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**SARAH FIELDING: SATIRE AND
SUBVERSION
IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
NOVEL**

**A thesis submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements of
the University of Sunderland for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

June Jameson

October 2008

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Ken and our family who stalwartly support me at all times above and beyond the call of duty.

Vita Brevis, Ars Longa.

—And now if any able Muse would kindly attend my Call, I would entreat the Favour of her to sing the Lady tossed about by adverse Fate . . . If there were any reasonable Hopes of Success, I would make an Effort to allure such Assistance by melodious Verse; but as those Ladies have been long out of Fashion, and would be deaf to all my Supplications, I must proceed in humble Prose.

(Sarah Fielding, *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*, II: 25).

ABSTRACT

This study of Sarah Fielding (1710—68) is an original contribution to Fielding scholarship that has a dual purpose: to support those who are striving to re-introduce her to the modern literary landscape in an effort to restore her eighteenth-century literary standing, and to *firmly* establish Fielding as an early feminist writer. It is argued here that throughout her oeuvre Fielding challenged prevailing traditions that denied women a choice, particularly in education, employment and marriage. These themes are also considered in the political treatises of Mary Astell (1666—1731) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759—97), who are now widely recognised as feminist writers.

It is further argued that Fielding's subversion in fiction of the English patriarchal system is underscored by her unorthodox performance in the literary arena. This is fully explored alongside her use of sentimentalism as a literary tool with which she challenges her seemingly inhumane society. Fielding's interest in 'the Labyrinths of the Mind' (in modern terms, human psychology) will also be addressed as will her placement in the history of feminism and her placement in the sentimental novel tradition. Fielding's performance as a literary critic will be compared with the few female authors who, like her, dared to publish literary criticism during her writing career. Accordingly, extracts from Fielding's novels and her two critical pamphlets will be thoroughly examined.

An updated biography of Fielding that is also included here will provide evidence for a further claim, that her fiction is autobiographical in part. A comprehensive account of Fielding's performance as a literary critic forms the final chapter of this work. It is the first full-length examination of her contribution to the genre and includes an appraisal of her recently unearthed critical pamphlet entitled *A Comparison Between the Horace of Corneille and The Roman Father of Mr. Whitehead* (1750) that is yet to be formerly attributed to her. Ultimately this study of Fielding will go far beyond what has previously been written about this remarkable eighteenth-century author, particularly regarding her feminist activity.

FORMAT

Introduction: some historical data relevant to the woman's situation in eighteenth-century England will explain the feminist quest for social change. The terms 'sentimentalism', 'feminism' and 'patriarchy' are investigated in order to define their eighteenth-century meanings. With references to Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, Frances Burney and Jane Austen, Fielding's satire and subversive methodology is considered. An argument for Fielding's placement as a mid-eighteenth-century link between Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft begins here. The ongoing debate about the authorship of *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* (1754) is also addressed here. I unconventionally argue that Fielding was the text's sole author.

Chapter 1: This consists of biographical data that will provide evidence for the claim that Fielding's life illuminates her work. It contains new information obtained from personal research about Fielding's younger days at Salisbury, the boarding-school she attended, where her grandmother Gould's rented Salisbury house actually stood, and the environment in which she grew up. Whereas many Fielding scholars cautiously suggest that Fielding 'may' have lived at Yew Tree Cottage, Bath, I can confirm that she certainly did live there, also that the cottage is now subsumed into Widcombe Lodge, Church Lane, Bath. It will be shown that Fielding's circle of friends is much wider than previously thought. Contradicting the notion that Fielding was a recluse, it is argued that she was a leading figure in a community of like-minded women.

Chapter 2: Since Fielding is known as a sentimental novelist, this chapter thoroughly examines her literary style, her use of satire, and subversive methodology as she tackles socio-political issues and moral dilemmas. With references to Samuel Richardson, Thomas Gray, Laurence Sterne and Henry Mackenzie, Fielding's placement in the sentimental novel tradition is also evaluated.

Chapter 3: With particular reference to the work of John Locke and Fielding's educational novel for children, *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy* (1749),

Fielding's quest for female equality in education will be fully explored. Since she often appears to borrow directly from Astell's polemics, this is also considered.

Chapter 4: Fielding's radical views on female employment and the arranged-marriage system are fully investigated and compared with those of Astell. Fielding's satirical denunciation of rich women skilled in 'the Art of Tormenting' is made clear as she brings into public view the often miserable lives of gentlewomen who perform the role of governess or unpaid lady's companion in private households. While unconventionally arguing for a woman's choice in marriage, Fielding condemns male flatterers who pursue women for their dowries and rich old men who, after a profligate life, seek virginal teenage wives to produce heirs for their estates or to act as their nurses in old age or unpaid upper-servants.

Chapter 5: This final chapter offers an original account of Fielding's performance as a literary critic at a time when literary criticism was just beginning to develop as a genre. Evidence for Fielding's astute analysis of social trends and channels of influence is presented here. Her placement among the few female literary critics who dared to publish their literary criticism during Fielding's literary career, such as Eliza Haywood, Elizabeth Elstob, Elizabeth Cooper and Charlotte Lennox, will also be addressed — *published* as opposed to being contained in private letters or passed around secretly in manuscript form, since this will give a fairer assessment of Fielding's unconventional literary activity and achievements in this area.

June Jameson.



SARAH FIELDING: SATIRE AND SUBVERSION IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

Contents

Cover page	
Acknowledgements	
Abstract of Thesis	
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: <i>Sarah Fielding: A Biographical Account</i>	43
Chapter 2: <i>A Call for Change in the Sentimental Novel</i>	83
Chapter 3: <i>A Mid-Century Call for Female Equality in Education</i> ..	132
Chapter 4: <i>A Mid-Century Call for Female Equality In Employment and Marriage</i>	165
Chapter 5: <i>Flying the ‘Lofty Realms of Literary Criticism’</i>	206
Conclusion:	253
Bibliography	262
Index	270
Appendix: List of Sarah Fielding’s known works.	

Introduction

Avant-propos

When I first saw Sarah Fielding's name on a university syllabus, I had no idea who she was. From Malcolm Kelsall's introduction to her first novel, *The Adventures of David Simple, Containing an Account of his Travels through the Cities of London and Westminster in the Search of a Real Friend* (1744),¹ I learned that she was 'something of a bluestocking' and the third sister of Henry Fielding (1707—54), the Augustan author of *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749). I read *David Simple* as a work that attacks hypocrisy, affectation and snobbery while calling out for compassion for the suffering individual. I wanted to learn more about the author.

I soon discovered the enormity of the task that I had set myself, but as I trawled through barely legible dissertations on creaky microfilm machines, biographies of Henry Fielding and other writers of the day, spending hours in rare book rooms, I became increasingly aware that Fielding's life illuminates her work. This is mainly why the first chapter of this study takes the form of a biography of Fielding that includes new data from personal research. It will explain why Fielding wrote as she did and what she hoped to achieve. A second reason for the biography is that due to the dearth of information about her life, no *comprehensive* biography of Fielding exists. Thirdly, since interest in Fielding is growing, evidenced in the appearance of new editions of her work,² this biography should assist new Fielding scholars.

¹ Malcolm Kelsall ed. (1969, 1994), *The Adventures of David Simple*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Brackets indicate the date of the first edition followed by that of the edition used in this study.

² Peter Sabor ed. (1985), *Sarah Fielding: Remarks on Clarissa*. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library (Augustan Reprint Society); (1998), *The Adventures of David Simple and Volume the Last*. Lexington: Kentucky University Press; (2004), *The History of Ophelia*. Canada: Broadview Press; Candace Ward ed. (2005), *Sarah Fielding: The Governess*. Canada: Broadview Press.

In her day, John Brewer notes, Fielding ‘outsold Voltaire, Cleland, Marmontel, Goldsmith and Cervantes’,³ but for decades she has been lost to the literary world, overshadowed by her famous brother Henry, who stands alongside Daniel Defoe (c.1660—1731) and Samuel Richardson (1689—1761) as a ‘founding-father’ of the English novel. In works concerning Henry, if his literary sister is mentioned at all she is usually dismissed as an insignificant writer. At Bath, where Fielding lived for years, revered as the ‘Author of David Simple’,⁴ her name and fame have been submerged beneath the tide of adoration for Jane Austen (1775—1813). No portrait of Fielding exists (as yet) to indicate her physiognomy. What is known of her today mostly has been gleaned from works about Henry and some extant correspondence.⁵

Researching Sarah Fielding has taken me on a fascinating journey into classical antiquity that has further acquainted me with literary figures such as Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Virgil, as well as theorists such as John Locke (1632—1704) and the third earl of Shaftesbury (1671—1713). I knew of British patriarchy and the brave suffragettes who in January 1918 won for women aged above thirty the right to vote. I now know more about earlier English feminists such as Mary Astell (1666—1731), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759—97) and eighteenth-century literature in general. My knowledge of social issues has increased and I have a better understanding of the devastating effects of smallpox and ‘jail fever’ that spread through the sewage-filled London streets where Henry and John Fielding (1721-80) struggled to contain crime. Fielding has led me to London, Bath, Salisbury and Stonehenge.

