since the death of his father. During the past fourteen years apart from his wife, his experiences have paralleled those of his wife in a remarkable fashion. For example, while fighting as a mercenary for the Swedish king, he had been captured by the Muscovites. His captor enlists his daughter, Zara, "as fair as Venus"

(77), to ensnare the Marquis to enter the czar's service, but, the narrator points out, in so doing, she "unfortunately lost herself" (78). When the Marquis tells her that the ghost of his wife, who had died in a shipwreck, prevents him from loving her, she goes into a decline just as Mr. Hide had done when he learned that Belinda II was married. But unlike Mr. Hide, who recovers instantly when Belinda II urges him to marry her step-sister, Zara, refusing to live as a rejected woman, takes poison and dies. Her angry brothers imprison the Marquis in a tower in the mountains just as his wife had been placed in a tower by the sea. But she had languished there for two years before a priest could effect her escape. In contrast, the males can take action: the Marquis and another prisoner kill their jailer and escape after four months. Living by his wits, the Marquis manages to make his way back to his home.

But not all of his experiences are like those of his wife. She has no news of his whereabouts; the near disasters of her one trip to find him make her resolve to bury herself until he comes to find her. He is not so patient or so passive. Again he hears of his wife's death; this time, her jailer tells him she died of spotted fever. For two years he mourns, but having been separated from his wife for nine years, he complies with his friends' advice to marry a young widow of great family and fortune with a young daughter. Again, however, he is haunted by the ghost of Belinda I; his new wife perceives his unease, goes into a two-year decline and dies, leaving him with a fourteen-year-old step-daughter. He is literally a lady-killer.

Just as the experiences of the wife are different from those of her

husband, so what the daughter undergoes is unlike what happens to her father: both are imprisoned; he engineers his own escape but she must be rescued. Both are besieged by wooers: he refuses and his first would-be lover takes her own life; the second one dies a lingering death from her grief; but when Belinda II refuses, her would-be lover takes her body forcibly and would violate it if attackers did not kill him; another time, her wooer sickens, but revives astonishingly rapidly when presented with another beautiful girl.

When the Marquis is reunited with Belinda I, she is understandably perturbed about his showing up with a fourteen-year-old daughter. "What fair Virgin is that, my Lord? Have you more Daughters? and has some other Woman slept in your dear Arms?" is her plaintive reproach. He tells her that he has been married but "the Lady was so happy as to die before I was bless'd with the knowledge of your Safety". His euphemism points up the significance of the theme of burial and rebirth. Thinking his wife dead, he had remarried. The second wife, luckily, was buried before the first wife was "reborn." The Marquis has apparently felt no need to defend his actions or to explain that he thought himself a widower when he married. Instead, he tells her that this child is as dear to him as his own daughter whom, of course, he has never seen, and he presents Isabella to Belinda I as the "greatest Blessing Heaven can send you, next my Life, and Belinda's Safety" (104). Again permitting the woman no words, the narrator does not report her answer, if she has one.

The second Belinda, in contrast, is more assertive. When Mr. Lluelling sees her safe after her ordeal, his first words are:

Alas! my Belinda, may I hope that I shall sleep again within those arms? Has no vile Ravisher usurped my Right, and forced you to his hated Bed? Has not that lovely Body been polluted with his curs'd embraces? though I believe your Mind still pure, and that your Soul loath'd and abhor'd the damning Thought; yet forgive me, if I tremble at the dreadful Idea of so curs'd an Act, and long to know the Truth. (128)

He has not the visual evidence of adultery that Belinda I had, but he has still concluded that violation has taken place, and the tone of his speech is far more vehement than that of Belinda I to her husband (above).

Unlike her father, who felt no need to explain himself, Belinda II answers indignantly:

Are you my Husband? Do you know me? and can you believe me capable of so vile, so base a Crime, as yielding up my Honour to a Ravisher? No; I would have preferr'd the cruellest death to Infamy; or if by Force compell'd wou'd ne'er have let the impious Villain live for to repeat his Crime; or I would have urged him to destroy me, pursued him with Reproaches, till with my Blood he should have bought my Peace and wash'd away my Stain: believe me, I am as innocent as when you took me first a Virgin to your Bed. Your Suspitions are unkind. (128)

Her disdain cannot be contained but perhaps she is startled by her own temerity, for afterwards, she faints in her husband's arms, a metaphorical death followed by a rebirth into the submissive mold. Having struggled so fiercely to uphold the patriarchal ideology, she is indignant enough to rebuke him but she immediately forgives him when he apologizes and "seal[s] his Peace upon her Lips and Hands" (128) with kisses in time-honored tradition. Having experienced life without a protector, she is not willing to alienate him permanently.

Belinda II seems to have gained some ability to act and to make decisions during her travels, for she forgives Mr. Hide for his detaining her and offers him her father's step-daughter in marriage. She also persuades her husband to spare the "noble" brigand who had held her in captivity and to help him start his life anew in Spain (suggesting without emphasizing the point that men can be reborn too.) Belinda II is a stronger version of the self-sufficient woman than her mother was, yet she is reabsorbed into the domestic role of wife, silent and ostensibly happy at the end.

Once again, the narrator lets the characters recede into the distance at the end of the novel. Domestic felicity is celebrated: the Marquis and his wife are restored to each other; Belinda II produces a son for her husband; and Isabella marries Mr. Hide. The didactic narrator closes with this remark:

Such histories as these ought to be published in this age
above all others, and if we would be like the worthy persons
whose story we have here read, happy and bless'd with all

human felicity; let us imitate their virtues, since that is the only way to make us dear to God and Man (143)

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF THE LADY LUCY (1726)

Five years after the first two novels were published, Aubin wrote The Life and Adventures of the Lady Lucy. It differs from her earlier novels in several ways: the traveling is reduced, letters are used to expedite the plot and to elaborate motive, the female characters are multiplied as Aubin explores female possibilities, the female characters are made more aggressive, and truly bad female characters are introduced. Aubin apparently had some qualms about offending her audience, for she wrote in the preface:

I fear my own Sex will now be displeas'd with me, for Henrietta's Story; but I was oblig'd to follow Truth, and I hope that one ill Woman, amongst a great many others of singular Virtue, will be no injury to the good Opinion which I would fain persuade all my Sex to deserve, and Mankind to have of us, who are the sole Authors of our being wicked, whenever we are so. (ix-x)

The preface, of course, underlines once again her moral intention and emphasizes the verisimilitude of her plot. She is also careful to point out, however, that the wicked will suffer, however highly placed they may be or however well hidden their crimes are.

Thus in this novel, Aubin experiments with the interplay between characters: instead of having good female characters who travel different routes to happiness, she splits the protagonist into three characters: Lady Lucy, the pure and good female, suffers mentally and physically for eighteen years; Henrietta is governed by passion and transgresses more than once, and for eighteen years she lives apparently comfortably, but on her deathbed she shows contrition and confesses her sins. Gertrude, like Lucy, a hostage of war, becomes Albertus's mistress--to be cast off when he decides to withdraw from the world in repentance for his misdeeds. In addition, two other interpolated stories explore the plight of women. A man who has been a hermit for forty years, for example, tells of his debauching of his wife's younger sister. Finally, a melancholy shepherdess tells her story of a legitimate relationship thwarted by the interference of a married woman and the sexual greed of an aristocratic man.

Like the two earlier novels, this one has a somewhat misleading title. Lady Lucy is the focus of the plot until about midway through the novel when she retires to a convent and the narrator refocuses on her husband Albertus as the angry and bitter man metamorphoses into a benevolent hermit. Also like the other plots, this one concentrates on the married life of the protagonists, but the marriage is delayed longer than in the other two novels, and there is a brief courtship for romantic interest.

The first three chapters contain the pre-marriage material. First, Aubin presents the story of the good girl, using the now-familiar motifs of disguise, imprisonment, and burial. Lucy is forcibly removed from

the sanctuary of her father's home when a German regiment attacks the castle and kills her father. The failure of the father to defend the women under his protection exposes both mother and daughter to a rapacious and unforgiving world.

The women are prisoners of Albertus. Unlike the crude and violent soldiers under his command, he is nobly born and more refined in his treatment of women. He is moved to pity by the helpless women's cries for mercy and bids them to cover their faces to disguise their sex from the soldiers, who are unused to restraining their appetites. Albertus takes the women to safety and, replacing the dead father, becomes their protector. The women are, nonetheless, his prisoners, but their imprisonment brings them temporary relief from the depredations of the world.

The story of the bad girl also makes use of disguise and imprisonment. Henrietta, though engaged to Lycidas (who is a younger brother and thus blocked from inheriting his father's estate), has surrendered to her father's insistence that she marry a wealthy old knight. Thus Aubin makes it clear that Henrietta's fall is at least partly the result of a marriage forced on her by an avaricious father. Her old husband has "buried" in his castle in the province, "immured from almost all Company . . . but what . . . his wretched self could afford her" (17). She hates him and views him as her jailer rather than her husband. This is a variation on Aubin's theme of imprisoned women, but with a difference, for this young woman is not being persecuted for political or religious reasons, nor is she being persecuted at all--her plight is the natural result of a marriage motivated by economic gain:

her husband regards her as his property and chooses not to regale others with her presence. He is maniacally jealous and furious that she has not become pregnant.

When Lycidas offers to risk everything in order to free her from that "Slavery to which her Father's Avarice, and her own Imprudence had subjected her" (19), Henrietta struggles over whether to follow love or honor; love wins. She agrees to meet Lycidas secretly; soon her virtuous resistance collapses under his amorous urgings, and she becomes pregnant. Her husband is more demanding and possessive than ever; it requires little pressure to persuade Henrietta to break out of prison. Disguised as a man, she begins the journey to her lover. Unlike Aubin's other women, however, Henrietta does not disguise herself for the purpose of protecting herself because she has been unwillingly forced into the world; she disguises herself for the purpose of fulfilling desire (and, incidentally, for breaking her marriage vows). In this case, the disguise has been useless; Henrietta's careless handling of a letter containing their plans has given away the elopement, and her husband captures her. Before he can return her to her "prison," however, robbers attack and kill him, taking Henrietta a prisoner in earnest this time. Suspecting her gender, this jailor gives the money they have taken to his men and keeps "this delicate choice Morsel" for himself (47). The stress of her predicament brings on premature labor and Henrietta loses Lycidas's child. After an incredibly short recuperative period, she escapes, once again disguised as a man.

The second interpolated story is told by a wounded old man who tells of his illicit desire for his wife's younger sister, Emilia. His

lust had been so strong that he had murdered the young man whose suit the young woman had appeared to be inclined to grant.

Having broken the seventh commandment, the husband has less difficulty transgressing again; he forces Emilia to submit to him and she becomes pregnant. Not only is she a prisoner--a dependent in his home and dependent on protection from a man who wishes to use her for his pleasure, but she is imprisoned in her body; eventually she will be incapable of concealing the evidence of her pregnancy.

The husband, driven by guilt over his adultery, his fear of discovery, and the advanced state of her pregnancy, poisons Emilia. Incredibly, his role in her death goes undetected, but his conscience is awakened and, when his wife dies inexplicably a few months later, he renounces his estate and becomes a hermit. As penance for his lust and the two murders, he "buries" himself, living as a recluse for the next forty years.

The functions of this interpolated story are clear; it is meant to serve as an object lesson to Lycidas, who is governed by passion in his relationship with Henrietta; it also prefigures Albertus's later contrition and repentance; but a third, and less obvious, use of the story is to show how defenseless a young woman is, even in the protection of her home, if the man charged with her care is unworthy or unwise. Emilia's story also prefigures Lucy's: her husband, despite his affection for her, will accept circumstantial evidence that she is unfaithful and attempt to murder his pregnant wife.

The narrator remarks on the story's effects on the old lady and her daughter and especially on Lycidas: he resolves that if he sees

Henrietta again, he will put her into a convent and he will join a religious order, "burying" both of them in a penance that parallels that of the hermit. The effects on mother and daughter are not evident, for when Albertus arrives a few days later to say that he has resigned his post and wants to marry Lucy and take her and her mother to Germany, they acquiesce.

At this point, Aubin allows the plots of virtuous Lucy and fallen Henrietta to converge. Albertus finds the disguised Henrietta in the woods and brings her home. Lycidas, who happens to be Lucy's cousin, is reunited with Henrietta. In a few days Albertus and Lucy marry. The narrator ominously notes that they make "in all appearances" a happy couple (49). At the same time, Lycidas consults the priest about his love for Henrietta. The priest tells them that they can marry after a year's penance. Both couples make their home at Albertus's estate in Heidelberg. The narrator condenses the next three years: Albertus dotes on Lucy; she produces two daughters. Lycidas marries Henrietta after the period of penance has passed and they all live together.

This passage in the text has all the appearances of a resolution, but it is a false one, for Aubin interjects an unattached male into the plot to upset the balance achieved by the two marriages. Albertus's cousin comes for a visit and immediately falls in love with Lady Lucy. In her innocence, she is unaware of his interest in her. Henrietta, on the other hand, does notice and is envious, for she has fallen in love with cousin Frederick. Albertus has noticed, too, but, although Lucy pleads with him to explain the alteration in his treatment of her, he never expresses his feelings to her.

Although Henrietta is now married to Lycidas, the man she loves, Aubin's plot demonstrates that once a woman has given in to temptation, her resistance to the next temptation is weakened. When Frederick asks Henrietta to smuggle a note to her best friend, Lucy, her "Woman's Curiosity" impels her to read the letter. The narrator notes that "when the Passion of unlawful Love has once taken Possession of a Heart, no Promises can bind, and Religion it self is forgotten" (55). Her first response to the letter is a reactive jealousy, but, upon reflection, her "woman's wit" which, the narrator comments, is "very happy" at invention, provides her with a proactive plan. She can enjoy the man she loves and throw the blame for the deed on another; all she has to do is "personate" the Lady Lucy's body and counterfeit her hand. Thus Aubin allows Henrietta to become an alter ego for Lady Lucy; forbidden thoughts and actions can be explored yet the protagonist remains unblemished.

It must be noted here that as before, Henrietta uses disguise to fulfill her own desire. The darker alter ego is capable of manipulating events to her own purposes. The impersonation is successful; for several months Frederick believes that the woman he meets secretly is Lucy. Henrietta is satisfied and poor innocent Lucy is completely unsuspecting. Soon both Henrietta and Lucy are pregnant.

Just as the unstable triangle of Henrietta, Lycidas and ancient husband had been truncated by a misplaced letter, so is the triad of Frederick, Albertus, and Henrietta masquerading as Lucy exploded when Henrietta carelessly misplaces a letter in which Frederick gloats over "Lucy's" child. This time, however, the disguise is not penetrated;

although Albertus and Lucy have been happily married for three years and she has given him two daughters, on the basis of one letter whose authenticity he makes no effort to establish, Albertus automatically assumes the guilt of his wife. His judgment is clouded by his acceptance of the male-perpetuated myth that woman is innately inclined to be unfaithful.

The consequence of this masquerade for Henrietta is that she sees her lover murdered but she is imprisoned in silence, for, if she speaks, she acknowledges her guilt. She is consumed by remorse, but she is unable to express it overtly. The narrator imagines the state of her mind:

. . . full of the most dismal Thoughts and bitterest Remorse of Conscience that ever Woman went to Bed withal. She had now received the just Reward such vile horrid Actions merit: And now she would, doubtless have given Worlds, had she been Mistress of them, for one Moment's Peace of Mind, (63)

and then Aubin addresses the reader directly to make sure that the relevance of Henrietta's story is not missed:

O if the vitious would but reflect one short Hour on the State of their own Souls how much would they prefer that heavenly Peace of Mind which the virtuous enjoy, before all the lawless Pleasures of this Life. I beg you would all reflect, who shall read this melancholy History, on the

Transactions of this dreadful Night. An innocent Lady and her unborn Infant ruined; a brave young Gentleman, who was dear to his Prince and Family, kill'd, and what is worse, without any time for Repentance, snatched in a Moment, and sent unprepared to appear before the dreadful Tribunal, from whence none can pass to eternal Happiness without being pure and holy: And the truly wretched Henrietta dar'd not right her murder'd Lover on the Murderer, for fear all her vile Actions should be discover'd. (63)

The voice of the future preacher can be detected here. Aubin emphasizes this event as a personal history and engages the reader to make a personal application of the moral. The unjust cannot expect or demand justice of others, she implies, but the reader is reminded that women are condemned to an even more profound silence in that they cannot speak out against the patriarchy that oppresses them. Only by speaking directly to the public, an act forbidden to respectable females, in her persona of narrator could the female writer attempt to influence readers to effect changes in the spheres of society and personal morality.

But we should notice that for a part of her story, Henrietta has been the author of a plot that manages the men in her life rather than subject herself to a male plot. Aubin is ambiguous, too, about punishing Henrietta for stepping out of the proper "female" role: aside from the remorse, the only noticeable result of her misdeeds is that she is delivered of a dead child (it is the second time that she becomes the

literal tomb of her child conceived by a man not her husband) and keeps to her bed until the furor attendant upon the discovery of Frederick's corpse dies down. She is "reburied" and does not reenter the plot for eighteen years when she falls ill and confesses her transgressions; in the interim, however, she has remained married to Lycidas and produced a "vertuous and accomplished" son who marries Lucy's daughter (124).

Henrietta represents the author's vision of the woman who would be free—free to break out of her prison and to pursue her own desires. Aubin is not radical enough to praise her actions, but we cannot fail to notice that Lucy suffers much longer and harder than Henrietta does.

The good woman, in fact, is condemned to unjust death and to prolonged burial. Her husband removes her from the security of home by feigning a religious pilgrimage on which he takes her. He has concocted a plot in which brigands seize her, gag and blindfold her, and then he accuses her of infidelity. Sightless and speechless, she can only listen to his vituperation. Then he removes the bonds; she attempts to vindicate her innocence, the narrator says, in terms that would move the most obdurate, but he is untouched. She is dumbfounded when he shows her the letters written in her own hand: he attributes her silence to guilt and remains deaf to her protestations of innocence. He stabs her in three places, shoots in her face, removes her gown and petticoat and leaves her for dead (66-8).

Remarkably, Lucy lives; her apparent death, however, protects her from further assault from her enraged husband. Once again, Aubin makes the point that only a dead woman cannot be harmed by man. Lucy is given refuge in a convent where she delivers a son and remains quietly

incognito for eighteen years. Her mother and daughters believe her dead, as does Albertus.

As far as the narrative structure is concerned too, Lucy is dead. Albertus becomes the focus of the plot for the remainder of the book. History repeats itself in his story; he becomes a soldier again and once again a young woman begs his protection from the rampaging soldiers. He takes her under his protection and Gertrude becomes another alter ego for Lucy. She succumbs to his will; the narrator ironically notes that he has vowed never to marry again but has made no vows against keeping a mistress. She remains with him and, like Lucy, gives him three children. Unlike Lucy, she is in a position of dependence with no rights of legitimacy.

Gertrude also differs from Lucy in that she does commit an infidelity. As a camp follower, she is constantly exposed to men and Albertus's jealousy is eventually aroused. She begs Albertus to marry her and "legitimate" their children, but he does not comply. Then he is wounded and taken prisoner. In his absence, Gertrude takes on another protector, a necessity for a woman in her position. When Albertus returns, he rejects her and demands that she give up his children. His conscience has, however, awakened during his convalescence, and he tells her that he regrets having ruined her and that he will provide for her. Naturally he will not marry her after "the false steps [she has] made in [his] Absence" (79), but at the end of the novel Lucy will accept him back as her husband without mentioning the false steps he has made in her absence.

Albertus tells Gertrude that he plans to withdraw from the world

and advises her to do likewise. He warns her that age and sickness will be her enemies and she will not be able to attract male protectors as time goes on. Trained to submit to the demands of patriarchy, she "yield[s] to go wherever he would lead her" (81). He leads her to the estate of a wealthy couple where he introduces her as his niece. He claims to be a widower with three children; when he leaves, taking the children, Gertrude must conceal her grief at having her children taken from her in order to maintain the fiction that he has created. She is inscribed in his plot, an unwilling actress imprisoned in silence, a dependent on the kindness of strangers. This version of Lucy learns that she has no rights as woman or as mother; she is cast off and abandoned. Aubin mentions almost as an afterthought that Albertus learns years later that Gertrude had died of a fever.

The female plight is seen from yet another angle in the story of the wife who takes Gertrude in. Greatly indulged in her youth, she is made mistress of her self and of her fortune. Innocent and inexperienced, she falls victim to a man who wants access to her money. He woos her secretly and persuades her to elope with him. Her father is absent on army business; she collects the money from her banker and leaves.

Gradually, she realizes that the young man intends to ruin her and to make off with her money. When she comes to awareness, however, she is capable of acting. She is his prisoner in a foreign country and he has control of her money; he tells her that she must pass for either his wife or his mistress. Refusing to act in his plot, she tells him she will die rather than submit and asks for her money. He laughs aloud and

turns his back on her. Though he refuses to hear her words, she finds another ear. She goes to the bishop, who reprimands her, but sends her and her story on to the governor, who has the young man arrested and her money returned to her. The governor's nephew takes a fancy to her and they marry.

This story, of course, affirms patriarchal ideology. The woman who tries to move through the world without male guidance inevitably runs aground and has to be rescued by father figures. Yet Aubin gives the story an ironic twist at the end: Albertus and Gertrude first meet the noble couple when they are drawn by her shrieks to a swordfight. Four masked ruffians have her wounded husband with his back to a tree. Aubin once again subverts the prevailing notion that men are naturally the protectors of women. In this case, the husband is incapable of protecting her from the perils of the world and the providential appearance of an unknown defender is all that can save her.

The final exploration of the female predicament in The Adventures of Lady Lucy comes in the story told by a young woman posing as a shepherdess. Her melancholy mien and her predilection for solitude have attracted the notice of Albertus, now expiating his past sins by devoting his life to others. But, although she seems to venerate his age and simple habit, she is reluctant to disclose her family history. The inescapable conclusion to be drawn from her behavior is that a man is at the root of her problem: if she has been betrayed by a villain, Albertus offers to help her enter a convent where she will be less exposed; if she has left her family because of "the idle passion Love," he will help her reunite with her parents (102).

Arminda claims to have left the world by a "fatal Necessity" (102). Her vanity and wilfullness had caused her to consent to a secret marriage to Don Alonzo. A public marriage has the effect of staking out the territorial claims of the male, but a secret one leaves the female available in the eyes of the world. Despite her plea of pre-engagement, Arminda is beseiged by a wealthy lord, Constantin, who will not accept her refusal. Unaware of her marriage, her father, because of his political position, does not protect her. Having consented to a secret marriage, Arminda finds herself in a position where she cannot defend herself with the truth; thus, both her father's career at court and her reputation are jeopardized. Further, she is the victim of the impatient suitor's plot: he discovers that she is married and blackmails her to submit to him in exchange for his silence. His words attest to the strength of male lust: "I cannot live without possessing you," he tells her, "and if I cannot do it, he shall weep Blood for my Revenge" (107).

Unlike other Aubin women beseiged by men, Arminda resists physically and is able to thwart his success, but, though she is able to act, she is unable to speak for fear of making public her misfortune. She reasons that if she discloses what happened, she will endanger both husband and father; also, "a Woman's Reputation always suffers by such Discourse, tho she be entirely virtuous and innocent" (108). She decides to remain silent and to withdraw from court; like the others, she must accept being buried alive. She retires to the country and awaits the return of Alonzo, but all she receives is passionate letters from him.

Undaunted by her refusal, however, her importunate lover follows

her secretly and again invades her bedroom. This time, she responds more violently; she seizes his sword and kills him. Again, she conceals the truth, but Constantine's servant makes the story public. At the same time, Alonzo, returning from the wars, goes to his mistress instead of his wife. His mistress attempts to discredit Arminda by telling Alonzo that his wife has been unfaithful.

When Arminda's husband comes to see her, the sight of his rage-filled face paralyzes her; she swoons at his feet, unable to say more than "my dear Lord, I am innocent" (115). When she comes to, he has departed, having left money to place her in a convent. Fearing that the convent cannot protect her from the angry elector, Arminda chooses to go into exile with her father. For two years she sends letters to her husband, but they have no power to counteract the words of the jealous mistress or the revengeful elector.

Aubin clearly intends Arminda's story to parallel that of Lucy. Both women are instantly relieved to have their virtue cleared and their beloved husbands restored to them. Both appear to be oblivious to the wrongs done them, though Aubin's language is perhaps ambiguous in Lucy's case: "she seemed to fly to meet his wishes, so much she had forgotten and laid aside all resentments of his past cruel treatment of her" (128). A woman who has to choose between being immured in a convent for the rest of her life and being a respectably married woman in eighteenth-century society would have good reason to overlook past indignities to accept the latter.

Yet, although it was customary to admire and praise erring males rather than to rebuke them, Aubin does punish transgressing males by

subjecting them to experiences which cause remorse and repentance strong enough to force the men to withdraw from the world. The criticism of patriarchy is very timid on the surface, however. It is only when the subtext is recognized that the repeated references to female disguise, imprisonment, burial, and pretended death draw attention to the injustices that patriarchy foists on women.

As always in Aubin's work, the voices of the characters recede and the voice of the narrator takes over at the end. After having been separated for eighteen years, Lucy and Albertus are reunited; Arminda and Alonzo, their marriage public now, have gone their way. Henrietta's widower (Lucy's cousin Lycidas), is extremely glad of Lady Lucy's return to life and the world, the narrator reports, presumably because his wife had been responsible for Lucy's disappearance. Lucy's daughters have been "nobly disposed of" (124), one marrying Henrietta's son and the other a wealthy noble. Albertus' three sons by Gertrude, however, have not fared so well: one has died of smallpox; another has become a Jesuit priest; the third has joined the army. The ending imposed by the narrator attempts to smooth out the contradictions that have arisen in the work, but this narrative strategy fails to divert attention from Aubin's uneasiness with the traditional assumption that marriage equals happiness ever after for women.

When we look at these novels, they do not at first appear different from male writing--at least not on the level of the sentence. But when we examine content, we will begin to note "the insistence of a certain thematic structuration" (Miller 341) that does reveal difference. If

the text is a reflection of reality, it reflects women as powerless--as written by the culture and controlled by it. The most compelling evidence of their difference is that these plots invariably depict female life as surrounded by dangers; passive and inexperienced, the female protagonist lacks the physical power and the mental force to preserve herself and the resulting pathos of situation commands subconscious sympathy. The tension consists in waiting to see whether the woman will survive--and almost always her survival is contingent upon outside forces, rarely her own skill or resourcefulness.

Aubin's novels are unusual novels for the early eighteenth century in that their plot line is the wedlock or domestic plot (Castle 116) (though these couples' lives are hardly lived within the domestic sphere). As is the case with most novels about marriage, the tone is darker than in the novels of courtship (Backscheider 160). This narrative pattern upholds the concept of romantic wedlock as its symbolic center--but with the stipulation that happiness has to be earned and gratification has to be deferred; the hero and heroine's goodness/virtue have to be tested. In Aubin's work the testing period lasts throughout the plot; balance is restored at the end, but it is a delicate balance. For example, after the reunion, Lucy and Albertus lived "many years most happily together," but "at last" (129, emphasis mine), Albertus dies and Lucy returns to the monastery where she spends six years in prayer and devotion until she dies and is buried with her husband. It is as if Lucy had found burial alive more congenial than life married to a man who had tried to kill her. Reduced to essentials, Lucy's life has been marked by loss and restraint: when her story

began, she lost her father and a secure home. After a few years of marriage, she lost her husband, her mother, her children and her home. For the next eighteen years, she remained in a convent raising her son, both forced to relinquish their identities to prevent detection and destruction. For a short time she regained husband, mother, and name, but lost first mother and then husband to death. It is easy to conclude that the simple life unhampered by personal relationships is less likely to result in loss. At the end Aubin returns Lucy to the convent where she remains buried until her death. And that is all Aubin can offer women: a quiet haven where one prays in solitude for salvation. Her other attempts to work out a female story are unsatisfactory as well. Henrietta is free to survive by her wits, but she is deprived of the man she loves and her child by him; her position makes it impossible for her to grieve openly for her loss. At the end of her life her conscience drives her to confess her wrongdoings in order to achieve forgiveness. Gertrude fares even worse. She lacks the protection of marriage or the convent; she loses her man and her children and is left to live and die with strangers.

The archetype of wedded relationship in these novels is based on the Platonic notion of both sexes as "half-selves" incomplete without the other (Boone 12). Thus the resolution of plot calls for a joining of male and female. Yet Aubin's treatment of the theme is subversive. By constantly deferring happiness after marriage, these novels call into question the notion that marriage is a satisfying solution to the problems the unattached woman faces; these married heroines gain no protection from the men they marry; in fact, Ardelisa's father endangers

her life by taking her to Constantinople; the circumstances of the marriages place both Belindas at risk. If Belinda I had remained in the convent, she would not have become prey to the father-in-law; if Belinda II had remained in the cave with her mother, she could not have become the object of desire for Glandore or for Mr. Hide, her own cousin. Finally, had Lucy not married, she would not have put herself in the power of the man who wounded her and left her for dead. In fact, in focusing on forgiveness of the husband and praising the wife's stoic endurance, the plot ignores the fact that the husband's unjustified jealousy instigated the disruption to begin with.

The insistent repetition of situations that require women to conceal their gender and incidents in which men imprison women or women are confined by their gender finally subverts the claims of patriarchy that men are the natural protectors of women. Constantly recurring to burial and rebirth motifs, Aubin implies that death or burial is preferable to an imperfectly conceived and administered world that empowers men who often think or act with a contradictory weakness that imperils the women placed under their control. Also, the "happy" ending that restores woman to her "place" in society as wife is shown not to be a reward, but actually requires the woman to withdraw from reality in order to cope with the fact that she has no real options unless attached to a man. Therefore, the messages these novels send are contradictory: at a time when changing behavior had raised the question of whether young women should leave the paternal home and go off on their own, (after 1740, evangelism encouraged young women to exercise their influence beyond the boundaries of their homes [Poovey 8]), Aubin's

novels suggest strongly that the one who does so is subject to powerful inimical forces she will have no power to combat. Thus the lure of distance and the exotic is cancelled by the inevitable perils that accompany them. Some of the men in Aubin's novels undergo perils and sometimes must do penance for their misdeeds, but they emerge from solitude into power. Unlike the male protagonists who surmount all obstacles in their paths until they have achieved success and carved out their niches in life, all the females can do is rebound from each peril they survive until they are restored to husband and/or father. They are not rewarded financially nor is their status in the world improved: for Aubin's heroines, it is not marriage that is the reward but the cessation of trouble and restoration to the married state.

Women are at risk in the world wherever they are identified as women, even when they are under the protection of men. The implicit message in the novels is that only when women are disguised as men or when they are thought to be dead (or are in actuality dead), can they be safe. Even God's surrogates, priests and members of religious orders, are unable to protect women. A woman can expect her life to be fraught with peril and she can anticipate that she will face trials and sufferings. If a woman marries, she must not expect immediate happiness, but, like the Christian, must have faith and hope that the future brings salvation and joy.

When Aubin was forced by the death of her husband to seek her own livelihood, the status of fiction was low. Women had learned from the tarnished reputations of Behn, Manley, and Haywood that a display of certain sorts of self was ruinous; simultaneously, however, they learned

that writing for publication was one of the few options for women desiring to produce an income. In order to resolve the conflict, Aubin devised a strategy which legitimized women's writing in a form that had great popular appeal, thus changing the persona of the lady novelist (Richetti, 229). Additionally, she infused fiction with a new strength that came from its assumption of the moralist's authority. Bound on the one hand by restrained subject matter and on the other by austere moral tone, Aubin and others like her raised the respectability of both the female writer and the novel at the same time that they elevated female fiction to a central position in the culture.

Later, however, as literary tastes changed and as the avid reading public consumed old plots and demanded new ideas, both her writings and her name fell into obscurity. Now only English scholars read her works--and only occasionally are novelists before Richardson acknowledged as influences on the development of the novel. Penelope Aubin is usually dismissed as a writer of improbable didactic fictions. But she was instrumental in giving fiction new direction in the early eighteenth century. Herself imitative, she was also imitated by writers who followed. For example, as Spender notes, Aubin paved the way for Richardson to create his 'new species of writing' that would 'promote the cause of religion and virtue' (88). In fact, Beasley argues that Aubin and Davys were popular long before Richardson and

male novelists, even innovative geniuses like Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, felt obliged to write with at least some resemblances to the work of their female

counterparts, who had already won the attention of the reading audience by appealing insistently to its deepest and most abiding preoccupations. (220)

Penelope Aubin's novels, while overtly affirming establishment values, reveal unease with women's condition in the early eighteenth century. The insistent motifs of burial and pretended death, the repeated incidents in which women must dress as men in order to travel through the world, the basic premise that women can hope for only divine intervention to save them are crude yet intelligible signs of repressed criticisms of society. Other female writers followed Aubin's lead in writing didactic fiction. Mary Davys, like Aubin, struggled to work within established conventions to express the female condition and found other devices to express the female experience.

MANIPULATING THE ROMANCE: MARY DAVYS'S REALISTIC FEMALES

While Aubin was bending male-dominated literary conventions of early fiction to her own ends, another female writer was also working to revise traditional modes of plotting and characterizing. Like Aubin, Davys was compelled to earn a living when the social support system intended to protect women failed her. Born in Dublin in 1674, she married Reverend Peter Davys, a college contemporary of Jonathan Swift. When her husband died in 1698, he left her no money, and Davys turned to writing to support herself. She began her literary career in the theatre, writing The Northern Heiress: Or, the Humours of York (1716), which was produced successfully at the New Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Her second play, however, was not produced. Apparently despairing of supporting herself with her pen, she opened a coffee house in Cambridge, where, isolated from the literary mainstream in London, she began her fiction-writing career (McBurney 348-50). Her novels reveal her disaffection with the patriarchy which, rather than protecting and supporting her, had forced her to rely on her own resources and suffer indigence for much of her life. Evidently the coffeehouse became her primary support; she sold her first novel for only three guineas (The Accomplished Rake 236) and she periodically applied to Swift for financial aid, which he reluctantly supplied (Spencer 11).

Davys's novels strike the modern reader as more interesting than Aubin's for a number of reasons. First, the plots are more tightly constructed, probably as a result of her experience writing for the

theatre. Second, her characters are unmarried English girls whose possibilities are not so constricted as those of the continental wives so favored by Aubin. Third, she exposes more overtly the sexual politics governing the oppression of women. Finally, Davys's characters and narrators are wittier, less stuffy and less overtly moralistic than Aubin's. Perhaps it was Davys's exposure to the literary discussions at her coffee house that gave her insight into the literary tastes of educated young men; perhaps it was her isolation from literary currents in London--whatever the case, her style is sprightly and entertaining.

Davys avoided what she saw as failings of contemporary fiction-writers. In the preface to The Accomplished Rake, she noted that "Probable Feign'd Stories" (her name for novels) were surpassed in popularity by accounts of personal lives and travels because, she argues, fiction has been abused by French writers, "who, tho upon all Occasions, and where they pretend to write True History, give themselves the utmost Liberty of feigning, are too tedious and dry in their Matter, and so impertinent in their Harangues that a Reader can hardly keep themselves awake over them." Davys decided that "the commonest Matters of Fact, truly told, would have been much more entertaining" (235). Thus her plots avoid the incredible journey, the pirates, the storms and the lustful Turks that Aubin had built her plots on. Instead, Davys writes about an ordinary exchange of letters between a man and a woman or the education and moral growth of a young man or a young woman. She emphasizes development of character rather than mere diversity of action. Therefore, by appealing insistently to her audience's interests and their preoccupations, she won the attention of the reading public.

The Reform'd Coquet, for example, was reissued in London at least seven times, once in large print; there were also three Dublin editions (McBurney 352).

Although her novels differ in style and technique from Aubin's, the underlying themes are the same. Both women came to writing as a necessary result of the loss of their husbands, their providers and protectors. Both widows, speaking from experience, demonstrate how precarious is the life of a woman left to survive on her own. The message in the novels is invariably an admonition that women must protect themselves, for they can expect men to prey on them, not protect them. In addition to warning other women of the risks inherent in their positions as females, both writers appear to be instructing women (in a kind of subversive conduct book) in strategies for survival in a world where their gender ensures their exploitation.

Current critics, particularly Armstrong, Langbauer, Miller, Perry, Poovey, Schofield, Spacks, and Todd, describe the position of women writers in the eighteenth century as an uneasy one: when they embarked upon authorship, it was an intrusion into a world dominated by men. In "masculine" systems of representation, the role of femininity had been imposed on women by the narcissistic and basically anti-feminist logic of such masculine systems. Women writers struggled to submit to these conventions, but inconsistencies in their writing reveal the extent to which such repression failed. As a result, their writings are unstable; the writers' discomfort with the culturally imposed role of femininity turns against the system that allows them to exist.

Working from within the "masculine" system of representation, an

environment early women writers necessarily inhabited, Davys subverts the system. Her subversive strategies insistently call to attention the sexual politics of the time.

Davys's personal experience had revealed to her the inadequacy of the social safety net which was supposed to preserve and protect society's "weaker" members. Popular eighteenth-century ideologies concerning women reinforced their passivity and circumvented any attempts they might have made to fend for themselves. Davys's novels, by mocking courtly romance conventions and by exposing the workings of sexual politics governing women, reject the illusions romance fosters. Davy's novels also emphasize that real human beings are nothing like characters described in courtly romance. Clara Reeve articulates this view in 1785: "The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and the times in which it was written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what has never happened nor is likely to" (4).

The dishonesty of romance is that it is really a form of wishful thinking; it depicts women as able to inspire noble action in men while simultaneously keeping men at a chaste distance. It promises women that love will bring them to their rightful position in society, protected and supported, financially and socially. The truth that romance withholds from women is that love will lead women to relinquish their independent state and to submit to an ideology that renders them powerless. In fact, to accept romance ideology is "not to know one's self as a woman" (Schofield 132). Davys's novels attempt to enlighten women whose vision has been corrupted by romance reading--to shock readers out of their complacent romantic expectations. Remembering her

own bitter experiences, Davys argues that women must not depend on the romantic notion of perfect love and happy marriage.