³ John Brewer (1997), *The Pleasures of the Imagination*. London: Harper Collins, 78.

⁴ Alicia Lefanu (1824), *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Frances Sheridan*. London, 95. Some of Fielding’s works carry the appellation, ‘by the Author of David Simple’.

⁵ See e.g. Martin C. and Ruthe Batestin (1989), *Henry Fielding: A Life*. London: Routledge, hereafter cited as ‘*Life*’; Martin C. Batestin and Clive T. Probyn eds. (1993), *The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*. New York: Oxford University Press. The latter includes two previously unpublished cachés of letters (seventy-nine in all), which had been preserved among the papers of the earl of Malmesbury, a descendent of James Harris. Sarah’s correspondence totals only thirty-one letters in all.

I have come to view Fielding as an extraordinary, erudite woman who, through her fiction and her unorthodox performance in the literary arena, challenged prevailing traditions biased against her sex. This study argues that she wrote herself and her vision of a more humane society into her work, using satire and subversive methodology to quest for social change. Fielding bemoans the low status of women, particularly the plight of the impoverished single gentlewoman. This work, written in support of scholars who seek to establish Fielding as an early feminist, will add more pieces to the as yet incomplete picture of this remarkable eighteenth-century writer.

I: *Outlining the Argument*

Contrary to the notion that Sarah Fielding (1710—68) was careful not to disturb the English eighteenth-century patriarchal status quo, this study argues that she was a *nascent* or *incipient* (early) English feminist. In Fielding's day, as the descriptive prefixes indicate, 'feminism' as a theoretical concept had yet to arrive. Indeed, the word 'feminist' was not in use until the 1890s.⁶ It was Fielding's experience of poverty and injustice as an impoverished spinster allied to the aristocracy that provoked her to quest for female equality, particularly in education, employment and marriage. This study will show that Fielding was a radical at heart, but, as an impecunious genteel spinster, she was also wary of offending publishers and subscribers on whose generosity the publication of her works depended.

At a time in England when the subjugation of women prevailed, the new novel genre provided Fielding with a way to assail traditions biased against her sex through the mouths of her characters, enabling her to tactfully distance her authorial voice. Nevertheless, her subversive intent in fiction is underscored by her radical intrusion

⁶ Ruth Perry (1986), *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 13.

into the literary arena where writing for pay, literary criticism, knowledge of the classics and translation, was accorded by most people the province of erudite men.

In opposition to this view of Fielding as a radical author, Kelsall allots her ‘the vision of a child’ writing ‘something resembling folk-tale or fairy-story’: when David Simple marries, states Kelsall, ‘We ascend to an Arcadian cloud-cuckoo-land’.⁷ Deborah Downs-Miers claims in her doctoral thesis (1975) that Fielding’s ‘first steps as a novelist’ were made in a ‘mincing and hesitant manner’ down a ‘straight and narrow path’.⁸ This, she suggests, is because Fielding felt ‘constrained’ and ‘disadvantaged’ at having to follow in the footsteps of Henry Fielding and Richardson, both men having ‘won acclaim as great novelists’.⁹ Jane Spencer, who also views Fielding as a conservative writer, argues that her work is ‘strongly marked by the woman’s need to conform’ — conform, that is, to a cultural hegemony in which women for the most part were denied a voice:

Fielding . . . endorses female subordination . . . to keep masculine approval for the learned woman by disclaiming any intention to overturn the sexual hierarchy . . . Marrying for money and title is acceptable if the motive is filial obedience . . . Fielding’s scathing satirical attacks on society are considerably weakened by many other instances of praise for obedience and subordination in women.¹⁰

Spencer agrees with Peter Sabor that there is a ‘rebellious note’ in *David Simple*¹¹ focusing on the role of Cynthia, but claims that it is ‘muted’ in her oeuvre thereafter.¹²

In her (2005) edition of Fielding’s *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy* (1749), Candace Ward states: ‘Fielding’s position seems to be one of accommodation

⁷ Kelsall, xvi; xiv.

⁸ Deborah Downs-Miers (1975), *Labyrinths of the Mind: A Study of Sarah Fielding*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Missouri, 21.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jane Spencer (1986), *The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, Oxford: Blackwell, see pp. 119, xi; 94; 121.

¹¹ Sabor (1998). All further references appearing by pagination in this study are to this edition.

¹² Spencer (1986), 399; 94. For a list of Fielding’s works see the Appendix.

rather than resistance' to the patriarchal code.¹³ Betty A. Schellenberg, who also views Fielding's stance as one of 'accommodation', claims that in her works, which bear a 'privileging' of 'the domestic, and the safe', 'the Road to Happiness' is the 'path of social duty and self-discipline'.¹⁴ According to Anthony J. Fletcher, Fielding purposely designed *The Governess* 'to secure the system as it stood and to reinforce gender definitions.'¹⁵ Fletcher views Fielding as one of the 'agents of patriarchy' whose 'prescriptions' in *The Governess* 'were entirely traditional'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, in publishing the text, which purports to be a conduct book that intends to cultivate 'Virtue, in the Minds of young Women' (Dedication, iii), Fielding was behaving in an unorthodox manner on two counts: conduct books were usually produced by men to show women how they ought to behave, while writing for money was ostensibly the preserve of literary men.

Fielding's name is missing from Janet Todd's *Feminist Literary History* (1988), which implies that Todd is another scholar who does not recognise Fielding as a radical author. Moreover, despite having published during her lifetime at least seven novels, plus the first children's novel, two critical pamphlets, the 'first British fictional autobiography',¹⁷ a new genre that she called 'the dramatic fable' and a translation from the Greek of Xenophon's *Memoirs of Socrates. With the Defence of Socrates before his Judges* (27th September, 1762), Fielding's name is missing from Bridget Hill's much-referenced anthology of eighteenth-century women writers.¹⁸

¹³ Ward (2005), 32.

¹⁴ Betty A. Schellenberg, 'The road to happiness: conversational travel in the novels of Sarah Fielding', *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 1992, vol. 35, pp. 1660-3, 1663.

¹⁵ Anthony J. Fletcher (1995), *Gender, Sex & Subordination in England 1500-1800*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 374-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* xv-xvi; 375-6.

¹⁷ Carolyn Jane Woodward, 'Sarah Fielding's Self-Destructing Utopia', in Dale Spender ed. (1992), *Living by the Pen: Early British Writers*. New York: Teachers College Press, 65-81, 66.

¹⁸ Janet Todd (1988, 1995), *Feminist Literary History*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Bridget Hill (1984, 1987), *Eighteenth-Century Women: An Anthology*. London: Routledge.

In recent years, however, the growth of feminist writers seeking to construct an alternative canon has occasioned renewed interest in Fielding, resulting in a movement to restore her eighteenth-century literary standing and further, to radicalise the author. Carolyn Jane Woodward, who applauds Fielding's 'innovative genius, political consciousness and interest in psychology', regards her as a 'foremother' of modern feminists.¹⁹ Woodward states: 'We feminists need our foremothers to help reconstruct our past, draw on it, and transmit it to the next generation'.²⁰ She observes that while Fielding 'experiments with urban picaresque as a vehicle for apologue',²¹ she focuses on 'the human need for friendship' and 'criticizes patriarchy for the greed and mistrust fostered by its hierarchies'.²² Woodward argues:

[F]ielding denounces mid-century patriarchal capitalism, and raises the question about social change . . . we cannot really resolve our critical debates until we hear what she and other eighteenth-century women writers have to say.²³

Lisette Ferlet Carpenter, who associates Fielding with Wollstonecraft, Austen, Charlotte Bronte (1816—55), and Virginia Woolf (1822—1941),²⁴ states: 'If "feminist" can be defined as one who refuses to allow women to be confined within the constricting circle drawn by a male-dominated society, then Sarah Fielding has earned her place on the role of eighteenth-century feminists'.²⁵ Downs-Miers, after revisiting Fielding, now recognises her as an 'experimenter in the art of fiction, a journalist, a self-taught classicist, and a feminist'.²⁶ Linda Bree has also noticed that

¹⁹ Woodward, (1992), 66.

²⁰ Carolyn J. Woodward (1987), *Sarah Fielding and Narrative Power for Women*. (Ph.D. dissertation) University of Washington, 2.

²¹ Apologue —an allegorical story intended to convey a useful lesson.

²² Woodward (1992), 66.

²³ Woodward (1987), 3-6.

²⁴ Lisette Ferlet Carpenter (1989), *A Mid-century Link in Eighteenth-Century Feminist Views*. (Ph.D. dissertation), Texas: A & M University Press, 2 and passim.