Although women's limited education stressed self-mastery rather than self-knowledge, women writers during the eighteenth century repeatedly repudiated the culturally-constructed idea that women were incapable of reason. As the Enlightenment promulgated the belief that reason could subdue baser impulses for the improvement of society, women began the slow process of dissociating themselves from the archetypal Eve-figure and presenting themselves as capable of subjecting feeling to reason. (For example, many female protagonists in latter-eighteenth century novels were named Sophia to emphasize their rationality and wisdom.) Davys is one of the female writers who tackles the traditional antifeminist argument that associates women with ungoverned passion and men with reason. By balancing characters drawn from the romance mode against realistic characters and by balancing romance plots against realistic plots, Davys undermines the social fiction that women are incapable of thought and action.

Davys also argues that it is possible for women to bring about changes in the oppressive moral order. Her point is that desire cannot be purged from men and since it governs their actions, order in the community must depend on the passions being regulated; she adds: "If the Reformation would once begin from our Sex, the Men would follow it in spite of their Hearts" (Accomplished 236). The fundamentally misogynistic outlook of aristocracy proposes only two roles for men to play in their dealings with women--the exploiter and the protector. Davys's works attempt, however, to introduce a third option--that of

companion and equal.

In order to repudiate the false romance view of the world, Davys insists that she is writing "fact," that is, providing a realistic picture of contemporary conditions. Her locales and her characters are always strictly English. Davys also abandons the depiction of artificial, stylized characters and dialogue. In keeping with her insistence on real situations, she makes her characters lifelike. Rather than strive for the self-consciously elevated tone of other female moralists, Davys dares to be humorous. She breaks away from the awkward and depersonalized prose that had been prevalent in the French romances and the English amatory novellas for over a century. Where other novels had jumped from episode to episode, hers unfolded in a natural progression; she avoided the stuffy or gloomy moralistic tone of other didactic writers and developed a light and entertaining narrative voice. Her style mediates between that of Defoe and Fielding; in fact, it might be said that her innovations contributed to a new fiction; the extravagances and excesses of the novel came to be replaced by a didactic yet amusing form, a novel with a plot that develops logically, illuminating character as it unfolds.

Davys's plots, different from the fantastic and improbable plots of pseudo-French romances, concern the ordinary events of women's life, especially the hazardous journey from daughterhood to wifehood. The conditions the novels portray are inimical to women: all of the rules favor the men and the women have no advantages. Women's options are limited; they must be wives if they are not daughters: in either case, the only acceptable behavior is to be submissive. Rather than offering

the consoling myths of romance, her plots stress the dreary realities that most women face.

Davys goes beyond merely portraying the oppressive conditions of life for women. She undermines the conventional male plot in order to present a critique of contemporary social structures and mores. Mocking and parodying the falsely idealized romance mode, Davys's characters come to a clear perception of how dangerous romance ideology is to women; her heroines resist the system which insistently devalues and exploits them, not only the actual social system, but the covert system disguised by the codes of romance. For example, although her female protagonists never question their role in the courtship game (that is, they accept that it is their lot to marry), they do argue for the right to refuse a suitor and they also blast the notion of contemporary men as romantic lovers (Kern 32). The reformed coquet Amoranda says, "Love is a subject every Man of mode is ashamed of. It has so long been exploded, that our modern Wits would no more be seen in Cupid's toils, than in a Church; and would as soon be persuaded to say their Prayers, as tell a Lady they love her" (Reform'd 138). Davys's female characters, knowing how men are socialized to view women, regard suitors as insincere in matters of courtship and scorn the notion that men in the real world treat women as the idealized lovers in romance do.

In Davys's novels, men are insincere: she portrays men as eager to escape the confinement of marriage. They view it only as a device to gain wealth (Callid and Froth in The Reform'd Coquet) or to slake their passions (Lord Lofty in the same) or to gain both wealth and the body they crave (Biranthus), but whenever they can achieve their ends without

it, they do (Lord Lofty agrees to a written contract and then reneges on it and John Galliard flatly refuses marriage until he can resist his awakened conscience no longer). Thus the double standard applies: men demand freedom for themselves and captivity for women.

Given a clear-sighted vision of the reality of sexual politics, it is not surprising that, unlike most female characters in early eighteenth-century novels, several of Davys's female characters also resist marriage as obdurately as the men do. Nancy Friendly, who has been drugged and raped, refuses to marry her defiler until he agrees to make her son his heir. Her eventual acceptance amounts to a sacrifice of her principle and her body for the sake of her son. Berina, too, celebrates her freedom. She writes of a sixty-five-year-old maiden lady who poisoned herself for love--and then Berina thanks the stars that inclined her to freedom (Familiar 270).

Davys makes it clear that corruption exists not only at the level of individual relationships, however. Her novels conspicuously detail the spreading decay of English culture and argue that the injustices, cruelty, and violence they depict will destroy the social fabric. Herself a member of the middle class, Davys exposes the corruption of aristocratic culture, at least insofar as it exploits women. Corruption is always shown as coming from above: so, although these novels appear superficially to limit their concerns to domestic politics, they reveal a covert concern with the larger questions of justice and morality in society.

McKeon comments that the female becomes symbolic of virtue in "progressive" narrative; the preservation of female chastity becomes a

pervasive theme in eighteenth century novels; it represents

the honor that has been alienated from, and is yet pursued by, a corrupt male aristocracy progressive ideology learns to adapt to its own uses the emotional animus against patriarchal power that has been nourished in other realms of experience, exploiting limited alliances with interests that ultimately diverge from its own. (255-56)

He cites Davys's The Accomplished Rake as an example of progressive narrative in which the corruption of aristocracy is pilloried. As he defines it, progressive ideology proposed a radical attack on the long-standing institutions of landed wealth and noble titles. Armstrong agrees with McKeon that female fiction provided a forum for discussing socioeconomic conflicts and contradictions transposed into the domestic sphere (133). Armstrong also suggests that the middle-class audience identified with plots rewarding characters who were able to emerge from powerlessness by dint of self-assertion (for example, women who were able to thwart or escape from victimization by aristocratic rakes). When a female character triumphs over the constraints of her circumstances, she argues, her success is acceptable because it is not expressed in terms that suggest that her triumph is in any way a victory over males (141). In Davys's works, however, females do not seek higher status. Instead, they aggressively attack social practices that demean women. Davys's novels insist that women must learn how to resist the illusions of romance, perceive more clearly the pitfalls that await

impulsive and ungoverned women, and begin to inculcate a system of control, first of their own desires and then the desires of men.

To sum up, Davys deliberately explodes the idealized conventions of the romance genre. She also creates female characters who are more independent than the passive, unbelievably good Aubin females; Davys's women are intelligent and capable of action, able to plot and to manipulate others within their limited spheres of influence. Some of her female characters are aggressive in sexual matters; and, like Aubin, Davys does not condemn them to sickness, madness or death at the end of the novel. In addition, Davys urges women to embark on a moral reformation of men. Further, she uses commonplace settings and plots, focusing on character to demonstrate female helplessness in the real world. Just as Aubin's heroines had only the hope of Providential salvation, Davys's plots suggest that without some "magical" intervention (beyond the resources of the woman involved) woman's only recourse may be to suffer. Finally, Davys's female characters are outspoken about the joylessness of marriage and about the dangerous power of love to entrap.

Thus Mary Davys does offer conscious criticism of the place to which women were relegated in the eighteenth-century world, but she is careful to avoid appearing too radical. Three of her works demonstrate her unease with contemporary male-dominated ideology, but in such an ambiguous fashion that her plots seem to affirm the status quo. One work, an epistolary exchange between man and woman, reveals how each struggles for independence in a relationship that patriarchal ideology dictates cannot be equal. Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a

Lady depicts Berina, who rejects the dishonest eighteenth-century romance courtship ideology that treats a woman as a goddess until she is transformed into a slave when she marries. Like the other two novels, the epistolary novel employs parodic techniques that undermine romance ideology. The second novel, The Reform'd Coquet, is dedicated to "The Ladies of Great Britain," from whom Davys seeks sympathy and support. Her stated intention is to demonstrate how "a young Lady's Vanity and Levity" are "Blots, which certainly stain the Mind." Davys hopes that women will learn not to "change their Gold for Dross," but will, when it comes time to marry, discount appearances and select husbands who can respect them rather than treat them as mere extensions of male desire. As in Familiar Letters, Davys warns the members of her sex that the values that governed their behavior during courtship will betray them after marriage. Using a romance heroine as a foil for the more realistically portrayed protagonist, Davys critiques "aristocratic" views. In the preface, Davys adds, "my Pen is at the service of the Publick, and if it can but make some impression upon the young unthinking Minds of some of my own Sex, I shall bless my Labour, and reap an unspeakable satisfaction" (x). The third, The Accomplished Rake, is addressed to the beaux of Great Britain. The dedication states a preference for men who devote themselves to "the gentle, easy study of women and dress" rather than the study of "men and letters;" their "charming nonsense" is far superior to "those profane oaths which make so great a part of the conversation of blustery Britons" (240). Although written tongue in cheek, the dedication makes the point that men would be improved if some of their more aggressive masculine traits

could be replaced by softer, more feminine ones. In a series of ironic parodies of the romance plot, again Davys emphasizes the shortcomings of romance ideology. The novel shows the moral reeducation of one of those "profane" and "blustering" males; he is not turned into a beau, but a series of punishing accidents strips away his "superior" veneer and awakens him to the pain and suffering his unthinking exploitation of women has caused. As companion pieces, The Reform'd Coquet and The Accomplished Rake apply the same analytical scheme. Demonstrating the social injustice that is an inherent feature of the libertine mindset, the two novels argue for virtue rather than genealogy as a standard as they display the dishonesty of the romance model by juxtaposing it to the realistic plot. The Reform'd Coquet argues that the female must become the embodiment of virtue; The Accomplished Rake completes the process by reforming the aristocrat so that his inner condition is made consistent with his status. These three works, then, display a number of evasive or subversive strategies employed by Davys in a critique of patriarchy. That the subtext often remains undetected is evident even in current readers.

For example, Mary Anne Schofield argues that Davys did not fulfill her early promise to rewrite the male plot; she contends that The Accomplished Rake tamely conforms to patriarchal expectations (Masking 90). But early eighteenth-century female writers had learned from the examples of Behn, Haywood, and Manley that open opposition to prevailing tastes was counterproductive. Davys learned to embed her radicalism and critiques of male-dominated society within the text so that the message becomes almost subliminal. Compelled to support herself by her pen, she

could not risk her survival on rash attacks on established traditions. Fully aware that women had been forced to learn to communicate by indirection, she used subversive strategies to bury her messages to her sex. And, as Rogers observes, "The Accomplished Rake . . . is distinctly feminist in its icy contempt for the rake, who is reduced to ridiculous defeat by all the women he attempts to prey on" (Feminism 106). A covert message the novel offers beleaguered women is that they can outwit and defeat predatory males. The other two novels focus on the awakening and moral reformation of women; the third focuses on Davys's main project--the reformation of men.

FAMILIAR LETTERS BETWIXT A GENTLEMAN AND A LADY (1725)

Familiar Letters is the most subversive of Davys's works. Though one critic has called Familiar Letters "an enormously popular imitation of The Portuguese Letters" (Kauffman 96), the similarities between Davys's novel and the anonymous but almost certainly male-authored epistolary novel are only superficial. Hers is an epistolary novel consisting of twenty-two letters between a gentleman and his female correspondent in which the female voice claims equal space with the male, whereas The Letters of a Portuguese Nun is a collection of five letters from a cloistered woman to the man she gradually realizes has abandoned her. The only voice is that of the nun; the man's responses are indirectly alluded to in her letters. Although his voice is absent, it is his physical absence that dominates the letters. The nun's letters are at first lamenting, later denouncing, and finally resigned.

In contrast, Familiar Letters is not a text of "feminine surrender" (Miller 150); indeed, in many ways it is a text of feminine self-assertion. Davys establishes a situation in which she can portray the realistic and psychologically plausible development of a relationship between a woman and a man, but unlike the amorous novella, her story insists on the establishment of esteem and respect as the basis for an attachment.

Superficially, the letters resemble other copy-book models in which the content is less important than the style and decorum with which the letters are written. But these letters are revelatory: an examination of the content reveals that each writer has a political agenda and that the letters are more than just a friendly exchange: they are really weapons in the arena of sexual politics. Although attracted to each other, the protagonists feint and maneuver, each attempting to preserve his or her liberty and individuality within the context of their relationship. Thus Familiar Letters has a running subtext in which the conflict results from the male's unconscious conditioning and the female's conscious repudiation of that cultural conditioning and her attempts to awaken him to the inconsistencies of the ideology which he has unquestioningly accepted.

An important theme in the novel is the rejection of romance language and conventions. Familiar Letters's plot traces the growth of emotional bonds between the male correspondent and his female friend. The development of the plot depends upon the female correspondent's refusal to be blinded by the illusions of romance. Despite the fact that the protagonists' names, Artander and Berina, come from romance,

the characters reject the romantic view of life and scoff at love and marriage. Berina espouses progressive city values that eventually clash with Artander's conservative, aristocratic views. Berina's letters emphasize her rejection of romance idealism. She recognizes that the "Follies of Love" (FL 267) often imperil the freedom of the individual.

At first the correspondents trade opposing political opinions and assert their advanced views and their independence by speaking slightly of love and marriage. Later, when Artander hints that marriage may not be all bad, Berina's retort is quick because she recognizes the pattern of ensnarement and she will not be caught: she writes of a dream in which she saw Artander blind; when she attempted to lead him, he blinded her too (296). She does not wish to be disarmed or disabled by his strategies; she resists his seductive language. Berina has long been aware that deceit is common to the male sex (268) and she is particularly suspicious of protestations of love, which she views as blind, deceitful, and poisonous: "Love is a thing so much against my grain, that tho' it be dressed up in a disguise of Wit, I see it thro' the Mask, and hate the base Imposture" (289). She is especially concerned after he reveals that love for her had wheedled its way past his defenses and that he has been forced to dissemble or lose her friendship (298). She maintains her control by rejecting the discourse by which courtship conventionally proceeds. Her stance demands a new way of speaking in response to a new way of feeling. Davys uses Berina's rejection of courtship discourse to display the pitfalls awaiting those who unquestioningly accept romance illusions.

Another strategy that Davys employs is her careful construction of the female character as a rational person rather than one dominated by impulse or emotion. Indeed, it is the male who appears to be motivated by unchecked passion as the plot unfolds. For example, the initial letters between the protagonists trade opposing political views. Artander is a Tory; Berina, a Whig. The more vehemently he argues for his conservative views, the more coolly and logically Berina counters his arguments until, finally, unable to subdue her views to his, Artander asks Berina to confine her letters to social chitchat. Rather than to capitulate to a woman, he invokes his patriarchal privilege and puts her back in her "place." Although she calls him "hard" for curbing her pen, Berina acquiesces to his request for the sake of their friendship. She reminds him mildly that suppressed urges find other outlets; she will become a poetess rather than a politician. Through her protagonist, Davys reminds readers that women will find a way to express their ideas; if expression of their thoughts is blocked, it will be diverted into another direction. Throughout this episode, Berina is passionless and reasonable; Artander is the one who reveals his childish insistence on having his way.

As the correspondence develops, it becomes clear that Artander, who is vacationing in the country, has been tormenting himself with jealous fantasies about how Berina spends her time in the city. He begins to complain that her letters arrive too infrequently. The content of the tenth letter reveals his real fears: he tells an anecdote of a nearby farmer who finds his wife asleep in the arms of a neighbor (288). Artander almost hopes Berina's tardy letter is the result of her

sickness rather than her having found a husband.

Berina's artful silence only increases his anxiety over what diversions have prevented her from writing him. When she does reply, she somewhat testily reminds him that they have agreed to remain single in order to avoid the boredom that is caused by satiation. Her assertion of her freedom and her desire to remain free inflames his jealousy and arouses his desire to possess her.

Artander shifts into the romance mode of discourse, filling his letters with the masculine flattery that has traditionally won women over. He knows that once he secures her consent and she is bound by the marriage vows, he can dispense with the flattery and all the troublesome posturing, but until his goal is reached, he must woo her carefully. When he writes that he cannot be content until he "possesses" her, his unconscious slip, however, reveals his true intentions; after marriage, their roles will shift and he will be the one to be beseeched, despite his promise in the next line to submit himself to her least desire. The vacillations of his language between terms of mastery and terms of slavery indicate the distance between what his letter appears to say and what it really means.

Berina, however, is not drawn by conventional wooers' ploys. She counters each move with a logical rebuttal, shifting away from romance discourse to rational, "masculine" discourse. When Artander complains that he "dies" for love and that if she were his friend she would ease his pain, Berina cuts through his emotional outburst to the real issue: she offers to prove that she is his friend by keeping him a free man, (incidentally, though she doesn't mention it, preserving her own

freedom). Certainly she is not swayed by his promise to be her slave: she could not respect a man who "unmanned" himself by relinquishing authority to a woman. It is clearly the man who is swept away by his emotions; the female's feelings are held in check by her fear of loss of her independence. Berina is not devoid of sensibility, but she refuses to be led into an oppressive system by unrestrained emotions.

Familiar Letters also emphasizes a reworking of masculine and feminine roles in courtship and marriage. Berina struggles to wean Artander from his vision of himself as a romance hero "dying" of love for a merciless woman. First she has to contend with the antifeminist bias evident in his earliest letters. In his first letters Artander has offhandedly mentioned encounters with various women. Each story, without seeming to do so, points out a "female" weakness: the young woman with the "prodigious" hoop skirt represents vanity (271); the old woman represents slovenliness and filth (275-76). Though he continues to insist that Berina is different from the rest of her sex, Artander's antifeminist stance comes repeatedly to the surface. Artander recites with relish the story of an eligible bachelor who humiliates the woman who spurned his addresses (266). The subtext reveals his conviction that a woman who is so audacious as to refuse an offer in the hopes of finding a better one deserves to be punished. Similarly, Berina's answer is revealing. She reacts sharply to Artander's story, saying that even though the woman was in the wrong, the price she had to pay for hurting a man's pride was too great. Between the lines one reads anger at the duplicity of men and sympathy for the woman who is condemned to public humiliation for asserting her desire.

Berina also protests Artander's imposition of restraints on her writing. One senses that she fears the loss of what sets her apart from many other females in Artander's eyes--the ability to converse wittily and assertively on "masculine" topics. Berina wants to reeducate Artander, or at least to point out that she is not willing to be enslaved. Romantic novels and social convention have produced an unrealistic and pernicious script for lovers to follow; she would have him cast away his memorized lines and speak openly and forthrightly what is in his heart. The political terminology of the following passage emphasizes the ideological struggle taking place in their letters:

But when once the Blind Archer with a random Shot has hit a Heart, the wounded Fool grows stupid, sighs and cries, prays, and begs for Help and Pity, but never offers to pull out the dart, which causes all his Pain: Wou'd but every body keep their Ground, and stand boldly in their own Defense, how easily might they baffle the Attempts of a Boy? But, instead of fighting for their own Liberty and Property, they tamely yield to an arbitrary Power; and, like a Dog used to a Collar, hold down their Heads to take the Yoke. (303)

Ridiculing his behavior, she urges him to leave off his childish play-acting and to approach her in a mature and thoughtful fashion because she will not willingly bow to the yoke. Her letter is an invitation to negotiate a new basis for their relationship.

To emphasize the verisimilitude of the plot, Davys presents

ordinary English people going about the mundane events of everyday life. Artander comes from a family wealthy enough to possess a rural estate; his sojourn in the country is the motivation for this epistolary novel as he conducts a friendship in letters with Berina. Her life in town is typical of her station; she plays cards, visits her acquaintances, and attends parties. The plot illustrates the adage, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," by revealing the progressive attachment of the letter-writers to each other. The focus is on psychological development as the letters gradually expose Artander's growing jealousy and Berina's efforts to bring him into a relationship where male and female interact in mutual respect.

Finally, Familiar Letters demonstrates that the woman governed by rationality distrusts patriarchy's promise that marriage will resolve all the problems that the unprotected woman faces in society. Throughout the correspondence Davys depicts Berina as asserting her independence and struggling to preserve it. As a consequence, Berina has from the beginning rejected the deceptive, seductive claims of romance discourse. When Artander realizes that each romantic sally increases Berina's resistance, he finally understands that he can subdue her only by appearing to surrender. As a last resort, he employs the ultimate weapon: he suggests that matrimony may bring happiness after all.

Having refused to play the role of a romance heroine all along, Berina is quick to force Artander to speak plainly; she writes that she thinks she perceives in his words a leaning toward marriage: "I desire, in your next, you will either make a generous Confession, or give me

some Assurance my Thoughts are ill-grounded" (287). Her demand that he declare himself disrupts the romance convention that women are to remain helpless and passive. It also suggests her horror at the notion of relinquishing her selfhood--to drink the "Bitter Cup" of marriage. She concedes that there can be happiness in marriage--but only if the marriage is based on mutual respect:

The Notion I have always had of Happiness in Marriage, is, where Love causes Obedience on one Side, and Compliance on the other, with a View to the Duty incumbent on both: If any thing can sweeten the Bitter Cup, 'tis that." (303)

But it is not easy to reconstruct one's world-view, or even to recognize the ideology to which one has unconsciously subscribed. The remaining letters prove conclusively that Berina's attempts to raise Artander's consciousness have failed. He continues to pose as the suffering lover who begs for mercy. Clearly, stronger measures are required. She fires back an exasperated letter in which again she ridicules his affectations:

I'll swear, Artander, I was never so merry in my Life, as at the reading of your last Letter: I don't believe that a Man in the World, that defies Love as you do, cou'd assume the Lover like you: Why you mimick it as naturally as if you had serv'd an Apprenticeship to its God: Methinks the very Paper whines, 'tis writ in such a beseeching Style. (306)

In strong terms Berina emphasizes the dishonesty of such a pose and urges him to be more forthright.

In his final letter, Artander chides her for belittling his real pain. He has edited his letter carefully to avoid further ridicule, but he has not been conditioned to deal with one who does not submit to the system of discourse which exploits her. Assuming that her response is designed to keep him groveling, he persists in the fictional role and still intends, apparently, to fling himself at her feet. The one comfort he has taken from her letter was in the promise of a kind reception; it has spurred him to give orders to leave the next morning. He closes by telling her that he "dies with Impatience for a Performance" (308), until when he remains her faithful adorer. Here, his language is ambiguous: does he suggest that her resistance is merely a pose? Or does he acknowledge that he is acting and playing the romantic role?

There it ends. Davys tantalizes the reader with the possibilities: will Berina prove to be just as dishonest as he and suddenly be transformed into a conventional lady of fashion or will she continue to insist that a permanent relationship cannot be founded on clichéd emotions and romantic speeches? Will Artander finally be jolted into an awareness that Berina is truly different from others of her sex in that she has rejected the pose of the romantic heroine and that the only relationship she will accept is one based upon open and forthright expression of the true state of his mind? Will he then find himself unequal to the effort of developing an honest, candid relationship with a woman? Or will he try to bully her into submission to the role

society expects her to fill?

The open ending subverts the closure of the traditional male novel even while it may appear to affirm it. Preset expectations affect interpretation: those who have failed to detect Davys's seriousness in proposing Berina as an honest, intellectually astute female character will project her capitulation to Artander and acquiescence to her "proper" role. Indeed, some feminist critics read Familiar Letters as a failed attempt at subversion: for example, Todd complains that Davys loses courage at the end of the novel and falls in line with the male model (84). On the other hand, it is possible that Davys recognized the risk of disappointing a reading audience trained to expect a "happy" or romantic ending and that the open ending may have been devised as a kind of concession for the sake of economics. Yet its ambiguity only makes the novel more interesting. It can be argued that Davys conceals her revolutionary ideas to keep them from being unilaterally rejected, yet the concealment is only partial so that a receptive reader may see that once the female's social mask is removed, her struggle for an authentic self can be revealed. Believing, as Davys did, that women must initiate the reformation if a new regime were to emerge, she creates a character who can aggressively, yet subtly, manage a correspondence in order to enlighten a male (and, at the same time, to enlighten her readers). It is Berina who sets the goal: she wants marriage to result, but she refuses to play the traditional courtship game or to assume traditional courtship roles in order to achieve it. Artander appears to be unaware of his real feelings at first; he disguises his intentions until Berina forces him into self-awareness and a declaration but his language and

strategies are the deceptive ones typical of the enslaving patriarchy.

Aside from the question of whether she will or whether she won't, the unresolved conclusion also underlines the point that an unmarried young woman has few options: she can, if she is careful, "sweeten the Bitter Cup" (303) of marriage by insisting on respect as the basis of the relationship or she can remain unmarried and suffer the humiliations of dependence, pity, and scorn. (Female discomfort with patriarchal ideology is underlined here: Berina resists the enslavement of marriage just as vehemently as the stereotypical aristocratic male character who wishes to preserve his freedom to fulfill his desires.)

By denying the reader the satisfaction of closure, the novel also suggests that a woman is not likely to find satisfaction in the choices offered by social and legal institutions. Thus, the novel allows for covert criticism of marriage but at the same time allows readers who have bought into the patriarchal ideology believe that Berina will accept Artander when he arrives in London. The open ending makes several interpretations possible: we can read it to say that Berina prefers to remain free and suffer outside of marriage rather than in it, or, if we prefer, that Berina will achieve the reeducation of Artander, or we can read the ending as an ominous warning that marriage deprives the female of a voice (for it is Artander who has the last word: he announces his intention to arrive in London and the correspondence ends).

Thus Familiar Letters represents not only Davys's repudiation of the falsely glamorized position of woman as depicted by female characters in the romance genre, but also represents her exposure of the

dangerous and uncomfortable position of woman in eighteenth century social structure. The voice of Berina breathes new life into the stodgy and artificial language which relegated women in novels by both women and men to alternate servitude and godhood.

THE REFORM'D COQUET (1724)

The Reform'd Coquet, Davys's best-known work, also explores the plight of the unmarried woman. The protagonist, Amoranda, is a wealthy orphan whose guardian sends her away from the temptations of town and who appoints a protector to shield her from the perils of the world to which she has never been exposed. One of the predominant themes of women's fiction in the eighteenth century is that of the coquette who had to be domesticated--an apparently anti-feminist plot (Spencer 143). But Davys uses the "reformed-coquette" plot to explore female character in more complex ways. This story-line had the advantage of focusing on female character; unlike the static model female depicted in other didactic plots, this heroine was able to rebel against constricting social codes and yet be redeemed at the end after her reeducation, demonstrating that women are capable of moral growth. For the majority of the plot the female is allowed to act independently and to speak her mind; she is able to resist authority until the denouement when she is "cured" and installed in her "proper" and submissive position under patriarchal authority. At the same time, coquetry introduces tension; there is always a chance that the desirable man might recoil from the woman who manifests her spiritedness in flirtation. Thus, though

coquetry is a source of power, it is a precarious one. The unspoken conclusion to be drawn from these stories is that woman's freedom is merely illusory; she has the semblance of power during the brief transition from paternal domination to conjugal domination, but if as a daughter or a wife she tries to exercise similar freedoms, she inevitably moves out of the orbit of the protected female and encounters the predatory males against whose machinations she has only her wits to defend herself (and because she lacks experience, she usually succumbs to their wiles).

Davys uses the same devices she used in Familiar Letters to encode warnings to young women about the insidious dangers of romance discourse and patriarchal inscription of women in an oppressive system.

In Familiar Letters Davys had her characters talk about the pernicious effects of romance fiction: its misleading depiction of male and female roles, the artificial and dishonest language it fosters, and its tendency to glamorize and idealize the most mundane events of daily life. The Reform'd Coquet also explodes the deceptions of romance--its argument emphasizes the destructiveness of unquestioning acceptance of the fictions inculcated by the romance mode. As in Familiar Letters, the satiric use of romance elements tends to point up the unpleasant reality of prescribed female behavior in eighteenth-century courtship and to expose the falsehood of romance idealism. Again and again the social defenselessness and impotence of women are stressed. Davys also emphasizes how unlike the idealized male suitor in romance the contemporary male is.

Amoranda's innocence and inexperience, for example, have failed to

prepare her to deal with Lord Lofty, who, like the other suitors who besiege her, has been attracted by her beauty and her wealth. Posing as a romantic lover, he accuses Amoranda of trifling with his affections. He demands that she relieve his agony; he threatens suicide if she does not. Unable to detect his insincerity, Amoranda allows him to penetrate her defenses. As the ironic narrator points out, only a lucky accident reveals his duplicity to Amoranda. His callous indifference to the plight of another woman he has ruined finally exposes the falsity of his chivalric pose. In another confrontation, Lofty woos Amoranda in typical romantic fashion, but, brushing aside his fatuous romantic raptures, she demands forthright speech. Pressed for the truth, he uncovers patriarchy's invidious trap for women: "Every Man breathing, makes a better Lover than Husband" (81). He describes marriage as a no-win situation for women: if a woman marries a man, she will make him hate her. Unmarried, he will be her slave forever, but if she marries him, she subjects herself to him. Thus Davys suggests how men use romance conventions to their own ends.

Froth and Callid, too, have professed love for Amoranda in conventional courtship fashion. Their ineptitude in plotting reveals to her that they are really after her estate. Neither man worships and adores her; if they could separate her from her money they would cheerfully dispose of her. They, too, have manipulated romance discourse for self-serving reasons.

A third parody of the romance plot occurs in the Biranthus episode, when Amoranda's abductor, expecting her to respond in conventional romantic mode and fall into his arms, professes to her that he is a

slave who dies for love of her. Rejecting the false claim of the male who wants to make her his slave, Amoranda responds that if her ruin is the price for his love, he can die. As soon as he realizes the romantic pose has failed, Biranthus removes the mask and reveals his true intentions: violation of her person.

Davys also parodies the romance plot when Alanthus appears just in time to save the "distressed maiden" from her would-be ravisher, but, instead of taking arms on Amoranda's behalf, Alanthus curtly tells her that he is no knight-errant in quest of adventures. He accuses her of inviting trouble by leaving the care of her father to roam on her own. When Biranthus approaches Amoranda, Alanthus has one of his servants dispose of the rapist. By constantly disrupting the expectations of the reader in the romance mode, Davys underlines the unrealistic and illogical behavior that romances validate.

In addition to satirizing romance elements, The Reform'd Coquet also contrasts the passive and flat romance heroine in Altemira's interpolated story with the robust and rounded character of Amoranda. The doubleness of the plot subverts romance conventions by playing them against the representational conventions of realism.

Altemira is also an orphan, but her brother, refusing the role of surrogate father, approaches her as a lover. A typical romance heroine, she flees overt expression of sexual desire, but she quickly succumbs to Lord Lofty's desire because it is concealed in the idealized language of the romance genre. Abandoned by her seducer, she loses her senses for several weeks, and then, recovering, repines in silence until she learns that Lofty is courting Amoranda. Cut off from family and friends, she

nevertheless feels a need to warn another woman of Lofty's dishonesty.

In exchange for the selfless gift from Altemira, Amoranda plots a happy ending for Altemira's romance gone wrong: she tricks Lofty into marrying the romance heroine. After her marriage, Altemira learns that her brother, after an ineffectual suicide attempt, has married Lord Lofty's sister. Thus the romance plot solves all problems with a happy ending culminating in marriage, not only for the wronged heroine but also for the two reformed men. The juxtaposition of Altemira's plot with that of Amoranda, however, stresses how far from reality the false ideology of romance strays.

Unlike Berina, who has already seen through the false illusions of romance, Amoranda remains to be educated. Because she is wealthy, she has become accustomed to praise and flattery. Because she is a woman, she has not been trained in logic and reason. Her untrained perception will make her easy prey for those attracted by her youth, beauty, money, and wit. In contrast to Altemira's plot, Amoranda's plot puts her in situations which teach her that the idealized male suitor in romance is only a fiction.

Davy's organizes the incidents in the plot to expose Amoranda to increasingly dangerous threats to her person. The first two episodes take place before the protector designated by her uncle arrives; thus, Amoranda has to evaluate these situations by herself. In the first case, Lord Lofty sees Amoranda as only an interesting diversion. Despite the anonymous warning against him, Amoranda receives him; her easy banter and freedom of speech persuade him that she will be an easy mark. His reaction to her behavior underlines the lesson that levity is

a flaw in a young unmarried woman, for its presence is interpreted as a sign of irresponsible freedom and lack of restraint. Bereft of her parents, separated from her uncle, Amoranda has only her maidservant to guide. Jenny, though uneducated and limited in worldly experience, is possessed of common sense and an instinctive distrust of men. She cautions Amoranda against being too free with Lofty. Thus, although Amoranda's gaiety and frivolity have endangered her, she is saved from difficulty because other women (her maid and the writer of the anonymous letter) have taken the trouble to share their knowledge with her. Davys stresses that when the traditional advisors for a young woman are unavailable, another woman often supplies the deficit, just as Davys, the woman writer, speaks to other women from her experience as a widow having to rely on her wit to survive. Therefore, Amoranda's situation represents what Miller calls "a swerve from the paternal orbit," speaking of novels that examine how women can become independent through "a series of female alliances" (150).

The next test of Amoranda's ability to judge men grows out of the rivalry of two coxcombs, Froth and Callid. Amoranda's coquettish behavior, artfully concealing from each man that he is receiving exactly what every other man receives from her, has led each to expect a "yes" from her. She, however, has no intention of marrying while she still has her youth and beauty: "It will be time for me to be a wife when the dreadful thing decay gets hold of me" (19).

Amoranda's pride and love of flattery cause her to enjoy the sense of power she has over her suitors. But her inexperience causes her to miss the seriousness with which Froth and Callid take the game. She is

more than a lovely woman to them; she represents three thousand pounds annually. These stakes are worth running the risk of hanging, they conclude; the two men plan to kidnap her until she agrees to marry one of them and the other will share the estate. If she refuses to marry, they will demand cash for her freedom.

Balancing dramatic incident with moral observation, Davys has the narrator comment:

What an unhappy Creature is a beautiful young Girl left to her own Management, who is so fond of Adoration, that Reason and Prudence are thrust out to make way for it, 'till she becomes a prey to every designing Rascal and her own ridiculous Qualities, are her greatest Enemies. Thus it might have fared with Amoranda, had not a lucky hit prevented it, which the Reader shall know by and by. (25)

The narrator calls to the reader's attention the fact that the young female, lacking parental guidance and protection, is easy game for predators; only accident or luck puts her in a position to save herself. In her youthful high spirits and optimism, Amoranda has not learned to develop the caution and prudence that would keep her out of the reach of unscrupulous men.

Again, an anonymous letter and a woman come to her aid. The anonymous letter describes her position clearly: the author tells her bluntly that she is neither "Angel nor Goddess, but a Woman" like every other woman in the country, and the sooner she stops believing the

flattery of her admirers who, "like so many Locusts are striving to devour you," the safer she will be. Amoranda is outraged by the idea. "What good meaning can he have, who persuades me to banish the Bees, and live in the Hive by my self?" But Jenny is more perceptive: she tells her to banish not the bees, but the wasps "who come to sting and steal from those who have a better title to the Sweets of your Favours" (28-9). Implicit in her statement is the idea that even now Amoranda does not belong to herself but to some future male who will exercise his rights to her.

The letter helps Amoranda to perceive the fragility of her status. What strikes her about the letter is the tone of sympathy. "I always thought a woman of Youth, Beauty, and such a Fortune as mine is, might raise Envy in many, but Pity in none" (30). And her new perception of her vulnerability is ratified: the housekeeper reports to her that she has overheard Froth and Callid in the summerhouse plotting to kidnap Amoranda. Again, assistance comes from a member of her own sex.

Having made the point that women form a subtle sisterhood, caring for one another and rendering assistance whenever able, Davys then examines the role of men in educating women. After the protector her uncle has sent arrives, Amoranda resolves to accept his guidance. Formator's venerable age both repels Amoranda and affirms him as a repository of experience and wisdom. As his name suggests, he is there to re-form her. Amoranda accepts him because her uncle is an extension of her parents' will and because she is essentially sensible and virtuous. Nevertheless, though she has resolved to cooperate with Formator, she cannot easily relinquish her recently-gained

independence. Her willfulness is demonstrated in an incident with Lord Lofty. Ignoring her orders that she will see no one, Lofty has entered her home. Formator dismisses Lofty, but Amoranda, unable to bear his peremptory seizure of control, countermands the order. Lofty, encouraged by her apparent favor, seizes her and kisses her familiarly.

Formator lectures her sternly: he tells her that reason is useless if unused; her reason should have revealed to her the self-serving maneuvers of her admirers. Of Lofty, he says, "all the Love he has for you, is to satisfy his own bestial Desires, rob you of your Innocence and Honour, and then leave you to the World, to finish the Misery he begun, by being pity'd and despis'd as long as you live" (45). Having been left on her own, she has because of her inexperience and her love of flattery attracted an unsavory following, none of whom offers a legitimate relationship. Amoranda's eyes are opened: though she has to swallow her pride, for no one has spoken so candidly to her before, she recognizes the truth.

Having disposed of some of Amoranda's idle flatterers, Formator sets about educating her in earnest, providing books and telling stories to divert her from the follies of life. His goal is to indoctrinate Amoranda in the art of pleasing a man of sense. Self-sufficiency is not a goal that patriarchy sets before women; their training prepares them to be dependent upon and acceptable to men. Formator particularly urges Amoranda to conceal her enjoyment of flattery, that is, to curb her vanity (which essentially means reducing her self-esteem).

The third, and most dangerous, test of Amoranda's ability to pierce the male mask occurs when Biranthus, irresistibly attracted by Amoranda,

disguises himself as a female in order to gain access to her. Formator is almost instantly made uneasy by the strange woman. The plot emphasizes that the male has an intuitive recognition of falsity which the female lacks. The reason, of course, is that he has a knowledge of the world which the female has been denied. Her innocence, imposed by uncle and guardian, is a weakness. Pride is her other weakness. When Formator cautions Amoranda about "Berintha," she scoffs; when he persists, she continues to resist, but privately she begins to suspect that her guest is, in fact, a man. Even so, she stubbornly insists on being alone with the disguised predator.

The result is that Amoranda finds herself in the hands of a powerful and ruthless man. Neither her wit nor her scorn is sufficient to fend him off; only the intervention of Alanthus prevents Biranthus from having his way with Amoranda.

The three episodes constitute Amoranda's education in perception. She has learned that appearances can be deceiving, that surface identities are unstable, and that, in order to survive, she must learn to look beneath the surface to find evidence of the truth. She demonstrates her success in learning the lesson at the end of the novel when she reveals that she has perceived that Formator and Alanthus, her "romance" hero, are the same person. Her education is completed when she recognizes that the "godlike" rescuer who has won her heart is also the antique Formator whose age had repulsed her and whose reins she had strained against. Once again Davys exposes the deceptions that romance has foisted on women who have been deprived of education in the ways of the world.

As part of her program to reform the ideology of courtship and marriage, Davys argues that the reformation must begin with women. In the introduction to The Reform'd Coquet, which she directs to the "Ladies of Great Britain," Davys enlists the sympathy and the support of her sex. Acknowledging that she competes against the diversions of the town for the attention of her readers, she emphasizes that her intention is good: she hopes to reform British women deformed by vanity and levity. Specifically, she has created *Amoranda* to illustrate that the sensible woman will discount flattery and fine clothes in choosing a husband: she will seek "a Man with fine sense, as well as a fine Wigg, and let him have some Merit, as well as much Embroidery: This will make Coxcombs give ground" (vii).

Davys also points out her didactic purpose in the preface: admitting that idleness led her to write the story of *Amoranda*, she nevertheless insists that her "Pen is at the service of the Publick, and if it can but make some impression upon the young unthinking minds of some of my own Sex, I shall bless my Labour, and reap an unspeakable satisfaction" (x).

The female who has been trained to value virtue inevitably finds herself in conflict with a society that values only the appearance of virtue (Spencer 150). If women can reform the men who in the libertine role are shown to pay lip service to the tenets of virtue, then they can revise social practice. The vices of women, vanity, coquetry, and gullibility, harm only themselves. The vices of men, lying, raping, seducing, abducting without scruple, gambling, and drinking to excess, harm themselves and others. Reformation of both sexes could produce a

kinder, gentler world where a new relationship between men and women, one based on honesty and mutual respect, could develop.

Amoranda is Davy's exemplar of the reformed woman. A series of encounters with men teaches her not to accept the discourse of romance or to expect chivalric behavior from men. Formator's books and stories alert her to the dangers of vanity, pride, and excessive freedom as well as to the necessity for using reason and prudence to restrain emotion. Her attempts to reform predatory males are only partially successful, however. She is able to maneuver Lord Lofty into marriage with the woman he has seduced; he even finds a certain pleasure in doing the right thing, he says. She is not so successful with Froth and Callid: the ironic narrator reports that they kill each other in a duel. The attempted reformation of Biranthus, too, is a failure, for he refuses to respond to pleas for pity or to reasoned argument; Alanthus's servant kills him to prevent his rape of Amoranda.

The final question concerns the reformation of Formator/Alanthus. Amoranda finally realizes that he has taken a dishonest route to love; disguised as the old man that her uncle has sent, Alanthus has been able to observe and judge her freely. In addition, he has been able to form her to his own ends. Trusting Formator as confidant, Amoranda has revealed her deepest feelings to him, expressing what she would never have said directly to Alanthus. Clearly he has enjoyed the power his disguise has given him; he has been able to achieve the lover's voyeuristic wishes to see and overhear what his beloved really thinks of him. Despite her love for Alanthus, Amoranda is angry. This situation duplicates the case of Biranthus, who had disguised himself in order to

gain proximity to her. Amoranda had condemned him for not daring to approach her openly; now she rejects both mentor and lover until she can be satisfied as to identity. Her behavior demonstrates the ambivalence and anger felt by women who have been tricked into dependence on men. It appears to be only a postponing of the inevitable, but the point is well taken: Formator/Alanthus has chosen a dishonest route to love, one that has given him all of the advantages and her none. He has had ample time to study her character from the point of view of a prospective husband and to re-form her to his tastes; she has not had the opportunity to judge him from the point of view of a prospective wife. Finally, the duper in such a situation always feels superior to his victim; the victim feels resentment at being victimized. The problem is that in a society in which men are exploitative and women are conditioned to repress desire, an honest route to marriage does not exist. The only "exploration" sanctioned for women is "flirtation," and essentially deceptive practice based on hints and innuendoes rather than open discussion. Additionally, Amoranda instinctively knows that saying "yes" means submitting herself entirely to Alanthus's will. She has accepted his guidance, knowing that she still retained some choice; saying "yes" means that she says "yes" to him forevermore. She has discovered that the ability to say "no" is also a subtle form of power--one of the few powers a woman possesses. A condition of the "reformed coquet" plot, however, is that the plotter must at some point decide when the protagonist will give up her resistance and submit to establishment values. In this case, when Amoranda says "yes," the plot ends: when she relinquishes her opposition to society and accepts her

place in it, there is no more story. Alanthus has not been altered; only Amoranda has.

As always, Davys insists she is writing "fact," a realistic story of contemporary conditions. Familiar Letter's epistolary form allows for gradual self-revelation of character. For the reformed-coquette plot, however, separation from the protagonist is necessary so that objective judgments may be made. Therefore, The Reform'd Coquet; Or, the Memoirs of Amoranda, does not consist of memoirs at all, but is a story told by an ironic author-narrator. The narrator confesses that she is motivated by a desire to make money, but she also desires to please her readers; she has therefore bypassed pedantry, dogma, and philosophy and settled on love, a common topic. People have developed the art of disguising their tempers better than their faces (2), she notes. If poets, printers, and booksellers would write truthfully of love, she argues, they would make an easy living. She proposes to strip away the disguises and give her audience truth in the story of Amoranda. It is clear, however, that this story is a moral fable, not an account of actual events. The "truth" of the story concerns the dangers a young woman faces during the perilous interval between daughterhood and wifehood.

Davys arranges incidents to indicate the encroachment of the world on private female life. First, there is a social threat: though Amoranda's uncle has secluded her in the country to avoid the corruptions available in town, Amoranda is nevertheless besieged by suitors, most of whom have designs either on her body or her fortune. Next is a criminal threat: Froth and Callid plan to abduct her and

force her to choose one of them as husband. In another incident, masked men attack Amoranda's coach and Formator is compelled to defend her. A final example is Biranthus's abduction of her, terminated only by the death of her attacker. Amoranda is able to avoid the social threats by using her wit and by avoiding unwanted suitors. But when confronted with men unrestrained by social convention, Amoranda has no physical prowess with which to defend herself; only the lucky presence of a male defender saves her. The point is clear: the single female is always and everywhere vulnerable to male predators.

As she had done in Familiar Letters, Davys points up the paucity of acceptable roles that eighteenth-century culture has to offer women. As a daughter, a young woman is encouraged, praised, and valued by her parents; everyone notes her youth, beauty, and accomplishments; she is flattered, pampered and petted. During the courtship ritual, she appears to have a great deal of power; men respond to every whim and hang on every word. She also has the power to ratify or veto her parents' offers of potential husbands. But as soon as she says "yes" and becomes a wife, she is no longer an individual, but only an adjunct to her husband.

Like Berina, Amoranda is an intelligent young woman all too aware of the brevity of her time as an independent person. Also like Berina, she recognizes that marriage, while representing a loss of freedom, is still the lesser of two evils. But unlike Berina, she enjoys the power that the courtship game affords and wants to prolong it--putting off marriage as long as possible.

Amoranda enjoys the power she wields in courtship and delays

committing herself to marriage; her resistance amounts to a subversive statement about female subordination. It also reminds us why romance myths were so attractive to women: the "coy mistress" enjoyed her power without considering the power and freedom she would lose when she said "yes." A woman had only a brief period of freedom between paternal domination and becoming subject to a husband; she could not be blamed for attempting to extend the period of her power and delaying or even escaping subjection to a man (Spencer 142).

In a conversation with Lofty, Amoranda compares herself to a bird that she has been trying to trap in her garden: "Well, every thing loves liberty and so do I". Lofty's aristocratic opinion of marriage is that it "is to love what Cold Bed is to Melon-seed; it starves it to Death infallibly." She says that she has observed that when a woman marries, no one loves her but her husband; if what he says (that the husband does not love his wife) is true, then both men and women must live single in their own defense (26). Appalled at the bleakness of her possibilities, Amoranda wonders why men, the lawgivers, impose on women what they think distasteful for themselves. There is, of course, no just answer. In the eighteenth-century social order, institutions existed to preserve what patriarchy valued: marriage keeps property under control and progeny in order. Like other eighteenth-century writers, Davys accepts existing social order as a given; she offers no plans to reform institutions--but her subtext reveals the impingement of the world on the private lives of women and, in a subtle countermovement, suggests how women may face the most important decisions of their lives and make prudent choices: to control their

lives as much as possible within the constraints of society. Socially and politically conservative, Davys affirms the status quo; however, the anxiety her characters show about making marriage choices reveals covert criticisms of the system. Her progressive narratives ascribe the corruption to the "social injustice inherent in aristocratic rule" (McKeon 174). In this example, Amoranda's ambivalence--acknowledging the power of the patriarchy in blaming it--foreshadows the end of the novel when Amoranda finally submits to Formator's control, a loving control, but one that nonetheless deprives her of her freedom.

Amoranda's rejection of marriage is not the expected response of a marriageable young woman, but she is not playing hard to get; she simply does not want to relinquish her freedom. Thus her behavior is not the teasing of a flirt so much as it is the expression of rebellion against her future inevitable entrapment.

Even so, Davys shows that the other option, that of remaining at large in the world, is equally unacceptable. Even in a realistic plot, the heroine has few options other than marriage. Maria, Amoranda's "grave lady relation," represents the alternative. Amoranda comments that the trouble with being old is that in addition to the infirmities of old age, the elderly are despised for being old (148). Amoranda is free from the weaknesses of age now, but they are inevitable and Amoranda, like Berina in Familiar Letters, has no desire to spend her old age visiting one relation after another in order to have a home. So at the end, even though she is capable of matching wits and plots with the men, she has no choice but to conform to the role expected of women.

Finally, Davys's plot shows that only the male has real power; even

when the female believes she controls the actions of a male, she discovers that her power exists only to the extent that he accedes to it --and at some point in the plot she must relinquish that power and submit to a process of integration into the existing patriarchal social structure. Thus, the plot has allowed Davys to indulge in fantasies of female political power with a certain amount of freedom as long as they are played out within the confines of the domestic framework and the resolution ultimately affirms male dominance.

Whereas Amoranda sees marriage as a loss of freedom and power, however, Alanthus, who is not a coxcomb but a man of sense, sees it as an end to months of restraint and denial--and they marry that very day. Davys makes no prediction of happiness ever after; however, in keeping with her promise to tell truth, she closes with the remark that they return to London and that anyone who wishes to see them may do so there. One assumes that their married life, then, will be typical of the time, that is, not idyllic. Davys's subtext reveals that the equality necessary for mutual respect and consideration in marriage does not exist in the Amoranda-Formator relationship. Although married happiness is a stated social ideal in the eighteenth century, the ideological changes required for its possibility have not yet occurred.

THE ACCOMPLISHED RAKE (1727)

Unlike Formator, the male protagonist in Davys's last novel is not a man of sense. In fact, Davys even reverses the reformed-coquette plot to apply it to a male protagonist in The Accomplished Rake,

demonstrating that men, too, need and are capable of moral reform. More subversive, however, is the subplot concerning a woman who is just as rapacious and obsessed with self-gratification as the male; unlike "bad" women in most eighteenth century plots, she is not punished by downfall or death.

Indeed, although Davys's last novel ostensibly features a male protagonist, the narrator devotes more time to stories of women used and abused by Sir John Galliard and his friends. For example, during the course of the novel, Sir John impregnates and abandons Nancy Friendly, casts off at least one mistress, seduces and impregnates a female servant at an inn, very nearly forces incest on his own sister who has been abducted to a brothel, impregnates a married woman whose husband is sterile, has an affair with another married woman, attempts to seduce a woman he believes to be the sister of a friend, and abducts a woman courted by one of his friends. The final story is of a servant who is tricked by her fiancé's employer into giving up her maidenhead to him.

The pervasive theme of the subtext is that women, whatever their stations in the world, must continuously defend themselves from the deceit and the depredations of men. The fact that even in fiction women see themselves always as victims suggests their awareness of their victimization. Significantly, the women do defend themselves: Davys's women, rather than stoically accepting their oppression, actively oppose those who attempt to exploit them. Their struggles indicate a silent protest against an ideology that allows them to be exploited and abused.

As a companion piece written to contrast with The Reform'd Coquet,

The Accomplished Rake reveals what a vast difference there is between the development of character in a young man and in a young woman. The contrast is emphatic from the beginning. Amoranda, the protagonist of The Reform'd Coquet, is, as her name suggests, made for love--an object of man's desire. The increasingly dangerous situations in which she finds herself in the book suggest at what peril the desirable female remains at large in the world. On the other hand, Sir John Galliard is a gay and spirited man, as his name implies. He is made for rape, not for love, and he is not required to curb his spirits or his desires. Though both young people are sensible, both are led astray by self-love. Young Galliard's besetting fault is vanity, just as is Amoranda's. Amoranda's ego is inflated by the flattering words of her admirers seeking to deceive her; Galliard is flattered by his servants who hope to gain preferment thereby. Amoranda's education consists of her learning to restrain her levity and love of flattery; she is not considered to have desires. She is sent from London to the country to be removed from temptations. In contrast, Sir John goes from the country to London to see what the beau monde is like. Amoranda is subject to, if not the control, at least the lectures of her "protector;" he has a tutor, Teachwell, who dies before he is able to accomplish what his name indicates. In short, Sir John's liberty demonstrates by contrast how repressed and restricted the life of the woman is.

The plot contains storylets which offer variations on the ironies produced by the rake's ungoverned impulses--his mother a whore, his sister a whore, possibilities of incest, his being regarded not as a

person but as a producer of viable seed. As the stories proliferate, the consequences of the acts of the unscrupulous male bent on pursuing sexual gratification multiply until the reader cannot escape the conclusion that unrestrained desire has the power to destroy the social structure that grants it to the male.

Bringing the stories of the women in The Accomplished Rake to the foreground produces a curious effect: the reader becomes aware that when the rake runs amok, he rips apart the flimsy social fabric spun out of marriage. He destabilizes marriages, brings into question the legitimacy of progeny, faces the possibility of incest, and makes whores out of decent women. Davys's argument for the reform of men is reinforced by the inevitable conclusion that the rake's exploitation of others may in reality produce an undesired effect on patriarchy, which is the ultimate victim. If the family, the basic unit of patriarchy, is destroyed, then patriarchy itself will crumble.

The Accomplished Rake, more insistently than the other two novels, rejects the false illusions that romance novels engender. Not only does romance project a false image of woman and of female roles, but it also makes possible a male desire run amok. Unchecked male lust is the chief threat to women in the novel. When Davys urges women to reform men, it is the libertine philosophy that she attacks. Self-indulgence threatens to destabilize social structures; in this novel Davys demonstrates the negative results of Lady Galliard's lack of self-control and her subsequent failure to govern her son.

Providing ironic twists on the romance plot, Davys creates a world where male force rather than seduction is the operative power. The

protagonist, presumably a representative man of his station, makes explicit the libertine view of women:

Shall a Bull or Horse command a thousand Mates while Man, the reigning Lord of all, stands cringing at his vassal's Feet begging to be admitted to his own? Would all Mankind assume their own Prerogative, we should soon divest ye of your pretended Virtues and let ye see your Pride and Scorn are only Weapons turned against yourselves. (AR 324-5)

Similarly, Sir John also theorizes, "Is she not a Woman and was she not made for the Pleasure and Delight of Man?" (307) and, "A Man may preserve an Appetite that only takes a Snack by the bye, but a full Meal very often gorges the Stomach and turns to Loathing and Surfeit" (310). In her ironic presentation of the rake, Davys expresses dismay with the society which condones, even fosters, these attitudes towards women; she also proposes reformation of the people who think that way.

When Sir John Galliard meets Nancy Friendly in the city, he is possessed by a "criminal admiration" and he begins to plot how to ruin her. Like Amoranda, Nancy (as her surname suggests) is perhaps a little too free. Although her aunt keeps her on a close tether, Nancy appears to chafe under the restrictions laid on a proper woman as she quotes her aunt: "'Men love to take Freedom themselves but don't care we should; they like to show their Fondness to a hundred Women, but expect we should only smile on one.'" She adds, "Now I would fain ask why we may not love Variety as well as you" (281). Nancy fans herself

flirtatiously and banters with Sir John, who behind the pose of the romantic gallant, is plotting to separate her from the aunt in order to seduce her.

Nancy's innocent playfulness is ironically contrasted with Sir John's single-minded determination to ruin her. Coquettishly, Nancy switches costumes with her friend at a masquerade so that she can enjoy watching Sir John making love, as he thinks, to her. But Sir John plays a darker deception on her; he bribes a chairman to take Nancy to a bagnio. Expecting to have Nancy in his power, he is infuriated to learn that his victim has eluded him.

Davys shows how Nancy's reliance on romance conventions makes her an easy victim of Sir John's desire. She believes that Sir John has too much respect for her father to cause her harm; therefore, she accepts his lie when he explains away the mixup about the hired chair. Further, she is totally vulnerable to his next attack, for he drugs her, deflowers her, and leaves. She is not even aware that she has been transformed from virgin to 'fallen woman.' She soon realizes, however, that her condition is irrevocably altered; when she learns that she has been drugged, she concludes, "I fear I am ruined beyond Redemption" (297).

The end of Nancy's story is far from the fiction that romance perpetrates. She is the laughingstock of her neighborhood when she talks of "sleeping cookies" and protests that her child was bred by "nobody." Shame undermines her father's health; Nancy's acquaintances shun her. Davys strips away the facade of romance illusion to show the reality of woman's position--even, in this case, a woman who remains

under the protection of her father.

Davys also distorts the romance plot in the case of Belinda. Originally attracted to her because one of his friends claims that she is impervious to all male charms but his, Sir John makes love to her merely to disprove his friend's boast. Belinda is not so frivolous as Nancy, however; she knows better than to be taken in by superficial charms. She tells Sir John that her heart is "disengaged until [she] see[s] something of higher Merit than it can hope to deserve (320). When Sir John attempts to seduce her with romance discourse, she echoes Berina's views on love and marriage:

Who that has ever taken Notice of a modern Husband's Behavior can with Patience listen to a modern Beau making Love--the latter all Adoration, Praise, Rapture, and Lies; the other Jarring, Discord, Indifference, and downright Hatred; one breathes nothing but Darts, Flames, and soft melting Sighs; the other cries, 'Damn you, Madam, you are my Aversion. We have been too long acquainted. A stale Face is the D---l; prithee take it from my Sight' (323).

As in the earlier novel, Davys attributes this situation to current patriarchal ideology, but this time the criticism comes from the male, who grumbles that lawgivers expect men to hug their shackles forever. His position illustrates McKeon's argument that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries patriarchy fought to retain its power in the face of "the . . . impersonal machinery of the legal system" designed to

maintain family unity (265). If men of his ilk become empowered, the reader realizes, the few laws that exist for the protection of women will disappear altogether.

Belinda quickly perceives that he will not be satisfied to remain in the role of chaste lover; in his coach and therefore physically in his power, she realizes that she must outwit Sir John rather than oppose him directly and drive him to use force on her. The only weapons she has available are her wit (she parries his every verbal attack) and the assistance of her maid, who, at a rest stop, enlists the aid of the landlord to procure an escort of sturdy men to protect her mistress and herself. Again, Davys shows women helping each other.

Belinda's verbal prowess is what finally turns the tide: she scores a hit when she suggests that Sir John's mother, having violated her marriage, must have conceived him by one of her footmen, for "nothing but a Charnel, nay, a common Sewer, of base plebeian Blood, could put a Man upon such low dishonorable Actions," and that she will "let out Life at Ten Thousand Portholes" before she will submit to him (330).

Struck by the possibility that what she says may be true, he retreats and then apologizes. She is the first woman to make him feel shame; his admiration for her almost overcomes his desire for liberty. He tells her that she has brought it to a single vote whether he shall marry or not, but she laughs and tells him that marriage must result from a joint consent or it will be a sorry failure (343). As in the previous novels, Davys emphasizes that marriage cannot succeed in the master-slave mode or when mutual esteem and respect are absent.

These examples illustrate how Davys rewrites the romance plot to expose its sham. Juxtaposed to the "truth" of male-female relationships, romance conventions are palpably false.

The Accomplished Rake inverts the traditional association of men with reason by portraying Sir John Galliard as the personification of self-indulgent, unrestrained passion. Although eighteenth-century thinkers believed that men were the sole possessors of reason and wisdom, Sir John is actually a product of his culture, which envisions man as master of the universe. In a long ironic passage, the narrator points out the inconsistency of a world which calls women weak and illogical, yet expects them to behave in a more mature fashion than men do, penalizing their self-indulgences more harshly than men's. On the one hand, society expects women to remain childlike and unable to make decisions or control their own lives, but on the other hand, it holds them accountable for repressing their emotions and ideas.

Surely unjustly are we called the Weaker Vessels when we have
Strength to subdue that which conquers the Lords of the
Creation, for their Reason ties them down to Rules, while we,
like Samson, break the Trifling Twine and laugh at every
Obstacle that would oppose our Pleasures. (243)

Spacks's observation shows how hollow the irony is: "The sexual attitudes in eighteenth century fiction . . . suggest how completely for women, the century's belief that reason must govern imagination operated to ensure patterns of repression and denial which women, experiencing

such patterns as oppressive, yet believed to be in the nature of things" ("Every Woman" 46). The narrator's comment demonstrates that Davys perceives the irony.

The narrator is careful to point out that Sir John's lack of governance is occasioned by an ill education: his perfect fine gentleman of a father dies, leaving the boy with no role model but his mother. Flaunting the privileges of aristocracy, Lady Galliard is unlike any of Davys's women we have seen so far. Pleasure and variety are her objects in life and she knows no boundaries. The narrator notes dryly that when her husband died, she "dried up her Tears so soon that Decency, ashamed of such light proceedings, with a Blush cried, 'Fie,' and left her" (243). Self-absorbed, she pays no attention to the education of her son.

In an aside, the narrator muses on the effects of an ill education: in this case a youth, who could have been molded into a gentleman like his father, falls instead under the influence of his mother, who lacks the steadiness to direct him. No doubt, the narrator speculates, that same lack of guidance explains the prevalence of men in London who believe that fine apparel and proficiency in cursing constitute gentlemanhood. Carrying that logic to its extreme, she concludes that if Galliard misbehaves, "we will have to blame the Mother since the Father left only a good Example to imitate" (243). Thus the world exonerates men of blame for their own behavior and of responsibility for the behavior of their sons; women are held to be accountable for the moral condition of society. The contradiction is apparent: if, as eighteenth-century men professed to believe, women

were naturally depraved, surely they would be unfit guardians of morals.

When Sir John learns that his mother is having an affair with a footman, he asks whether this is typical female behavior; his tutor Teachwell answers, "Women no doubt are made of the very same Stuff we are and have the very same Passions and Inclinations which, when let loose without a Curb, grow wild and untamable, defy all Laws and Rules, and can be subdued by nothing but what they are seldom Mistresses of" (254). As Spacks points out, though eighteenth-century ideology discouraged women from thinking of themselves as sexual beings, many novels written by eighteenth century women explore, usually covertly, the question of female sexuality and what should be done about it ("Every Woman" 28). Davys displaces the criticism by having a man express it: rather than acknowledge female carnality herself, she can safely make the point without being held responsible for it. Teachwell suggests that female carnality is all the more dangerous because women lack reason with which to control their passions. Lady Galliard is thus the epitome of a female fantasy--a woman without restraints, the female rake. Lacking a husband and wealthy enough to ignore censure, she is able to take a lover who is beneath her rank and thus destabilize social order, face down neighbors' objections to her behavior, and face her son without being touched by his reproaches or feeling guilt. She demonstrates by negative example what happens when women do not restrain desire with reason.

From the beginning of the novel, Davys paints a grim picture for women. The epigram she cites below the title states clearly that when vice overpowers virtue, wirtue must yield to the superior power:

When Conqu'ring Vice Triumphant takes the Field,
 Virtue Dethroned must to its Pow'r yield,
 And when Good Characters are all at stake,
 The Best of Bad Ones is, th'Accomplish'd Rake.

In the preface, she notes that men's actions will be governed by their passions; if they cannot be purged, they ought to be controlled. Like most people in her century, she saw females as the guardians of virtue and argued that if women would initiate reform among themselves, men would then follow suit. If women fail to regain their "empire," she implies, the story herein will be not fiction but reality (236).

The example of Lady Galliard, however, demonstrates that the task of reforming men is not always easy or even possible. Driven by ungoverned passion to the commission of a murder, Lady Galliard is finally brought to a realization of the consequences of her actions when the murdered woman's husband abducts Lady Galliard's daughter to gain revenge. Her reformation comes too late, however, to influence the behavior of her son. The disillusionment of seeing his mother a whore and possibly a murderess has hardened his heart to the plight of woman. His conscience is not awakened until he sees the suffering that is a direct result of his own action. When he realizes what Nancy endures as the consequence of his rape of her, he muses, "to violate her Honor without her Knowledge is laying her under Cassandra's Fate always to speak Truth but never to be believed." However, his humanity cannot overcome his cultural conditioning, for he continues, "Is she not a Woman and was she not made for the Pleasure and Delight of Man?" The

author/narrator stresses that this kind of thinking is not natural or instinctive: "We may see here the struggles betwixt Nature and a loose Education" (307). She suggests that man's natural inclinations are perverted by a patriarchal ideology which designates him as "superior" to woman, her master.

Davys introduces an interpolated story to demonstrate to Sir John what he has done to Nancy Friendly. Betty, the granddaughter of a small landholder, has preserved her chastity until her fiancé's employer, disguised as her lover, seduces her. The covert message of the story is that women are all too vulnerable to the deceit of men. As long as men are allowed to believe that women exist for the pleasure of men, women will have to fight for survival in a society that denies them rights or power. Even the women who appear to have power are in the end deceived. Lady Galliard finds herself at odds with her neighbor, despised by her lover and held in contempt by her servants and by her son. Yet Davys fails to destroy this "bad" woman; she is allowed to repent with little apparent pain and to retire to the country with her daughter and son restored to her.

Yet it is with deep irony that the narrator comments at the end of the novel, "As for Sir John Galliard, I would have him acknowledge the favor I have done him in making him a man of honor at last" (373). The fiction writer has the power to transform a character into whatever her imagination dictates, but it is a sad commentary on English society that it takes so much time and effort, and that so many women have to be sacrificed, to produce a man of honor. Davys's message in the preface to The Accomplished Rake was that order in society depends on the

regulation of passion and that women must initiate the reformation; the daunting message of the novel, however, is that when one woman has failed to regulate her own passion, as in the case of Lady Galliard, the effects proliferate in geometric progression. And even when one male has been reformed, the gain may be only temporary, for the narrator closes by saying that she has set spies to watch for any backsliding on Sir John's part.

As in The Reform'd Coquet, Davys employs the ironic narrator/author to control the plot. As always, she claims to present truth: the opening lines announce:

Young Galliard, who is to be the Subject of the following Leaves, will (with his own Inclinations and a Little of my additional Discipline) be a very exact Copy of the Title Page. . . . I shall be punctual in delivering nothing but plain Fact in the fundamental Part of his Story

(241)

The reason for her discipline, she noted in the preface, was to "order Accidents better than Fortune will take the Trouble to do--in order to work on the Reader's Passions, keep him in Suspense sometimes, and at the same Time send him away satisfied" (235).

Davys continues to urge that women not depend on the romantic expectation of perfect love and happy marriage. Nancy Friendly's story is a cautionary one: although her innocence allowed her to be victimized by the rake, her behavior following the rape reveals that she

is governed by reason rather than feelings. Acting with dignity, she withdraws to her father's home and makes arrangements to raise her child by herself. Her initial refusal to subordinate herself to the libertine's governance when he proposes suggests that she does not regard marriage as a perfect solution to her problem. She refuses to marry for marriage's sake and she refuses to marry a rascal. Sir John, annoyed that she fails to appreciate what an effort it takes for him to give up his freedom, snaps at her not to give herself airs. If she laments her lost honor, he sneers, he will restore it with a ladyship and a good estate. She trembles with resentment that he equates honor with property and title, but mere pride is a luxury she cannot afford. She agrees to marry if he makes the child his heir. Taking the best of the few options open to her, Nancy chooses to insure her child's future at the cost of her personal freedom. Thus, Nancy has a husband and a father for her child, but the husband may be no bargain and it is reasonably certain that she will not live "happily ever after." Though the plot ostensibly affirms the ideology of marriage as the great ordering power of society, the repressed content of the plot offers a critique of the act which defines woman as commodity and possession of man.

The cumulative effects of the women's stories emphasize that women must not trust the men who make love to them; indeed, that the only safety for women lies in forming female alliances and avoiding men and marriage altogether. Davys does not endorse the romance ending in marriage followed by "happily ever after." Her females dread marriage, accepting it only as an alternative to spinsterhood, poverty, and the

losses incurred by age.

Davys's narrator, like a Greek chorus, chants a counterpoint to Sir John's abuse of women: "O Man! How strong are thy Passions, how exorbitant thy Desires, and how weak, how impotent thy Virtues!" (293) When desire outstrips restraints, women are the ones to suffer; however, moral indignation does them little good. Instead, women writers must raise women readers' consciousness of the plight of women so that society itself can be reformed, and it is to these efforts that Davys bends herself. Her novels, like Aubin's, undermine the male-authored plot and suggest that women may, by reforming themselves, have some impact on the social structure that oppresses them. Davys's novels, although didactic and moralistic as were Aubin's, are less heavy-handed and more entertaining. Davys employs a lighter and wittier tone in her dialogue, somewhat in the vein of the witty heroines of the Restoration comedy of manners. Davys's novels are also more hopeful than those of Aubin, for they do suggest that women, by changing themselves, have the power to rewrite the ideology within which they are inscribed.

Davys made the English woman placed in ordinary settings and mundane plots the focus of her stories; presented realistically, these females, sometimes subtly, resist oppressive patriarchy. Juxtaposing romance plots to more "truthful" plots, Davys exposes the insidious exploitations of women ratified by aristocratic ideology and suggests alternative roles for women and men. Davys's women do not seek death or burial to escape the world; they defend themselves and attempt to carve out for themselves a position that does not require capitulation to patriarchy. They also seek a relationship with man as companion and

equal. That they were not always able to achieve their ends only emphasizes the power of ideology to perpetuate itself.

Like Aubin, Davys receded into oblivion after the eighteenth century. Despite the fact that McBurney cites her as an artistic forbear of Fielding (348), most critics consider her, like the other eighteenth-century woman novelists before Burney, to be flawed somehow. Yet the feminist critic finds her interesting because her works are the site of an ideological struggle. Visible in her writing is the struggle to conform to (and the inability to succeed in so doing) masculine systems of representation as well as to patriarchy.

Some thirty years later Charlotte Lennox returned to many of the same themes treated in Davys's work. In her work, too, are the signs of the author's attempts to come to grips with the discourse of patriarchy and its inscription of women. Lennox also exposes the false illusions foisted on women by romance discourse in order to raise the consciousness of women readers so that they can learn how to survive in a world inimical to their interests.

CHAPTER FOUR

LENNOX: CLASH OF DISCOURSES

Born sometime during the decade when Aubin and Davys published The Adventures of Count de Vinevil and The Reform'd Coquet, Charlotte Lennox was another female writer who struggled to make a living after the social support system had failed her. Her father was apparently a military officer and her early years were spent in the American colonies in the New York area. Little is known of Lennox's early life except that when her mother chose to stay in America, the young girl decided to live in London, trying to support herself by acting. In 1747 she married Alexander Lennox, by all accounts an improvident and imprudent husband. He was a constant drain on their funds; she supported him and their children by acting until 1750, when her first novel was published. From then on, she depended on her writing to support the family. She frequently complained of her husband's spendthrift ways and his pernicious influence on their son. Eventually she separated from Lennox; for the rest of her life she was novelist, translator, magazine editor, and poet in a constant struggle against poverty.

Lennox's novels are overtly didactic, but they also expose psychological, gender-based issues that were not directly spoken of in the eighteenth century. Four main themes emerge in her novels: the conflict between logical, rational "masculine" discourse and emotional, illogical "feminine" discourse, the disintegration of the family as a result of the policy of conferring status solely on the basis of class

and genealogical distinctions, the economic oppression of women, and an attraction to the language of romance. The novels come to grips with female powerlessness and demonstrate how women are born into language and forced inexorably into the ideology of the establishment. Lennox's females, unlike earlier heroines, do acknowledge that they love, and though they try to suppress their emotions, the difficulty of the struggle attests to the strength of the desires that have to be subdued. The novels trace the steps by which society attempts to curb desire in women and also reveal how desire erupts in indirect ways that are both personally and socially harmful. Not surprisingly, given the circumstances of the author's life, the novels are obsessed with the theme of money: they demonstrate that the world of money and finances has conspired to exclude women. Two of her heroines enter the world of work, but the humility of dependence, the unscrupulousness of employers, and the scarcity of jobs for which women are trained force them to be "rescued" by marriage. Also quite logically, Lennox's women have exclusively appropriated the realm of romance; only in a fantasy world are women granted importance and power.

These novels, named for women, narrated by women, and concerned with the experience of women, legitimize the notion of female subjectivity, but it is only for the duration of the plot before the resolution. The artifices of the narrative allow Lennox's women subjectivity, but, as Pollak points out, the "ideological impositions" of plot are merely obscured by these devices until the end of the novel, when "androcentric values" are reimposed (7). Nevertheless, it is clear that Lennox aims toward a reconstruction of the idea of womanhood that

patriarchal ideology constitutes in women. The novels suggest a distinctively female discourse that centers on social relationships related to courtship and marriage (sexual relationships, really). That female discourse is set in private life in a domestic framework. As is nearly always the case, the plots insist that before their protagonists can assume a place in society, they must relinquish their autonomy. Boheemen comments, "The final effect of this fiction is the reconfirmation of the supremacy of the symbolic order in which woman cannot be given autonomous subjectivity. Her speech and authority derive from patriarchy, as each narrative enactment confirms" (32).

Like the novels written earlier in the century, Lennox's novels have a strong didactic strain. Invariably dealing with the development of a female character, Lennox's works, like other eighteenth-century novels of female development, focus on education--not academic education but instruction in survival in a world inimical to women. Essentially chronological and linear, this type of novel traces the heroine's mastery of the social skills necessary to preserve her reputation and chastity until she can find a safe haven in marriage. Hardly any option other than marriage is considered; work for women is explored, but abandoned as crushingly debilitating.

Abel and Langland, in discussing the female bildungsroman, point out that the development of females in the eighteenth century differed vastly from that of men: women seldom had opportunities for formal schooling. They were not free to leave home to "find themselves;" their quest generally entailed finding a secure place and a protector. Unlike men, women could not easily cut family ties, and they were forbidden the

sexual explorations that lead to emotional maturity and to the formation of moral values. Finally, whereas the male bildungsroman might end in alienation from, rebellion against, or integration into society, the female bildungsroman always leads to submission to social structures (7-8). What informs these plots, however, is a "tension between the surface plot which affirms social conventions and the submerged plot which encodes rebellion; between a plot that charts development and a plot that unravels it" (12). Aubin's critique revealed itself through recurrent images and metaphors, and Davys's ironic narrators often counterpointed events in the plot. But Lennox's narrators affirm patriarchal values; it is the contradictions between what the narrator says and what happens in the plot that demonstrate Lennox's discomfort with the patriarchy which exploits and destroys women.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the cult of sensibility was gaining hold and beginning to manifest itself in the works of female writers. While Lennox cannot be called a sentimental writer, traces of the "feminization" of the heroine are evident in her works. Her central characters, for example, are not as robust as those of Aubin or Davys; their bodies fail them in moments of stress. Aubin's women survive imprisonment and shipwreck, Davys's, kidnaping, drugging, and rape, but Lennox's Arabella cannot walk two miles without sinking to the ground. Not only are Lennox's females physically delicate, but they also have "delicate" minds that are shocked by coarse ideas or remarks. Armstrong argues that Lennox and others like her deliberately separated the language of male-female relationships from the language of the male-dominated world of economics and politics; they invested their female

characters with an authority that did not conflict with the political powers of patriarchy--an authority over the household goods and routines, the etiquette of courtship, and "kinship relations" (3).

According to Armstrong, these writers stressed individuation and pressed for individual merit as the criterion for judging a woman rather than her family alliance or her fortune because they wanted to overturn the prevailing idea that power and privilege should depend on genealogy (5). Lennox and our other writers, all by birth excluded from aristocracy, join in the assault on social hierarchy.

Lennox's novels also respond to changing social conditions in the eighteenth century. As progressive and conservative forces attacked aristocratic hegemony, the traditional system of kinship based on economics and blood ties declined, to be replaced by a more closed, "nuclear" family (Eagleton 14). The Puritan model of family with the father as sovereign over his home, creating a "self-enclosed social unit in whose affairs the state could not intervene" (Armstrong 18), was conceived to replace the corrupt aristocracy that depended on inherited power. But this model is as unstable as the one it sought to supplant, for the patriarch is not unfailingly the seat of moral superiority, nor is he incorruptible or immune to death.

In fact, the families Lennox depicts in her novels are disintegrating. The absence of stable and efficiently functioning families in her fiction strikes a blow at the patriarchal myth that the family dominated by a strong male figure should be the basic unit of society. These fictions represent fragmented families, families whose power to protect and sustain their members has been weakened or lost.

In addition, the novels suggest that the ideal family with a competent, just, and honorable father with a prudent and moral wife at his side and with obedient children is also a myth and that perhaps marriage as it exists is not the best social arrangement, especially for women.

Three of Lennox's novels, The Female Quixote (1752), Henrietta (1758), and Sophia (1762), reveal Lennox's covert rebellion against a society that relegates women to marginal positions and deprives them of power. Each novel explores a different realm of female experience: The Female Quixote's protagonist has birth, beauty, and wealth; Henrietta has birth and beauty; Sophia lacks the conventional beauty valued by conventional males; she has only "graces" and her intellect. The increasing "deprivation" demonstrates how helpless women without social props are in a world which determines status according to criteria which are limited to an elite group. The three novels, taken together, explore female experience on three levels of rank and affluence. In each case, the conclusion is the same: though rank and power give a woman some additional comforts, in the end, females from each level must relinquish notions of power and self-identity and accept the role that patriarchy offers. In the battle of discourses, the "masculine" discourse invariably triumphs and the female subsides into silence.