²⁵ Ibid. 272-3.

²⁶ Deborah Downs-Miers 'Springing the Trap: Subtexts and Subversions', in Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski eds. (1987), *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists 1670-1815*. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 308-323.

Fielding's views 'on the position of women in society, and on the responsibilities of civic humanism' are 'often provocative, even radical'. Bree states:

In *David Simple* . . . [and] in *Volume the Last*, individual situations symbolize the large sweep of social and ethical forces; in *The Cry* the emphasis is on the allegorical representation of philosophical dilemmas. But in *The Countess of Dellwyn* and *Ophelia* the main characters exist as part of a realistically depicted, recognizably contemporary social world—an urban society based on materialism and personal indulgence, with a very real capacity to corrupt innocent young women who stray unwarily into its orbit.²⁷

This study argues that *David Simple* and its sequel, *David Simple, Volume the Last* (1753), are actually satires on Fielding's society and further, that the 'rebellious note' in *David Simple* is not muted thereafter, but resonates throughout her fiction.

II: *Political Perceptions*

A true feminist, critics may argue, is concerned for *all* disadvantaged women. Feminist literature, as Patricia Springborg points out, is recognisable for its 'recognition of oppression and a conviction of women's intellectual and moral worth'.²⁸ To describe Fielding in political terms as an early feminist, however, means 'reading into the past an ideology that could only be located in the present world, with its birth control pills, equal educational opportunities, and other forms of modern enlightenment'.²⁹ It means creating a picture of Fielding, as it were, with the aid of historical hindsight. This requires the present writer to respond to questions such as, 'What do we know of Fielding's life? How does her work compare with that of other writers, particularly female writers, whose works were *published* during Fielding's

²⁷ Linda Bree, 'Sarah Fielding: A Woman of Singular Energy, Learning, and Ability'. Twayne's English Authors, CD-ROM. New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1997, (no pagination).

²⁸ Patricia Springborg ed. (1996), *Mary Astell: Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 18.

²⁹ See Perry, 13.

literary career as opposed to being kept from public view until the social climate changed, or someone else published it posthumously? Did Fielding's attitudes embody a shift in consciousness — perhaps the possibility of a new sensibility? What *is* 'feminism'? What *is* 'patriarchy'? Did Fielding see *herself* as a radical?

Responding immediately to the last three questions, 'feminism', in any century and in any country, is, as Stephanie Hodgson-Wright's defines it — 'any attempt to contend with patriarchy'.³⁰ 'Patriarchy' and 'patriarchal' are terms that refer to power relations between the sexes in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men, from the division of labour to procreation. Fletcher's description of the patriarchal system, as 'institutionalized male dominance over women and children in the family and the subordination of women in society in general', aptly defines patriarchy according to its meaning in eighteenth-century England.³¹ Patriarchy, as Sarah Gamble notes, rests on the belief that 'women, purely and simply because they *are* women' must be 'treated inequitably within a society which is organised to prioritise male viewpoints and concerns'.³² In a patriarchal system:

[W]omen become everything men are not (or do not want to be seen to be): where men are regarded as strong, women are weak; where men are rational, they are emotional; where men are active, they are passive; and so on. Under this rationale, which aligns them everywhere with negativity, women are denied equal access to the world of public concerns as well as of cultural representation. Put simply, feminism seeks to change this situation.³³

Throughout history, this cultural construction of gender differences, or 'biological essentialism', as Pam Morris terms it, has led to much inequality between the sexes.³⁴

Based on the assumption that a woman is less capable than a man 'for moral

³⁰ See Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'Early Feminism', in Sarah Gamble ed. (1999), *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Feminism and Postfeminism*. Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., 3-15, 3.

³¹ *Ibid.* xv-xvi; 375-6.

³² Gamble, vii.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Pam Morris (1993, 1994), *Literature and Feminism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1.

behaviour and rational thought' (dating back to Eve's transgression in Genesis), that she is *naturally* inclined to be submissive and open to persuasion, men have assumed responsibility for making laws and acting as 'protectors' of women — society's 'weaker vessels' — to justify the subordination of women.³⁵ Consequently feminism has a double agenda: to understand the social and psychic mechanisms that construct and perpetuate gender inequality and then to change them.

Fletcher reports that the predominating difference in gender was early classed according to temperature; heat was associated with men and cold with women:

[S]pecific aspects of womanhood . . . [were] almost entirely made up of the four humours of blood, choler, melancholy and phlegm. Each had two primary qualities: blood is hot and moist, choler is hot and dry, melancholy is cold and dry, phlegm is cold and moist. The analogies in the macrocosm are with air, fire, earth and water. Each humour has its physiological functions: blood warms and moistens the body, choler provokes the expulsion of excrements, melancholy provokes appetite in the stomach, phlegm nourishes the cold and moist members such as the brain and kidneys.³⁶

Angus Ross claimed that a woman's 'want' of heat caused 'imbecility of mind', 'strength of imagination' and 'anger'.³⁷ In Fielding's day, however, the 'humoral' explanation of gender difference was giving way to the notion of 'separate spheres', which, Valerie Sanders explains, is 'the idea that the man exposed himself to the temptations of the market-place while the woman stayed at home and preserved a place of peace and purity for her family'.³⁸ Moreover, the situation of British women was a much more complicated affair than Fletcher suggests.

³⁵ Morris, 2. The phrase 'the weaker vessel' originates from William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament into English (1526). For further discussion of this subject see Fletcher, 60.

³⁶ Fletcher, 33.

³⁷ Angus Ross, (1651), *Arcana Microcosmi or The Hidden Secrets of Man's Body Disclosed*. London, 86. Cited in Fletcher, 61.

³⁸ Valerie Sanders, 'First Wave Feminism', in Gamble, 16-28, 18.

Eighteenth-century women, barred by gender from universities, had little access to education, no voting rights, had little or no choice in marriage, and the lack of employment opportunities for aristocratic or middle-class women like Fielding made it very difficult for them to achieve economic independence. Marriage was seen as the best way that a gentlewoman could secure her future. A husband expected his wife to bring him a dowry sufficiently adequate to his status. In 1753 Sir William Blackstone (1723—80) decreed: '[T]he husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being, or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband'.³⁹ This law, Bridget Hill points out, placed a wife 'in the same legal category' as 'underage children, wards, lunatics, idiots and outlaws'.⁴⁰ Children by law belonged to their father and if the couple separated he could prevent them from having any contact with their mother. Throughout the century many jurists upheld the right of a husband to beat his wife provided the stick was no thicker than his thumb. A father could appoint a guardian to maintain control over his 'empire' (as Blackstone termed it) after his death.⁴¹ Since a woman's destiny was as a wife and mother, to be a 'maid' was 'essentially a temporary state passed through on the way to marriage', which left 'old maids' open to scorn as social misfits or economic burdens.⁴²

Hodgson-Wright reports that Jane Anger wrote the first English 'feminist polemic' entitled *Her Protection for Women* (1589), putting 'an entirely different gloss upon the Genesis story' when she claimed that since Adam was made of 'dross and filthy clay' while woman was made of human flesh, woman was the better of

³⁹ Sir William Blackstone [1753], *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, 4 vols (1793), vol I, p. 441, cited in Bridget Hill, (1989), *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 198.

⁴⁰ Hill (1989), 198.

⁴¹ Ibid. 198.

⁴² Ibid. 222.

God's creations.⁴³ Following Anger, several women, spurred on by the challenge to patriarchal authority through the twice removal of the nation's patriarchs from power, (Stuart Royalty), produced similar works which challenged the Scriptures.⁴⁴ Lawrence Stone reports that an early feminist movement occurred in England during the Civil Wars (1642-8) when over 'four hundred women unsuccessfully petitioned Parliament' hoping for a change in the woman's situation.⁴⁵

Consequently 'feminism' engendered under such circumstances 'had to change attitudes before it sought to change conditions', so took 'an entirely different form from that of the feminist movement of the twentieth century'.⁴⁶ An early 'feminist' had first to find a practical vehicle with which to challenge the prevailing notion that women were inferior to men, to make it known that they were intelligent beings who deserved access to better education and more freedom of choice. Literature being the most popular vehicle, the voice of protest found its way into poems, plays and novels.

Aphra Behn (1640—89), whose tomb in Westminster Abbey Virginia Woolf famously said women should bestrew with flowers,⁴⁷ wrote her rebellious voice into fifteen plays and a political novel entitled *Oroonoko, or the History of a Royal Slave* (1688), a text that is now viewed as a 'remarkable' early protest against the slave-trade'.⁴⁸ Eliza Haywood (c.1693—1756), a prolific writer, constantly flouted convention by writing for money, for which she was satirised by Alexander Pope (1688-1744) in the *Dunciad* (1728), as a 'Juno of majestic size, / With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes'. Pope, waspish as ever, offered Haywood's sexual

⁴³ Hodgson-Wright, 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lawrence Stone (1977, 1979) *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 225. Stone further reports that when the outraged Duke of Richmond cried 'Away with these women', they physically attacked him and broke his staff of office.