THE FEMALE QUIXOTE (1752)

Charlotte Lennox's second novel, The Female Quixote: The Adventures of Arabella, best demonstrates how patriarchy constructs female identity and suggests why the language of romance is so

attractive to women. The parody of Cervantes's idea of madness inspired by fiction apparently appealed to eighteenth-century tastes (Todd 152), probably because satire was a literary form appropriate to reform-minded writers like Pope, who had already demonstrated the effectiveness of the mock-heroic of epic. Mock-heroic of romance could reveal the distance between the lofty rhetoric and deeds of romance and the commonplace speech and events of the mundane life against which the romance world is pitted. The mock-heroic's double perspective matches the romance vision of the world against the reality of daily existence: looking in both directions simultaneously, the parody diminishes many of the values of the romance myth, but it may, at the same time, make the reader yearn for the idealized heroic world that does not exist in reality. The elevated view is so obviously not a reflection of what is that the falseness of romance language is made evident, but, subversively, the contrast exposes the crass and crude values in its counterpart.

The idea of a female Quixote was not original with Lennox, however. Richard Steele's The Tender Husband, first performed in 1705, featured Bridget (Biddy) Tipkin, a young woman who rejected her humdrum life and environment in favor of the idealized world of romance. A prospective suitor, Captain Jack Clerimont, describes her: "A perfect Quixote in petticoats! I tell thee, Pounce, she governs herself wholly by romance; it has got into her very blood. She starts by rule and blushes by example" (Steele 38). His further comment demonstrates the danger of such romanticizing: "Could I but have produced one instance of a lady's complying at first sight, I should have gained her promise on the spot. How am I bound to curse the cold constitutions of the

Philocleos and Statiras. I am undone for want of precedents" (39).

This masculine discourse is replicated in the thinking of Sir George in Lennox's version; he believes he can manipulate Arabella as he wishes if he can imitate the romance rhetoric. When romance heroines inhabit a world governed by masculine discourse, they are imperiled by their failure to evaluate situations and make rational decisions about their courses of action; they merely reenact plots that they have read before.

However, the fact that real-life events rarely resemble the dramatic and extravagant happenings in romances is of little importance, because, as Castro observes of Cervantes's novel, the author is not concerned with questions of truth or falsehood; the point is that "reality is always an aspect of the experience of the person who is living it" (377). Whether things are as Arabella perceives or not, she acts upon her delusion. She may, at best, appear ridiculous to others; at worst, however, she may find herself in circumstances which threaten her reputation or her virtue. She becomes her own worst enemy: "'Tis not the lover's merit wins the field,/ But to themselves alone the beauteous yield," Clerimont knowingly remarks. Lennox's version pursues this theme, for Arabella's heedless acts, dictated by romance, often endanger not only her friends, but herself.

Lennox's plot illustrates that romance is what Langbauer calls a "consoling illusion;" that is, ignorant of the way of the world, Arabella believes that women control the actions of men, but the plot moves to disabuse her of that notion. Langbauer's thesis is that novelists have used romance as a "scapegoat:" that is, they tend to

relegate disorder, exaggeration, and incoherence to romance and consider their novels the site of order, probability and "truth." Women are similarly scapegoated in that men tend to define themselves against the standard of women; thus, women and romance are often linked, but the power that romance appears to offer women is only an illusion (2-3).

Lennox's plot moves to force Arabella into an identity-mold determined by patriarchal values. The Female Quixote turns on the conflicts between masculine and feminine views of the world and of experience. Like Don Quixote, the novel concerns itself with a play on discourses: the male-dominated language of patriarchy, pious, legalistic, and logical, confronts the "feminine" language of romance, emotional and irrational. Arabella is hampered by her female inheritance (the books her mother bought to relieve her loneliness in the solitude imposed by her husband), which pits her against masculine authority and tradition. Preferring to be a romance heroine with complete dominion over men, she resists entering the real world where she will be without any power but, inevitably, she must surrender to the necessity of finding a subordinate place there. Thus The Female Quixote is a "hidden drama of relinquishment, a bidding farewell to poetic hopes" (Doody 300). The omniscient narrator gives the reader insight into Arabella's thinking processes and also reveals how the other characters perceive and respond to her. On the overt level, Lennox, like Cervantes, satirizes romance, but simply because Arabella is the protagonist and because the narrator presents her sympathetically, the novel covertly approves romance. Romance is, after all, what gets Arabella out of the stifling and stultifying life at her father's house,

and when she must give up her heroic dreams at the end, she is trapped into submission in her husband's house. She displays ambiguity about the compromise: on the one hand, she has been attracted to Glanville, but on the other hand, she is disappointed to discover that her hopes for significance in the world were impossible ones. The novel offers numerous signs that the real world needs correction. At the end, the desires and the will of the heroine must be destroyed in order for her to fit into her place; sadly, despite her imagined omnipotence as a romance heroine, she has been able to change nothing. Though a clergyman offers the correction, it is clear that the injunction is worldly, rather than divine. Thus the novel makes evident that what is differs from what should be.

The novel also depicts female fantasies of power even as it criticizes the standards of eighteenth-century society which restrict female possibility. Romances express female desires; naturally they appeal to women because of the "psychic need for alternatives to a socially defined state of meaningless and powerless activity" (Spacks, "Subtle" 533). Arabella clings to the romance view of the world because it assures her importance; it is empowering, not imprisoning. Patriarchy has imprisoned her on her father's estate; her father has circumscribed her movements and dictated her actions; in contrast, romance gives her not only power over her self but also over men. But the plot argues that the fantasy of power must be abandoned--that the female must accept male wisdom, relinquish selfhood, and become a wife. The contradiction between the development and the resolution of the plot suggests the psychological struggle that Lennox does not openly

acknowledge or adequately account for.

The major theme of the book concerns the collision between the romance world that Arabella has constructed for herself and the social constructions that she encounters in the real world. Arabella is a textbook illustration of the point that the individual is a product of her society: her role was predetermined by the practices of the society into which she was born and her position in society was established by the rank of the family into which she was born. The combined facts of her birth, her wealth, and her gender govern how she will be dressed, fed, and trained; how she will be educated; how and when she will enter society; and where she will find a place within it. Her self-image will derive from these facts as well as from the treatment she receives from the significant others in her environment, and, most importantly, the language she learns will subtly reinforce all the other learnings. Though not all young women will have Arabella's extraordinary advantages, all of them will undergo the same process of conditioning according to their rank.

A secondary theme concerns the ambiguity of words and the misunderstandings that arise when people speak from different contexts. Arabella, for example, does not grow up in the world; her father, disgusted by political maneuverings which have discredited him, has withdrawn from the court and the city. He has used his vast wealth to create an Edenic rural estate as a symbolic repudiation of human corruption. There he secludes his young and beautiful wife, who dies soon after giving birth to Arabella. Arabella then becomes the focus of her father's attention and he educates his bright child until she is

"proficient in all knowledge" (Lennox, Female 6). Her father, however, sharply restricts her contact with the outside world: he allows her to go to church "sometimes" and "sometimes" lets her ride out accompanied by several servants. As a result, her concept of reality is based upon what she has seen, what he has taught her, and what she has read.

Like Don Quixote, Arabella reads romances, the poor translations of French romances her mother had bought to alleviate the loneliness she had suffered in the two years of her married life. Don Quixote had escaped from the dreary life of a poor hidalgo into the exciting life promised by romance. In contrast, Arabella's "madness" is a displacement of her mother's alienation onto the daughter--though, of course, the father's imposition of solitude has made the daughter's life equally dull. Totally insulated from the world, Arabella accepts these fictions as histories--as true stories of life--and bases all her ideas and expectations on them. Thus she accepts idealized courtly love as the governing principle of life and wonders when her adventures will begin.

If Arabella has no adventures, there will be no story, for plot requires conflict, and Arabella's life at the castle with her father is a life of stasis. Unlike the Don, she is unable to ride forth in quest of adventures. Outsiders must be introduced, outsiders who will not humor her eccentricity as her servants are accustomed to do. Lennox thus provides a series of initial encounters between Arabella and those who speak a different discourse: she confronts first individuals and then groups as she leaves the protected confines of her father's castle and ventures first to Bath and then to London. In effect, Arabella

creates her own plot, for her imagination transforms events to fit her romantic view of the world. The distance between Lennox's plot and Arabella's "plot" reveals how much effort is required to inject interest into the daily affairs of a proper woman.

Lennox's plot is a variation of the reformed-coquette plot; though Arabella is not a coquette, the plot does require her reformation, a reformation brought about through the agency of men. It is significant that the countess, who attempts to persuade Arabella out of her romance fantasies, can shake her faith but not divest her of it. Davys had Amoranda cured by a lover-mentor in The Reform'd Coquet; here, although Arabella's lover would reform her, he is unsuccessful; he must enlist the aid of an older clergyman, fully vested with patriarchal power, in order to bring about a change.

The values implicit in Arabella's ideas are similar to those that emerge from Cervantes's treatment of love in Don Quixote. In Part 1, Ch. 14, for example, he has Marcela defend herself from charges that she is responsible for the death of Grisostomo. Like Arabella, she argues that she does not will men to die, and that, although she is beautiful, she is not thereby obligated to grant her favors to men:

Heaven made me beautiful, you say, so beautiful that you are compelled to love me whether you will or no; and in return for the love that you show me, you would have it that I am obliged to love you. . . . I was born a free being, and in order to live freely I chose the solitude of the fields. . . . Those who have been enamored by the sight of me I have

disillusioned with my words; and if desire is sustained by hope, I gave none. (1744-45)

Marcela insists on her freedom of choice as well as her freedom from the harassment of unwanted lovers. Likewise, Lennox creates a character who refuses to conform to the pattern of contemporary courtship that marks women as objects to be granted to the highest bidder. Arabella believes that women are capable of deciding whether and when they will love, that they are capable of speaking with authority and of occupying a significant space in the world. She envisions women as having the potential to act heroically; that is, she believes that women can engage in activity outside of the household without the stifling limitations imposed on them by patriarchal notions of propriety. She also insists that women have a story to tell; she wants to be the heroine of a romantic history, that is, she wishes to be the central character in a plot containing men who live--and die--for her love. Arabella does not relinquish her views readily, for she instinctively realizes that her power resides in her ability to coerce others into following her heroic script (her wealth and rank are actually the coercive factors here, but Arabella does not realize that). She speaks with the authority of the elevated heroic style, and such is her mastery of the language of power that men are awed into respecting her. Thus Lennox suggests that even when female authority is contained within patriarchal structures, it may have a reformative effect on those structures.

Lennox constructs a plot which introduces Arabella to the world by stages so that gradually she comes to realize that her ideas are

incompatible with the laws of the time (for example, heroes can be hanged for murdering rivals) and with religious doctrine (again, murder is a sin). Repelled by the vision of a world in which the heroic deeds she envisions cannot occur, she searches her library of romances for examples which justify her ideas so she can authenticate herself by invoking "historical" precedents. It is notable that though Arabella is presented as eccentric and ridiculous, her ideas, her critiques of society, are often quite valid from a woman's point of view. She recognizes that women's power is nullified by patriarchy; therefore, she rejects its institutions. When her detractors accuse her of ignoring the law, she responds loftily, "The empire of love, like the empire of honour, is governed by laws of its own, which have no dependence upon, or relation to, any other" (357).

As the plot brings Arabella into contact with other women and their daily routines, she is appalled by the emptiness of their lives. Women in the world have neither significance nor authority: their days are filled with trivial duties and trivial speech. The others of her sex fritter away their time in meaningless, unproductive activity; they are incapable of conversation above the level of fashion and gossip. After the death of her father, Arabella wishes for a confidante, but the first woman she meets from the outside world is unacceptable. Miss Groves is adept at "nothing-meaning ceremony" (76) but unable to converse with Arabella since the latter's preferred topics include neither fashions, cards, scandal, nor assemblies.

When the plot exposes Arabella to the society at Bath, she observes that these women's time is ill-employed:

people who spend their lives in such trifling amusements must certainly live to very little purpose.

What room, I pray you, does a lady give for high and noble adventures, who consumes her days in dressing, dancing, listening to songs, and ranging the walks with people as thoughtless as herself? (313)

The men she sees do not measure up to the heroic ideal either; she decries those men "with figures so feminine, voices so soft, such tripping steps and unmeaning gestures" (314).

Lennox moves her character from the closed world of the resort to the fashionable city of London. Arabella develops a low opinion of the diversions available to women: "methinks it seems to be the sole employment of those days; and what you call the amusement, must of necessity be the business of life" (373). The conversation and the activities of the women she encounters seem insipid and frivolous to Arabella. Even the Countess, the only woman who speaks her language because she, too, is well-versed in romances, subsides into the consuming activities of female life. When she receives word that her mother is ill, she rushes off to perform the womanly duty of nursing a family member and is never heard of again in the book. Her disappearance demonstrates how women are absorbed into menial or self-sacrificing tasks which effectively efface all signs of their existence.

Lennox reinforces her criticisms of the trivialization of women by having men speak them. Sir Charles, Arabella's uncle, recognizes her superiority to the town beauties who can talk of nothing but their

conquests; Sir George agrees that their conversation is filled with trifling topics--not music or drama, but their charms or their pets. Though these criticisms of women may at first glance appear to be anti-feminist, they are really attacks on the ideology of the system which produces such trivialized women--women who are insulated from meaningful work, who have leisure time to fill only with empty pastimes, women with no useful contribution to make to society, women who exist for beauty's sake and when beauty is lost, are valueless and discontented. The reader expects Arabella to condemn the vainer members of her sex, as she has done, but the criticism carries more weight when it comes from the voice of patriarchy.

Small wonder that Arabella prefers her delusions. Only once does the plot impose masculine will on her, and that is in the matter of her father's decision that she should marry her cousin Glanville. The narrator points out that she had always intended to marry but, finding attractive the notion that a suitor must serve her faithfully and suffer from afar for at least twenty years before finally wresting her from his rivals with his sword (significantly, about the length of time it will take her beauty to fade and her power fail her), Arabella is reluctant to consent to marriage right away. Even though she finds her cousin physically attractive, she represses the idea of love because freedom is difficult to relinquish. Her father, the voice of patriarchy, appropriates the possibility of romance by confiscating her books and threatening to burn them. The narrator reveals Arabella's perception of her situation:

If she did not voluntarily conform to it, she exposed herself to the attempts of a violent and unjust lover, who would either prevail on the marquis to lay a force upon her inclinations, or to make himself master of her person, and never cease persecuting her till he obliged her to give him her hand. (37)

Her imagination fueled by her romantic ideas, she melodramatically conceives of the crisis her father's act has precipitated. The only solution she can see is to flee--but she can think of no precedent in which "any heroine . . . voluntarily left her father's house, however persecuted she might be" (38). Isolated and inexperienced, Arabella does not know what persecutions await her if she should leave the protection of her father and enter the world alone--and the plot spares her that ordeal. The death of her father frees her from "tyrannical exertion of parental authority" (38) and, though placing her under the guardianship of her uncle, in effect, leaves her free to control her own life.

Once the pressure of the unwanted marriage is removed, Arabella shows no inclination to enter the world. She is content to exert control over her cousin, who really has fallen in love with her, recognizing the good sense and intelligence only partially concealed by her eccentricity. He is also attracted by her beauty, which is, of course, another form of female power. Lennox indulges a female fantasy of power by allowing Arabella to give men a dose of their own medicine--insisting that they accept her arbitrary and whimsical rules that

circumscribe their actions and curtail their speech. At first Glanville tries to jolly Arabella out of her antiquated romantic fixations, but she haughtily tells him, "The world is not more virtuous now than it was in [heroic] days, and there is good reason to believe it is not much wiser; and I do not see why the manners of this age are to be preferred to those of former ones, unless they are wiser and better" (48). Her point is well taken.

Like Don Quixote, Arabella finds herself in a world that does not live up to her heroic expectations. McKeon details progressive ideology's disenchantment with hereditary rank, suggesting that the progressive attack on aristocratic honor made satiric use of the romance genre to expose the myth that virtue is genealogically linked (153-54). Thus when Lennox chose Don Quixote as the model for a novel contrasting the social world with an ideal world, it was inevitable that her heroine would attempt to create herself in the romance-heroic mold. Cervantes's Don Quixote particularly emphasizes that the world through which the protagonist moves is considerably corrupted in contrast to the golden age of chivalry; the ancient world in which action is initiated by noble ideals is contrasted with the modern world in which action springs from material considerations and interests. One conclusion to be drawn from the novel is that the world would be improved immeasurably if the Don could somehow revive the past according to his vision (285). Arabella also attempts to reform the world around her, but the status quo resists change.

Unable to outargue her (he has read no romances), Glanville tries to accommodate himself to her expectations until her whims have passed.

In her presence he submits to her authority, even when it causes him great embarrassment. His feigned reformation does not satisfy her entirely, however, and she continues to refuse to accept his addresses.

Another man comes under Arabella's sway, the young baronet, Sir George Bellmour. He is more attracted to her wealth than to her person, but he has read romances and instinctively recognizes that in order to manipulate Arabella, he must shift to her discourse. He offers her extravagant compliments in heroic style, and she accepts them as her due as a heroine.

Sir George undertakes a duplicitous campaign to conceal his intention to woo Arabella from Glanville and his sister while he insinuates himself into Arabella's esteem. He even pretends to kill a man who Arabella mistakenly thinks was trying to abduct her. Going to even more extravagant lengths to discredit his rival, Glanville, he hires an actress to impersonate a heroic princess who identifies Glanville as her ravisher. As the result of several misunderstandings, Glanville wounds Sir George in a sword-fight, inadvertantly fulfilling Arabella's condition that her lover must purchase her with his sword from his rivals.

Arabella thus controls both men, forcing them to imitate the heroes in her French romances. Glanville humors her because he loves her; Sir George, because he want to gain her fortune. Her uncle, her guardian, has, despite his misgivings about her sanity, great respect and even awe for her high-mindedness. Once he tells her that if she had been a man she would have made a great figure in Parliament and that her speeches might one day be published (347). Half-admiringly and half-

exasperatedly, he accuses her of wanting to expand her power: "Why, madam, you want to carry your power farther than ever any beauty did before you; since you pretend to make people sick and well whenever you please" (161). She does, indeed, believe she has the power of life and death over the men who love her. (Which raises an interesting question: did she will her father to die when he opposed her wishes not to marry? There are no clues in the novel, but it is striking that she did not will him to live when he was on his deathbed, as she does at several other times in the novel when she believes men to be dying.) Yet she disclaims any guilt for the deplorable effects of her beauty; like Cervantes's Marcela, she emphasizes that she does not will men to fall in love with her (195). (But this is disingenuous; she is aware of her beauty and she expects men to fall in love. The narrator notes several times that Arabella is disappointed when her beauty does not have the desired effect [12, 15].)

And, at the end, her power is demonstrated to be merely verbal: she is strong enough only to criticize the world, not to change it, for her trajectory through the world still ends at the marriage prearranged by her father (Spacks, Desire 30). The real power belongs to men and to realities. Leland Warren writes, however, "Perhaps the most quixotic thing our Female Quixote does is to refuse the role allotted to women and to insist on becoming an active participant in the discourse of truth usually reserved for men" (377). Though her victory is shortlived, the plot does allow her to penetrate the barriers to masculine prerogatives.

Despite Arabella's resistance to traditional courtship conventions,

Lennox must eventually devise a reason for her submission in order to bring the plot to closure. Since first seeing her cousin Glanville, Arabella has been attracted to him. She gradually recognizes her desire and acknowledges it, and, according to the laws of romance, she is free to reveal her affection for him whenever she pleases. Arabella is unwilling to take that crucial step, however; as an avid reader of romances, she is well aware that when "she at last condescends to reward him with her hand . . . all her adventures are at an end for the future" (152); the fictional model ends and thus fails her. Like her eighteenth-century counterparts, when she submits to marriage, she gives up selfhood and a voice in the world. Her romances have taught her that the reputation of a woman depends "upon the noise and bustle she makes in the world" (142); she realizes that becoming a wife requires a woman to become silent and to cease making a "bustle"--she must be dependent, self-effacing, silent: in short, as men desire women to be. It will be difficult for her to accept insignificance; she has been too long used to the importance that her beauty, birth, and riches confer on her. She cannot easily forget the haughtiness she learned from her father, nor will she easily accustom herself to a marginal position in other's plots: she is too used to being the central character. Nor will she easily relinquish the elevated rhetoric of romance to accept the rhetoric of domestic affairs or to accept with equanimity the fact that others will create her social reputation and she will be inscribed in their rhetoric.

Lennox's plot lurches when the moment of Arabella's reformation arrives; apparently she had intended for the romance-reading Countess to

bring Arabella to recognition of her situation, but, though Arabella is shaken by the Countess's argument that good girls do not have adventures, she cannot accept as her own fate the life the Countess describes as

those few and natural incidents which compose the history of a woman of honour. And when I tell you that I was born and christened, had a useful and proper education, received the addresses of my Lord--, through the recommendation of my parents, and married him with their consents and in my own inclination, and that since we have lived in great harmony together, I have told you all the material passages of my life; which, upon inquiry, you will find differ very little from those of other women of the same rank, who have a moderate share of sense, prudence, and virtue. (365)

Arabella is unable to conceive of having no story at all. She is confident her history will be written after her death (121), but while she is alive, she counts on her maid Lucy to relate it for her. She instructs her maid that she must

be able not only to recount all my words and actions, even the smallest and most inconsiderable, but all my thoughts, however instantaneous; relate every change of my countenance, number all my smiles, half-smiles, blushes, turning pale, glances, pauses, full-stops, interruptions;

the rise and falling of my voice, every motion of my eyes,
and every gesture which I have used for these ten years
past. (135)

This comic version of Hamlet's injunction to Horatio to "report me and my cause aright/ To the unsatisfied" (V, ii, 326) deflates the seriousness of the scene, yet these are the instructions of a person who desires importance in the world. It is not surprising that she is unable to accept the Countess's prohibition of adventures. If she does not act nobly, how can she have a story to tell? The scene is reminiscent of Don Quixote's dismay, when, at the beginning of Part 2, he learns that his story has been printed and he fears that an evil enchanter may present him and his deeds in an unfavorable light. One who constructs his own history wants to remain in control of its telling. Arabella is quite explicit in her directions to Lucy that she wants every expression and every action to be recorded.

In the midst of her attempt to "cure" Arabella, however, the Countess breaks off. Rushing away to attend her sick mother, she demonstrates the insistence of female "duty" and perhaps, too, Lennox's intuition that a true feminine authority does not exist; the Countess has only her "charm" to bring to bear on Arabella and it is not enough to deflect her from her romantic course. As was inevitable from the beginning, only masculine authority can overcome Arabella's resistance to the relinquishment of her desires and the possibility of their fulfillment. The rationality and truth of the elderly clergyman overcomes the young woman's passionate defense of her romances. When he proves to her that her "histories" are really fiction and that they

serve only to inflame desire, Arabella yields "to the force of truth" (421). She finally recognizes in herself the pernicious effects of the romances: she has succumbed to the vanity of beauty, participated in intrigue, and lost her humility and kindness. At last she is reconciled to the abnegation of desire and will so that she can receive the blessing of patriarchy. The plot illustrates her loss of power and voice, for the narrator observes that Glanville and Arabella are "united" in title and wealth and in "every virtue and laudable affection of the mind" (423). She is no longer an individual; she has merged with her husband. The plot has unsexed both partners; they conjugate in a sexless union. In a conventional closing scene, the narrator retreats from the principals; Arabella and Glanville remain silent as the narrator describes the marriage. In Cervantes's novel, Don Quixote, disillusioned and resigned to reality, dies after renouncing his dreams and apologizing to his biographers; Arabella lives, likewise resigned to reality, but she dwindles into a silent, self-effacing wife with no story left to tell.

Yet somehow the haste with which the marriage follows the conversion of Arabella suggests the enormity of what she has given up. She has resisted the will of her father, the arguments of Glanville, the ridicule of various others, and the persuasion of the Countess. The strength and duration of her struggle demonstrates the force of the desires she had to subdue. From the beginning, the young woman has been obsessed with love; her sexuality is implied but not expressed. The fact that she sees a ravisher in every man (including her own uncle) and the energy she consumes in reconstructing the world so that she is the

object of every man's desire suggest a preoccupation with sex. At the same time she imagines that women have the power to subordinate men to their will. In this way she is able to re-form the world that deprives women of significance and dignity. Despite having cast Arabella in an absurd role, Lennox still presents her sympathetically. Though the clergyman has imposed his patriarchal vision of the "truth" on Arabella, Lennox's novel subversively preserves Arabella's "truth" in print. When Arabella cedes her power at the end, the eighteenth century reader, as well as the contemporary one, is left with a sense of loss and a wistful regret that somehow the world could not really be changed.

Finally, Arabella's aloneness is notable. Her mother dies when the baby is three days old; her father educates her, but he is not sympathetic to her slanted view of the world; they become adversaries when he commands her to marry her cousin, and the father dies before they are reconciled. Lacking education, Lucy, her woman, her only confidante, is unable to understand her mistress's needs. The other women in the book are largely inimical to Arabella; they see her as a rival (with the exception of the Countess, who withdraws her protection when she goes to nurse her mother). The men who meet Arabella find her attractive and, despite her eccentricities, they admire her, but their friendship is not disinterested or idealistic, as romance friendship should be. In order to ally herself with any of them, she must leave the woman's world of romance. Her struggle to maintain her identity is all the more touching because it is a solitary one, and her contempt for the social sops offered women as palliation for their deprivations suggests that her future life will be bleak indeed.

Lennox creates other female characters to contrast with Arabella. Her cousin, Miss Charlotte Glanville, is one of the city belles deprecated by her father and Sir George. She spends hours dressing, attending places where she will be seen by others, playing cards, discussing fashion, and gossiping. She is a coquette, flirtatious and a little free with her kisses. She is also an intriguer, for when she discovers that Sir George intends to woo Arabella, Charlotte dresses in Arabella's veil and goes to meet him in the garden in the guise of her cousin. Charlotte is envious of Arabella's beauty and secretly pleased when Arabella appears foolish, for patriarchy sets unmarried women against each other as rivals in the conquest of men. Charlotte remarks, "For my part I declare nothing pleases me so much, as gaining a lover from another lady; which is a greater compliment to one's beauty, than the addresses of a man that never was in love before" (168-69). Unlike Arabella, she does not question the propriety of her behavior, nor is she aware of the banality of her thoughts and conversation. The plot does not punish Charlotte, however, for she is a victim of patriarchy, not an evildoer. It does, however, fulfill her desire, for Sir George repents of having trifled with her affections and he marries her on the same day that Arabella marries Glanville.

The interpolated story of Miss Groves serves as a cautionary tale about what happens when female desire is unrestrained. Miss Groves, the counterpart of Maritornes in Don Quixote, is raised by a proud mother, whose pride she inherits; she grows up to be an insolent and arrogant girl. Unlike the delicate Arabella, given to crying, blushing, and fainting, Miss Groves is boisterous and more apt to indulge in

"unfeminine," rough physical exercise. When her mother confines her to home, "even here she [is] not without meeting adventures, and f[inds] a lover in the person who t[eaches] her to write" (80). Her mother finally gives up the idea of controlling her and turns her loose in London on her own. Men are attracted by her beauty; women reject her pride and masculine robustness. She takes a lover and becomes pregnant, but the baby dies. She resumes the affair until her lover abandons her when she runs out of ready cash and is unable to draw on her fortune. She has no friends: although people talk about her, no one, not even her mother, advises her; instead, people flatter her and prey on her fortune. Disposing of a second baby by her lover, she finds a man who is willing to marry her (for her fortune, of course).

Arabella, swept away by her romantic delusions, reconciles Miss Groves's behavior with romantic precedents and sheds tears over her misfortunes. Nevertheless, the female reader does not miss the point that one who lacks restraint suffers the loss of reputation. Miss Groves's story might exemplify female courage and honesty in the twentieth century, but eighteenth-century readers would view her freedom as despicable.

However, Lennox is not so severe with the transgressor as one might expect. Miss Groves loses two infants, but she does gain a husband, and, presumably, respectability. Somehow Miss Groves seems less reprehensible than the predatory Mr. L-- who took his pleasure with her without assuming any responsibility for the consequences.

Finally, there is the example of the Countess who recounts her own history to prove to Arabella that good women have no stories. A woman's "adventures" can be only illicit intrigues or sexual relations: the

proper eighteenth-century woman is the one about whom there is nothing to say. The Countess's reward for her blameless life is disposed of in a sentence: she and her husband "lived together in great harmony" (365). Although "harmony" implies two voices, the implication is that they blend together. Relinquishing her autonomy would be, as Davy's Berina said, "a bitter pill to swallow;" for Arabella, it is particularly difficult because she has become accustomed to exerting power and speaking with authority. Lennox's plot falls apart when she tries to oust romance; she brings in the countess only to pull her out of the plot without having accomplished her purpose (Langbauer 73).

Lennox's novel is, in effect, a case study of how human beings construct reality for themselves. Arabella, is, of course, the focus, but an omniscient narrator carries the plot and reveals what goes through the characters' minds. The narrator explains what motivates Arabella's outrageous behavior and then recounts how various other characters respond to her. The narrator's lightly mocking tone has a tendency to defuse criticism of any of the characters; rarely does the narrator condemn; more often she places the criticism in another character's mouth or simply reports incidents without comment.

For example, rather than explaining that Arabella is anxious to initiate a romantic adventure, the narrator dramatizes a conversation between Arabella and Lucy:

Well, Lucy, said she, did you observe that stranger
who ey'd us so heedfully today at church?

This girl, notwithstanding her country simplicity, knew

a compliment was expected from her on this occasion; and therefore replied, that she did not wonder at the gentleman's staring at her

I charge you upon pain of my displeasure, do not be accessary to the conveying his presumptuous thoughts to me, either by letters or messages; nor suffer him to corrupt your fidelity with the presents he will very probably offer you [said Arabella].

Lucy, to whom this speech first gave a hint of what she ought to expect from her lady's lovers, finding herself of more importance than she imagined, was so pleased at the prospect which opened to her, that it was with some hesitation she promised to obey her orders.

Arabella, however, was satisfied with her assurances of observing her directions; and dismissed her from her presence, not without an apprehension of being too well obeyed. (12)

The effect of the narrator's light ironic tone is to allow the reader to momentarily sympathize with almost all of the characters. There is no villain (with the possible exception of Mr. L---, Miss Groves's debaucher, described by Miss Groves's maid, whose degree of bias is unknown) or villainess in the novel; the source of discontent and the cause of rebellion only partially expressed in the novel is the patriarchal ideology which oppresses women and forces them to repress will and desire. The novel's satire, its humor, and its insights into

the female condition make it enjoyable without devaluing the serious concerns which are the subtext.

Spacks sees Arabella's desire to apply the power of the romance plots to her life as an analogue to the act all narrative writers engage in: the desire to make life more like fiction bespeaks a desire to alter the world, and the "power of plotting" is conceivably the power to do just that (Desire 240). Thus, though not overtly rebellious, The Female Quixote reveals the author's perceptions of shortcomings in the world she describes and also uncovers a latent desire to share in the significance the world has granted to men and denied to women.

Langbauer comments:

Arabella exemplifies Lennox's own dilemma as a woman writer: the imperative to leave behind the insubstantial world of romance, the only realm in which the woman (writer) is given a place, however illusory. The novel reveals that the novelistic world it strives to establish through a critique of the emptiness of romance has no real place for women except in repeating her association with romance. The only alternative it can offer her is this revelation which exposes the workings of the system of representation and the logic of the tradition. (62)

HENRIETTA (1758)

Henrietta is, likewise, a novel of female initiation to the world

and a quest for self-discovery. It also displays a clash of discourses; this time the conflict is between the virtuous discourse of the heroine and the language of the self-seeking and the self-indulgent who posit a moral relativism that justifies whatever they do. Henrietta is concerned with themes of status inconsistency, the economic oppression of women, and the diminution of women's possibilities caused by patriarchal ideology. Like Arabella, Henrietta comes to realize that one's private conception of reality must always surrender to the social construction of reality. Her initiation into the world brings her into contact with people to whom her moral guidelines are meaningless. Recognizing her vulnerability, Henrietta strives to protect her reputation by remaining a non-person, but even the effacement of her identity is insufficient defense, for it places her in that class of people who exist only on the sufferance of those with superior wealth and rank (and whose code of behavior is antithetical to hers). The plot expresses Lennox's "conservative" view, which rejects aristocratic brutality and tyranny but also denies the pragmatism of the middle class that derives power from money without any mediating sense of human worth (McKeon 169-171).

Lennox's narrator reveals how Henrietta must suppress her thoughts and opinions from her employers; Mrs. Willis is the only one in whom she can safely confide, but Henrietta is able to see her only occasionally. Even so, the plot suggests that natural gentility cannot be concealed; whenever Henrietta's employers begin to perceive that she does not come from the servant class, they find reasons to dismiss her and eliminate the silent reproach she offers to their pretensions. Thus, even though

she attempts to conform to the expectations of the world, Henrietta is unable to act the role successfully because her inherent superiority cannot be suppressed.

Unlike Arabella, Henrietta is not a heroine requiring reformation (though she is guilty of imprudence); she already has a fairly realistic idea of the image of womanhood imposed by conventional education and society. She is aware that despite her venerable ancestry and high social standing, her indigence will prevent her from attracting a suitor worthy of her, and, having lost the traditional protectors of father and mother, she must defend herself from the machinations of those who wish to use her in one way or another. Lacking Arabella's romance illusions of power, Henrietta does not revolt against the institutions of patriarchy, but rather, by disguising herself so that her identity remains unknown, takes defensive maneuvers. The first volume of the novel depicts how haste, imprudence, and untrustworthy friends combine to place the heroine in untenable positions.

The novel introduces Henrietta as a "fair adventurer" (a loaded term, as The Female Quixote has demonstrated) in the act of fleeing her manipulative benefactor's home. She has taken the drastic step of risking her reputation not because of anything she has done to deserve punishment but because of "the fear of being forced to marry a man I hate" (Lennox, Henrietta 1, 10). Like Arabella, she has concluded that flight is her only means of combating the superior power of her elders, and, though her knowledge of the world is somewhat wider than that of Arabella, she has no conception of the pitfalls that await her. Seeking refuge from a predatory world, Henrietta allies herself, first, with a

Miss Woodley, a flighty girl given to seeing the world through romantic glasses, and, second, with Mrs. Willis, a pragmatic and clear-sighted woman from the working-class, who extends her home and her friendship to the beleaguered girl.

Henrietta is not a reader of romances (though she does occasionally imagine a romantic plot with herself as the heroine; however, on these occasions, reason quickly reasserts itself). Henrietta also rejects amatory novellas, reading a few pages of The New Atalantis and then throwing it away (1, 34). She prefers Fielding's The Adventures of Joseph Andrews to one of Mrs. Haywood's "love-sick passionate stories," demonstrating her adherence to the virtues of prudence and chastity (1, 36).

Henrietta's parents collaborated to educate her; her father taught her French and Italian and her mother "every useful accomplishment for a young woman's situation" (1, 77). In addition, her mother, who loved "scribbling," had written her history to serve as instruction for her daughter, and "she had interspersed throughout her little narrative many beautiful and just reflections, and many observations and useful maxims, which her reading, which was very comprehensive, and her experience furnished her with" (1, 73-4). Thus Henrietta's maternal inheritance provides a set of principles to guide her.

The moral reflections from her mother, however, are inadequate guidelines for the situations Henrietta finds herself in. Lennox arranges for Henrietta to learn from experience what humiliations and perils the world offers the unprotected woman. A woman at that time had limited routes to security: employment, dependency upon a patron or

relative, marriage, or inheritance. Henrietta goes into service, the only respectable occupation for a working woman of her class, only to learn how employers exploit and degrade the women who work for them. Henrietta also discovers what it is like to become a poor relation. Some of her relatives reject her entirely until she becomes the wife of a wealthy man. Henrietta has few illusions about her chances for marrying into a fortune; as it happens, she has difficulty finding a man who will offer her marriage at all. In order to bring Henrietta to security, Lennox manipulates the plot so that Henrietta's aunt has a change of heart and leaves her enough money to marry the man she loves. The ostensible message is that a virtuous woman will find happiness; the subversive message is that happiness occurs only as the result of the intervention of the author: the ostensible message is fiction. Beneath the light tone, the novel is a horror story about a woman alone in the world.

Another theme developed in Henrietta is that of the economic oppression of women. Gender roles were inescapable in the eighteenth century, but even more so in the lower economic levels. Lacking both freedom and security, lower-class women were less free from the constraints of being female than their aristocratic counterparts. Forced by Lennox's plot out of the role of daughter and denied the role of wife by her poverty, Henrietta has the option of becoming a prostitute or carving out an identity for herself in the no-woman's land of respectable work. Incidents in the plot cumulatively reveal the narrowness of her options.

Henrietta is the product of an imprudent marriage. Her father, the

third son of an earl, had alienated his father by marrying the daughter of an impoverished widow despite his father's disapproval. The young couple had managed to live happily without money; their son has found a job as a tutor to support himself, but Henrietta is thrust into the world without a family to protect her or a job with which to support herself. Henrietta does have a guardian, the merchant Mr. Bale, but he is out of the country or otherwise unreachable for most of the novel, so his protection is purely nominal. The plot shows the successive failures of the working world, the family support system, the friendship of women, and the protection of men to provide a place for this unchaperoned woman.

Lennox's plot traces Henrietta's efforts to find a "position;" these experiences expose her to women who exist on the social fringe; their wealth grants them access to the lower ranks, but their manners quickly cancel the opportunity. Lennox's plots use the narrative strategy that McKeon identifies as linked to conservative ideology--they detail the coarseness, hypocrisy and fraudulence of those who rise in status (232). First, she is befriended by Lady Manning, a soap boiler's daughter who had married well. Birth is meaningless to Lady Manning; she despises those who have no wealth and she enjoys humiliating the daughter of a gentleman. Henrietta is able to swallow the verbal insults, but when Lady Manning proposes a match for her with Mr. Vellum, a clerk, Henrietta is indignant at this insult to her rank. Henrietta may lack money, but she is certain of her own worth and what she deserves. She is not free to leave, however, first, because she has nowhere to go, and second, because she fears that Lady Manning will harm

her reputation: "The world seldom espouses the part of the oppressed, because they who oppress have that on their side which is sure to exculpate them, and that is riches" (1, 98), the narrator wryly comments.

Henrietta finds another employer, Miss Cordwain, a lady of quality but a "cit," a tradesman's daughter, who requires a companion who looks like a gentlewoman. She does not expect to find the genuine article, whose true gentility will present a silent reproach to her lack of it. Miss Cordwain and Lady Manning are mirror images--both from trade families, they have gained wealth and now wear the latest fashions and affect grandeur and distinction in the most awkward, yet opulent, way. Natural gentility, Lennox suggests, cannot be concealed any more than social pretensions. Though Henrietta has taken care to adopt the demeanor of an employee and to comport herself with humility, both employers are somewhat awed by her inborn grace. The reader can predict that, like Lady Manning, Miss Cordwain will strive to undermine Henrietta's natural superiority.

Lennox's satiric portrait of Miss Cordwain stresses that riches do not improve the mind nor do they enhance the person. The narrator points out that Henrietta would not trade the virtues and sentiments of her noble ancestors for Miss Cordwain's wealth. Henrietta's employment is terminated when she inadvertantly becomes Miss Cordwain's rival for the hand of Lord B--. The young man is attracted by Henrietta's beauty and by her principles, but Miss Cordwain's fortune proves to be a stronger incentive. Uncertain of her ability to compete with Henrietta on merit alone, Miss Cordwain frames her for the theft of a bracelet.

The narrator cynically points out how the count, the countess, and their son kowtow to the owner of the fortune; though Henrietta is proved innocent, no one moves to reproach Miss Cordwain:

Thus did these noble persons accommodate themselves to the manners of those whom they in secret despised; and, for the sake of a few paltry thousands, shewed the utmost solicitude to associate plebeian meanness in the honours of a noble ancestry, and to give title, rank, precedence, to one who would disgrace them all. (2, 92-3)

Again and again, Lennox criticizes a society that values money above virtue. Lord B. is a pitiable example: he loves Henrietta's person and Miss Cordwain's money. Similarly, though his mother despises Miss Cordwain and admires Henrietta, she supports the match her husband had agreed to so that they can remove the mortgages on their estate, and she hies Henrietta off to London to go in service.

Henrietta's new employer, Mrs. Autumn, is a caricature of the beauty-obsessed woman; despite the "deep furrows in her face, her fallen cheeks, and the poor shrivell'd hand that supported her head . . . her dress spoke her scarce fifteen" (2, 119). She is unable to come to terms with her own advancing age, and she requires all of her servants to participate in her self-deception that she is still young. Warned about Mrs. Autumn's foible, Henrietta is confident that she can act with discretion. Since her mother died, Henrietta has had to disguise her inner feelings one way or another: she had concealed her resentment

over Lady Manning's insults until she could leave; as Miss Benson, she had to maintain another identity; now as a servant, she has to remain subservient to those who are her inferiors by nature and by birth. In order to survive in the world, she has had to efface her own identity and, chameleon-like, take on whatever demeanor pleases those on whom she must depend. In this case, when she is unable to contain her disgust and shock at the older woman's ridiculous posturings, Mrs. Autumn fires her.

Henrietta's last employer is Miss Belmour, a kind woman who deperately needs a confidante. She is involved with a married man--a man whose father had forced him into an avaricious marriage. Mr. Campley has separated from his wife but he is unwilling to part from her money. Because Miss Belmour wishes to rationalize her desire, she readily accepts his argument that heaven considers the marriage invalid and that he is free to love her.

Henrietta begins a campaign to reform her mistress; but in her position as companion, she must be careful not to appear morally superior. Miss Belmour's excessive freedom with Mr. Campley leads Henrietta to explain the power struggle that goes on in courtship: "You must either give him laws, or be contented to receive them of him: his aim is to degrade you to a mistress, he will love you upon no other conditions" (2, 175). Under Henrietta's tutelage, Miss Belmour begins to establish a distance from her married lover; but, lacking Henrietta's ability to restrain her emotions, she backslides. Henrietta's brother, absent from the plot until required to assist in her providential rescue from indigence and spinsterhood, disapproves of Miss Belmour as a

companion for his sister and sends Henrietta back to England.

Thus Henrietta's efforts to provide for herself have come to nothing. She has continually found herself linked with persons beneath her rank, persons who are morally inferior to her. Her employers, often envious of her rank, have attempted to humiliate and degrade her. The view that Lennox provides of the world of work for women is a daunting one.

Another safety net for the woman alone should be the family. The family support system provides a network of relations disposed because of kinship to help one another, but Lennox shows that the system can fail. The Courtney family is an ancient one, but the patrilineal method of preserving estates intact penalizes the family that produces more than one son. Henrietta's father, the third son, though well loved, forfeits any hope of support when he marries for love; the disapproval of the father is extended to the son's children. Thus, when Henrietta finds herself a destitute orphan, no one in the extended family comes to her rescue. It is only when Lady Manning makes a disparaging remark about Henrietta's father in front of Lady Meadows, his aunt, that family pride forces her to take Henrietta in. Once the connection is made, however, Lady Meadows offers to make Henrietta her heir upon the condition that Henrietta recant her religion and become Roman Catholic. Lady Manning insists that Henrietta marry a Roman Catholic baronet with a good estate, one that Henrietta describes as "not much above sixty years of age, his person just not horrible, and he was not quite a fool" (1, 121). Learning that her refusal has made the aunt decide to imprison her in a French nunnery, Henrietta impetuously runs

away to live incognito. Rejecting the option of quiet submission to a loveless marriage, she removes herself from familial protection and forfeits her identity, her name and her social position.

Henrietta's uncle interests himself in Henrietta's welfare when he learns that Lord B. wants to marry her if she can reconcile with Lady Manning (and, of course, inherit her estate); he offers to mediate between her and her aunt. When he discovers that her objection to the reconciliation rests upon her refusal to become a Catholic, he considers such apostasy a small sacrifice for a fortune. Her horrified refusal causes him to drop her, telling his friends that she has been imprudent. The narrator comments,

As for our fair heroine, she foresaw that her uncle would justify his neglect of her at her expense. She had every thing against her: rank, fortune, power; that general prejudice which prevails against the unfortunate, and that as general servility which adopts the passions of the great. But these reflections filled her with no uneasy apprehensions; for there is this advantage in virtue, that it is sufficient for itself and needs not the applause or support of others, its own consciousness is its best reward.

(1, 148)

These are noble sentiments, but the plot subverts them by demonstrating that virtue brings no income or protection to Henrietta.

There is one family member who is able to help Henrietta, but he

appears only at the end of the novel, and both he and she fail to recognize each other because both are in disguise. Lennox, of course, has organized the plot so that Henrietta must face the world with only her own slender resources until the "happy" ending can be deferred no longer. Henrietta's younger brother had been in the same destitute condition as she at the death of their father, but, being a man, he was able to go forth to seek his fortune alone. He has found a position as tutor to a young lord; the two of them have been making the "grand tour," and Charles Courtney and Henrietta have not seen each other for years. In contrast to Henrietta's, his experience clearly points up the disadvantages of being female. He has needed no advisor or chaperone; on his own he makes a suitable connection and becomes self-sufficient when his employer settles money on him for life for having discharged his duties honorably.

Lennox contrives for brother and sister to meet unexpectedly while Miss Belmour and Henrietta are en route to Paris. (Obviously, they would never meet if Henrietta remained within the "proper" sphere for a young unmarried woman, for the two women encounter Charles and the young lord on the road; modest Henrietta would never have spoken but the freer Miss Belmour strikes up a conversation right away.) Charles and Henrietta do not recognize each other, not only because they have been separated for so long, but also because they both travel incognito. Again, the gender difference is emphasized; Charles and his young lord periodically call themselves Freeman and Melvil because, says the narrator, they have had "many pleasant adventures" under those names (2, 187). Henrietta has been traveling under the cognomen "Miss Benson"--

first, in order to avoid being captured and put into a nunnery by Lady Meadows, and second, in order to avoid the humiliations heaped upon a reduced gentlewoman in service. Charles has joined the ranks of the predators while Henrietta remains one of the victims.

When "Melvil" and Henrietta fall in love, their identities still unknown to each other, Charles becomes a procurer. He tells her that the man she loves has an illustrious title and is heir to a great estate. Pointing out that a person of her low rank can never hope for marriage with such a man, he urges her not to let a romantic notion of virtue deprive her of advantages that might be offered her. As soon as Charles discovers that Henrietta is his sister, however, he shifts into the role of surrogate father and forbids her to associate with Miss Belmour. Illustrating how easily men accept the double standard they apply to women, he also warns her that she cannot expect a decent proposal from the Marquis. He places her in a nunnery so she can avoid the attentions of the persistent Marquis, ironically imposing the same restraint on her movement that she had fled Lady Meadows to avoid. The plot takes another ironic twist when Charles tries to intercede for Henrietta with Lady Meadows; the capricious aunt much prefers her nephew to his sister and settles the bulk of her estate on him, giving Henrietta only a lump sum. Thus the movement of the plot demonstrates that the patriarchal system accommodates men easily; they have no difficulty in finding a secure place in the world. It is only women who have to remain vigilant to avoid unacceptable connections and to defend their bodies against harm.

Eighteenth-century heroines alone in the world yearn for a mother-

figure, a confidante and advisor, but Henrietta's inexperience leads her to female relationships which are not to her benefit. Miss Woodley, a flighty young woman Henrietta meets as she flees from Lady Meadows, is to blame for the fact that Henrietta takes lodgings in London with a woman of questionable reputation. Her appearance there brings her to the attention of the libertine Lord B--, who harrasses her with his unwanted attentions. Miss Woodley, her head turned by his meaningless flattery, also reveals Henrietta's real name, given to her in confidence, to the young lord. Another female becomes interested in Henrietta, but her friendship is flawed too. The countess, mother of Lord B., is impressed by Henrietta's quality and her virtue. Several times she offers to find Henrietta a position as a companion, but Henrietta refuses to become a dependent: "I have not too much pride to be a servant, since it is necessary I should be one: but I am afraid I cannot so easily submit to be a dependant [sic]" (2, 114). The countess even offers to have Henrietta come to live with her, but Henrietta will not agree to do so while Lord B. remains at home. The countess, like her son, admires Henrietta and despises Miss Cordwain, but she wishes her son to marry the inferior woman with the large fortune rather than the paragon with no fortune. Thus the female companions Henrietta has sought to ally herself with victimize her in a kind of double repression, for they are themselves victimized by patriarchal ideology.

Having failed at supporting herself or finding a relative or friend to take care of her, Henrietta has no recourse but to marry. Again, however, this realistic novel demonstrates how scarce are the prospects. When she lodges at the milliner's, the plot confronts

Henrietta with Lord B., a young libertine who is engaged to a wealthy young woman but who is not averse to having an illicit relationship. Henrietta is unbending in her refusal to listen to his addresses; he attempts to overpower her physically, but she repels him. He feigns reformation, thinking to win her over, but she tells her confidante, Mrs. Willis, that she has a low opinion of him. He may be a lord, but he is not a gentleman. She cannot respect him; no man has a right to the esteem of a woman whom he has treated dishonorably. She argues, "The lover, who marries his mistress only because he cannot gain her upon easier terms, has just as much generosity as the highwayman who leaves a traveller in possession of his money, because he is not able to take it from him" (2, 103). Her metaphor underlines the material value placed upon chastity as well as the predatory nature of man.

Henrietta continues to resist Lord B., even when he really does fall in love with her, for he is never able to overcome his desire for Miss Cordwain's money. At the end, the narrator reports that he does marry Miss Cordwain and is an unhappy man, until, finally, "tortured with remorse, disappointment and despair, he had recourse to the bottle, and fell an early sacrifice to intemperance" (2, 313). He exemplifies the degeneration of the aristocracy that has sacrificed honor and virtue to material considerations, and to which what McKeon defines as conservative ideology is opposed.

The younger Mr. Bale also falls in love with Henrietta, but he is already married to a plebeian wife with a fortune. Taking over Henrietta's guardianship while his father is out of the country and knowing that his jealous wife would never allow him to bring a beautiful

young unmarried woman to their home, Mr. Bales finds lodgings for her. He is in the process of arranging to take Henrietta to the country for (the reader surmises) an attempted seduction when his wife confronts Henrietta as a fallen woman. Timid Mr. Bale retreats under the iron hand of his wife, and Henrietta does not see him again. Once again, patriarchy has succumbed to material interests; the loss of honor has weakened it immensely.

Deprived of name, family, and friends, and confined in her movements by her position as servant, Henrietta has no opportunities for meeting an eligible and respectable man--and, in fact, when she does meet the Marquis, it is suggested at first that even he intends originally to have a light dalliance, but he reveals his essentially virtuous character when he finds himself unable to consider dishonorable approaches to the chaste Henrietta. The reader should notice, however, how many obstacles have to be overcome before the resolution is achieved. First, Lennox has to contrive a plausible way for a modest young gentlewoman to meet a young man who has not been introduced to her. Next, Henrietta has to resist the suggestion of "Freeman" (her brother in disguise) that she consider an improper relationship with his charge. Then Lennox has to manipulate the plot so that Henrietta's identity is accidentally revealed to her brother. Henrietta's brother becomes her protector then, and he undertakes a series of maneuvers to prevent the Marquis from seeing her while he works feverishly to try to obtain a dowry for Henrietta so that an acceptable marriage is possible. The impediments increase at the end: Lady Meadows makes Charles her heir rather than Henrietta; the Duke opposes the marriage of

his son, the Marquis. Finally, the machinery producing a "happy" resolution lurches into action: in a "magical" contrivance, the absent elder Mr. Bale makes an appearance at the end of the novel and agrees to lend Charles enough money to make a settlement on Henrietta (to be repaid when Charles inherits Lady Meadows's estate).

Once again, the heroine is silenced at the end: "That innate delicacy which had forced her joy to be silent, suffered her gratitude to show itself in the most lively expression" (2, 311); Henrietta is not only silenced, but she disappears, not to make a public appearance until late the following winter. She is the topic of conversation, the narrator explains, "Her beauty, her sufferings, her virtue, and her good fortune, were for a long time the subjects of conversation" (2, 313) but she is not an actor or a speaker.

The novel has demonstrated how fiercely the heroine must struggle in order to maintain her integrity in a world where wealth is thought to equal virtue. Henrietta's discourse of virtue has had little impact; in the circles where she traveled, discourse is governed by other values. Henrietta has been unable to instill good sense in Miss Woodley or Mrs. Autumn or to teach discretion to Miss Belmour. Lord B.'s reformation is only feigned; he never comes to realize the error of basing all his expectations on wealth. Only a plot contrivance brings Henrietta into contact with the Marquis; the inescapable conclusion is that it is only by accident that a young woman without money will encounter a good wealthy man. The reader is left with the impression that good people by far are outnumbered by the ridiculous, the depraved, and the dangerous. The novel expresses the conservative view that aristocratic virtue has

been diluted by marriages motivated by monetary interests; it also protests strongly the lack of economic opportunities for women who have been forced out of the gender roles that are protected by patriarchy. In the clash between the virtuous discourse of the heroine and the language of the self-seeking and self-indulgent who posit a moral relativism that justifies whatever they do, it is the voice of the heroine that is effaced. Finally, at no point in the story is Henrietta allowed to write her own story; her decisions are never a matter of her choice--they are made in order to avoid whatever evil faces her. The best she can do is struggle to avoid being subject to other people's plots.

SOPHIA (1762)

Sophia, first serialized in The Lady's Museum as The History of Harriot and Sophia in 1760 and published as Sophia in 1762, also divides the inhabitants of the eighteenth-century world into two groups: those who live by principles of honesty and goodness and those who are moral relativists, who simply take the most expeditious way of gaining their ends (Schofield 142). This novel also develops the themes of feminine sensibility, of economic oppression of women, and of decay of the patriarchal family.

Lennox divides her female character into Jekyll-Hyde components and contrasts the resulting one-dimensional characters. Patriarchy's valorization of intellect over emotion is demonstrated in Sophia, who,

suppressing all sexuality, uses her mind to become economically independent. Sophia, representing virtue, displays reason used to curb instinct and desire; and Harriot, representing vice, embodies overt sexuality and ungoverned passions. Sophia, despite her apparent meekness, becomes the voice of judgment on the advantages granted to males in her world; Harriot fulfills female fantasies of complete freedom. The author's ambiguity toward the two characters, however, is evident in the fact that though the narrator's language and the plot condemn Harriot, the plot also allows her to achieve her desires of luxurious clothing and accoutrements as well as a powerful and rich protector while the virtuous Sophia must subsist in a humble cottage with her mother and support herself by doing needlework. Yet the resolution clearly rejects Harriot as the "other" and confirms the valorization of Sophia's "graces" as superior to Harriot's dependence on beauty and haughty airs. Sophia becomes "worthy" of her husband by surviving without having to depend on feminine wiles and stratagems.

This novel contains a living mother who embodies the negative traits of womanhood as perceived by men. She is not sexually depraved, but she is shallow and frivolous, guided by no fixed moral principles. She is not a fit instructor or model for her children; in fact, she is a good deal like her childish elder daughter Harriot, whom she consistently favors. Therefore, instead of serving as exemplar to her daughters, she must be corrected and led by her younger daughter Sophia.

Lennox's plot is far less complex in this novel than in the previous two: it is a conflation of the Cinderella story and the Reformed Rake plot. Sophia must rise out of the ashes of her mother's

contempt and her sister's ridicule to meet the "prince," but this prince is a rake who must be brought to terms with the will of a virtuous woman who will not be corrupted. Yet Sophia must face her perplexing difficulties virtually alone: alienated from her mother and sister, Sophia has no one in whom to confide except for Mr. Herbert, the elderly and weak (at one time becoming so ill that his life is feared for) mentor who attempts to guide her through the maze of moral choices she faces. Lacking Arabella and Henrietta's liveliness, Sophia more nearly approaches the type of the sentimental heroine: she is timid and quiet; she blushes easily and weeps frequently. Because the plot lacks the complex action of the other two novels, the focus is on Sophia's reactions to her feelings and to the words of others. It is thus more a psychological portrait than a novel of action.

From the beginning, Lennox makes it clear that the two sisters are opposites. Harriot, as her name suggests, is given to riotous behavior, venting her emotions and sexual appetites at will. She is even demonic, as "little Harry" implies. Sophia, on the other hand, is quiet and thoughtful. Her behavior throughout the novel lives up to her name; she epitomizes wisdom. Having subdued all thoughts of sexual fruition, she is in the paradoxical position of having to attract a man into the path of righteousness (and matrimony) without the traditional lures that women use.

The novel focuses on a female household: the father, disposed of in a sentence, has no influence on the atmosphere of the home. His only contribution is a negative one: his inability to provide money for his family. He is replaced by a surrogate, an elderly relative of his, but

Mr. Herbert represents failing patriarchy. Fallible, he is unable to read correctly Sir Charles's motives. His discourse is patriarchal discourse, but it is most often pious platitudes designed to persuade Sophia to accept her fate with stoic resignation. His advice requires her to be passive and to allow men to arrange her affairs for her; however, having a modest income, he can provide for the family no better than Mr. Darnley could.

The spendthrift Mr. Darnley (perhaps named for the foolish husband of Mary Queen of Scots) did not exercise rational judgment when he chose a wife for her beauty, encumbering himself on a modest salary with a woman who craved luxury. Harriot is a beauty like her mother; she too loves luxury and lacks restraint. Harriot's beauty, however, is all superficial; her haughty airs and arrogant behavior tend to repel others, not attract them. In contrast, though Sophia has not the striking beauty of Harriot, she has "graces" (1, 3). The narrator distinguishes between them by saying,

Harriot was formed for the admiration of the many; Sophia the passion of the few, the sweet sensibility of her countenance, the powerful expression of her eyes, the soft elegance of her shape and motion, a melodious voice whose varied accents enforced the sensible things she always said, were beauties not capable of striking vulgar minds; and which were sure to be eclipsed by the dazzling lustre of her sister's complexion, and the fire of two bright eyes, whose looks were as quick and unsettled as her thoughts. (1, 4)

The narrator's rhetoric is careful to dissociate the heroine from sexuality and physical beauty; Lennox's strategy is in line with the movement in eighteenth-century women writers to align women with qualities of mind rather than body. Harriot's more visible, and therefore more "vulgar," traits are inferior to Sophia's more subtle virtues of discernment and rationality. The process is what Eagleton calls the "feminization" of values (14) designed to reduce the brutality of aristocratic exploitation of the underprivileged--"to mollify ruling-class barbarism with the milk of middle-class kindness" (95). Sophia is presented as a model of female sensibility.

The girls differ in their tastes, too: Harriot receives the polite education and Sophia remains at home reading the books Mr. Herbert gives her; because of her innate intelligence she needs no teacher, precepts, or examples. Her reading teaches her good judgment while her mother and Harriot spend their time on dress, visiting, and trivial amusements. Not considering domestic duties incompatible with intellect, she takes over the running of the household (her mother and sister are too busy dressing and being seen to worry about it).

The death of Mr. Darnley has a more profound effect on the family than any action of his following his marriage. The household must be dismantled and its inmates become lodgers. Each responds in a different fashion: Mrs. Darnley prefers to delude herself and pretend nothing has changed; Harriot complains loudly, but relies on her face to save her from poverty; only Sophia makes concrete plans to earn money for the future of the family.

Again there is a clash of discourses: Sophia's mother and sister, rather than admit her superiority, denigrate all of her practical suggestions. They particularly scorn her idea that she should become a governess and that Harriot should go into service. Neither of them is able to come to terms with the grim reality of their poverty and lack of resources. Sophia subsides in silence, her wisdom overwhelmed by the self-absorption of the other two.

Harriot, exhibiting sexually provocative conduct, attracts the attention of Sir Charles Stanley, a wealthy baronet whom all perceive as "a man of the strictest honour and unblemished integrity" (1, 20). Again the gap between perceived male honor and integrity and actual male behavior appears: he is willing to set Harriot up as his mistress and she accepts readily. The narrator's disapproval, however, is directed at Harriot's sexual aggression, which provoked his offer. Harriot is too caught up in her sexual triumph to consider the implications of such a relationship (or else too amoral to care what they may be).

The plot illustrates the narrator's contention that Harriot's beauty is effective at first sight, but Sophia's beauty has a delayed reaction; Sir Charles shifts his attention to Sophia. Sophia is in a quandary, but she cannot turn to her mother for useful advice; the mother is interested only in the luxurious gifts that Sir Charles provides for them. Mr. Herbert, her elderly mentor, urges Sophia not to be deceived by Sir Charles's good looks and money.

Harriot is furious, not because she loves Sir Charles but because her vanity is wounded. In rage, she heaps invective on Sophia. Sophia is shocked; she is incapable of using such language or even thinking of

the ideas that the language expresses. Clearly, the two sisters are inscribed in different discourses: Harriot, the expression of competitive sexuality and Sophia, the language of innocence and repression. When Harriot learns that her former love, Sir Charles, has begun to pay his addresses to Sophia, she sneers: "I have always despised Sir Charles; my sister is so unused to having lovers, that she will run mad for joy, but she will have only my leavings" (1, 53). Sophia refuses to listen to distasteful speech. She is offended by the idea that she should consider it an honor to be sought by a man whose wealth places him so far above her (in her innocence, she is unaware the he has debauched her sister); the narrator relates that Sophia considers it an "indignity to her sex" (1, 67). Sophia says she will seek a job:

Though I am humble enough to go into service, I am too proud to listen to the addresses of any man, who, from his superiority of fortune, thinks he has a right to keep me in doubt of his intentions, or in mean dependance [sic] upon a resolution which he has not perhaps enough regard for me to make.

Such discourse is alien to Mrs. Darnley; she responds that women must suffer "inconveniencies" for affluence and pleasure (1, 66). The sacrifice of honor is a trivial matter for her, whether or not it leads to marriage.

The narrator emphasizes that the natural parent-child relationship

is inverted here: "Nature here had transferred the parent's rights to the child, and the gay, imprudent, ambitious mother stood awed and abashed in the presence of the worthier daughter" (1, 69). Sophia, who has always been excluded from her mother's affection, desperately wants to please her mother when Mrs. Darnley urges her "to use your good sense to secure your conquest" (1, 68), but the plot reveals her determination not to compromise her own standards to win her mother's love.

Lennox dramatizes the contrast between the two sisters by juxtaposing two scenes: one in which Harriot accidentally encounters Sir Charles after he has cast her off and another one in which Sir Charles is alone in a room with Sophia. In the first scene, Harriot is bold and rude. The narrator stresses that Sir Charles has delicacy; he would never face a woman he had rejected "unless her contemptible character had authorized it," ironically underlining the insidious domination of women by patriarchal values. The narrator directs a warning to the female readership:

Pride, ignorance, folly, and affectation, sink a woman so low in the eyes of men, that they easily dispense themselves from strict observance of those delicate attentions, and respectful regards which the sex in general claim by the laws of politeness, but which sense and discernment never pay to the trifling part of it. (1, 71)

Here the narrator strongly disapproves of Harriot's unconstrained behavior and suggests that her behavior justifies his treatment of her.

The narrator's illogical response emphasizes how women are victimized by the men who govern them: women's acquiescence to men's desires automatically devalues and demeans them in men's eyes.

Sophia, in contrast, is thrown into "sweet confusion" when Sir Charles enters the room where she is doing needlework. She attempts to conceal her disorder by concentrating on her work. She converses with ease, but she is unable to meet his eyes without losing her composure. The narrator calls attention to Sophia's modesty and industry; Sir Charles is also pleased with her more feminine traits.

But Sophia is not without strength of character; when her indiscreet mother leaves her alone in the room with Sir Charles, she promptly turns the battery of her displeasure on him and stems his "language more tender and particular" (1, 74). Awed into silence, he stands behind her while she concentrates on her needlework. She has learned the lesson that Harriot has missed: women can, by controlling their own demeanor, control men's treatment of them.

This scene is a pivotal one in the novel, for its aftermath brings new self-knowledge to both characters. At first affronted by her dismissal, Sir Charles decides never to see her again, but later he feels tenderness for her and is compelled to give in to it. Sophia, too, after she has driven Sir Charles away, comes to realize that she loves him. The rest of the plot demonstrates that though both characters try to suppress their love, desire is too strong to contain, but the plot cannot be resolved until Sophia is able to reform Sir Charles out of his libertine philosophy.

Sir Charles is attracted strongly enough to marry her, the narrator

reveals, but he is deterred by "force of habit, an insurmountable aversion to marriage, and the false but strongly impressed notion of refinements in a union of hearts where love was the only tie" (1, 82); in other words, he has learned the libertine mindset which regards marriage as a death-blow to love. Knowing Mrs. Darnley to be essentially amoral, Sir Charles plies the mother with gifts which the innocent Sophia at first interprets as tokens of his love. After an illness, however, he buys a house and settles money on Sophia to protect her if anything should happen to him. Harriot's spiteful remark, "I suppose Sir Charles does not consider this as a marriage settlement" (1, 103), suddenly enlightens Sophia as to his purposes and she realizes he does not intend to marry her at all.

From that point on, Lennox's plot blocks communication between Sophia and Sir Charles. Mr. Herbert cautions Sophia that she must not see Sir Charles again, for appearance carries more weight than reality when the world judges women: "It is not enough to be virtuous: we must appear so likewise; we owe the world a good example, the world, which often rewards the appearances of merit, than merit itself" (1, 108). Rather than recognizing the hypocrisy of his statement, he appears to subscribe to it. He offers to be guardian "of her honor and reputation: these make up her fortune: and with these she is richer than if she possessed thousands without them" (1, 123). The plot will demonstrate, however, that Harriot, who abandons her honor and her reputation, quickly gains the house, clothing, and jewels that her vanity requires, while Sophia, honor intact, finds herself left in the country, suffering the loss of love.

Sir Charles and Sophia do not see each other again face to face; they communicate through letters and messengers. Mr. Herbert becomes their intermediary and like any middle man in a relationship, he can only guess at motives and intentions behind words. Harriot maliciously misinforms both Sophia and Sir Charles with the intention of damaging their relationship. Each of them is misled by appearances, and because they do not discuss their feelings, the misunderstandings remain.

At first, the novelty of the new surroundings distracts Sophia from thoughts of love, but she soon discovers that silence and solitude nurture love rather than banishing it. This heroine not only admits to feeling desire, but the desire is so strong that even a Sophia, one whose strength is her mind, is unable to subdue it. Sophia hopes against hope that she is wrong about Sir Charles's character, even when the evidence against him seems strongest.

Threaded through the main plot is the story of Dolly and William--another example of a romance dependent upon the approval of a wealthy relation, as in Henrietta. Dolly, the daughter in the house where Sophia stays, is obviously lovesick too. Sophia learns that this country girl with no monetary expectations has met William, the son of a nearby farmer. William's wealthy aunt has educated him in the city to be a military man, but when he sees Dolly, he decides to come home and be a farmer.

Dolly tells Sophia that when she first saw William she "felt [her] face glow like fire" (1, 160). Sophia chides her for being susceptible to physical attraction; her emotional reactions hamper her use of

judgment. This, of course, is Sophia's constant struggle. Distrusting her emotions, she resists surrendering to her love for Sir Charles. Her experiences with Sir Charles have led her to distrust men's behavior in general: "Men's actions as well as their looks often deceive us" (1, 164).

But William is not a deceiver; the impediment to their love is his wealthy aunt who withholds her approval of the marriage because Dolly's mother has mocked the old lady and offended her. William would be willing to live on his own small fortune with Dolly, but because his father cannot bear the loss of his sister's considerable fortune, he has asked Dolly's father to withdraw his permission for the marriage.

This subplot underlines once again the precariousness of the happiness of a woman without money. Dolly is bound by the ideology of patriarchy which insists that she obey her father. Her happiness is not an issue: the pride and vanity of other people are at stake and determine the outcome of the plot.

Helpless to act directly to facilitate her own romance, Sophia exerts her power to bring happiness to another woman. Having met William and approving of him, Sophia decides to help remove the obstacle to Dolly's happiness. Although this new interest diverts Sophia from her own unhappiness, her benevolence is the cause of her next distress.

The omniscient narrator has partially obscured Sir Charles's motivations and intentions, but now she reveals that he sincerely loves Sophia. He would have followed his heart sooner had not the amoral characters of Harriot and Mrs. Darnley led him to devalue Sophia's character. That prejudice, combined with the prejudices of his rank and

gender, had caused him to waver about marriage.

The narrator also depicts a poignant scene in which Sir Charles enters Mrs. Darnley's empty house and goes into Sophia's bedroom. He examines a firescreen she had worked with her needle, several drawings she had executed of the virtues and graces, her books, and some essays she has written. He even finds a watercolor of himself--"artless testimony of her affection for him" (2, 74). Amidst these reflections of Sophia's character, he repents of his light treatment of her and repudiates his "depraved principles" (2, 75). Thus Lennox's plot demonstrates the power of a good woman to effect moral reform in a man, but, at the same time, it demonstrates the powerful forces she must combat.

Almost immediately, Sophia's imminent good fortune is cancelled by the malice of her evil double. Harriot tells Sir Charles that Sophia has another romantic liaison. The alacrity with which he accepts her falsehood demonstrates the insidiousness of patriarchy's view that women are constitutionally incapable of fidelity. The lie is apparently authenticated when, from a distance, Sir Charles witnesses a meeting between Sophia and William and concludes that this apparent romantic tryst is real, confirming Mr. Herbert's admonition that the appearance of virtue is more important than virtue itself. The narrator describes his response:

And now rage and indignation succeeding to grief, in these first transports, he was on the point of discovering himself, and sacrificing the hated youth to his vengeance, but a

moment's reflection shewed him the dishonour of a contest with so despicable a rival, and turned all his resentment against Sophia [He] followed her with disordered haste, resolved to load her with reproaches for her inconstancy: there, unwilling to gratify her pride by such an acknowledgement of his weakness, he turned back, cursing love, women, and his own ill fate. (2, 91-2)

The narrator thus exposes the complex elements of his behavior: his rank precludes his competing with a commoner; his gender role prohibits him from revealing his "weakness." Cultural prescriptions force him to conceal his emotions, just as cultural prescriptions have prevented Sophia from expressing her feeling honestly.

Although Sophia is certain that some misunderstanding has brought about this latest impasse, she is unable to initiate a reconciliation simply because a respectable woman must remain passive. Her perceptive reading of his most recent letter has detected that he still loves her and that for some reason his jealousy has been aroused, but she is not free to contact him in order to clear up the confusion. She can do nothing but abide by Mr. Herbert's advice to "calm your mind, and resign yourself entirely to that Providence, which, while you continue thus good and virtuous, will never forsake you" (2, 55). When his own efforts prove futile, Mr. Herbert refers Sophia to a higher patriarchy, but Sophia must exert great effort to curb the desire to right things herself.

Sophia diverts her energies toward finding a position in service. William's aunt introduces her to Mrs. Howard, a wealthy widow, who is known for her opposition to the extravagant rich who are too selfish to apply some of their wealth to the needs of the poor but not necessarily for her own generosity. Sophia accepts the position without consulting Mr. Herbert, who has been ill. Like Henrietta, however, Sophia discovers that dependency has its price. Benevolent Mrs. Howard always extracts payment in some form from those she extends her charity to. She exploits Sophia's talent with the needle, and she meddles in Sophia's affairs, attempting to arrange an unwanted marriage for her. When, however, Mrs. Howard's own son exhibits an interest in Sophia (who returns his interest not at all), Mrs. Howard ejects Sophia from the house and trumpets it around the neighborhood that Sophia is engaged in a love-intrigue. Rather than continue to submit to the indignities heaped on dependents, Sophia decides to depend on her own resources, her skill with a needle, to support herself.

While Sophia's fortunes have been declining, Harriot's appear to be on the ascent. She has found a rich protector, Lord L., who has established her, ironically, in the house Sir Charles had intended for Sophia. She has servants, jewels, expensive clothes--everything but respectability. She is shunned by former friends, but she still gloats over her possessions. The narrator consciously opposes the two women on a moral scale: she describes Harriot, wearing her riches "purchased by guilt" coming to see Sophia in her "humble abode of innocence and industry" (2, 171). When she sees the squalid circumstances that virtue has condemned Sophia to, Harriot cannot be persuaded that chastity is

the better path. (The amoral Mrs. Darnley, living with Sophia now, yearns for the high life again and envies Harriot her finery without thinking of how she came by it.)

Like Henrietta, Sophia requires a coincidence to set the resolution in motion. Sir Charles, trying to forget Sophia by traveling abroad, runs into young Mr. Howard, who tells him how Sophia had been driven from his home by his mother. Sir Charles rushes back, surprising Sophia in her little cottage, again with needlework in her hands. Although her body language reveals her desire, she suppresses it and refuses to hear him or see him again. Once again, Mr. Herbert must become the mediator--and the heroine is silenced. The men agree on the financial arrangements and the wedding is set.

Mrs. Darnley can think of nothing but clothing, houses, servants, jewels. Sophia, in contrast, "enjoyed the change of her fortune with much more rational delight; and among all the sentiments that arose in her mind upon this occasion, that of gratitude to heaven was the most frequent and the most lively" (2, 226). The invocation of the higher patriarchy suggests the failure of the temporal scheme to provide for women. A criminal snatched from the gallows at the last instant would probably experience this emotion, but it is hardly what one would expect a happy bride to feel, yet, in effect, the analogy is accurate. An indigent spinster in the eighteenth century experienced a kind of living death, in prostitution, in dependency, or in the struggle to eke out a respectable living for herself.

While Sophia is being rewarded for her stoic endurance, Harriot receives her deserts: Lord L., whose family has made an advantageous

match for him, leaves her. She is so enraged that she sickens, contracts yellow jaundice [sic], loses her beauty, and thus effectively loses her power to attract men, since she has neither modesty, wit, nor money. Sir Charles agrees to settle money on her if she can find a suitable husband; a former wig-maker turned officer, interested in her newly-acquired fortune, marries her and takes her to America. As soon as she reveals her character and temper, however, he loses whatever love for her he may have had. He keeps her in rigid confinement and she is mortified because he does it out of pride and not because of love.

Nevertheless, Harriot does not suffer great wretchedness because of her lack of virtue. She does find a husband; even if the marriage is not a happy one, it amounts to a partial redemption in Lennox's eyes. And although she has lost her beauty (a loss which age would have brought eventually anyway), she does not lose her life or suffer greatly; in fact, she thoroughly enjoyed the fruits of her wickedness while she had them, for she had material and social gratification. Although Lennox does not touch on the topic overtly, the light tone and the farcical ending suggest that the author deliberately avoided the death or madness usually dealt to unregenerate females in novels by women.

Sophia, on the other hand, has repressed all desires and gratified none. She has lived in poverty. Beyond the deprivation, her life has been unpleasant, for when she was not weeping over her lost love, she was combating rumor and attacks on her reputation. So even as the narrator insists that Providence will reward the virtuous and punish the wicked, the plot suggests that even the higher patriarchy can fail

women. Mrs. Darnley, too, is not punished for her weak character. She has been a self-indulgent person and an inadequate mother. Harriot's career is a direct result of the mother's leniency; that Sophia remained virtuous was in spite of, not because of, Mrs. Darnley. The connection between mother and older daughter is emphasized at the end: Mrs. Darnley dies soon after her favorite daughter goes to America. It is as if she cannot face the sober prospect of a life of benevolence and charity with Sophia.

For that is what the narrator describes as Sophia's happiness. The reader learns nothing of domestic life (except that Sophia nurses her mother in her last illness and receives visits from her "beloved father," Mr. Herbert; it is almost as if she has regressed to childhood with her parents, rather than leaving the parental home to form a new one with her husband), nothing of children, of social life, of trips. Sophia's chief enjoyment is to share her "good fortune" with others, and Sir Charles, who adores her, indulges her in it.

Questioned about his love for Sophia, Sir Charles explains that his passion is not founded on the charms of her person, but on her virtues and graces, of which "her charming mind is an inexhaustible source" (2, 237). Thus at the end Lennox's heroine dwindles into a disembodied mind. Throughout the novel she has repressed all feelings; the result is pure rationality. The woman who survives in a world which has no place for women alone has literally effaced herself.

Sophia has shown the darker side of female experience and detailed the fallibility of parental authority as well as the instability of family as a social unit. For the first time in these novels, there is a

parent who does not expire in the early pages and contribute thereby to the growth of the heroine; this is a mother who is materialistic, frivolous, and not overly scrupulous about moral niceties. The protagonist, the obedient and virtuous daughter, is paired with her older sister, a wilful, bad-tempered, and self-indulgent girl. Sophia constantly strives to win the affection and approval of her mother, who favors the child most like her. Thus the novel presents the topsy-turvy relationship of a daughter who tries to educate her mother and older sibling.