⁴⁶ Hodgson-Wright, 5.

⁴⁷ Virginia Woolf (1928, 1963), *A Room of One's Own*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 66.

⁴⁸ Margaret Drabble ed. (1985), *The Oxford Companion To English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 721.

favours as the prize in a urinating contest between the booksellers Edmund Curll and William Chetwood. Mary Astell (1666—1731), an erudite spinster and a Tory who is regarded by Hill as ‘the first English Feminist’,⁴⁹ angered senior clergymen and statesmen when she demanded to know why, ‘since GOD has given Women as well as Men intelligent Souls’, they are ‘forbidden to improve them?’⁵⁰ Rebellious women were also ostracised by other women inured to patriarchal conventions.

Fielding, as this study will show, borrows directly from Astell while arguing for social change. She satirically targets women who work to uphold the status quo, particularly those who use their ‘arts’ to attract, flatter, or manipulate men. Clearly, in Fielding’s view, to form a more equitable society in which people respect one other as equals, a change in attitudes must be encouraged from childhood. That she abhorred the conventional practice of corporal punishment in education is evident in *The Governess*, where Jenny’s cat ‘Frisk’ is tortured by boys inured to cruelty through being whipped at school (32-5) and in *David Simple*, where Cynthia’s brother’s dies from ‘continual tormenting and beating’ to ‘make him learn his Book’ (88).

Towards the end of the century, Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), courageously attacked conventions of the day when she denounced women who ‘feign sickness’ to manipulate men and those whose ‘spaniel-like affection’ for men encourages female subjugation.⁵¹ Deploring ‘the tyranny of man’, she demanded to know why women should be ‘degraded’ and made to be ‘subservient’. In *Vindication* she throws down ‘her gauntlet’ to women, vehemently stating: ‘[I]t is your own conduct, O ye foolish women! which throws an odium on

⁴⁹ Bridget Hill (1986), *The First English Feminist: ‘Reflections Upon Marriage’ and other Writings by Mary Astell*. Aldershot, Hants: Gower Publishing. For Astell’s Toryism, see Perry, 9.

⁵⁰ Mary Astell (1694, 1697), *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. London: John Nutt, 79-81.

⁵¹ Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Miriam Brody, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992, see 100, 110, 112-13; 118; 309.

your sex'.⁵² Echoing Fielding's sentiments behind the *Governess* story of Jenny's poor cat, Wollstonecraft argues, 'habitual cruelty is first taught at school, where it is one of the rare sports of boys to torment the miserable brutes that fall in their way: The transition, as they grow up, from barbarity of brutes to domestic tyranny over wives, children, and servants, is very easy'.⁵³ Wollstonecraft, like Astell and Fielding, was seeking female equality in education, but she takes a step further than her predecessors by making a case for co-educational day schools so that boys and girls can develop more equitable relationships from a young age, hopefully leading to the eventual eradication of patriarchy.⁵⁴ She calls for a 'REVOLUTION in female manners' (customs) and hints that women might study politics.⁵⁵ *Vindication*, as Sanders notes, marks the beginning of modern feminism.⁵⁶

Thus, in the trajectory of women writers who in modern terms can be called 'feminists', Fielding can be seen as a mid-century link between Astell and Wollstonecraft, women, like Fielding, who lamented the prevailing notion that 'poverty' was 'more disgraceful than even vice' and 'women of a superior cast have[ing] not a road open by which they can pursue more extensive plans of usefulness and independence'.⁵⁷ These women, who were trying to change attitudes hoping to eventually change laws biased against their sex, had to operate on a different level from the twentieth-century suffragettes. They may have hoped, but could hardly have imagined the arrival of a Sex Discrimination Act in 1975 (reviewed 1986), or the ordination of women priests within the Church of England (1992), or that there would be a woman Prime Minister (Margaret Thatcher) from 1979 to 1990.

⁵² Ibid. 140; 309.

⁵³ Ibid. 298.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 290; 300.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 325.

⁵⁶ Sanders, 16.

⁵⁷ Brody, 265.

In answer to the question of whether Fielding saw herself as a ‘radical’, given the facts outlined above and as the following chapters of this study will show, the response must be, ‘yes’. For while men assumed the right to produce didactic literature (in poems, ballads, plays and conduct books), instructing women how to behave as men required them to behave, ‘silent, dutiful and obedient’,⁵⁸ ‘the very act of a woman publicly pronouncing her own polemic constituted a challenge to patriarchal authority and can therefore be identified as “feminist”’.⁵⁹ Fielding would know that in peppering her work with classical allusions, overtly displaying her unorthodox knowledge of classical literature and refusing to be sidelined in serious (male) debates concerning laughter, ridicule and the grotesque (see Chapter 5 of this study), that she was challenging convention.

From 1714—60 the Whig government ‘reigned supreme’, led from 1721—42 by Sir Robert Walpole (1676—1745), England’s first Prime Minister.⁶⁰ Since the Whigs were responsible for making and upholding the laws biased against women, by process of elimination it can be said that Fielding, like her friends, the Colliers — who ‘were known for their High Church Toryism’ — was a Tory.⁶¹ Her political stance certainly impacted upon her radicalism, seen, for instance, in *Familiar Letters Between the Principle Characters of David Simple and Some Others* (1747),⁶² where, through her portrayal of the widow and her small daughters who are rendered homeless by her stepson when her husband dies, she attacks Blackstone’s policies that denied women rights in property laws and marriage (II: 18-20). Blackstone, at one

⁵⁸ Fletcher, xxi.

⁵⁹ Hodgson-Wright, 6.

⁶⁰ Arthur Marwick (1980), *The Illustrated Dictionary of British History*. Norwich: Thames and Hudson, 306; Edith May Horsley ed. (1977), *The New Hutchinson 20th Century Encyclopedia*. London: Hutchinson, 1021.

⁶¹ Tom Keymer, ‘Jane Collier, reader of Richardson, and the fire scene in *Clarissa*’, *new essays on Samuel Richardson*, ed. Albert J. Rivero (Basingstoke 1996), 141-62, 144.

⁶² Sarah Fielding (1747), *Familiar Letters Between the Principle Characters of David Simple and Some Others. To Which is added, A Vision. By the Author of David Simple*. 2 vols. (facsimile), Eighteenth-Century Research Publications, 1989. All references are to this edition.

time a Justice in the Court of Common Pleas who rose to become Solicitor-General to the Queen in 1763, was ‘little touched by the spirit of Enlightenment’.⁶³ Fielding would also resent Walpole’s unpopular Licensing Act of 1737 that effectively ended her brother Henry’s career as a dramatist on the London stage.

Today, feminists study texts like Astell’s, Fielding’s, and Wollstonecraft’s because they can provide an understanding of the ways in which society works to disadvantage women. They look for the strong emotional impact of imaginative female writing to see how indignation expressed at biased traditions has furthered the cause to end gender discrimination, while positive images of female qualities have helped to ‘raise women’s self-esteem and lend authority to their political demands’.⁶⁴

III: *Astell and Fielding*

Fielding, like Astell, saw that patriarchy encouraged impulses in both sexes for aggression and competitiveness rather than for co-operation and compassion. Sadly, history has shown that any woman living in a patriarchal system who chooses to define her identity by forthrightly speaking out against the ‘rules’, invites separation within her community. This actually happened to Astell.

In her political tracts Astell blamed the state and the clergy for ‘exhorting Women, not to expect to have their own Will in any thing, but to be entirely Submissive’.⁶⁵ She claimed that men were destroying the possibility of marital companionship by depriving women of better educative opportunities: ‘How can a man respect his wife when he has a contemptible opinion of her and her sex . . .

⁶³ Geoffrey Treasure (1969), *Who’s Who in History, Vol. IV England 1714-1789*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 385.

⁶⁴ Morris. 7.

⁶⁵ Mary Astell (1700, 1706), *Some Reflections Upon Marriage, Occasioned by the Duke and Dutchess of Mazarine’s Case; Which is Also Considered*. London: John Nutt, ii-iii, reprinted in Springborg (1996).

[when] folly and a woman are equivalent terms?’⁶⁶ Astell insisted that women were ‘pre-eminently rational’ and being so, *deserved* access to a good education.⁶⁷ She proposed an academy for single women, self-financed with money from their dowries but, as Ruth Perry points out, Astell ‘struggled against an ideology of gender’ that ‘assigned beauty, not brains to Eve and her modest daughters’.⁶⁸

For her pains, Astell was ostracized by the Whig Bishop, Gilbert Burnet (1643—1715), who objected to Princess Anne (later Queen Anne, from 1702—14) that Astell’s plan for an all-female residential establishment resembled a Catholic nunnery’.⁶⁹ This was a serious charge, for in Protestant England, a wish to return to Catholicism was viewed as sedition. Astell felt compelled to refute the accusation: ‘Far be it from her to stir up Sedition of any sort, none can abhor it more’.⁷⁰ Richard Steele lampooned Astell in the *Tatler* as ‘the founder of an order of Platonick Ladies’ whose ‘Virginity’ was ‘to be prized above all else’,⁷¹ while Susanna Centlivre (c.1667—1723) modelled Valeria, the ‘She-Philosopher’, on Astell in her play entitled, *The Basset Table* (1706).⁷² Valeria founds ‘a College for the Study of Philosophy where none but Women should be admitted’.⁷³ Thus it is understandable that, as Perry observes, Astell often felt ‘exiled or ignored by the world’.⁷⁴

Fielding would be well aware of the hostility shown to Astell, whose polemics were widely circulated. Astell was a close friend of Fielding’s second cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689—1762), (known colloquially as Lady Mary), who maintained an interest in her literary relatives. Unlike Astell, Fielding expresses her

⁶⁶ Ibid. Preface (1706).

⁶⁷ Perry, xi.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 55 n. 86.

⁷⁰ Astell, *Reflections*, preface (1706).

⁷¹ Patricia Springborg ed. (1997), *Mary Astell: A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part I London 1694, Part II London 1697*. London and Vermont: Pickering and Chatto Ltd., xiv.

⁷² Ibid. 25-26.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Perry, 22.

unorthodox views through the mouths of her fictional characters, even hoodwinking critics by acting on occasions as authorial censor. In *David Simple*, for instance, Fielding's radical character Cynthia satirically rejects the man her father chooses as her future husband, refusing to be his unpaid 'upper-servant' (86). Acting as censor, Fielding punishes Cynthia by omitting her from her father's will. Nevertheless, as an impoverished gentlewoman, spirited Cynthia serves Fielding's feminist purpose to highlight the difficulties such a woman must encounter.

Cynthia heads Fielding's list of strong-minded female characters. Widowed Mrs. Teachum in *The Governess* ably manages an academy for young ladies, free from male interference. In *Remarks on Clarissa Addressed to the Author* (1749), Harriote Gibson successfully wins arguments with a 'distinguished gentleman' over a woman's right to choose whether or not to marry, and should she wish to marry, have the right to choose her partner. In *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* (1754), Fielding allows Portia and Cylinda to experience the freedoms of personal choice denied to real women. In *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), Mrs Bilson defies convention by 'going into trade'.⁷⁵ Overall, Fielding's strong female characters overturn the prevailing notion that women were society's 'weaker vessels'.

Thus through these un-stereotypical 'heroines' who form a fictional 'sisterhood' of women, Fielding subversively and effectively shows her female readers *how* women can achieve a better role in society if one is prepared, as she states in *The Cry*, to 'strike' out of the 'beaten' road.⁷⁶ 'Sisterhood', of course, is a textual theme that is recognisable as a feminist target; others of Fielding's include pedantry (undue rigorous formality), usury, education, employment, marriage, conversation, greed,

⁷⁵ Sarah Fielding (1759), *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*. London: A. Millar, 2 vols., I: 35, reprint in 'The Flowering of the Novel Series', USA: Garland, 1974. All references are to this edition.

⁷⁶ Mary Anne Schofield ed. (1986), *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* (facsimile). New York: Delmar, Introduction, 8. All references are to this edition.

benevolence, vanity, affectation, and female intelligence. ‘Sisterhood’ calls for a ‘sense of community among women’; it seeks ‘to overcome . . . animosity women may feel for other women as a result of competition for male attention’.⁷⁷ Fielding may have published polemical tracts, as yet undiscovered. However, since her feminist activity embedded within her fiction reached a wide audience, her attempt at furthering the feminist cause was likely to have been at least as effective as Astell’s.

IV: *Managing Publication*

Due to the prevailing antagonism towards women writers in Fielding’s day, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe, it was not unusual for literary women to be ‘apologetic’ about their ‘presumptuous pastime’.⁷⁸ Obviously her culture’s gender-biased dogmatism weighed heavily on Fielding’s mind when she sought to publish *David Simple* to earn money, since a woman, particularly a virtuous spinster allied to the aristocracy, risked losing her ‘virtuous’ reputation by doing so. Fielding found an aegis⁷⁹ to protect her ‘respectable’ social status in the form of a carefully crafted apology in which she states that her ‘best Excuse’ for producing the novel is:

Distress in her Circumstances: which she could not so well remove by any other Means in her Power. IF it should meet with Success, it will be the only Good Fortune she ever has known.⁸⁰

Fielding’s self-effacing ‘apology’ gives the impression that she was a conservative writer. Nevertheless, although the text was published anonymously,⁸¹ it carries the telling (feminist) message, written ‘By a Lady’, which is a bold statement to make

⁷⁷ Cheri Register, ‘American Feminist Literary Criticism: A Bibliographical Introduction’, in Josephine Donovan ed. (1975), *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1-28, 21.

⁷⁸ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979, 1984), *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 61.

⁷⁹ Aegis - in Greek mythology a shield belonging to Zeus, which he gave to the goddess Pallas Athene.

⁸⁰ Sabor (1998), Fielding’s ‘Advertisement to the Reader’.

⁸¹ This practice was not unusual in the eighteenth century.

when Fielding is knowingly committing a radical act. Thus her actions belie her ‘apology’. Her ‘aegis’ obviously worked since the novel was a huge success.⁸² Lady Mary ‘heartily’ pitied Fielding, ‘constrained by her circumstances to seek her bread by a method I do not doubt she despises’.⁸³ Lady Mary, a daughter of the wealthy Pierrepont family of Thoresby, and wife of Edward Montagu, at one time the British Ambassador to Turkey, was herself an anonymous writer of letters, tracts, verse, and travelogues, but considered the act of publishing déclass  for an aristocratic woman.⁸⁴

Fielding cleverly covered the initial outlay for publishing her work by winning subscribers to her cause, becoming ‘one of the first’ women novelists to use this form of publication.⁸⁵ Subscribers would pay half the cost in advance, the remainder on receipt of their copies. Sabor notes that Fielding’s subscribers ‘paid a premium’ for their copies, as the price for this kind of publication was ‘much higher than non-subscription publications’.⁸⁶ Henry Fielding’s publisher, Andrew Millar, became his sister’s publisher too. Richardson printed her work and loaned her money. Spencer claims that the ‘fraternal bond’ Fielding developed with Henry and Richardson was her ‘means of imagining egalitarian social relations’.⁸⁷

Spencer further suggests that there was a ‘struggle for possession’ of Fielding by the two giants of the novel ‘as sister author, each using her writing as a way of attacking the other, and each attempting to enlist her on his side in the clash between

⁸² *David Simple* (1 May 1744, July 1744; Dublin edn. 1744; German edns. 1746, 1759, French 1749).

⁸³ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to her daughter, Lady Bute, 23 July 1754, in Robert Halsband ed. (1970), *The Selected Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. London: Longman, 257.

⁸⁴ Perry, 18, reports that Astell urged Lady Mary to publish her Turkish letters and wrote a preface for it, but publication was withheld until after Lady Mary’s death in 1762.

⁸⁵ Sabor (1998), xi.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Jane Spencer (2005), *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon 1660-1830*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 141.

their two conceptions of fiction'.⁸⁸ Be that as it may, Fielding seems to have tactfully managed her 'literary brothers' as well as she did her publications.

V: *Satire and Subversion*

Fielding's regular use of satire and subversive methods will be addressed throughout this study, but it is worth pointing out here *how* she uses satire. Alexander Pope (1688—1744), Jonathan Swift (1667—1745) and Henry Fielding deployed satire to mock their rivals and criticize government officials.⁸⁹ Satire, Martin Price observes, can reveal a 'pattern of failure' that is 'not always easy to identify'.⁹⁰ In Fielding's hands, satire becomes a very useful feminist tool.

When Fielding satirically targets affectation or a self-obsessed character, such as a female who feigns weakness to attract a man, she is aiming her feminist arrow not just at the character, but at the wider canvas, targeting the prevailing ideology that viewed weakness in a woman as an attractive attribute and marriage as the ultimate career prize for a woman. Like Pope, Fielding uses satire to magnify the 'follies' of people, but demonstrates that such follies are the consequences of an unfair system. John Richetti notes that Fielding's satirical denunciation of self-obsession in her Theophrastian,⁹¹ allegorical characters from *David Simple* —Mr Spatter, Mr Varnish, Mr Orgeuil, Lady True-Wit and Lady Know-All— contribute to the contemporary satirical theme, that 'self-absorption . . . blinds one to ethical disorder'.⁹²

⁸⁸ Ibid. 144.