Sophia is the least charming of Lennox's three heroines; Arabella and Henrietta, despite their vicissitudes, have a capacity for enjoying life; both have a sense of humor and a lively demeanor. Sophia, on the other hand, is pale and trembling, always fearful of her own emotions and of whatever catastrophe lurks around the corner. She worries constantly and suffers; she is too virtuous to allow herself pleasure. Early on, she is attracted to Sir Charles Stanley, but Lennox presents him as an ambiguous and confusing character. He conceals his motives so that no one is able to know what he intends; only Sophia is capable of occasionally penetrating his subterfuges. When, after she discovers that she loves a man who does not appear to be worthy of her love, she is unable to dismiss the love. Eventually, however, her goodness wins him over, and Sophia becomes an agent of moral reform.

Even as the narrator emphatically disapproves of the wanton characters, the plot reveals their greater range of action. Similarly, the treatment of sexual misconduct in the novel suggests less disapproval than the narrative voice conveys. The plot pits

intelligence against beauty; the resolution affirms the superiority of intelligence, but the development of the plot emphasizes the power of beauty (though it also concedes its transience). An underlying message of the novel is that the virtuous woman does all the suffering and the uninhibited woman has all the fun. Even the "happy" resolution, the marriage, long-deferred, is presented in ambiguous terms: what Sophia is allowed to enjoy at last is the power to share "the good fortune which heaven had bestowed on her" with others (Lennox, Sophia 235).

Like Cervantes, Lennox is opposed to the social constraints placed upon the poor and the disadvantaged. In these three novels, Lennox systematically strips her heroines of the societal props that have traditionally provided a safety net for women so that her plots can reveal the weaknesses of patriarchy. Arabella has wealth, rank, and beauty, yet once deprived of her parents, she is besieged by men vying for her fortune. In addition to having lost her parents, Henrietta lacks a fortune, but she still has rank and beauty to assist her in finding a protector/husband. She also has a brother to act as surrogate father in the tricky business of negotiating her marriage. Sophia is penniless and without social distinction; she is not stunningly beautiful, either--rather, she has "graces," which only a discerning suitor will be attracted to. Finally, she is not parentless: her progress is impeded by her frivolous, luxury-loving mother who is all too willing to sacrifice her daughter's honor for a comfortable life and her surrogate father who is too weak to assist her effectively. Without the security of family and wealth, these women are unable to provide for

themselves; their creator, the author, must contrive improbable and unrealistic plot devices to bring them to safety.

The world of work proves to be more a trap than a opportunity for Lennox's heroines. There is no effective system of screening employers for their acceptability; they invariably prove to be selfish, envious, exploitative, or simply depraved. Dependent on references for their livelihood, mistreated employees must simply endure and hope for a better place next time. Rarely are there opportunities for a woman to become self-employed; even Sophia has to depend upon a noblewoman to find purchasers for her needlework.

The examples in these novels also indicate that family ties weaken or dissolve when charity or emotional support are concerned. Financial gifts often have impossible conditions attached; a woman of principle prefers to subsist in poverty rather than corrupt her beliefs. What is missing in these novels is any representation of a healthy and whole family. Instead, we see families crippled by the loss of the father or mother or families set on the path to downfall by an imprudent or improvident father.

As long as economic considerations remain the determinant for marital choices, husband-wife relationships seem to founder as a matter of course, with a few lucky exceptions. Armstrong and others demonstrate that prevailing opinion was swinging in the eighteenth century toward marriage based on love and respect, but money remained a strong motivation for many families. Lennox demonstrates in her work, as does Smith in the last decades of the century in her novels, that treating women as chattels and valuing them only on the basis of

financial considerations inevitably debases them and leads to their exploitation.

The struggles of these women to find any place in society demonstrate how patriarchy fails to provide for those who, for one reason or another, fall between the cracks in the system. These young women are able to survive because they abandon "feminine" discourse and submit to the language of patriarchy, but it is a debased and weakened patriarchy into which they become integrated.

Toward the end of the century, England was polarized by the questions raised by the revolutions in America and in France. Many women equated women's oppression with the political oppression which had instigated war in other countries, and they adapted the rhetoric of freedom to their own cause. Charlotte Smith, for example, made the deliberate connection between oppression of women and revolution in her novels. Her novels challenge the dominant representation of woman as lacking both autonomy and desire.

SMITH: THE REVOLUTION IS COMING

Charlotte Turner Smith, whose life spanned the second half of the eighteenth century, was drawn to writing early; at fourteen she was already submitting poems to The Lady's Magazine. What was an avocation, however, became a necessity caused by a marriage arranged by her father and her aunt.

Smith is yet another example of a woman failed by the social support system. Nicholas Turner, her father, was a landowner and a gentleman. When Charlotte Turner was three her mother died; a doting aunt became her surrogate mother and with the father lavished attention on the motherless child. When Nicholas Turner decided to remarry, however, the aunt, assuming that all the stories about bad stepmothers were true, arranged a marriage for the fifteen-year-old girl with the twenty-one-year-old son of an East Indies merchant. The irresponsible, profligate Benjamin Smith had control of his wife's fortune and promptly dissipated it. The young wife, producing over the years the twelve children she would bear him, lived a miserable life in an inelegant street in London "in a house where commerce was viewed as the business of life and literary pursuits scorned" (Spender 220). In addition to his sexual infidelities, Smith's husband was constantly hiding from his creditors or languishing in debtor's prison (for seven months Charlotte Smith lived with him in prison). She even followed him to France when he went there to evade creditors, giving birth to another child in those uncomfortable circumstances.

When Charlotte Smith left her husband at the end of twenty years of

marriage in 1787, she found it necessary to produce the maximum income to support the eight children still dependent on her at the time. Although her first love was poetry, novels were more remunerative; her first novel, Emmeline, appeared the next year. An immediate success (the first edition of 1500 copies selling out at once and a second and third editions following [Schofield 148]), it initiated a series of ten novels published in as many years (Spencer 9).

Charlotte Smith always felt betrayed by the patriarchal system: she believed that a woman of her class should not be compelled to work to support her family. She aspired to educate her children to professions, but, instead, she had to struggle to earn enough for a scanty subsistence for her family. To make matters worse, she had a long and bitter contest with the lawyers managing her rich father-in-law's will, which was never settled during her lifetime (Spencer 10).

The socially accepted role dictated for women entrapped Charlotte Smith: rather than providing her with a protector, companion, and father for her children, marriage burdened her with twelve pregnancies and nine children to support as well as with the child-like, immature man she married, and generated the necessity for independence, a role society granted reluctantly and only partially to women. And, as so often happens, real-life experiences became transmuted into art as Charlotte Smith created her novels. In addition, the patriarchal establishment exerted an influence on her work, indirectly smothering her expression of political opinion and granting her only a limited range within which to work if she intended to earn a living from her novels. As with the other writers, we can find in her work traces of

her resistance of the conventions--her efforts to break through the tacitly understood limits placed on "women's writing." This resistance is sharpened in Smith's work not only by her miserable personal experiences but by contemporary revolutionary events. Thus Smith's novels, while expressing many of the same themes as their predecessors by women writers, often use new symbols and different strategies to embody social criticism.

Smith's most vehement charge against patriarchy is that it has replaced morality by the profit motive. Herself a victim of economic exploitation, Smith protests in her novels the trivialization of women by a society that denies them autonomy and turns them into commodities to be bid upon and bargained for by the male. She exposes the brutality lurking beneath the polite veneer of society, a dehumanization deriving from the arbitrary assignment of roles to human beings based on their economic value.

Although Smith's characters frequently attack excessive concern with money as vulgar and "low," the frequency and intensity of the attacks suggest a deeper concern with the masculine individualistic principles of free enterprise that ignore human worth in favor of profit and loss. Sumptuary display as a marker of aristocratic status is dangerous because it transforms women into items of consumption and use--visual evidence of the status of their fathers and husbands. Such displays suggest that a woman has value only as a mannequin on which to display finery and that her virtues as a person are unimportant.

Like Defoe and Richardson before her (but writing from the point of view of a woman), Smith also shows how family ties have deteriorated as

a result of emphasis on money: kinship bonds are clearly weakened when they run counter to financial gain; in this case, blood is not thicker than money. Smith seizes "author"-ity to dispute the prevailing ideology of kinship that attached the most power and privilege to certain bloodlines or to social status. She argues instead that individuals should be valued for their qualities of mind.

Smith diverges from earlier novels written by women in that after her first three novels named after women, Emmeline (1788), Ethelinde (1789), Celestina (1792), Smith writes about male protagonists, even engaging in "narrative cross-dressing" (Goldsmith iii) in her one epistolary novel, Desmond (1792). Smith's positive male characters fit the mold of the romance hero: they are enlightened, idealistic, tender and sentimental--a new kind of man. Despite the titles of these novels, however, and their focus on the male hero, women's stories always insistently emerge and come to dominate the novel. These heroines survive because they have rejected a dependence on fictional improbabilities and have learned to skirt the dangers awaiting a romance heroine by leading blameless, ordinary middle-class lives rather than seeking romantic adventure and excitement. These women have no faith in the fictional escape offered by romance; they recognize with painful honesty that their lives will be constricted by their gender roles. Emphasizing the crippling effects of gender expectations on these women's everyday lives, Smith calls for a revolution: a redefinition of "romantic."

Laura Glenmorris in The Young Philosopher articulates Smith's argument:

If affection for merit, if admiration of talents, if the attachments of friendship are romantic; if it be romantic to dare to have an opinion of one's own, and not to follow one formal tract, wrong or right, pleasant or irksome, because our grandmothers and aunts have followed it before--if not to be romantic one must go through the world with prudery; carefully settling our blinkers at every step, as a cautious coachman hoodwinks his horses [sic] heads, if a woman because she is a woman must resign all pretensions to being a reasoning being, and dares neither to look to the right nor to the left, oh! may my Medora still be the child of nature and simplicity . . . even at the risk of being called a strange romantic girl. (2: 12-14)

Laura espouses an utopian vision of a world where liberty of the individual is a possibility even in the face of mindless, prudish, conventional "femininity." But not all of Smith's heroines are idealistic or optimistic; indeed, few of them are hopeful. Her novels present a spectrum of feminine behavior ranging from the idealistic to the hopeless.

Smith's insistence on romantic possibilities makes her focus on failed women, especially on those who might have succumbed to convention and who are aware, often, of their failure to achieve romance. Consistent with this vision, another marked change in *dramatis personae* is the large number of female villains--bitter, twisted women who cannot accept the diminished role that society requires women to play. These

are capable, intelligent women who strive for importance in the world, and who seek ascendancy over others as the visible evidence of that status. Their energy and strength, finding no legitimate outlet, is usually turned to malicious purposes, and, unless superior status or wealth allows them power over men, the malice is usually directed toward women lower on the social or economic scale, women just as intelligent and capable, but unable to defend themselves because of their inferior social status. Smith is clearly preoccupied with the marginal positions in society to which women were relegated and with the destructive effects of their deprivation of power.

A fourth notable shift is that Smith focuses on the married woman. In four of Charlotte Smith's novels, Emmeline (1788), Desmond (1792), The Old Manor House (1793), and The Young Philosopher (1798), the failed marriages greatly overbalance the love matches. The novels vent Smith's anger about women's entrapment by the same system that had oppressed her. Smith's heroines are often the victims of the women described above and of the system that created them. Prevailing social practice sanctioned marriage as the one legitimate future for a woman; wifehood was the necessary stage after daughterhood for females. Smith's novels suggest that the idea that marriage is the "happy ending" for a woman's story is largely a myth; more frequently, marriage causes misery.

In contrast to the fictional heroines of earlier writers, Smith's heroines are more mature (than those of Davys or Lennox, for example): they are not flighty girls who have to be reformed in order to be assimilated into the social system; they are troubled women who are

tried by the exigencies of the world they have encountered, who are psychologically worn down by the cumulative effects of poverty, fear, and despair. They are often further demoralized by other women's attacks on them.

We have seen the female writer's perceptions of the range of possibilities for women's action undergo a radical change during the eighteenth century. Most female writers, however, chose to avoid using the married woman as a central character. Boone observes that most writers (male and female) focus on the courtship plot, for "too complete a representation of the married state runs the risk of becoming . . . a deconstruction of its ideality" (114), and patriarchy depends on stability of the family. The few examples of main plot lines dealing with wedlock tend to be darker in tone than those of courtship novels, emphasizing the weaknesses of individuals in marriage as it exists rather than examining the flaws of the institution (Aubin's novels and Fielding's Amelia, for example). In these examples the wife is depicted as a woman of great virtue and the flawed partner is always the husband. Nevertheless, the wife always forgives the chastened and reformed husband and the union is affirmed as the plot ends. In contrast, Smith, writing seventy years after Aubin and thirty years after Amelia, calls into question the validity of marriage as the proper place for many women by depicting marriages that are far from ideal. Although she does portray a few happy, fulfilling marriages, many married women in her novels are miserable, and some of them inflict misery in turn upon their husbands.

Some of the couples achieve accommodation; others dissolve the

ties. Some wives, like Josephine de Boisbelle in Desmond, leave their husbands and pursue their own desires without any evident ill effects. Others, like Adelina Trelawney in Emmeline, commit adultery, but become nearly deranged with guilt. Still others, like Geraldine Verney in Desmond, risk self-annihilation rather than transgression. Often, the denial of female self required by the men who govern these women results quite plausibly in a kind of psychological disintegration of the women.

A final important shift in Smith's work is the identification of a view of women's condition with that of the revolutionaries in France and in America. Earlier novels by women had concentrated on the domestic scene and had ignored or acknowledged only indirectly the political context within which the characters operated, but Smith's novels reverse that focus: the political scene is foregrounded and the domestic plot is played out within that situation. Smith is not the only female writer to show an awareness of what went on in the world around her; her inclusion of it in her work merely reflects the politicization of literature that occurred in the 1790s (Todd, Sign 224).

Four of Smith's novels exemplify these subversive techniques. Emmeline (1778), though ostensibly about the ordeals of a "lovely orphan" whose clouded birth prevents her from achieving acceptable social status, examines the extent to which the family is weakened in a culture dominated by monetary values. Desmond (1792) explores the democratic values of the French revolution with an eye to importing them to England. The Old Manor House (1793) is an attack on patrilineal inheritance and argues that the values of the American rebels are

admirable. The Young Philosopher (1798) pits a young freethinker against the hypocritical and artificial values of English society. The latter three novels, creating a romantic hero different from others in this study, argue for liberation of the individual from his or her political chains. Smith suggests that by casting aside the status distinctions that organize the old society, individuals can realize a new autonomy, an identity based on qualities of mind rather than family connections, frequently diluted when opposed to financial gain, or economic power, which tends to ignore human worth.

Boheemen contends that the novel served as a means of imagining the world within which it was written: "Western rationalism finds its belief in transcendent subjectivity confirmed in and supported by the contemporary reflection of the novel" (5). So, although the raw material Smith had to work with emerged from her own experiences, the novel form, the plot arrangements, the narrative strategies, were ready-made for her, and, significantly, were not hers to choose or reject, for "the logical or conceptual operations that organize experience . . . are inherited. The significance of our stories derives from their relation to the models of signification operative in our society" (13).

Richardson's Pamela had established the legitimacy of the novel that analyzed women's interior experience, but although the field of women's consciousness proved an invaluable source to many women writers, it was also constricting for some; for them the novel as genre became "women's form" and prevented them from examining practical concerns outside the range of women's emotions.

Smith's first three novels adhere to "women's form." Emeline, her

first novel, is typical. The protagonist is a "lovely orphan," the legitimacy of whose birth is clouded. Raised by a housekeeper and a steward in a remote castle, the girl enters the world and the plot begins when her uncle decides to claim her father's castle for a hunting seat and bring his eligible young son and the son's friend with him. From that time on, Emmeline is alternately pursued by six suitors--despite the fact that all she wants is to clear her name from the taint of illegitimacy and retire (alone) to the refuge of her castle. Without the protection of her name, she lacks rank and family position to shield her from adventurers, sexual or otherwise.

Despite its formulaic Gothic beginning, Emmeline does manage to provide some fresh insights about how a perfectly proper lady can cope with the plight of woman. The heroine is less passive than many of the period; she is spirited, even obstinate, in refusing to submit to her aunt and uncle's oppressive demands or her cousin's ungovernable tantrums; she also skewers the pomposity of several self-satisfied suitors. All the while she never steps over the boundary of acceptable behavior for a young woman.

Smith bases her plot on the heroine's search for home and family; the narrative is marked by a series of losses that arouse pity and sympathy for the heroine. Emmeline suffers from the undeserved misfortunes, but she does not submit meekly. The narrator gradually reveals that Emmeline is unable to obtain acknowledgement of her legitimacy and social status because of a cabal of malicious, envious ill-wishers, and in the end, Emmeline's irreproachable rectitude vindicates her and she is restored to home and status. So from the

beginning, Smith sets the themes that will dominate the narrative. As in Aubin and Davys, the emphasis is on the vulnerability of a woman alone: the liability her sexual attractiveness proves to be, the tenuousness of her claims on relatives for protection, the necessity for self-imprisonment to escape those who would take advantage of her, and the desperate search for connections which will provide the propriety that will preserve her from evil. Smith differs from the other two novelists in focusing on women who are victimized by members of their own families or other women. Additionally, at the root of their troubles is money rather than sex. Smith demonstrates how the woman alone must develop a siege mentality: she must always be prepared for threats from any quarter, she must often fend off attacks from unknown and unidentifiable enemies, and she is always susceptible to pettiness, envy, greed, and selfishness from powerful and wealthy oppressors.

Emmeline's early life is marked by her attempts to reconstitute the family she has never had. For the first twelve years of her life, Mrs. Carey, the housekeeper at Mowbray Castle, is her mother and the old steward is her father. Isolated from the world, Emmeline is innocent of the knowledge that she lacks parents (Smith, Emmeline 7). When she is fourteen, the steward dies and Mrs. Carey's health fails. Emmeline turns to books for consolation: there she acquires a taste for poetry; the books provide the foundation of knowledge that enables her to cope with what the narrator calls "those undeserved evils with which many of her years were embittered" (8).

At sixteen, Emmeline is left desolate and friendless when Mrs. Carey dies. Her uncle sends a new housekeeper, but she is emphatically

not a gentlewoman--the narrator describes her as "gaudy, dirty, tawdry, disgusting" (14). Emmeline's natural fastidiousness makes it impossible for her to share a room with this creature, so she moves to the turret of the castle, calling to mind Rapunzel (but this maiden is imprisoned, not by an evil stepmother, but by her internalized understanding of what is right and proper--and there is no prince to rescue her).

Or, rather, she meets a "prince" who would rescue her--ardent, impetuous Frederic Delamene, Lord Montreville's son and her cousin, who falls in love the moment he espies Emmeline despite the fact that his parents will not consider a match between him and one so far beneath his station. She does not recognize him as her rescuer, however; she is more concerned about how much trouble he can cause her. Lord Montreville is not her savior either; although he recognizes his dead brother's features softened in this feminine face, he is disconcerted to find a woman where he had expected a child. His wealth and power have hardened him to the distress of others, and rather than offering to act as Emmeline's father, he is alarmed by Delamere's evident attraction to her and makes hasty plans to move her out of sight. An unexpected solution presents itself; the impertinent steward offers to marry Emmeline. Montreville's family pride makes a feeble resistance, but avarice and ambition quell it; and he does not refuse the offer.

Emmeline, however, does. Although her name and social position have been barred to her, she knows her social value--and as an orphan, she has no parents to choose her husband for her. She is spirited enough to refuse Lord Montreville's pressure:

Unhappy as I am, I can claim nothing, it is true; but if the support of an unfortunate orphan, thrown by Providence into your care, is too troublesome, suffer me to be myself a servant; and believe I have a mind, which tho' it will not recoil from any situation where I can earn my bread by honest labour, is infinitely superior to any advantages such a man as Maloney can offer me. (30)

Nevertheless, Montreville tells her she cannot remain at the castle except as the steward's wife.

Thus her father's brother, rather than securing a home for her and acting as her father, deprives her of home and family support; in fact, he confines her to her tower until she can slip away secretly at night without attracting her cousin's attention.

Emmeline finds temporary refuge with her old housekeeper's sister; during her stay at Mrs. Watkins's home, Emmeline meets a married woman staying with her young children nearby. Educated and refined, a congenial companion and also a willing teacher, Mrs. Stafford becomes both mother and sister, advisor and confidante, and living proof of the horrible effects of an unfortunate marriage.

Emmeline also meets her female cousin, Augusta Delamere, Frederic's younger sister. The two young women like each other instantly and Emmeline gives Augusta second place in her heart after Mrs. Stafford, and looks on her with "sisterly affection" (78). Augusta is self-confident enough not to fear her young cousin as a rival, and she genuinely likes Emmeline's honesty and integrity. This is the only

comfortable relationship Emmeline is able to form with her blood relations: Delamere frightens her with his uncontrollable passion; Lord Montreville likes and pities her but is unwilling for his son to stoop to marry her; in addition, he fears the violent tantrums of his wife. Emmeline's aunt rejects her as an upstart and calls her a "little reptile" who would insinuate herself into the bosom of the family (62). Fanny, Augusta's older sister, is scornful of an indigent orphan.

Emmeline does not find a permanent home with Mrs. Watkins; Delamere's constant, unwelcome hovering nearby drives her into London where she seeks refuge with Mrs. Ashwood, Mrs. Stafford's sister-in-law. Now Emmeline has been separated from all she loves--her paternal home; her surrogate mother, Mrs. Stafford; and her surrogate sister, Augusta. Nor has she escaped the threat of Delamere's importunities; he finds her at Mrs. Ashwood's and kidnaps her, planning to carry her to Scotland and marry her secretly. Emmeline is able to thwart his plans and force him to return her to her surrogate mother, Mrs. Stafford, but like a natural mother, the substitute is powerless without patriarchal support. Because Mrs. Stafford's improvident husband is being hounded by creditors, the family has to leave the country. Thus Smith has the plot systematically strip the heroine of all the societal props women have been taught to depend on: family, home, friends, country.

Once the mystery of Emmeline's birth is Providentially solved and she has been established as the legitimate heir of her father, Emmeline returns to Mowbray Castle, taking Mrs. Stafford and her children with her. Although Emmeline is secure in name, position, and home, she is

still not free of importuning suitors. The only way to avoid them all is to vow that she will not marry until she comes of age. Like Davys's and Lennox's heroines, Smith's females do not actively seek the yoke of marriage. Here, the narrator's language reveals that Emmeline faces the prospect so reluctantly that she has thrown up one objection after another until her invention is exhausted: "Emmeline, having no longer a subterfuge, was obliged to let Godolphin take his own way" (552); they marry and return to Mowbray Castle. Of course, her ingenuous acceptance may be itself a form of subterfuge to conceal her desire.

Thus the castle becomes a reversible symbol: at the beginning of the novel when the friendless orphan is isolated from the world in the remote castle, the castle represents a prison within which woman is contained so that she may be denied entry to the male-dominated world of power. At the same time, Emmeline's "prison" is also her haven. It protects her not only from knowledge of her own powerlessness, but from the evils of the world. Only when her uncle and his retinue penetrate the castle's walls does Emmeline realize what she has to fear. After having lost the refuge of her paternal home, Emmeline often fantasizes about returning to the safety of the castle. It is the bolthole to which she returns as soon as she comes into possession of her name and her inheritance. In such a manner Smith metaphorically represents both the trap of womanhood and a necessity for a refuge from the world of money and power (Spencer 94). Ethelinde and Celestina follow the same pattern, focusing on the single woman's interior experience as she negotiates the obstacle-strewn course to marriage. These novels, focusing as they do on courtship and female emotions, are naturally

conducive to romance patterns and the consoling fictions they offer to women, but they allow no space for more practical concerns such as social and political abuses.

Having written three novels in "woman's form," i. e., non-politicized, domesticated courtship plots, Charlotte Smith abandoned the focus on the single woman's experience and turned to "narrative cross-dressing," focusing on male heroes in Desmond (1792), The Old Manor House (1793), The Wanderings of Warwick (1794), The Banished Man (1794), Montalbert (1795), Marchmont (1796), and The Young Philosopher (1798). One reason may have been that Smith was increasingly attracted to the ideas of the French Revolution. Reared in Dissenting circles, which allowed a political voice to women (Todd, Sign 197), she believed that women could and should discuss politics, but she also knew that the prevailing public sentiment did not concur. Her remark in the preface to Desmond points out the hypocrisy of such a position. She notes acidly that it was precisely her plight as a woman that made it possible to have such opinions and to express them in writing:

Why [should women] not [be concerned with politics]?--Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting around them, in which they have fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or friends engaged? Even in the commonest course of female education, they are expected to acquire some knowledge of history; and yet, if they are to have no opinion of what is passing, it avails little that they should be informed of what has passed, in a world where they are subject to such

mental degradation; where they are censured as affecting masculine knowledge if they happen to have any understanding; or despised as insignificant triflers if they have none. Knowledge, which qualifies women to speak or to write on any other than the most common and trivial subjects, is supposed to be of so difficult attainment, that it cannot be acquired but by the sacrifice of domestic virtues, or by the neglect of domestic duties.--I however may safely say, that it was in the observance, not in the breach of duty, I became an Author; and it has happened, that the circumstances which have compelled me to write, have introduced me to those scenes of life, and those varieties of character which I should otherwise never have seen. (Desmond iii-v)

Although she defended women's right to have political awareness and opinion, she may not have had the courage to create female characters to voice her opinions. Because the income from her novels was her only means of subsistence, she could not afford to alienate her buying public, so she created male, politically-oriented heroes. A male character was freer to travel and observe political and social conditions wherever he went as well as to discuss political sentiments with other men.

The focus on male characters is a form of resistance to the established conventions within which women writers were expected to write. Smith belongs to the sentimental tradition; that is, like some other writers in the 1790s, Smith emphasizes the sensibilities of her

heroines, their artistic inclinations, their grace and their intelligence. But she also suggests that men could benefit from the softening effects of sensibility and creates a hero whose sensibilities are just as tender as those of the women she writes of. As she appropriates the male voice in Desmond, an epistolary novel, and uses an omniscient narrator to reveal inner voice and public voice in the other novels, Smith's ambiguous authorial stance is evident in the novels named after men. Smith divides men into two categories--separating them according to their relationships to women. The heroes are thoughtful, considerate, gentle, as mindful of family responsibilities as women were expected to be. Their relationships with the women they love transcend worldly ambition or friendship with men. The villains, on the other hand, sneer at women's capabilities, threaten and exploit them, and brutally override their wishes. The bad husbands in these novels share one trait: contempt for women. As a victim of a bad marriage, Smith is able to point out the most damning failures of bad husbands--irresponsibility, inability to provide for the family, addiction to vices that dissipate the family fortune, and the daily grind of ill-humor, sneers, snubs, and demeaning language that made their wives' lives constantly distressed. Several of our writers have depicted villainous men: for example, Aubin's lustful Turks and pirates and Davy's rakes come to mind. Aubin has also depicted husbands as jealous and dedicated to the double standard. But these men are essentially exploitative rather than destructive as Smith's are because Aubin's husbands at least love their wives; often Smith's do not.

Like other female novelists in the eighteenth century, Smith

critiques the romance genre. First, her cast of characters usually includes a parodic example of a woman who accepts unequivocally the romance view of woman's life. The central female characters, however, unswervingly reject the romance ideology and insist on a clear-eyed, realistic assessment of their positions. Then, interestingly, having divested her heroines of romance characteristics (though, it must be acknowledged, the men often force the women to act like romance heroines), Smith applies those characteristics to the central male character. To contrast with the indifferent, incompetent, or even openly abusive husbands she portrays in each novel, Smith depicts the perfect ideal lover and husband--the honorable man who adores the woman from afar, suffering silently rather than expressing his sentiments, hovering in the background to protect her, waiting patiently for a time that may never, realistically speaking, arrive--a time when the existing engagement has been dissolved or when the burdensome husband has died and the wife is free to marry again, in short, the courtly romance hero. Presaging the views of the nineteenth-century Romantics, this paragon also embodies enlightened views of human liberty; he accepts the woman as the directress of the family, his friend, his mistress, and his wife. Expecting that she would be accused of encouraging men to be interested in married women, Smith wrote in the same preface that she did not intend to justify "ardent but concealed" passion for a married woman: she was more interested in a man "capable of a passion so generous and disinterested as to seek only the good of its object" (*Desmond* ii). Her typology may derive from seventeenth-century heroic drama, which often contrasted a "wild" hero with a "civilized" or

disciplined hero as described in Dryden's preface to The Conquest of Granada.

Smith's fictional heroes are a clear rejection of the concept of the domineering, patronizing, cold and distant male. They typically find themselves in sympathy with the ideals of the French Revolution; they are imaginative, empathetic, and concerned about the downtrodden. They are more interested in the welfare of the family than they are in the self-indulgent pleasures of the conventional single male. In addition, they reject the crass materialism which dominates middle-class structures in England and yearn for a classless society where all citizens can be equal. In part they represent Smith's wishful thinking, her construction of an ideal man with all the positive attributes her own husband had lacked, but they also reflect women's increasing attacks in the last decade of the century on financial concerns and their fear of the masculine mindset that substitutes financial consideration for ethics (Todd, Sign 203). The villainous husbands, of course, represent Smith's conception of men as they are (or as her experience has shown them to be).

In her first novel, Smith creates a man imbued with romance precepts, a man who considers himself a romance hero, but a man in whom romance has somehow gone awry. Delamere in Emmeline obviously sees himself as a romantic hero: he is transfixed at the first sight of Emmeline; he detains her and frightens her with his extravagant compliments. Despite her timid attempts to turn him away, he perseveres in his courtship: he throws himself at her feet and declares his frantic passion. When his father attempts to make it impossible for

Delamere to see Emmeline, Delamere's possessive instincts are aroused and he tracks her with the tenacity of a bloodhound. Several times he threatens to take his own life if he cannot have her love. When he believes that Emmeline has borne his best friend's child, he reacts with jealousy and rage. His fevered imagination depicts nothing but Emmeline with Fitz-Edward; like any scorned lover, he sickens until he decides to take action--to go to Ireland and retrieve his honor by doing battle with Fitz-Edward. Finally, his romantic conception of his role proves to be his undoing. He insults his sister's lover, provoking him to a duel in which Delamere is fatally wounded. In this male character, Smith demonstrates the folly and destructiveness of attempting to live the life of the romantic hero, or, at least, of the self-centered hero's seeking his own gratification when the romantic impulse is not balanced by rational control. Delamere never considers what Emmeline wants; he brutally overrides her protests because only his desire is important to him. Just as the romance genre deludes women into false expectations, so it causes this young man to alienate the woman he loves, to agitate and distress his family, and finally, ironically, to throw away his life defending the honor of his sister, the honor she had long ago forfeited for a life of dissipation and excess. His failure as a romantic lover is that he lacks the "generous passion that seeks only the good of its object" (Desmond ii).

The plot schematically opposes the "wild" hero to the "civilized" one. Delamere is marred by a lack of restraint; his romantic behavior is extravagant. In contrast, William Godolphin in the same novel is a romance hero who is given the feminine traits of softness, tenderness,

generosity, and the desire to help others. He is not impulsive and obsessed like Delamere but intelligent and spirited. He has a commanding presence; "he reflect[s] the race of heroes from whom he [is] descended;" his speech combines the seductive softness of Fitz-Edward and the fire and animation of Delamere (289).

He is characterized by extreme sensibility; in fact, his sister's pitiful condition reduces him to sobs and tears. The narrator depicts the helpless innocence of the baby and the repentant sorrow of the mother as "melt[ing] his softness of heart into more than feminine tenderness" (327). Yet, in contrast to Delamere's needless self-sacrifice for Fanny, Godolphin relinquishes his desire to avenge the honor of the family in order to protect Adelina's reputation. Thus he is guided by reason and not passion.

Godolphin falls in love with Emmeline before he realizes that she is engaged to Delamere. He conceals his ardent but hopeless love rather than offending her with an unwanted passion. He never even thinks of trying to supplant Delamere in her heart; that would be dishonorable. The most he dares is to kiss her in the pretense of sending a kiss to the baby. When he learns that Delamere thinks the baby belongs to Emmeline, rather than taking advantage of the opportunity to alienate Delamere from her, he is so anxious to protect Emmeline's reputation that he nearly ruins Adelina's reputation by revealing her secret. Evidence of Godolphin's altruism is also seen in his efforts to restore Lt. Stornaway's sick wife to him and his tender care of Delamere, his rival, when he has been fatally wounded.

In the other novels the male protagonists are not so thoughtless

and self-destructive as Delamere. Desmond, for example, is clear-eyed about his role as romantic hero and savior. He recognizes his romanticism and how he is led by his dreams and his imagination. He is able to act heroically in a positive way because his actions are for the sake of others and not for selfish self-fulfillment, as were Delamere's. Desmond is able to save Geraldine's house by paying Verney's debts; he saves Waverly's life in a duel and prevents him from entering a disastrous marriage. He even risks his life to escort Geraldine through strife-torn France back to the arms of her husband, an act which is clearly against his own interest. This is the "disinterested passion" that Smith describes in the preface.

Orlando in The Old Manor House is also a romantic hero. The narrator describes him as a "knight of romance" (1: 65) and "sanguine and romantic in the extreme" (2: 53); he is compared to Pyramus, to Prometheus, and to Pygmalion. His brother mockingly refers to him as "the fierce Sir Rowland" (2: 78) or "the most fortunate and valorous Orlando of the enchanted castle" (3: 207). A young Jewess, her imagination filled with heroes of novels, finds "the figure and face of Orlando exactly corresponded with the ideas of perfection she had gathered from them" (3: 121). His father accuses him of "romantic quixotism" because he appears to be willing to alienate Mrs. Rayland and risk poverty for himself and the woman he loves (2: 89). Again, his actions are associated with an idealistic adherence to the lofty values of romanticism rather than the self-gain that motivates the less admirable characters.

Mr. Somerive suggests that Orlando's susceptible imagination comes

from his reading, and to an extent, that is true. Before going into the army, he tells Monimia that he has read in a magazine of two separated lovers who agreed to withdraw from their social engagements each night so that they could gaze at the moon simultaneously; he tells her that knowing that her eyes are on the moon at the same moment as his would double the romantic satisfaction of seeing the moon. Mrs. Rayland, his second cousin and benefactor, also regards him as a romance hero. Rather than regretting that he is joining the army, she exults that he will represent her honor as a chivalric knight.

Orlando is the perfect ideal lover; he is chaste and respectful. Once when he is tempted to kiss Monimia, he is checked by the fact that she is due more respect than it would be necessary to show her in public because she is entirely in his power. Orlando idealistically values his love above rank or material possession; he is prepared to forfeit whatever financial consideration he may receive from Mrs. Rayland if she will not approve his love for Monimia.

Like Desmond, Orlando regards himself as a savior, not only of Monimia, but also his family. Monimia is a destitute orphan, friendless and harshly treated, but he perceives that she could move among the highest ranks of society if she were educated. He tries to prepare her to cope with her future by giving her a taste for good books and by cultivating her mind. Like Pygmalion, "he had animated the lovely statue and, like Prometheus, seemed to have drawn his fire from heaven" (2: 125). Orlando also views himself as his family's salvation. His father's branch of the family had fallen into disfavor when his grandmother had married a yeoman. Orlando is the only member of his

family that Mrs. Rayland seems to have any affection for; therefore, he is his family's only hope for a share of the family fortune when she dies.

The hero, moreover, is entrapped by the masculine tradition. The law of primogeniture has failed Orlando: when, after the father's death, the elder brother does not live up to expectations, Orlando assumes the responsibility of providing for his mother and sisters. His benefactor does mean to make him her heir, but she is determined to keep him dependent on her during her lifetime; thus, he is forced to defer his wishes until he is free to act. Meanwhile, Smith's plot blocks him from his legacy when Mrs. Rayland dies. He marries Monimia, but he finds that the "romantic theory of sacrificing every consideration to love produces, in practice, only the painful consciousness of having injured its object" (4: 327). And despite all his highminded ideas of educating Monimia to face her bleak prospects, in reality, it is not the knowledge gained from books that saves them. Orlando is trained to be a wealthy gentleman; he is completely inept when it comes to finding work to support his wife. His lawyer tells him that his literary work has merit, but without friends in the literary establishment, he achieves nothing material. Monimia is the one who supports them; she does needlework, the humble skill she had learned as a dependent at Rayland Hall--and she does it secretly so as not to "shock his tenderness or his pride" (4: 268). Smith emphasizes the impracticality of romance idealism and points to the pragmatic nature of her heroines in this episode. But in the end, in a scene like "those so often met within old romances and fairy tales, where the hero is by some supernatural means

directed to a golden key" (4: 350), Orlando finds a duplicate of the will destroyed by the villain and is able to inherit the means to support his wife and family. Smith has subtly undermined her ending, however, by stressing its improbability. Her own life had no fairy tale endings, and she cautions other women not to expect such a thing to happen to them. Nurture in the romance tradition does not prepare a hero any better than a heroine to face the harsh realities of the world when one must meet it without the societal props of wealth, family, power, and powerful friends.

Having shown that romance ideals do not prepare men to deal with practical concerns, Smith turns her attention to women. Even in her first novel, Smith emphasizes that unquestioning acceptance of romance ideology is destructive for women. Augusta Delamere is a character in Emmeline who is seduced by romance ideology. In her case, the romance plot comes true, but her expectations that the romance heroine will always win the romantic hero cause her to champion Delamere's cause with Emmeline long after any possibility of its success exists. The only reading Augusta is allowed as a woman of fashion is novels. Knowing only romance plots, she is convinced that Delamere and Emmeline are made for each other. She also believes that Emmeline has heroically sacrificed her genuine love for Delamere to her duty. Augusta becomes a silent accomplice in what she views as a romantic passion thwarted by unromantic parents. Even when Emmeline assures Augusta that she will never marry Delamere, Augusta remains deluded by her romantic vision and continues to manipulate events so that Delamere can be near Emmeline.