⁸⁹ See e.g. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Pope's *Dunciad* (1729) and Fielding's *Shamela* (1741).

⁹⁰ Martin Price (1973), *The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 11.

⁹¹ Theophrastus - a Greek philosopher (died c. 287 B.C.), native of Lesbos and pupil of Aristotle. His 'Characters' include brief but graphic descriptions of various types of characters with human failings.

⁹² John J. Richetti, 'The Portrayal of Women in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Literature', in Marlene Springer ed. (1977), *What Manner of Woman*. New York: New York University Press, 81-90, 84.

For instance, in *Familiar Letters* Cynthia mocks the humiliating tradition of women being lined up at a dance awaiting inspection by men looking for suitable dancing partners. For the woman who is left surrounded by empty chairs while friends are dancing, this is a very unpleasant experience. It is a subject that is later addressed by Frances Burney (1752—1840) in *Evelina: Or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) and Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Evelina abhors the way men 'pass and repass' women at a ball, inspecting them 'as if they . . . were quite at their disposal . . . waiting for the honour of their commands'.⁹³ Austen's Darcy humiliates Elizabeth Bennet by disdainingly refusing to dance with her.

Fielding's Cynthia 'smiles' as she imagines the reactions of men if their roles were reversed, picturing them squirming under the gaze of 'Women Chusers' (II: 146-7). At the ball, a 'Tell-truth Mirroure' forces 'Women Chusers' to reveal their motives for choosing specific partners. Due to her 'Husband's Character', Hautilla is required to walk at a 'stately Pace' with a 'dignified Air', but the mirror reveals that she secretly wants to 'caper' in red shoes with the 'Dancing-Master'. Scipio's outwardly happy but inwardly bored wife wants a 'Raree-Show Man' to entertain her. Ice-cold Lelia desperately seeks a 'passionate Beau'. With satire to the fore Fielding writes: 'Ovid's Imagination in his *Metamorphoses* never made more unaccountable Changes, than would appear thro' such a Tell-truth Mirroure' (II: 147-149).⁹⁴

Fielding's satirical methodology brings her readers into close involvement with character, event, consequence, and veracity, thereby demonstrating that the satiric vision expounded by Pope, who 'traps an oaf in the pattern of the heroic to define his

⁹³ Compare *Familiar Letters* (II: 146-7) with *Evelina* (1778), Letter I: XI.

⁹⁴ Plato's metaphor of the mirror was widely used by eighteenth-century critics to explain the difference between 'realism and stylised idealism'. Fielding is catching 'the true colours of life and reality' and transmitting them to her readers, evoking a chain of pictures in the reader's mind, adhering to Horace's dictum, '*ut pictura poesis*' (as a painting, so a poem)— painting a picture with words. See Jean H. Hagstrum (1958, 1987), *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 135-142.

grossness more sharply’, gives way in the novel to what Price terms, ‘an exploration of the confusions . . . within the self’.⁹⁵ Fielding’s use of the mirror metaphor, that reflects the dissatisfaction of women who participate in a marriage arranged on a purely commercial basis, is a subversion of the arranged marriage tradition. It also reveals Fielding to be a moral author who respected the sanctity of marriage.

VI: A Brief Overview of Fielding’s Oeuvre

David Simple, that is tailored to suit Fielding’s ironic view of society, reveals her despair of uncaring folk who turn their backs on helpless individuals. This is seen through the lachrymose eyes of her eponymous, Quixotic, sentimental hero and his encounters with those he meets while searching for a ‘true Friend’. Here, Fielding tackles a variety of social issues including gambling and duelling, although her main focus centres on the plight of penurious gentlewomen. In some ways David represents Fielding herself, illustrating through his miserable experiences her own life-experience (discussed in Chapter 4). Arthur Murphy, in his ‘Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq.’ (1762), sees *David Simple* as one of ‘many elegant performances’ that displays her ‘lively’, ‘penetrating genius’.⁹⁶

While portraying Camilla’s close relationship with her brother, Fielding introduces an unusual theme of *alleged* incest (see Chapter 2). David rescues Camilla from poverty, realizes that she is his ‘true Friend’, then marries her in a double wedding with Cynthia marrying Camilla’s brother, Valentine. Thus the novel ends happily, with David’s new ‘Family of Love’ intent on forming a utopian community.

Familiar Letters (1747) is not actually a sequel to *David Simple* on several accounts, primarily as prose with chapter headings is replaced by an exchange of

⁹⁵ See Price, 11.

⁹⁶ Cited in Kelsall, xi.

letters, mainly between Cynthia, who is recovering from an illness at Bath, and Camilla at London. Secondly, plot gives way to journalistic reportage as the correspondents discuss people bathing in Bath's spa waters and dancing in assembly rooms. Thirdly, David is seldom mentioned. He writes only three of the total forty-four letters. Furthermore, Henry Fielding wrote the preface and five of the letters (XL-XLIV). James Harris (1709—80) also supported Fielding by contributing two dialogues, 'Fashion' and 'Much Ado' (II: 276-93).⁹⁷ As Fielding compares the more civilised Bath milieu to London society through the mouths of her characters, juxtaposing human virtues with vice, she demonstrates the attribute Henry ascribes to her in the second edition of *David Simple* — a 'vast Penetration into human Nature'.

In the attached 'Vision' to *Familiar Letters* that recalls John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684), the 'spectator' dreams of groups of people who choose 'The way to Wealth' (or 'Avarice'), or 'The Way to Power' (or 'Ambition'), or 'The Way to Pleasure' (or 'Disappointment'), or 'The Way to Virtue' (or 'Pride'). When they reach their various destinations, all are disappointed at what they find. Eventually the spectator joins a small group travelling on the path to 'Patience' and 'Truth' to find the goddess 'Benevolence', at whose right hand sits 'Compassion' (II: 388-90). Here, as Fielding slips into extolling the benefits of sentimentalism, which, she explains, means the 'Inclination' to care for one another and try one's best to eradicate 'heart-breaking Torments' (II: 391), the 'spectator' awakes, satisfied that the last place visited in the dream (Fielding's ideal world) displayed 'all the real Happiness Human nature is capable of' (II: 392).

Although classical learning, as Todd points out, was the most prestigious area of *male* education providing 'a code of culture, a privileged discourse' that women were

⁹⁷ Battestin and Probyn (1993), xxvii.

thought incapable of understanding,⁹⁸ *Familiar Letters* contains a plethora of allusions to classical writers, including Horace, Ovid, Seneca, Cicero, Phaedrus, Persius, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Milton, John Dryden, Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, Rochfoucault, La Bruyere, and Cervantes.⁹⁹ Fielding's display of her unorthodox erudition overtly challenges society's man-made 'rules' regarding female education.

With *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749), Fielding invades male literary territory to offer a critique of Richardson and his novel, the last instalment of which had just been published. Fielding reports to Richardson overheard comments about the novel. Her fictional commentators are mixed company engaged in drawing-room conversation. Enthusiastic Harriote Gibson, clearly Fielding's spokesperson, stalwartly takes on objectors to defend the length of the novel, Richardson's intentions, and the actions of his heroine, Clarissa. Gibson eventually manages to convert the 'candid' gentleman, Bellario, from a position of scepticism to one of agreement (see Chapter 5). Through Gibson, Fielding argues that when a woman is allowed to voice her *informed* opinion, she can reveal an intellectual capacity that can surpass a 'Gentleman of letters'.

The Governess (1749) is ostensibly a conduct book for young ladies. It is also an important work in the history of literature for children since it is the first novel written for children upwards of infant age. Into the framework narrative of hebdomadal life for nine students at the all-female Academy run by aptly named Mrs. Teachum, Fielding interpolates a variety of stories featuring giants, fairies, bird-fables and poems, each of which carries a moral message. This text (examined in Chapter 4) continues Fielding's theme of female equality in education, freedom of speech for women, and her call for a mutually supportive 'sisterhood'. In this text, while

⁹⁸ Janet Todd (1989), *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1600-1800*. London: Virago, 32.

⁹⁹ Richardson subscribed to *Familiar Letters*, but there is no reference to him or his works in the text.

Fielding illustrates the detrimental effects of female affectation, she again stresses that wealth, status, or marriage does not guarantee happiness.

In the recently unearthed critical pamphlet, *A Comparison Between the Horace of Corneille and The Roman Father of Mr. Whitehead* (1750),¹⁰⁰ Fielding again defies convention by displaying her unorthodox classical erudition as she defends *The Roman Father* (1750), a play written by one of her subscribers, William Whitehead (1715-85).¹⁰¹ She creates two ‘candid’ gentlemen, Mr. Bromley and Mr. Freeman, who attend a performance of the play. Later, they debate which is the better play, Whitehead’s or Pierre Corneille’s version of the same play entitled *Horace* (1640). Fielding unconventionally reviews the plays and, through Bromley, addresses objections made by Richardson to Whitehead’s play (see Chapter 5).

In *Volume the Last* (1753), the much darker sequel to *David Simple*, David’s little community gradually breaks down, mainly because of his misplaced trust in Ratcliff and Orgueil, who feign friendship and mishandle his finances. Following on from the theme of usury, in the dénouement of this novel that resounds with gloomy Hobbesian undertones reflecting ‘Fielding’s fear’ that her world is ‘collaps[ing] into anarchy’,¹⁰² only Cynthia and David’s child, little Camilla, survive the text.

The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia (1757), which is not discussed at length here, is a ‘psychological study’ of the two main characters that was praised by a critic in *The Monthly Review* (July 1757) who wrote: ‘It were superfluous to compliment

¹⁰⁰ Attributed at the British Library as ‘W. Freeman’ pseud.’ See June Jameson and Richard Terry, ‘An Addition to the Sarah Fielding Canon: *A Comparison Between the Horace of Corneille and The Roman Father of Mr. Whitehead* (1750)’, *Notes & Queries*. Vol. 252 of the continuous series [New Series, vol. 54]. No. 1 March 2007, 62-65.

¹⁰¹ Works of Fielding’s to which Whitehead subscribed include *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757) and *Memoirs of Socrates* (1762). *The Roman Father* opened at Drury Lane in February 1750.

¹⁰² Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), *Leviathan* (1651). All references to *Leviathan* are to John C. A. Gaskin ed. (1996, 1998), *Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Hobbes advocates the leadership of a sovereign who can take command and govern wisely, for the reverse would be intolerable anarchy since man is essentially selfish and will inevitably attempt to gain power over others. See also Stuart Sim and David Walker (2003), *The Discourse of Sovereignty: the State of Nature and the Nature of the State*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 181 and chapter 12.

the Author of David Simple upon her merits as a Writer'.¹⁰³ Fielding's fictional autobiography follows the *Mirroure for Magistrates* tradition, as Cleopatra and Octavia relate their 'histories' from beyond the grave.¹⁰⁴ In death, Cleopatra sees that on earth she caused an unbroken chain of death and misery that added to her own discontent. Unbounded ambition and pride prevented her from finding genuine happiness and made her neglect her children. Real love had escaped Cleopatra, who despised others who achieved success.

The *Lives* (to give the work its shorter title), embodies one of Fielding's favourite themes, that a mind tortured by selfish ambition can never achieve 'Tranquility [*sic*] and Happiness'. Nevertheless, Cleopatra emerges from the text an enigmatic, strong woman who is adept at manipulating men while Octavia, the dutiful Roman wife for whom country comes before self, is portrayed as a pitiable victim. In this text Fielding yet again defiantly displays her classical erudition with well-researched historical events concerning Mark Anthony, Octavian Caesar, Pompey, the Battle of Actium and Cleopatra's death. Her account of Cleopatra on her boat closely resembles Enobarbus's description in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Dellwyn (1759) partly follows the novel of seduction tradition that is seen in the novels of Mary de la Rivière Manley (1663–1724) and Haywood. In the seduction tale, the innocent virgin is seduced then abandoned by her unfaithful lover, possibly left with an illegitimate child she may not be able to support. While the girl is subsequently subjected to social ignominy for losing her virginity, and perhaps contemplates death, the lover looks for his next victim. Thus the seduction tale is ideal food for the feminist critic. *Dellwyn*, however, is a seduction tale with a twist,

¹⁰³ Kelsall, xi.

¹⁰⁴ *A Mirroure for Magistrates* is a work in the posthumous autobiography tradition. It was planned by George Ferrers, Master of the King's Pastimes in the reign of Henry VIII, and William Baldwin. In it, various famous men and women, mostly from English history, recount their downfall. Thomas Sackville's *Mirroure for Magistrates* appeared in 1563.

since Fielding's Charlotte Lucum is seduced by the promise of a fashionable lifestyle. Spencer, who notes that 'from the 1720s to the 1760s, sympathy for the seduced woman was much reduced', sees *Dellwyn* as 'a good example of the seduction theme in the new moral climate'.¹⁰⁵ Charlotte, as Lady Dellwyn, soon discovers that money is no substitute for love. Pursued by ardent young lovers, she spirals down into a promiscuous, miserable life after her husband divorces her. Fielding's moral outlook is evident throughout this novel, but blame for Charlotte's immorality is clearly apportioned to the men in her life who abuse her trust.

Fielding's final novel, *The History of Ophelia* (1760), that takes the form of one long letter found in an 'old buroe' and is addressed to 'Lady —', is a seduction tale that again highlights the vulnerability of innocent girls falling prey to rich lords. Sixteen-year-old Ophelia, who lives with her aunt in an isolated Welsh cottage, is abducted by the arrogant rake Lord Dorchester, who intends to coach her as his mistress. Ophelia is twice more abducted — by a man who mistakes her for his lover, and by the madly jealous Marchioness of Trente, who imprisons her in a Gothic castle. Contrary to his initial plan, Dorchester proposes marriage, which Ophelia rejects until she is sure that he will effect a reformation. On the novel's title-page the words 'Published by the Author of David Simple' raises the teasing (as yet unresolved) question, 'In what sense has Fielding published the book?' Two possible answers are (1) that she paid for its publication (2) that she took charge of the arrangements, employing Robert Baldwin, not her usual publisher, Millar, who in 1754 had not fulfilled his promise to print Harris's new essay on Henry Fielding.

Fielding's well-received *Memoirs of Socrates* (1762) that drew 611 subscribers, is mentioned in this study only to highlight the extent of Fielding's radical invasion of

¹⁰⁵ Spencer (1986), 118-19.

one of the last bastions of the male literary domain — translation. A critic writing in the *Monthly Review* (1762), noting the work's 'distinguishing excellence', praised Fielding for executing her task in a manner that does her honour.¹⁰⁶ Defending Socrates, Fielding considers 'the manner, in which Socrates behaved after he had been summoned to his trial, as most worthy of our remembrance . . . with respect to the defence he made for himself, when standing before his judges . . . [and] the sentiments he expressed concerning his dissolution'.¹⁰⁷

Fielding, The Cry, and a Question of Authorship

Published anonymously and printed in three octavo volumes for Robert and James Dodsley, the first edition of *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* appeared on 2nd March 1754 in London and sold well by subscription. It was advertised in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (XXIV, 144), the *London Magazine* (XXIII, 143) and the *Monthly Review* (X, 280-282), which praised its 'whole performance': within the year it was reprinted in Dublin by George Faulkner.¹⁰⁸

Set within the framework of a drama with scenes and prologues, *The Cry* incorporates allegory, fables, and romance, steering away from the linear narrative form to offer critiques on philosophy, language, and literature. Like all of Fielding's novels, it also attacks prevailing customs biased against women. Its complicated format consists of an Introduction, five 'Parts', each with its own prologue, which make up the body of the text, plus an epilogue. Some of the 'Parts' have scenes as in

¹⁰⁶ *Monthly Review* (27 September 1762), 171. Bree (1997) reports: 'Fielding's translation was included in the *Minor Works of Xenophon* (1813) and *The Whole Works of Xenophon* (New York, 1855). The 'Defence of Socrates' was reprinted in *Socratic Discourses by Plato and Xenophon* (Dent, 1910) that was reprinted in 1913, 1915, 1918, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1933, 1937, and possibly later.

¹⁰⁷ Apology, or the Defence of Socrates, attached to the *Memoirs*.

¹⁰⁸ Sabor (1998), xvi.

a production written for the stage. Although pagination continues throughout each 'Part' to the end of a specific volume, 'Parts' begin afresh from 'Scene I'.

In 'Part One' of the five 'Parts', Portia, *The Cry*'s stalwart heroine, begins to retrospectively apprise the audience of her 'history'. In 'Part Two' an omniscient narrator takes over to link the thread of the text with a story related to Portia's. Portia continues her story in 'Part Three'. In 'Part Four', Cyllinda takes over from Portia to tell her 'history'. In 'Part Five' Portia and Cyllinda's 'histories' merge. Finally the 'Epilogue' draws the 'Dramatic Fable' together. Within this strange format is an 'intensely psychological' fictional autobiography that, as Deborah Downs-Miers points out, 'was a very new kind of fiction'.¹⁰⁹ Since each volume has its own pagination (I:1-282, II:1-339, III:1-303), it is less complicated to source quotations from volume and pagination rather than 'Part' or 'Scene'.