Augusta is really Emmeline's double--she is the same age; their

figures and voices are strikingly similar. Their lives, following different trajectories, finally converge: they marry brothers, both good and gentle men who are genuinely concerned for the victims of oppression. Smith's pairing of these girls emphasizes how vital the support system is. Augusta, though undervalued by her mother, has family, home, and social status. Her meeting with Lord Westhaven is sanctioned by her parents, who affirm the match. Emmeline, on the other hand, has no family, home, or status. She encounters Godolphin when she comes to the aid of his sister, a fallen woman. Emmeline refuses to hear his addresses because her position is encumbered by her ambiguous relation to Delamere. Even though Emmeline recognizes that she truly loves this man, she admits her love only under duress and refuses to engage herself to him until her name is clear--but even then, she insists that she will not see him unless he appears not to be interested in her--because she fears inflaming Delamere's jealousy.

Smith demonstrates with Emmeline's story that the romantic view of life is a delusion; in fact, the "romantic hero," Delamere, persecutes and drives her with his unwanted love from nearly every sanctuary she seeks. Rather than heroically protecting her from harm, he kidnaps her and endangers her reputation by taking her on a clandestine trip to Scotland. Finally, her scrupulous adherence to the rules of propriety prevent her from forming an alliance with the man she really loves.

Miss Goldthorp, a wealthy young orphan in The Young Philosopher, is another example of a young woman deluded by romance ideology. When a coach accident forces her to become a convalescent in the home of George Delmont, she is "tempted to imagine that heaven had performed a miracle

in her favour, and sent a hero to her rescue, such as fables feign when they tell of demigods and knights endowed with supernatural powers" (1: 109). Deeply read in novels and romance and very susceptible to suggestion, "with a great versatility of character, she rarely appeared in her own" (1: 110). She sets in motion an elaborate plan calculated to inspire Delmont with passion for her, even enlisting his sisters in her campaign. Gradually, however, she realizes that Delmont is insensible to her attractions, despite all the practical reasons which his family recite to him for the marriage. She eventually marries Augustus, the brother who resembles George physically but who is selfish, crude, contemptuous of women, and a thoroughly bad bargain.

As noted earlier, not all of the villains in Smith's novels are men. Indeed, one of the most striking features of her writing is the sheer number of strong women who have found some way of wielding power over others without incurring the wrath of patriarchy. Prevented by their gender from legitimate routes to power (i. e., positions in the male-dominated hierarchy of power), these women have channeled their aggressive impulses into domestic outlets, often harming other women.

In Emmeline, for example, Lady Montreville, Fanny Delamere, Miss Galton, Mrs. Ashwood, and Mrs. Bancraft are women frustrated in their powerlessness at various levels of the social hierarchy. Each of them discovers how to achieve limited power within her sphere of influence: Lady Montreville and Fanny Delamere within their aristocratic family; Miss Galton, blocked by ugliness, lack of money, and age from achieving social status, can gain power over only those with less than she; Mrs. Ashwood, a "cit," has enough wealth to be able to dominate those in her

household, including the husband who marries her for her money. At the bottom of the social ladder is Mrs. Bancraft, whose greed leads her to fratricide.

Lady Montreville is interested in political power and because the wealth in the family belongs to her, she believes she has the right to it. Because she, as a woman, is unable to occupy the seat of power, she has projected all her ambitious hopes onto her son. She is blind to his flaws, probably because they are her own--a violent temper and an absolute insistence on having her way. She is intent on his marrying a relation of hers--a woman who has rank and an immense fortune, but who would make him miserable. Lady Montreville also favors her elder daughter, Fanny, who is just like her. The mother has little use for her younger daughter, Augusta, who displays the typically "female" virtues of meekness and modesty. Lord Montreville is utterly cowed by his wife. Because there is no male heir in Lady Montreville's family, he has taken her name and a title from her family. Now he bows to her "supercilious spirit and unconquerable pride" (114). In effect, they have traded genders: she assumes the "masculine" role in the family and he, the "feminine." Lady Montreville's ambition is ruled by the fact that her husband will be made a marquis only if their son marries a woman of great fortune. Thus when her husband seems to soften towards Emmeline, she hardens his resolve by losing her temper. Playing the "feminine" role, he submits without argument.

Whenever Lady Montreville speaks of Emmeline, she regrets that England's laws do not give "people of fashion" the power to dispose of those who stand in their way or who do not agree with them (139). Lady

Montreville's power, however, is limited to members of her household; when she commands Emmeline to marry Mr. Rochley at once, she expects the same unquestioning obedience she receives from servants and storekeepers, whose livelihoods depend on her. But, points out the narrator, "the gentlest and mildest temper will revolt against insolence and oppression" (146-47); Emmeline recoils from the cruel and "unfeminine" treatment and refuses the demand with spirit.

A direct show of power failing her, Lady Montreville resorts to flattery and insinuation to enlist the aid of others in changing Emmeline's mind, but Emmeline is not to be moved. Lady Montreville orders her husband to send Emmeline out of the country, but he does not obey. Momentarily recalling that he is a man and she is a woman, he defends the Mowbray name (his own name, originally) and reminds his wife that Emmeline is a woman--and as a woman and mother, Lady Montreville should have some feeling for her. He calls the action she is considering "as unfeminine as inhuman" and urges compassion. His unaccustomed resistance sends her into a "feminine" response: an "agony of passion which ended in an hysteric fit" (197).

The instability of her assumed gender role is her undoing, finally. After one of her hysterical fits, she is found to have suffered a stroke. Her favorite daughter is callous about her mother's illness and deserts her. The narrator comments that "unhappy temper" seems to be the cause of her illness: she is frustrated in her most ambitious project--that of uniting the only surviving branches of her family by marrying her son to Miss Otley (534). At the end, overagitated by the news that Delamere is to fight a duel, she dies.

Although her wealth has given her ascendancy over her husband, she is frustrated in her attempts to manipulate other people. Her son cannot be seduced by promises of wealth, and those beyond the reach of her nasty temper do not recognize tantrums as a legitimate source of power. Thus she is thwarted in her ambition and ultimately harms only herself.

Another example of a woman filled with pent-up anger is the widow, Mrs. Ashwood. Likewise a rich woman, she expects to wield the power associated with wealth. Past her youth, and never quite beautiful, she wears expensive clothing and attends all the social gatherings she can. Despite her plainness, she is ruled by vanity and loves flattery; she is kind to those who flatter her and ungracious to those who fail to do so. Her enmity against Emmeline is aroused when Emmeline comes to live with her: they go to the play and while Mrs. Ashwood's friends talk to her, they stare at Emmeline's beauty (89). Additionally, Mrs. Ashwood is made uneasy by Emmeline's superior merit. Emmeline, expecting only kindness from her hostess, is not prepared for the underhanded treatment she receives from the older woman. Mrs. Ashwood's excessive vanity makes her easy prey for men like Fitz-Edward, who immediately perceives her character and takes delight in making her appear as absurd as possible. Although Mrs. Ashwood does not lack intelligence, she fails to recognize his insincerity. She is also unaware that Lady Montreville, who, under any other conditions would never deign to notice her, flatters her only to use her. Again, her blinding vanity prevents her from recognizing that James Crofts is interested only in her fortune. She and Miss Galton, noticing that Fitz-Edward is pale and dejected, conclude mistakenly that he is in love with Emmeline. Mrs.

Ashwood is galvanized into hatred of Emmeline because she thinks that Emmeline toys with Delamere because of his wealth and future title but really loves Fitz-Edward. The narrator comments, "This idea . . . could not have occurred to a woman who was not herself capable of all the perfidy it implied" (248). Embittered over the loss of Fitz-Edward (who was never hers to begin with), Mrs. Ashwood turns her malignity on Emmeline. She and Miss Galton spy on Emmeline and send anonymous letters to Delamere to arouse his anger. Her malice not only sends Delamere into a jealous rage, but it alienates Lord Montreville, Emmeline's only protector, from her.

Once married, Mrs. Ashwood follows the trail blazed by Lady Frances. She spends her time trying to hide the ravages of age, "and dress and amusements effectually ke[ep] off the approaches of thought . . . Mrs. James Crofts fancie[s] she [i]s happy" (355). Our last sight of her comes when she and the two daughters by her first husband come in from a masquerade. Their gaudy appearances and airs made Emmeline and the company choke back their laughter; because, the narrators adds, "nothing more strongly excit[es] the ridicule and contempt of people of real fashion than awkward and impotent efforts to imitate them" (532).

Mrs. Ashwood-Crofts's companion in malice is Miss Galton, who is at the bottom of the social ladder because she is neither young, handsome, nor rich, all sources, to varying degrees, of power. She is compelled to live in grudging dependence on those she despises. Her only talent is satire; she gathers people around her by "ridiculing and villifying [sic] all their acquaintance whenever it was in her power" (107). Her

only source of power is knowledge; thus she is always probing and spying to learn anything she can use to her advantage; her "curiosity [is] mingled with envious malignity" (118).

Miss Galton's weapons being rumor and detraction, she has written anonymous letters before; now she conspires with Mrs. Ashwood and James Crofts to inform Delamere of Emmeline's supposed infidelity with Fitz-Edward--all done under the hypocritical pretense of saving a fine young man from the machinations of a wicked woman. The narrator says that Miss Galton takes "universal delight in defamation" (269).

Yet another woman who cannot squeeze herself into the submissive mold demanded of woman is Fanny Delamere. Like Mrs. Ashwood, she is deluded by her vanity into receiving the addresses of a man of inferior station and fortune. Entering a clandestine marriage, she finds herself reduced in social stature--not elevated--until her father is made a marquis and she begins to enjoy the privileges of her title. She diverts her energies into making a fashionable display both at home and abroad. Her husband considers her extravagant excesses as a mark of elegant taste, but he also learns that the slightest criticism will provoke her scornful indignation; his "plebeian spirit is subdued by "this right honorable eloquence" (375).

Lady Frances devotes all her time to doing exactly as she pleases; she has an affair with the dashing Bellozane and scorns to conceal it. Her vanity is gratified by the idea that she can attract this elegant chevalier away from Emmeline by her superior attractions. She is certain that her timid husband, who is lucky to be allied to her at all, will not intervene. She ignores her brother's displeasure, and hides

under the pretense of high spirits the "envy and mortification with which she contemplated the superior happiness of her sister" (527). Lady Frances refuses to sacrifice her ease and her friends to attend to her ailing mother. When her mother chides her for the public scandal she has created, Lady Frances shows no remorse but retorts rudely that she has the right to associate with whomever she pleases.

Lady Frances feigns regret over the death of her mother, but the day after the funeral her father comes upon her cavorting with her lover in her boudoir. She calmly announces that she cares nothing for what the world thinks and that if her family wishes to disown her, she will not try to change their minds. Enraged, her father visits her husband, but Crofts fears the fiery Bellozane and he will not risk diminishing his fortune by divorce, so he makes excuses for his wife's conduct. After her paramour kills her brother, she follows him in his flight to France, but pursued by guilt and regret, he regards her with revulsion and flees to Switzerland. Undaunted, she lives in high style in France until her excesses provoke the patriarchal establishment into constraining her behavior: her brother-in-law persuades Crofts to confine her in a convent.

Yet one more scheming woman appears in Emmeline. Mrs. Bancraft is Adelina Trelawney's sister-in-law. She laments her brother's decline, which she attributes to his having "quality" notions in his head that made him marry Adelina (237). Economic considerations diminish any affection she might have had for her brother: if Trelawney dies without heir, a good deal of money will fall to Mrs. Bancraft's son, who would take the name. Trelawney's dissipation has damaged his health so that

it appears he cannot live long. Avarice awakens malice; Mrs. Bancraft is tenaciously observant of Adelina's behavior, hoping to expose her liaison with Fitz-Edward. When Trelawney separates from Adelina, Mrs. Bancraft rents a house in her husband's name and takes her brother there to sink into continuous intoxication, a state which brings about his death.

Desmond also contains women frustrated by their powerlessness, Mrs. Waverly, a martinet in her household as was Lady Montreville and Miss Elford, like Miss Galton, a spinster dependent on relatives. Mrs. Waverly is another woman with time on her hands. Our perceptions of her come through her two daughters' letters; Fanny describes her as spending all her time in company and playing cards. Mrs. Waverly is also drawn to the power that money brings; she generally agrees with the opinions of rich people. She is distant to her daughters; Fanny is too awestruck by her to develop any affection for her. Mrs. Waverly prevents Fanny from conversing with literary people; in fact, she has a terrible aversion to any thing that smacks of knowledge. She forbids novels to her daughter--especially those that have been criticized by the people she relies on for wisdom and proper conduct. Geraldine has married in compliance with her parents' wishes; now Mrs. Waverly tries to avoid the unpleasant truth that she has condemned her own daughter to a miserable life. Further, she failed to perceive traits in her son-in-law Verney that indicated that he would be an improvident husband. Now if she were to acknowledge the truth, it would amount to an admission of poor judgment or lack of proper concern for her daughter, so she refuses to see or hear anything wrong with Geraldine's situation. She has always

been absorbed in her son; her only interest in her daughters has been to marry them to men of fortune. She is blind to the fact that there could be sources of unhappiness other than lack of money.

When Geraldine begs for refuge from the dissolute Frenchman who apparently believes she will give herself to him in payment for her husband's debts, Mrs. Waverly sends her a cold letter telling her to go to France with the man her husband has sent for her and to leave the children with some careful person. As if granting a large concession, she says that if they are near her, she will see now and then that they are well looked after. Geraldine compares herself to the Prodigal Son in the Bible--except that she has not caused her misery and she has nothing to reproach herself for; she is quite devastated by her mother's apparent lack of maternal tenderness.

Geraldine remembers their father educated them to believe their sentiments not worth consulting; he "hardly allowed women any pretensions to souls, or thought them worth more care than he bestowed on his horses." Their mother fell in line with his rules of domestic policy; if an ogre or a dwarf with a large fortune had come along, "we should have found it difficult to have escaped being married to them" (2: 133-34). When Montfleuri meets Fanny and falls in love with her, he wonders if Mrs. Waverly will object to his religion, but then he recognizes that "the idol of her worship is money" (3: 240). But Geraldine excuses her mother for accepting the ideology; she recognizes that her mother has only internalized the prevailing set of values and set out to obtain what she considered most valuable for her children.

Miss Elford is another frustrated spinster. Past her prime,

without fortune, she has remained unmarried. She is, however, of good family and she has shrewdly used her connections to find a niche for herself. Making herself useful, she moves from fashionable home to fashionable home, flattering important people wherever she is. This necessary dependence is not without its price, however. Unable to express her anger overtly or to gratify her need for power, she discovers devious means for unleashing her pent-up feelings. Ever since she mistakenly concluded that Geraldine has stolen a suitor from her, she has done her best to collect and disseminate damaging information about her.

Now she has found a good-looking young physician some twelve years younger than she, yet she continues to supply stories about the dissipations of Geraldine's young brother and of Geraldine's husband. In the end, Miss Elford is defeated by the very money that she courts: her lover inherits some money and decides to marry a woman whom he does not love (but who has money) in order to pursue his profession. Her malignity increases; she poisons Mrs. Waverly's mind against Geraldine.

The Old Manor House likewise displays a range of women struggling to gain significance. Mrs. Rayland in The Old Manor House is an elderly recluse. She is the surviving heir of Sir Hildebrand Rayland and thus in control of a large estate. Unable to compete on an equal footing with men in the public arena, she chooses to constrict her activities to the estate over which she has complete power. Unmarried, she enjoys the hold she has over her cousin's children, who hope to be able to inherit from her. Mrs. Rayland is proud of her illustrious ancestors and often recounts the family history. Mrs. Lennard, her companion/servant, is

the daughter of a rich merchant who lost his money. Now she lives in penurious dependence on a woman who never tires of expressing her contempt for those who are brought low by failure in the world of trade.

Mrs. Rayland is not disposed to encourage Orland to become independent of her by marriage. The narrator compares her to Elizabeth I, in that she cannot bear to openly acknowledge her successor; nevertheless, "like the royal ancient virgin, she is as little proof against the attractions of an amiable and handsome young man" (1: 280). Having spent all her efforts to subjugate others, Mrs. Rayland has developed few ties of affection. In an ironic twist, Lennard destroys Mrs. Rayland's will so that, in death, all of her maneuvering to gain control over others with promises of inheritance comes to naught.

Mrs. Lennard is another case. As explained earlier, she had been reduced to dependency when her wealthy father lost his fortune. Her survival depends upon a careful maintenance of a subservient facade, beneath which she secretly strives for power by allying herself with the larcenous Mr. Patterson, Mrs. Rayland's butler, who deals in contraband goods. Yet, rather than gaining power, she finds herself in his power, constantly hastening to placate him if something goes wrong. Mrs. Lennard's frustration is revealed in her secret drinking. The only overt power she has is over her great-niece, Monimia, whom she makes into a virtual prisoner.

Mrs. Lennard is attracted to and marries the nephew of Mrs. Rayland's estate manager, but she is consumed by jealousy when she discovers that he is not faithful. The now Mrs. Roker apprentices Monimia to a woman of questionable reputation in order to keep

temptation away from her faithless husband. Exasperated by her incessant jealousy, Roker lets it be known that his wife is mad; she is locked upstairs and guarded by her sister-in-law, "a nasty cross old maid" (4: 177). Smith plots for her an ironic duplication of her treatment of Monimia. Pitifully, Mrs. Roker denies that she is mistreated--she struggles between a desire for love and a desire for revenge. She had been too flattered by the acquisition of a young husband to acknowledge to herself that he married her in order to rob her and now confines her to prevent her discovery of his peccadillos.

Betty Richards is another female whose potential for action is cancelled by her gender and her class. Like Monimia, she is a poor orphan; unlike Monimia, she has no great-aunt to protect her, nor does she have an Orlando to develop her mind. But she has a native cunning; beneath her apparently simple rustic exterior lurks a coquet who knows how to use her body to get what she wants. She entices the butler to give her trinkets; she experiments covertly with various hairdos and hides her finery from view. She projects the image of the obedient maid, but she has a sharp eye for discerning the sources of power in the mansion and uses that information to her advantage. Betty is far more daring than Monimia; when she suggests watching the gentlefolks drive by, Monimia fears being caught. In contrast, Betty coarsely responds, "Hang their thoughts! What would it signify to us what anybody thought if we pleased ourselves?" (1: 138-40).

Betty and Monimia are also a study in contrasts when they go to town: Monimia, a "natural" heroine like those of the nineteenth-century Romantics, wears a white gown and straw hat; her hair is

arranged only by "the hand of nature." Betty, on the other hand, is decked out in all her gaudy finery and baubles (1: 197-8). Monimia is frantic about missing the deadline for returning; Betty chides her for fearing her aunt so: "She can't kill you; as for a few angry words, I've no notion of minding 'em, not I: 'tis hard indeed if one's to be always a slave, and never dares to stir even so little;--one might as well be a negur [sic]" (1: 200). When Monimia protests that she does not want to offend the aunt who is so good to her, Betty retorts:

Why, very often she uses you like a dog, and I'm sure she makes you work like a servant. There's Mr. Patterson always a'telling me, that handsome girls have no occasion to be drudges as I be, or as I have been; for that in London they may make their fortunes and live like the finest ladies of the land. (1: 200-201)

When the two girls are confronted by some young gentlemen, Betty is forward and Monimia is in agony. Betty forms a liaison with Orlando's brother; ironically, Mrs. Rayland fires Betty because she believes that it is she that Orlando meets secretly. Betty has provided for this contingency, however, and as long as Patterson has money and presents, she will be taken care of. When his favors cease, she goes to London, where Philip Somerive supports her. When Orlando bumps into her in the city, she is "tawdrily drest" (4: 145). Philip is now in prison, but she has found another protector (yet she still visits Philip). This is the last we hear of her. We sense that Betty has intelligence,

compassion, and ambition. She is trapped by her circumstances, and though the odds are that she will land on her feet and make the best of whatever situation she finds herself in, the open-endedness of her story line suggests the possibility of either improvement or decay (or that Smith feared to be too open in her support of a character who had transgressed sexually).

Isabella is another spirited young woman who rebels against her circumstances. Her family's reduced fortune makes it necessary for her to marry sensibly, but, before it is too late, her common sense rejects what her vanity and ambition almost made her choose. She is witty but thoughtless, innocent and frivolous. She is also virtuous; she is repulsed when when she hears about the old rake's sex life. She wishes his handsome young nephew would make the amorous declarations to her that the sixty-year old uncle does, but her mother reminds her that she is in no position to complain: "Young women without fortunes, though their merit be indisputable, are not likely to marry at all; are very unlikely, indeed, to meet with such a high fortune" (2: 69). Isabella fluctuates between scornful derision of her "old beau" and yearning for the gay social life and status she will enjoy as the wife of a wealthy military man. Smith sets the turning point a week before the projected wedding to General Tracy: Isabella looks at her new clothes and presents and wonders if they will make her happy. Before the week is out, she elopes with Captain Warwick, the young, dashing, but penniless nephew of the gouty old man. Thus both Isabella and Betty escape: Betty to a precarious kind of independence and Isabella to an unsanctioned but presumably loving husband of her choice.

The Young Philosopher also contains an array of women whose natural energies are thwarted and forced into harmful channels. Mrs. Winslow resembles the other upper-class women who bully family members with well-chosen displays of temper. Her ward Martha is another high-spirited young woman who, like Isabella, yearns to kick over the traces and control her own life. But the perversion of power in this novel takes a darker tone when Smith introduces Lady Mary, Mrs. Crewkherne and Mrs. Grinsted, an unholy trinity of women almost diabolical in their vindictiveness.

The early part of Volume I is taken up with the story of Dr. and Mrs. Winslow and their ward, young Martha Goldthorp. Mrs. Winslow is the heiress of a rich estate; her husband obtained her by using abject flattery and pretending to be whatever seemed to promote his interest. His deception, of course, reveals itself immediately after marriage, but it is too late then for his wife to withdraw from the match. Being married to a dignified, but lifeless churchman, Mrs. Winslow is forced to fit into a narrow pattern of behavior. She has developed a coping mechanism, however; whenever her will is blocked, she has a "nervous" spell, shrieking and falling insensibly to the floor. Unlike Lady Montreville, however, she does not seek to rule alone; she cooperates with her husband in his efforts to keep their ward's fortune in the family.

Martha, the wealthy only daughter of a deceased banker has no one to curb her desires--yet. Her aunt and uncle have always taken it for granted that she would marry their son and keep the fortune in the family, but Martha, who despises "feminine" fear, considers their son

effeminate; she affects great strength of mind and seeks a similarly strong husband. She also has a romantic side; when she sees George Delmont, she imagines him a romantic hero straight out of a novel. Right away she arranges herself in a languorous pose and casts languishing glances at him. Within a half-hour she decides that he will be the one to win her and her fortune, simultaneously dismissing with scorn the idea that her aunt and uncle could imagine she would marry their son. She conducts a subtle but aggressive campaign to inform Delmont that she is willing to receive his addresses, enlisting the aid of his two sisters and his aunt, who are not unmindful of the immensity of her fortune.

Well-read in novels, Miss Goldthorp knows the routine; she has even practiced it on other men, but this time she is in dead earnest. Her flawed education, however, has focused on her "accomplishments" and not her understanding; in consequence, she has an inflated idea of her own importance, yet she prefers to believe that she is liked for her person, not her fortune. Surrounding herself with admirers, she tends to reward those who flatter her with her love. This unfortunate trait makes her easy prey for fortune hunters and assures George Delmont's aversion to her.

Nevertheless, she is strong-willed and outspoken. Tired of Dr. and Mrs. Winslow's maneuverings to remove her from Delmont's company, she stages a rebellion. When Dr. Winslow cries out at the folly of modern young women, she replies confidently that she will save Delmont from his evil counselors and advise him herself. Clearly she does not project herself into the role of submissive wife. Since it will be her fortune

supporting him, she intends to have the upper hand.

Enraged by her unladylike speech, Dr. Winslow threatens to take her before the Lord Chancellor, but she is undaunted:

What has the Lord High Chancellor of England or five hundred be-wigged and be-robed old fellows, all as ugly as disagreeable, to do with me, beseech you? You threaten to put the fortune I am not to have the principal of till I am five and twenty into his power. I don't care whether you do or not. He cannot, now that I am of age, hinder me from marrying--he can only keep that principal, and put me to some expense. My dear uncle, I am not to be so frightened. I know perfectly what I can do. . . . And now, uncle, since you have forced me to say so much, I will tell you plainly, once or all, that I will not be controuled [sic] in the most important concern in my life; I will not be wheedled or threatened into marrying your son, which is what you aim at; and if I am to be watched, and checked, and teased, as if I was still a baby in leading-strings, I must resolve, though very sorry to give my aunt concern, to leave her, and establish myself in a house of my own. (1: 209-10)

Clearly, this is the voice of a new breed of woman. She knows her own mind, and, confident in her power (derived from her wealth), she ignores the protocols which require her to defer to her elders, to disavow her desire, and to accept passively the future that is devised for her.

Thus, when George's older brother Adolphus pays a call, she is greatly attracted because he resembles his brother. Soon she prefers him to George, for Adolphus is a polished man of the world.

Finding himself in circumstances that make the acquisition of a fortune necessary, Adolphus sets out to win her. When Dr. Winslow reproaches her forwardness, she admonishes him not to lecture her, "just for all the world as Squire Alworthy preaches to Jenny Jones in *The Foundling*" (4: 45). Miss Goldthorp marries Adolphus--and one suspects that with the superiority conferred by her fortune she will manage him just as she has her uncle, for near the end of the novel, Adolphus writes to Delmont that he has no money. Although he has become the Earl of Castledanes, he is heartily tired of his wife; his pleasure in his fortune and title diminished by the knowledge that he could have married Miss Cardonnel, a far more pliable heiress. We last see Adolphus and Martha living in "haughty gaiety," trying to compensate for lack of happiness (4: 396). Smith's plots suggest that women who have chosen a husband because of his wealth or polish rather than internal merit tend to fare badly, even when they appear to have achieved their goals.

Lady Mary is, despite her centrality to the plot, only a peripheral character in the novel, for she is principally described by her daughter and by the narrator: most of her actions are reported after the fact except for the one scene in which the distraught Laura stumbles on her mother sitting on a sofa. Recognizing her mother, Laura shrieks and falls at Lady Mary's feet. Lady Mary recognizes her too--"but her anguished cry has no effect on the callous bosom of Lady Mary." Even the servants are dumbfounded at this "unnatural rejection" of a child by

her mother; they cannot conceive that any act, especially one committed twenty years ago, can justify such coldness (3: 323).

Lady Mary seems to be characterized by coldness; like Smith's other unnatural mothers, her maternal instincts have been supplanted by a desire for power and wealth. From a poor but illustrious family, Lady Mary had married a rich merchant for his money. Like Mrs. Rayland and Lady Montreville, she is obsessed with the importance of family; she decides to give her elder daughter a large marriage portion on condition that her husband take the name of De Verdon. The second daughter, Laura, does not imbibe these notions of family consequence. When she elopes with a Scottish orphan who, although he is a member of the family which gave the De Verdon name its consequence, has little fortune, she is cast out of the family, victim of a dynastic quarrel.

Laura's father seems to pity her, but his increasing infirmities make him, symbol of ailing patriarchy, no match for Lady Mary. "Her original ascendancy [over her husband] was now confirmed by her violence and arrogance" (2: 29). Happy to be separated from a family whose values and actions were so inimical to her own, Laura does not consider the consequence of her disinheritance until twenty years later when she realizes that her daughter will need her share of the estate. Lady Mary, seventy years old now, is not so impotent as her age would suggest; her wealth allows her to "point, with the most infallible of all metals, the arrows that she from every quarter armed against the peace of her own child" (3: 103). She allies herself with self-serving lawyers and the two malicious women, Mrs. Grinsted and Mrs. Crewkherne, to block Laura's efforts to regain her fortune.

Lady Mary is not so forgetful of her bloodline as to deny her only granddaughter access to her. She has her elder daughter's child, a Miss Cardonnel (Medora's cousin), on whom all her hopes of succession rest and whom she has taken into her home. In driving away her rival, the lawyers are not disinterested: one of them hopes to marry his son to Miss Cardonnel and the other lawyer hates Medora's father.

As, one by one, the villains in Lady Mary's pay are unmasked and their plots fail, Lady Mary seems to realize how far they have gone in trying to please her and she tries to protect Laura and Medora from Mrs. Grinsted and Mrs. Crewkhorne, but senility takes its toll and she is powerless to control her harpies.

A fourth frustrated female in The Young Philosopher is Mrs. Crewkherne, George Delmont's "reputedly rich elderly female relation" (1: 25). Like Mrs. Rayland, she is interested only in talking of her illustrious ancestors and in a hypocritical religiosity. Having no children of her own to manage, she had tried to gain control over her nephews and nieces when their mother died, but the boys had rejected her religious bigotry. She had then taken the eldest sister to town, where she hoped to inculcate her belief in "faith without works" in at least one of her relations, but the joyless and hypocritical views of the aunt had alienated the young girl. Failing in her attempt to control the girl, Mrs. Crewkherne begins a vigorous campaign to manage George Delmont's life and force him to marry Miss Goldthorp and restore fortune to the family.

Discovering that George has been visiting an American woman and her daughter, Mrs. Crewkherne sets about driving off the strangers. Not

only does she consider them an impediment to her plans, but she also wants to sever George's connection with Mr. Armitage, who is the host of the Americans. Although she has never met Armitage, Mrs. Crewkherne hates him because of his advanced ideas: he favors the American and French Revolutions and he has the reputation of being a freethinker. She goes into such a frenzy when speaking of Armitage that her nephew is embarrassed to see her lack of control.

Mrs. Crewkherne's opinions are not her own; she has imbibed them from people of rank. She is internally aware that her energetic pursuit of a fortune is contrary to her pious cant in praise of poverty and self-denial, but she will not acknowledge the contradiction openly. Her method is to spread gossip and rumor rather than to deal directly with an issue.

Armitage confronts Mrs. Crewkherne to face her with the evil her malicious lies have caused, not just to him, but to the innocent American women. She is impervious to the truth, however; in fact, she hates him even more now for having revealed the malevolence in her heart. Inflamed to madness by his attack, she now persecutes the women directly. Although she calls herself Christian, she is blinded by passion and prejudice and not only instigates the kidnaping of Medora but also the confinement of Laura in a madhouse. As such plans deserve to be, hers are finally blocked as the truth emerges. At the end she is not reconciled with the happy lovers, and the narrator says she dies "in charity with no one" (4: 398).

A parallel character, Mrs. Grinsted, also comes from a family where title is the first requirement for happiness and fortune the second.

Fortune has made it possible for her to gain both connections and money, so she spends her time with bluestockings and busies herself in a political circle. Intimate with Lady Mary de Verdon, Mrs. Grinsted has an opportunity to gain influence when she becomes an intermediary between Laura and her mother, but, after artfully drawing the truth of her circumstances from Laura, she then turns Lady Mary against her daughter. Like Mrs. Crewkherne, Mrs. Grinsted justifies any evil action if the doer intends to do well. Thus she sets herself to interfere in Laura's life so that Lady Mary will not suspect that she may have mistreated her daughter.

When the distraught Laura comes for information concerning the abducted Medora, Mrs. Grinsted offers neither sympathy nor information. The narrator says she has a "naturally malignant heart," and a "selfish and arrogant temper." Laura finds herself unable to listen to "the inhuman woman who, abusing the name of religion, could thus pour corrosive poison in the dreadful wounds of her heart, bleeding for the loss of an only child" (3: 179). When Laura, bereft of her reason, stumbles into Lady Mary's house, Mrs. Grinsted advises Lady Mary to incarcerate Laura in an insane asylum under a pseudonym, telling her she does her duty as a mother in seeing her daughter cared for. Together, Grinsted and Crewkherne persuade her that Laura has formed a "guilty connection" with Armitage and does not deserve her forgiveness. Smith's dark melodrama emphasizes the strength of repressed desires to power, apparently unbounded by any sense of compunction or compassion for the victim.

Like Mrs. Crewkherne, Mrs. Grinsted is not brought back into the

fold. She

really imagined that if heaven had made her a man, the great compass of her mind, and her vast fluency of speech, on which she particularly piqued herself, would have placed her in a considerable rank among the statesmen of her day and nation. To this masculine, or rather universal propensity to govern, she added one purely feminine--a latent hatred toward Glenmorris because he had not made love to her when he might. (4: 361).

Here Smith points out that men are not the exclusive possessors of the will to power even though patriarchy makes them exclusively capable of attaining it. Just as Arabella in The Female Quixote yearned for individual power, Mrs. Grinsted is driven to extremes to satisfy her fantasy of personal significance. Deprived of power in the male world and prevented from enjoying sexual power, she has displaced the urge to power onto the politics of another family. Smith also calls attention to the fact that patriarchal ideology inculcates in women a need for recognition of their beauty and erotic attractiveness. Deprived of that satisfaction too, Mrs. Grinsted's offended feminine vanity has filled her with a virulent poison.

Smith gives us quick glimpses of other female characters acting to create power for themselves. One of them is Mrs. Nixon, the curate's wife's sister, a powerless woman in the household of a clergyman, who enjoys gathering information and using it to create a sense of

importance for herself. Accustomed to consider her activity harmless, she calls Mrs. Crewkherne's attention to the presence of Laura and Medora in the neighborhood--and to the fact that George visits them regularly. When Mrs. Nixon realizes how much anger and turmoil she has aroused, she regrets having exaggerated and tries to mitigate the harm she has caused; she hints that these women may be innocent after all, but Mrs. Crewkherne is too enraged to listen now.

Another vicious woman is the Ladie Kilbrodie--Glenmorris's only relation in Scotland. Her son will inherit the estate if Glenmorris dies without an heir. When she hears that Glenmorris may be dead and that Laura is pregnant with a child she may not bring forth alive, the Ladie takes matters in her own hands. Telling the servants that the stunned Laura is demented, she takes her forcibly to a remote and dreary old abbey. The plot takes on a Gothic coloring and the old woman becomes diabolical in her determination to destroy her innocent victim. Laura describes the Ladie as a "female warlock" having a "shrivelled and distorted countenance disfigured by evil passion" (2: 103). The old woman's plan is to dispose of Laura and her child so that the Laird can inherit Glenmorris's lands in Scotland; therefore, she sets about undermining Laura's mental and physical health by constantly bombarding Laura with ideas of danger and death. Although Laura does lose the baby, "this unfeminine, this inhuman woman" does not cause her to lose her desire for life (2: 123).

Another wicked and envious woman is Mrs. Mackkirk, the sister of Lord Macarden, who rescues Laura and takes her home with him. Though Mrs. Mackkirk feigns hospitality, she dislikes Laura from the beginning.

Mrs. Mackirk has six children, but, disliking art, music, and books, she does not attend to their education. When Laura draws the children to her by reading to them, Mrs. Mackirk becomes overtly hostile: she has tried to conceal her narrow-minded envy of the brighter, more attractive and better educated Laura, but after Lord Macarden engages in a duel for Laura's sake, she has Laura kidnaped and returned to Ladie Kilbrodie. When Glenmorris returns and the truth emerges, Lord Macarden punishes Mrs. Mackirk for her "unfeminine and malicious conduct" by refusing to speak to her (2: 253). The Kilbrodies make restitution of Glenmorris's property; the Ladie is repentant.

One other cameo appears; Mrs. Darnell, the mother of the slightly stupid law clerk who abducts Medora, is depicted as "ignorant and vulgar;" Medora learns that "it is from ignorance combined with avarice and malevolence that there is always the most to apprehend." Medora describes her as having the face and voice of a fury but being too plump to qualify as one of those monsters of poetical antiquity (4: 254).

In these four novels, Smith has assembled a large cast of energetic and capable women whose gender prevents them from constructive or productive action. Emphasizing their anger and frustration, Smith shows them turning on those around them in socially counter-productive violence, occasionally harming themselves in the process. Smith invariably describes her villainesses women as "monstrous," "inhuman," or "unfeminine," suggesting that these unnatural women are the result of a transformation or mutation from the norm. Although greed might appear to be at the root of their warped efforts at control, it is only a factor. The chief cause of the alteration is patriarchal social

practice, which distorts normal female desires for power and importance by denying them a sanctioned outlet; as a result, these women have lost their femininity, even their humanity. The stressing of "unfeminine," however, also calls attention to the fact that, by appropriating the powers reserved for men, these women have overstepped the boundaries patriarchy has set for their gender.

The other authors in this study also created women who transgress and occasionally one or two who deliberately harm other women. Usually these acts are motivated by jealousy, as when Harriot attempts to discredit Sophia in Sir Charles's eyes in Lennox's Sophia, or when Henrietta disguises herself as Lucy in order to meet Frederick secretly in Aubin's Lady Lucy, or Lady Galliard has her footman's wife murdered so their affair can continue undiscovered in Davys's The Accomplished Rake. But Smith takes her villainous females further--indeed, beyond the limits of their gender roles as women. Some of the ambitious wives actually trade positions with their husbands (Lady Mary and Lady Montreville, for example) and assume masculine powers, clearly drawn by the will to wealth and power and not mere gratification of sexual impulses, as the examples mentioned above were. Rather than condemn her characters' desire for power, however, Smith implies that it was the unrewarding and powerless feminine roles dictated by social practice that drove them to destructive acts.

A fourth dominant theme in Smith's novels is that of unsuccessful marriages. In Emmeline, Smith interpolates the story of Adeline Trelawney and weaves the story of the Staffords into the plot. In addition, there are the Montrevilles and Fanny Crofts. None of these

marriages is based on love: all of them were motivated by financial gain--and importantly, in the cases where the wife is miserable, she was not the instigator of the decision to marry. The conclusion to be drawn is that, left to themselves, women are more likely to make rational marriage choices than parents who are motivated by avarice and ambitions. The wives in these marriages range on a scale from passive to active: Mrs. Stafford is a kind of patient Griselda, always striving to hold the family together and never uttering a reproach to her husband; Adelina is more rebellious, drawn into an illicit relationship partly by circumstances and partly by desire, but her courage fails her when her defection leads to pregnancy, and the pressures of her guilt lead to a psychological disintegration that is nearly permanent. Lady Montreville, in contrast, is not a passive wife: she holds the reins in the family, and it is Lord Montreville who has to accommodate himself to her demands. Depriving him of his name and requiring him to take hers has somehow shifted the seat of power in her marriage. Fanny Montreville obviously uses her mother as a role model, and though she thoughtlessly consents to an elopement with an inferior man who is interested only in her fortune, like her mother, she controls him with her imperious temper and her fortune, but she goes one step further than her mother and takes a lover, flaunting the illicit liaison openly.

When Mrs. Stafford is introduced into the novel, she is shown to be melancholy and filled with a kind of patient resignation, but the cause is not explained. It is only gradually that the reader realizes that it is her demeaning marriage that fills her with sadness. She is constantly pregnant and she must struggle to manage the family affairs

(because her husband is incapable) so that they can subsist. Their straitened circumstances prevent her from moving in the social circles to which their name entitles her. Her husband, however, does not let lack of money curb his desire to collect bibelots. The narrator describes him as one of those "unfortunate" characters who is fit neither for business or more refined pursuits: he searches incessantly for relief from life's boredom. His failures have made him irritable; not only does his wife have to endure his improvidence, but she has to put up with his testiness. When his imprudence necessitates their leaving the country to flee debtors, it is Mrs. Stafford who returns to England to try to improve their financial standing. She is doomed, of course, to frustration, for financial men resent what they perceive as her affectation of business sense and block her every move.

The constant example of Mrs. Stafford's embarrassment and silent suffering before her, Emmeline is reluctant to enter into an engagement with Delamere, whose volatility and instability are easily discernable clues that he will not make a good husband either.

Smith also inserts the story of Adelina Trelawney to indicate that not all the wives of failed marriage are so passive and accepting. Adelina's story suggests, however, that the cost of transgression is more than most women cast in the sensible mold can endure. Adelina is another motherless girl; her father's decision to marry for wealth rather than love confronts her with the necessity of having to live with a spiteful and envious stepmother. As a consequence, Adelina views her first proposal as an attractive escape from the unpleasant woman now in charge of her home. Her suitor, a Mr. Trelawney, has suddenly received

a fortune which he lacks the training to manage efficiently. Adelina complains:

I had never thought of anything so serious as matrimony; and indeed was just out of the nursery [she is sixteen], where I had never been told it was necessary to think at all. I did not very well know what to say to my admirer; and after the first speech, which I believe he had learned by heart, he knew almost as little what to say to me. (226)

She does, however, see his weaknesses--but she says they are no different from those of other young men. So she "gave away [her] person before [she] knew [she] had a heart" (228). The seeds of dissatisfaction are sown in her heart when she compares her husband to her sister's.

When her brother-in-law, the unmarried Fitz-Edward, shows compassion to her, her defenses crumble and she hungrily accepts his love. Abandoned by her bankrupt husband, she says it is not Fitz-Edward's art that seduced her, but her "treacherous heart had already said more than his insidious eloquence" (236). Smith allows the story to be told so that blame is deflected from Adelina: first, she is the victim of a faulty education, and second, trained to display the feminine characteristics of sensibility, she is not mistress of her heart. Adelina lacks the stoic acceptance of Geraldine; she does not see duty to her husband as her only guide. Having transgressed, however, she is not without remorse. From beyond the grave the voice of

patriarchy awakens her conscience as she recalls her dying father's admonition that the honor of the family is in her hands. Adelina accepts the consequences of her actions; she courageously decides not to confide in her family or even Fitz-Edward when she discovers she is pregnant; instead, she decides to punish herself by separating from him and the rest of the world and taking her secret to her grave. Smith takes Adelina's suffering to extremes to emphasize the injustice of this final act of patriarchal repression.

Rather than having Smith's "good" women, Emmeline and Mrs. Stafford, condemn Adelina for her error, the narrator comments that they pity her for the misfortunes into which her unhappy marriage had led her. Although Adelina conceals her condition from the rest of her family, she allows the two women to befriend her. Thus the fallen woman is not held responsible for the vulnerability her sensible heart has given her; instead, the flaws of the institution are blamed. Yet it is she, and not the institution, who suffers. For fourteen months after her baby is born, Adelina tortures herself with a death-wish, spending melancholy and sorrowful hours walking alone, playing mournful music and writing morbid poems. Meanwhile, Adelina's brother Godolphin, persuaded by Emmeline not to avenge Adelina's honor but to keep her secret, gives the baby his name and lets it be known that the child is his. The obviously sympathetic treatment of Adelina's error suggests that the adultress can be forgiven by her family (especially when her transgression is not public knowledge). When contrasted with Lady Frances's deliberate flaunting of her affair in the same novel, Adelina's fall from grace seems almost chaste--and certainly her

repentance sits better with the audience than does Fanny's scornful pride.

After Adelina's period of contrition (the end of which coincides with the death of her husband), Fitz-Edward returns to avow his love. The immediate result is Adelina's derangement, because she believes the patriarchal injunction that transgressors should be punished, not rewarded. Unable to cope with the idea of contradicting the "law," she escapes into madness. Yet as Gilbert and Gubar argue, her madness is a metaphor for Smith's repressed alienation from the "system" that decrees such fates for women (85). Adelina gradually recovers and the plot indicates that she will marry Fitz-Edward, but that they will not be able to acknowledge their child. The plot, then, grants them only partial reclamation; the fruit of their sin, although innocent, cannot thrive.

Adelina serves as a monitory example to Emmeline of the dangers of a bad marriage, but her story also offers hope of an escape from a loveless marriage. The plot is contrived to free Adelina from direct responsibility for her actions, and by emphasizing the extremity of her suffering, suggests that the punishment is out of proportion to her transgression. Yet Smith's ambiguity reveals itself in her apparent inability or unwillingness to articulate her anti-patriarchal values.

In Desmond, Smith shows two failed marriages; though the circumstances are similar, the two wives deal with their unhappiness in radically different ways. Geraldine, though not the central character in the eponymous novel, is the female protagonist. Unlike most eighteenth-century heroines after Aubin's, Geraldine is married, a

victim of primogeniture as her mother has contrived to marry off her daughter without having to pay much of a settlement so that she can give most of the family fortune to her son. When Desmond first describes her, she has just married Verney, a bounder and a profligate man; Desmond worships her from afar as time passes. She is not a gay socialite: their financial straits keep her confined at home, worrying about money; about keeping her children fed, sheltered, and well; about her husband's irresponsibility; even worrying about her brother, who should be her protector, but who is nearly as foolish and undependable as her husband. She is the exemplar of woman victimized by avaricious parents and unworthy husband: her mother encourages her to obey Verney and closes her eyes to the brutality her daughter undergoes nearly every day.

Geraldine is intelligent and well-read, but she has internalized the values of patriarchal society so fully that she nearly becomes a martyr to them. She is passive, obedient, chaste--even when she realizes that what her husband intends to do is sell her to the highest bidder. She has attempted to maintain personal dignity in a world where both the law and social practice insist that her husband has the right to control his family however he wishes (and her family agree that he should). Although she accepts her legal obligations as wife and chattel, she gradually becomes aware that she will refuse to be sold to another man. As she obeys her husband's command to come to him in France, she acts more and more recklessly, coming dangerously close to madness, because she is faced with equally impossible choices--committing adultery at his request or breaking the moral imperative of

obeying her husband in all things that society has placed before her. Although Smith relents and creates a happy ending, Geraldine's story paints the grim outline of the lives of many women who destroyed themselves trying to reconcile their ideas of chastity and honor with the behavior required of them by the men who roled their lives.

Desmond finds himself involved in a romantic triangle with two married women: Geraldine is the goddess he worships from afar and Josephine is the sister of his friend in France. Passionately devoted to her only son, Montfleuri's mother has callously put two daughters into convents to become nuns and has married the other two to the first men who offered. Desmond writes that the partiality of the mother to her son has put Josephine in "cruel bonds" to a man who is worthless (1: 117-18). Having been put in the power of this man depresses Josephine; their financial embarrassment causes her to shun company.

De Boisbelle is typical of the French aristocracy in English fiction of the time, so violently opposed to the Revolution (and concerned for his own safety) that he has fled his country; Desmond calls him a "worthless character" (1: 118). Josephine shares some of her brother's enlightened ideas about male-female relationships; she has no compunctions about conducting an affair with Desmond. Like the French revolutionaries, Josephine rebels against the oppressive husband. She asserts her independence by actively pursuing and seducing Desmond. In contrast to Geraldine's passive acceptance of her oppression and her repression of her anger and desires, Josephine recognizes her sensuality and seeks to express it rather than to deny it. Smith makes her actions acceptable to the British audience by

making Josephine a Frenchwoman; the sexual license of the French was a byword in England. Additionally, Montfleuri confesses that he encouraged her to indulge her desire for Desmond; in fact, he maneuvered events so that she would be left alone with him after he had been wounded. But the representation of a sentimental character who has sexual appetites subversively suggests that women can have such feelings. (Juxtaposition of the two traits is not, of course, original with Smith; sentimentality and sexuality are often closely allied in the period (Poovey 15-19). Further, her story indicates that the consequences of such behavior may not be madness, death, or everlasting social opprobrium. She suffers no more for having engaged in an illicit relationship than does Desmond. So, as one critic observes,

although Smith seems to acquiesce to generally accepted social and literary proprieties of her time in the broad outlines of Geraldine Verney's story, she introduces ironic overtones that color the effect of the novel by positing a second "heroine," equally sympathetic, whose behavior deviates significantly from approved norms. (Bowstead 252)

Thus, while Geraldine sees her position as analagous to that of the French rebels, Josephine, like the rebels, actually breaks her chains. Smith also subverts Geraldine's submissiveness by contrasting it with Josephine's daring and independence. After having Desmond's child, Josephine leaves it for Geraldine to raise. Ignoring the conventions of sentimental fiction, Smith leaves Josephine at the end waiting for the

return of the naval officer to whom she has been attached almost since infancy. Although the point is not emphasized, it becomes clear that Josephine did not truly love Desmond, but that she used him as an emotional and a physical outlet during her time of need.

The miserable marriage in The Old Manor House is that of Mrs. Lennard to the nephew of Mrs. Rayland's steward. Made unhappy in her dependence and convinced that she would never have an opportunity to marry, Lennard is swept off her feet when the young man proposes. She is too thrilled at the prospect of marriage to question his motives. She recognizes right away that her husband has a roving eye, but she thinks to solve her problem by removing her young great-niece from his sight. After Mrs. Roker helps her husband manipulate events so that her inheritance from her employer will be increased, Mr. Roker locks her away in an attic and announces that she is insane. His imprisoned wife can no longer accuse him of infidelity or monitor his movements in any way. Even when Orlando communicates with her secretly, she is unwilling to acknowledge what a terrible mistake of judgment she has made.

Just as Desmond is really about Geraldine Verney and her endurance of a vile marriage, so does The Young Philosopher come to be dominated by Laura Glenmorris's story. Although it is her young daughter, Medora, who is the romantic interest in the novel, Laura becomes, inexorably, the central character. She appears to be peripheral to the main plot until in the second volume Laura becomes the narrative voice, telling her past history; after she brings it up to the present, the continuation of her story by the narrator overshadows the romance of Delmont and Medora.

Smith inverts the romance heroine pattern--rather than being an orphan, Laura is the younger daughter of a wealthy merchant and a woman from an illustrious family. The mother is obsessed with ideas of the importance of family. Laura, however, escapes interest in nobility and a life of pleasure. She falls in love with a "scholar, a poet, a young man of extraordinary, but eccentric genius" (1: 7-8), but Lady Mary, her mother, scorns his proposal of marriage to Laura and denies him entry to the house. Dreading the life her mother will force on her, Laura elopes with him to his remote estate in Scotland. When he is abducted by pirates, only a desire to live for the child she carries prevents her from taking her life.

Laura is taken captive by her husband's nearest relative--the one who will inherit his estate if Laura's child does not live. The old woman tries to undermine her health and her hope. Worse, the old woman's son eyes Laura with mingled avarice and lust after her child, born prematurely, dies. Fleeing the laird's determined courtship, Laura takes refuge in a cave by the wild Scottish coastline. She is aided by a rough sailor and his family and then rescued by Lord Macarden, a friend of her husband, who then falls in love with her and nearly dies defending her from the laird.

In many ways, Laura's early story resembles that of Aubin's Belinda I in Madam de Beaumont. Just like Belinda I, Laura believes her husband to be dead, she is imprisoned by a relative, she lives in a cave to escape her hunters, and she contemplates suicide in order to escape the harsh, unrelenting world in which she lives. When her husband returns, like Aubin's husbands, he is more concerned that his honor might have

been stained by her infidelity than he is to see her again. Molding herself in the passive behavior expected of a wife, she forgives him just as Aubin's wives had done.

Laura's early adventures are those of the romance heroine, for she always escapes and afterwards she is reunited with her husband. But the harrowing adventures of her past life are eclipsed by the psychologically more wearing events yet to come, events from which she never fully recovers. When Laura returns to England to attempt to obtain the legacy her father's will bequeathed to Medora, she and her daughter find themselves victimized by gossips, old ladies' disapproval, poverty, and the frustrations of dealing with corrupt lawyers and bureaucrats.

Like Emmeline, Laura finds her worst enemies to be her family, specifically, her mother, who is determined to oppose her no matter what the cost or what the deed. Indeed, she does not balk at kidnaping her own granddaughter; when Laura discovers that her beloved daughter has been taken, she goes mad. Lady Mary has Laura incarcerated in a madhouse, her "unfeminine" behavior demonstrating how patriarchy (in this case, matriarchy having appropriated patriarchal principles) attempts to contain and isolate the nonconformist who does not adhere to socially accepted schemes of wealth and power. When Laura discovers that her mother is responsible for the evils that have befallen her, she disowns Lady Mary:

My mother, alas! must I call her mother who would rob me of my child! My mother, who expelled me from her affections

long before I would ever have done anything to forfeit them, had first the cruelty to take from me my only delight, the sole pleasure and comfort of my life, by which she knew I should be driven to despair, and then took advantage of the anguish she inflicted, to affix on me the charge of lunacy, and to confine me, she hopes, for life! (3: 96)

After this lucid moment of recognition, Laura becomes insensible, her madness becoming an expression of her impotence and loss of control over her life (Gilbert and Gubar 86-87). Laura has dealt with the vicissitudes of losing her husband, being imprisoned, losing her first child and facing the persecutions of her enemies, but after being betrayed by her mother, Laura is overwhelmed by the chaos of her universe (Todd, Friendship 408). In eighteenth-century novels, madness is an everpresent symbol of the stress that life in patriarchy causes women, especially in the latter part of the century, when the cult of sentimentality was strong. The sentimental emphasis on feelings and emotions made women particularly vulnerable to suffering (that vulnerability revealing itself in psychic disintegration).

Laura is a woman alone, her husband, her supposed protector, in America, prevented by unpaid debts from returning to England. When he finally receives news of his wife and daughter and comes rushing to the rescue, he is promptly thrown into debtor's prison. The plot thus reveals how financial disabilities affect personal relationships: although he is a loving husband, he is incompetent in terms of fending

for those who depend on him. Smith reveals a curious ambivalence here: although her plots argue against avaricious matches, the above example certainly suggests the pragmatic value of a wealthy husband. Again, her bitter personal experiences had taught her how the indigent are disregarded and victimized.

Yet the cumulative effect of plots about miserable marriages is to repudiate the wisdom of arranged marriages and to suggest that marriages need to be based on merit, not financial considerations. It had become an accepted idea by the end of the eighteenth century that a woman had a right to select her own spouse, but the practice of parental interference in a woman's decision still existed (Poovey 13). The device of "strict settlement," intended to insure stability of the landed estate, actually created division of interests among family members and increased family tensions (McKeon 154). Thus, as Richardson depicted in Clarissa, family pressures on young women often caused them to subordinate their own preferences. Speaking from personal experience, Smith suggests that forbearance is not the only solution for a woman caught in an unbearable relationship. Although divorce hardly existed, at least not for people of her social rank, Smith offers the possibility of separation from an intolerable husband.

A fifth important idea in Smith's later novels is the notion that the democratic ideology raised by the revolutionaries in France and in America might hold hope for oppressed women. The volatile political situations in those countries aroused both hopes and fears in England. On the one hand, the aristocratic hegemony was adamantly opposed to efforts to overthrow British rule in America and the power of the

monarch in France. On the other hand, the oppressed and downtrodden hoped to receive some positive benefits when democratic institutions and laws (they hoped) materialized. Women were particularly sympathetic to the cause of the rebels because they recognized a kinship with the victims of oppression. Radicals argued that if reforms could be instituted, then revolution in England could be avoided. What they wanted for all were the same changes women agitated for: better education, more job opportunities, and generally speaking, more respect.

It was natural that the novel should become the testing-ground for such ideas. Many female novelists sensed that they had the opportunity to harness the power of the novel for reform--and to raise political consciousness in their readers. It was also natural that while revolution raged in France, male literary critics were suspicious about the propagandistic effects of these novels and tended to disparage them for adding to the already volatile debate.

On a practical level, male reviewers were concerned about the social, political, and cultural ramifications of the burgeoning number of women readers and writers. On a theoretical level, the reviewers insisted that the debate about good and bad novels remain inextricable from definitions of good and bad women. (Mudge 90)

As a result, though separating from her husband and writing for money did no harm to Smith's reputation (Spencer 10), as the last decade of the century wore on, revolutionary support was considered far more

offensive and Smith began to lose her public. Further, dismayed by the effects of recent events in France, Smith withdrew from active pursuit of the topic even though she still supported the ideals of the French Revolution. In her declining years, she turned to children's books to earn a living (Todd, Sign 226).

It is not surprising, then, that though Smith was opposed to tyranny on any level--domestic, political, spiritual, or temporal--and though she continued to express democratic ideals in her arguments against social distinctions based on wealth, her linkage of the plight of women with the French Revolution and the American Revolution is most forcibly expressed in Desmond, published in 1792 when the French Revolution had been in progress for three years, and becomes less dominant in the later novels.

In Desmond the uncharacteristically simple plot is subordinated to the political issues and debates throughout the novel. Desmond, the idealistic protagonist, fills his letters with stories showing the smug complacency felt by the narrow-minded aristocracy who are blind to the strong tide of antagonistic feeling rising in the poor and the oppressed. He also recounts incidents of those exploited by the gentry.

The prevailing sentiment in aristocratic circles in England ran counter to republican ideals, but Smith reveals her preference for the rebels and depicts Desmond as ashamed of his country for its failure to support the fight for freedom. Through him she attacks the social system, unjustly wielded by a decadent aristocratic culture, that reduces so many to poverty and despair, and especially the implacable legal system that seems to prey on the poor and those without friends.

Smith dramatizes the difficulty of the individual to exist as an entity in the face of archaic social convention, insensitive social institutions, and rigid social classification. Invariably her satiric portraits of the opponents of the Revolution reveal them to be greedy, self-serving, and unthinking monsters.

Though the correspondents in this epistolary novel express democratic political ideology, none of them articulates a specific position on the rights of women (Bowstead 259). Rather, as Geraldine Verney's story emerges from the letters, the reader begins to recognize the same characteristics of tyranny and oppression that have been discussed as theory in the preceding letters. Geraldine herself draws a parallel between her situation and that of the revolutionaries. Even if she did not call attention to the connection,

the striking juxtaposition of a sentimental narrative and lengthy discussions among the correspondents of evils implicit in autocracy induces a reflective reader to notice that the conventions of popular romantic fiction are themselves informed by questionable tenets about the exercise of power: that is, a notion of eroticism characterized by contemptuous dominion, on the one hand, and obeisant delicacy, on the other. (Bowstead 237)

These are the subversive criticisms of patriarchy that Smith offers: she attempts to inculcate in the reader a repugnance toward the oppressive husbands and a preference for the sentimental romance hero.

She also suggests that tyrannical husbands are an outgrowth of the political ideology which subjugates women to men.

Desmond illustrates that a woman may find death preferable to marriage with a man who considers her his chattel. The plot sends Geraldine to Paris during the reign of anarchy. She has every chance of meeting violence there--and it is a risk that she accepts in a kind of death-wish, for she would rather be dead than be abandoned by her mother to her husband's perverted power:

If I get among the wildest collection of these people, whose ferocity arises not from their present liberty, but from their recent bondage, is it possible to suppose they will injure me, who am myself a miserable slave, returning with trembling and reluctant steps, to put on the most deadful of all fetters?--Fetters that would even destroy the freedom of my mind. (3: 71)

Thus the plot makes the point that injustice in the government of the family is closely connected to injustice in the government of the nation.

In one of her letters Geraldine reports a joke she has heard about a Frenchwoman who changed her religion to avoid meeting her husband in heaven; Geraldine has become a democrat on the same principle, for she knows it will separate her from the male hegemony that deprives women of the right to selfhood. She believes that God's principles are on the side of freedom (3: 132), but her experience has shown her that that is

not what patriarchy believes--for example, her father had not subscribed to belief in individual freedom when when he raised her and her sister.

Smith uses attitudes toward the Revolution to categorize her characters. Those who are sympathetic towards the idea of the individual's right to human dignity and freedom are those who will treat women fairly and with respect. Conversely, the opponents of the Revolution support oppressive social practices. For example, Mrs. Waverly considers that marriage requires absolute submission, as do her son, Verney, and de Boisbelle. On the other hand, Desmond, Montfleuri, Josephine de Boisbelle, Fanny, Bethel, and Geraldine conceive of marriage as a consensual arrangement; only the persons who are to be bound by the agreement should participate in the decision to marry. Desmond is a call for a revolution on the domestic front to parallel the revolution in national government.

The Old Manor House touches on the same themes, but less overtly. The novel emphasizes the oppressive power of money and family veneration to enslave the individual or to curb his freedom. Orlando, Monimia, Isabella--all deal in various ways with the pressures put on them to accept undesirable marriages; each marries his or her choice eventually. The only overt reference to the American Revolution comes when Orlando's regiment is sent to America to subdue the rebels. The establishment view of the rebels is that they are of an inferior species who ought to be punished for resisting the mother country (3: 283), but the narrator shows Orlando's sympathy shifting as he sees firsthand the suffering of the soldiers in the transport ship:

Such of them as survived [were] going to another hemisphere to avenge on a branch of their own nation a quarrel, of the justice of which they knew little, and were never suffered to enquire: he felt disposed to wonder at the folly of mankind, and to enquire again what all this was for? (3: 257)

Orlando concludes that those who argue that one must sacrifice for the honor of the country are mistaken--that it was to "the wickedness of governments, or the sanguinary ambition or revenge of monarch, that so much misery was owing" (3: 258). When he thinks of the politicians who incur war without risking their safety, the contractors who line their pockets by supplying inferior merchandise to those who do risk their safety, all those who profit from the war and disregard the voices of the people who are taxed to support the war, he cries out:

Merciful God! can it be thy will that mankind should thus tear each other to pieces with more ferocity than the beasts of the wilderness? Can it be thy dispensation that kings are entrusted with power only to deform thy works--and in learning politics to forget humanity? (3: 260-61)

Disgusted, he decides that the English who sent the Indians against their own people were the savages, not the Indians they so designated.

Smith's last novel, The Young Philosopher, also alludes to America as a land where people can live in freedom. The Glenmorrises have fled to America to avoid debt, but they have grown accustomed to living in a

country where merit rather than money or family name is the determinant of importance. When Laura and Medora return to England in order to retrieve their share of the family estate, it is like living in a nightmare.

Medora misses America; she equates England with politics, lawsuits, old ladies' disapproval, and gossip (2: 264). Her father is struck by the difference in manners, customs, and habits of thinking there. The chief characteristic of the Americans is that they love to be free and they are making the noblest effort to resist oppression. Although some of them retain old prejudices, many of them are "purified by the noble flame of liberty from every narrow and unmanly prejudice" (2: 235-41). The narrator repeatedly refers to America as an Eden, a new world; Smith offers hope that a new order can emanate from the infant country.

Contrasting with the idea of freedom in American are the images of imprisonment in England. Laura has been held prisoner by Ladie Kilbrodie; Medora is kidnaped by a law clerk and held prisoner; Laura is imprisoned in a madhouse by her mother; and Glenmorris is clapped into debtor's prison as soon as he returns to England. In addition to the literal prisons, there are the metaphorical constraints on the women, who are prevented by their gender from engaging in the business transactions that will restore their fortune, and on the men, whose reputations as freethinkers make them targets of conservative defenders of the status quo.

Smith points out in a footnote that some of her other heroines have said this, but the repetition makes it no less true: "there [i]s

nothing good but liberty and fresh air" (4: 87). This is Laura's sentiment when she regains her senses; she wants to cease all attempts to retrieve her fortune and leave this country, which will be forever marked for her with images of crooked lawyers and women out to persecute her.

Todd quotes Cowper's description of Smith, "Chained to her desk like a slave to his oar, with no other means of subsistence for herself and her numerous children" (*Sign* 218). Shifting the metaphor from ship to shore, we might argue that just as the shipwreck marooned on a desert island encloses a communication in a bottle and tosses it into the sea, so did Smith and other women writers encode their cries for help into their novels and hope that the message might be discovered. They had little realistic hope of changing their own lives, but there was a chance that their writings might eventually effect some change in the social order--and, until that time, perhaps give guidance and hope to other women. All four of these novels lead the central characters to "felicity" in the last sentence, but Smith has used her license as a writer to bring each novel to such a close: in reality, felicity is not so easily gained.

Charlotte Smith, like Aubin, Davys, and Lennox, was a professional woman writer who "resisted" the language and ideology of patriarchy by straining and pushing against and testing the limits. She expected criticism, and she expected it to be directed at her gender rather than her ideas. In the preface to *Desmond*, she tried to anticipate the attacks:

For that asperity of remark, which will arise on the part of those whose political tenets I may offend, I am prepared; those who object to the matter will probably arraign the manner, and exclaim against the impropriety of making a book of entertainment the vehicle of political discussion. I am however conscious that in making these slight sketches, of manners and opinions, as they fluctuated around me; I have not sacrificed truth to any party--Nothing appears to me more respectable than national pride; nothing so absurd as national prejudice--and in the faithful representation of the manners of other countries, surely Englishmen may find abundant reason to indulge the one, while they conquer the other. . . .

[To those who persist in their beliefs, however,] I can only say, that against the phalanx of prejudice kept in constant pay, and under strict discipline by interest, the slight skirmishing of a novel writer can have no effect: we see it remains hitherto unbroken against the powerful efforts of learning and genius--though united in that cause which must finally triumph--the cause of truth, reason, and humanity. (viii-ix)

Although she is aware of the forces arrayed against her, she expresses a certainty that one day the grip of corrupt money and special interest will weaken. The thoughtful reader could not miss her repetitive attacks on money-dominated society; the repeated references to liberty,

especially in the context of women; and the warning about what happens to women deprived of legitimate outlets for their very natural anger and desire to exert some influence in the world. Most insistent are the warnings against ambitious or avaricious marriages, marriages to men who are in-"sensible"--that is, men who lack the sensibility enjoined on women in the last half of the century.

During the eighteenth century, a social framework conducive to economic development gradually replaced feudalistic aristocracy in England. Eagleton cites Richardson's fiction as the instrument of a "peaceful negotiation" between the upper class and the middle class which offers as an alternative to the patriarchal family a social form where discernment and sensibility were the criteria rather than genealogical or economic determinants. The effect was to legitimize women as specialists in sentiment--and these "feminine" values also reformed the male-dominated realm. The "feminization of discourse" was a mixed blessing for women, however; while it locked them into the domestic sphere, it did give them a more authoritative voice (3-13).

Smith was one of the writers at the end of the century who learned what the limits of her authority were. In 1792, when she wrote Desmond, Smith insisted that women had the right to have and to speak political opinions, but as the century wore on, she experienced the coercive power of ideology when her readership dropped. At the end of her career, she abandoned novel-writing and turned to children's books just to survive. She had neither strength nor resources to resist any longer.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: STILL RESISTING

Penelope Aubin (1679-1731) was a novelist, translator, playwright, and lay preacher. Although the details of her married life are unknown, her husband died before 1722, forcing her to support herself by writing.

Mary Davys (1674-1732) was also a playwright and novelist. After her husband died in 1698, she opened a coffeehouse in Cambridge and began to publish novels in order to survive.

Charlotte Lennox (1729?-1804) was a novelist, translator, magazine editor, poet, and playwright. Her marriage to an improvident and reportedly abusive husband was plagued by debt. She wrote and translated in an incessant struggle to avert poverty and to support herself, her husband, and her children.

Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) was a poet and novelist. Forced by family circumstances to marry at fifteen, she said later that she was ignorant of the consequences of her act at the time. She subsequently produced ten children. Her shiftless husband added to their debts rather than providing support for the family. Even though she separated from her husband, she continued to send him money as she wrote to support herself and her children.

These four women, two living in the early eighteenth century and two living at the end of the century, are fairly representative of the early woman author, caught between the demands of material necessity and a need for artistic integrity. Having fallen between the cracks of the

patriarchal system that had promised to protect and support them, these women had to blaze new trails into the worlds of literary endeavor and gainful employment despite the cultural injunctions against such activities. In effect, they had to reconstruct female subjectivity in order to assume the role of provider in a social system which denied them access to jobs and to a voice of authority.

Their novels are evidence of their efforts to reconstruct female subjectivity in the face of the various ideological and material constraints they acted under. None of the novels examined in this study can be said to be revolutionary: although the plot in each may seem to lead toward rejection of patriarchy, the heroine is always reintegrated into the social order and harmony is restored. Often, however, the devices of closure ring false, so false that the reader becomes aware of how incongruent and how arbitrary the ending is. Still, when one considers the times and the social conditions in which these women lived, the low esteem in which their fiction was held, and the extent to which they risked jeopardizing what status they had when they wrote, their boldness is admirable. Eighteenth-century women were socialized to suppress desires, to appear modest and silent, in short, trained to express themselves by indirection. One consequence was that they developed certain narrative strategies which enabled them to write within the established conventions. In addition, psychoanalytic theory teaches that truth reveals itself in fiction. These works suggest that women, in spite of their caution and intended decorum and in spite of the strictures of the culture in which they wrote, did reveal the insecurities of women's positions, the fears with which they struggled

to assimilate themselves into the dominant ideology, and the resentments they felt at having to make these accommodations. Their responses may at times appear to be less coherent or forceful than they might have otherwise been, yet, since critics have observed that these "minor" writers often served as models and stimuli for the "greats" of the eighteenth-century canon, their various versions of women's struggles often must have "rung true." Had they not been hampered by the necessity of writing within genres and conventions inimical to their needs, perhaps their works would not have been seen as flawed.

George Eliot's tart opinion of "silly novels by lady novelists" was just in many cases. As we have seen in the examples of Aubin, Davys, Lennox, and Smith, women writers in the eighteenth century were not able to express themselves freely or fully; what they wanted to write about was the crushing suppression of women's potentialities, but what they were expected to write about was the affirmation of women's assimilation into marriage and domestic life.

These were not submissive women; they were capable, imaginative, and talented. In each case, the loss of or the lack of a husband able to provide for her confronted the woman with the necessity to provide for herself and sometimes her children as well. Recognizing their limited options, these four women took up the pen, but their writing is marked by the urgent need to make it productive: that is, writing was not merely an expression of their ideas and dreams, and it was not merely a rebellious gesture--it was a crucial element in procuring a livelihood.

These women learned what any producer of goods or services learns:

the product must be tailored to suit the market. In the case of the eighteenth-century novel, the reading audience was largely composed of women, but their buying habits were often influenced by the opinions of others such as parents, husbands, social leaders, and reviewers for magazines and newspapers. A novelist who aimed for success had strong incentive to conform to the conventions of the male-dominated literary establishment.

Thus these women were faced with the necessity of working within a form which ratified gender roles and the ideology underlying them while, at the same time, their lives were evidence of the need to alter gender roles and the ideology. We have seen traces of the struggle in their works; all four novelists strain consciously and unconsciously against the order in which they work. They are "resisting writers," subversively revealing the truth of woman's condition as they perceive it and exposing the mechanisms by which women are rendered powerless and vulnerable. We will never know how many readers were influenced by the subtext, but we do know that these women and their works have quietly disappeared from literary history. Although their works were popular and successful in the eighteenth century, often running into several editions (and, indeed, so popular that male writers often used female pseudonyms to cash in on their success), a casual browser through books and libraries would find few traces of their existence. Was there a secret conspiracy to consign to oblivion the works of these "presumptuous women"? To the extent that the literary establishment was dominated by men and their values were undoubtedly "masculine," certainly writing by women was judged to be inferior and "lacking,"

never quite up to standard. Identified as minor, these works gradually faded from public recognition. Except for a few reprint series done by Garland and Virago Press, these novels are not printed any more.

Indeed, although new editions of early novels by men continue to appear, rarely does a new edition of a female writer before Burney appear.

Our four examples were not alone in their struggles to resist the models created by the male-dominated literary establishment; by the end of the eighteenth century there were several hundred other professional women writers in England, most of the married, some of them separated from their husbands and additionally burdened by the necessity of providing for their dependent children (Todd, Sign 218). Spender calls these women "mothers of the novel" because their novels helped to create and popularize the form within which they worked, ironically the form within which they were inscribed. Yet even when Gilbert and Gubar wrote Madwoman in 1979, they considered only Austen and Burney from the eighteenth century.

Possibly these women's works were flawed because of the effort it took to suppress their fears and anger. The focus of their criticism was invariably marriage, the essential patriarchal act--and, although Smith creates a new kind of man to become husband, the best the other writers offer is reformation of the erring husband through women's influence (Aubin), or the fortunate appearance of a mentor/lover (Davys's The Reform'd Coquet), or barring that, the timely discovery of villainy (Lennox), or sanctuary (Aubin). They had internalized the ideology which had socialized them and the world in which they moved, yet their personal experiences had proved to them that the system was

flawed--that it could not produce the protection and security that it had implicitly promised women.

McKeon details the weakening of patriarchy in the eighteenth century as a result of the assaults of "progressive ideology," the kind of thinking that attributes social problems to the injustices inherent in aristocratic rule. He also notes that the novel was the logical sounding board for the debates over reform (163-175). The four writers, although driven by economic necessity, still saw their plots and characters as vehicles through which they could speak to an audience ordinarily denied to them as women. Their writings reveal that for the sake of financial success they struggled to fit the mold and that, on the surface, their novels appear to support the "norm," but beneath the surface, the discomfort and the repressed anger inevitably lurks.

Though they were combating thousands of years of antifeminist thinking, these women took a hint from the Wife of Bath:

By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes han withinne hir oratories,
They wolde han writen of men more wikednesse
Than all the mark of Adam may redresse. (Wife of Bath's
Prologue 699-703)

Their plots reveal not only the "wickednesses" of men, but also their physically and psychologically debilitating effects on women. Women, as inscribed by the female pen, do have sexual desires, but rarely do they dare to acknowledge, much less fulfill them. Instead, the eroticism

found in these novels is oppressive, for it brings physical violence and psychic fear (of loss of reputation and of a chance for a decent life) to women. Even the "safely" married women are victims of their husbands' possessiveness, jealousy, indifference, and outright hatred.

Gilbert and Gubar comment:

Since both patriarchy and its texts subordinate and imprison women, before women can even attempt that pen which is so rigorously kept from them, they must escape just those male texts which, defining them as 'Cyphers,' deny them the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority that has imprisoned them and kept them from attempting the pen. (13)

These four writers, as we have seen, have swerved from the "male text" in various ways, striving to find a voice in which they could recount "woman's story." Like the woman entrapped in "The Yellow Wallpaper," they have been pressing against and trying to break through male expectations and designs to formulate the expression of women's consciousness even as they accept and internalize the broad commands of the father.

Penelope Aubin's strong religious inclinations probably conditioned her to accept the bleak Puritan view of life that defers happiness until after death. Her techniques and themes emphasize that woman's course through life consists of suffering and trials. Her doubling of characters stresses how repetitive women's experiences are: every woman

must endure the loss and deprecation forced on her by a predatory world. Additionally, the pervasive themes of disguise, burial, confinement, and feigned death insistently argue that a woman can find safety and peace only in removal from patriarchy--in short, in death. These themes proliferate in an indictment of the patriarchy that sanctions (or allows) the exploitation and oppression of women.

A more hopeful Davys depicts women who do not accept their oppression but resist those who attempt to exploit them. Attempting to explode the pernicious effects of unquestioning acceptance of the myths of courtly romance, Davys counters contemporary courtship ideology with examples of relationships based on esteem and respect. Her plots dramatize how prescribed female behavior constricts not only the thinking but also the actions of women. She also attacks the social injustices caused by the libertine philosophy.

Lennox confronts the escapist courtly romance embraced by women to reveal the shallowness and/or emptiness of their myths. Like Davys, she seeks a mediating language between that of slavery and that of power. Her novels also deal with themes of economic oppression; her female characters are inexorably excluded from having any say in financial matters. Rejecting the arbitrary investing of power solely on the basis of family and money, Lennox favors the conferral of status according to interior merit. Her plots document the fragmentation of family that often occurs when marital choices are dictated by financial considerations alone.

Finally, Smith's novels attack a society driven by the profit motive. She protests the dehumanization of women caused by their being

relegated to the status of pawns in a economic game of chess. Like Lennox, Smith argues that qualities of mind rather than family and riches should be the determinants of power and privilege. Also, like Davys and Lennox, she rejects a dependence on the improbable "happy ending" promised by romance. Focusing on failed marriages, she reveals marriage as constricting and entrapping. Her plots depict the daily drudgery of life with a man who is an incompetent provider and an unloving husband. She also experiments with cross-gendering when she creeates strong, angry, and destructive women to contrast with the gentle, nurturing heroes who exhibit a "feminine" softness, simultaneously condemning a patriarchy which perverts women's natural impulse toward power and suggesting a reformation of male character as a step toward correction of the problem. At the outset of her novelistic career, Smith optimistically envisioned a utopian society (inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution) where liberty of the individual would be a possibility, but as she grew older and more disillusioned, both with English society and with the direction that revolutionary activities in France took, she steered away from support of the French Revolution.

In accord with the ideology of the times, the heroines in these novels are unbelievably pure and ideal, yet occasionally we meet female characters who are neither angel nor monster and we detect a strong chord of sympathy between author and creation. To an extent, these characters represent a rejection of the female ideal envisioned by men; they are women who want and need, who err, do penance, and reform. These writers claimed to present "truth" and they did not apologize for

their work. Although Aubin was the only one with a known connection to the pulpit, each of them evangelized in her own way, preaching the need for change. They did not change the world, partly because of the need to "bury" their criticisms and partly the reaction to the prospect of revolution at the end of the eighteenth century forced women like Smith to moderate their tones. Yet their successors continued to make use of their subversive strategies to speak on behalf of women as nineteenth-century women writers searched for a literary voice.

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