Authorial intention, stated in the 'Introduction', is to 'strike a little out of a road that has been so much beaten' by 'stories and novels [which] have flowed in such abundance for these last 10 years' (I: 8). To do so, it is 'necessary' to assume a 'freedom in writing, not strictly within the limits prescribed by the rules' (I: 14). Thus *The Cry*, like *David Simple*, *Familiar Letters* and *The Governess*, is another interesting experiment with the new novel form. It is an innovative work of art, a combination of drama, prose fiction, allegory, philosophy, moral theorizing and social satire that constitutes what Clive Probyn calls 'a readerly challenge'.¹¹⁰

In the Introduction the reader is asked to fly 'on the wings of fancy' to a scene resembling a courtroom drama where the heroine, Portia, relates her 'history' before a critical 'assembly' of people representing negative human passions and attitudes who collectively are called 'the Cry'. The Cry, which resembles a rowdy theatre audience

¹⁰⁹ Downs-Miers (1975), 109.

¹¹⁰ Clive Probyn (2004), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [DNB]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, vol. 19: 511-513, 512. General editors Henry C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison.

or, as the name implies, a set of hunters in hot pursuit of a victim, constantly heckle Portia during her narration and twist her meanings. Suspended above the assembly is the all-powerful *female* judge with the Spenserian name Una, or ‘Simple Truth’. Portia radically attacks patriarchal customs biased against women and assails the philosophical theories of Thomas Hobbes (1588—1679) and Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury (1671—1713).

In *The Cry*, a second heroine, Cylinda, tells of having lived a full life with a succession of lovers due to her interpretation of philosophical theories. While Cylinda recounts her ‘history’, Portia suddenly realizes that she is her long-lost childhood friend and her father-in-law’s mistress who mysteriously disappeared. As in *David Simple* and *The Governess*, *The Cry* ends with the forming of a harmonious little community as Portia reveals that she has been married to Ferdinand (the text’s flawed hero) for two years and their extended family included Cylinda until her death, and Cordelia, Ferdinand’s unmarried sister. Their little community does not include Ferdinand’s egregious brother Oliver, who, for his sins, is finally bound with the text’s mischievous spiteful flirt, Melantha, in the ‘irrevocable Chains of Marriage’.

There is much speculation about the authorship of this unique text. In his recent article entitled ‘The grotesque, reform and sensibility in Dryden, Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier’, Clark Lawlor allots both aforementioned women authorship of *The Cry*.¹¹¹ Inviting the reader to consult various texts for further comments, he states:

[T]here are not enough facts for a final verdict at present, but it seems likely that Jane Collier [1715—c.55] did make a substantial intellectual contribution to the

¹¹¹ Clark Lawlor, ‘The grotesque, reform and sensibility in Dryden, Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier’, in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* vol. 22 No. 2, Autumn 1999, 187-205, 189 n. 8. Lawlor footnotes Battestin and Probyn, xx and 129; Keymer, 141-62; Woodward, ‘Who Wrote *The Cry*? a fable for our times’, *ECF* 9.1 (1996), 91-97; Bree, *Sarah Fielding* (New York 1996), 91; 163. Jane Collier was baptized 16.1.1715 at Steeple Langford (Wiltshire Record Office 520/1). Although the precise date and place of her death is unknown, the year is generally believed to be 1755.

novel, and that her brother, Arthur, may also have played some part in the attack on Shaftesbury.¹¹²

Contrary to the assumption that *The Cry* is a collaborative work, however, I recognise Sarah Fielding as the text's sole author, who did not add her usual admission 'By the Author of David Simple' on the title-page for the following reasons. Primarily, she would be unsure of its reception, since it is a strange mixture of genres. Secondly, the work, heavily laden with irony, as well as attacking some patriarchal customs, contains overt attacks on male-authored works by an outspoken female character (Portia) who regularly appears more intelligent than the male characters in the text. Thirdly, the text excuses an adulterous female character (Cylinda) who has lived life to the full with several men. Therefore *The Cry* could offend readers and damage Fielding's relationship with her subscribers (on whose financial assistance she depended for publication) as well as tainting her own 'virtuous' reputation.

Speculation about the authorship of *The Cry* revolves around the testimony of Mrs. Hester Thrale (later Piozzi). Responding to questions asked about the text from Leonard Chappelow, fifty-four-year-old Mrs. Thrale informs him in a letter dated 15th March 1795, 'the Characteristics in Cylinda's History was written by Dr. Collier'.¹¹³ Hence the assumption by some scholars that Arthur Collier contributed to *The Cry*. Yet *Remarks on Clarissa, A Comparison*, the prologue to *Dellwyn*, and many instances of literary criticism embedded within her fiction show that Fielding was quite capable of critiquing the *Characteristics* without assistance from others. Arthur Collier, a studious philosopher, could have discussed the *Characteristics* with

¹¹² Lawlor, 189, n. 8.

¹¹³ Hester (Thrale) Piozzi to Rev. Leonard Chappelow, 15 March 1795. My thanks to John Hodgson at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, for providing access to Mrs. Thrale's letters and for allowing me a copy of this letter (MS 533/16).

Fielding (according to Mrs. Thrale he was ‘much among’ the Fielding family),¹¹⁴ but Fielding, clearly a shrewd woman, could write her own thoughts into *The Cry*.

In her letter to Chappelow Mrs. Thrale cannot remember the name of the person on whom the character of ‘Melantha’ in *The Cry* was based, other than she was ‘a young Lady of Salisbury’. In the next sentence Mrs. Thrale falters, then writes: ‘If my recollection does not fail me . . .’. Clearly, Mrs. Thrale is having difficulty trying to remember some details. Conscious of her memory lapses, she advises Chappelow to contact Miss Sophia Streatfield, ‘to whom the Doctor [Collier] attached himself after we parted Company’. Mrs. Thrale then states that Jane Collier ‘wrote the Art of Tormenting and a little Book for Children called Mrs. Teach’em and her nine Girls’. Yet on the title-page of *The Governess* (1749), which had by then been around for forty-six years, is clearly stated: ‘*The HISTORY of Mrs. TEACHUM, AND Her NINE GIRLS . . . By the AUTHOR of DAVID SIMPLE*’. Such a misappropriation of authorship combines with Mrs. Thrale’s confessed unreliable memory to cast doubt on her claims, including her statement that Arthur Collier had ‘told’ her at some point that he had contributed to *The Cry*. According to Anna Laetitia Barbauld, editor of Samuel Richardson’s correspondence (1804), Jane Collier and Ursula Fielding (1709—50) co-authored *The Cry*.¹¹⁵

In her biographical text, *Sarah Fielding* (1996), Bree accurately describes Jane Collier’s *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (published anonymously in 1753)¹¹⁶ as ‘an extraordinary piece of ironic prose that completely subverts the form and content of a conduct book, since it offers detailed advice on ‘how to be thoroughly unpleasant to others in a variety of roles, including mistress of servants,

¹¹⁴ See Katharine Canby Balderston ed. (1942, 1951), *Thraliana, the Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2 vols., I: 78.

¹¹⁵ Barbauld, 1.cxcv.

¹¹⁶ Jane Collier (1753, 1805) *An Essay on The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting, with Proper Rules for the Exercise of that Amusing Study*. London: Andrew Millar. All references are to the 1805 edition.

wife, husband, teacher, and friend'.¹¹⁷ Bree notes that the *Essay* is concerned with 'many subjects already discussed in Sarah Fielding's novels', 'peculiarly' the emphasis on the 'unfortunate position of the impoverished gentlewoman'. She supports her claim with a quotation from the *Essay*, where Collier offers a lady advice on how to treat her companion: 'The more acquisitions she has, the greater field will you have for insolence, and the pleasure of mortifying her'.¹¹⁸ Bree continues:

Jane Collier may have assisted Fielding in her next work, *The Cry* (1754). Collaboration was clearly congenial to Sarah, and the similarities in theme between her previous work and Jane Collier's provide support for the theory that they wrote *The Cry* together. The book itself, however, is different from anything else written by either, or indeed anyone else of the period: it was in fact so original a combination of genres and discourses that few readers were able to appreciate its strengths, and no second edition was called for.¹¹⁹

Bree's use of the words 'may have' and 'different from anything else written by either' make the claim for collaboration possible but inconclusive.

Bree notes that the argument for Collier's participation 'hinges' on the unsigned 'Introduction to the novel' in which the words 'our' and 'we' appear.¹²⁰ Woodward, in her article, 'Who Wrote *The Cry*?: A Fable for Our Times', takes the word 'we' to indicate a wider authorship that 'extends to a whole group — James Harris certainly, and possibly Margaret (and Arthur?) Collier, Ursula (and Henry?) Fielding'.¹²¹ Given that the Introduction takes the dramatic style of a general Prologue usually spoken onstage, this seems rather flimsy evidence of co-authorship — would anyone attending a play assume that when the words 'our' and 'we' in a Prologue are spoken

¹¹⁷ Bree (1996), 15.

¹¹⁸ Ibid; Jane Collier (1753), *An Essay on The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting, with Proper Rules for the Exercise of that Amusing Study*. London: Andrew Millar, 2 'Parts', I: 43. References in this thesis are to the 1805 edition unless otherwise stated, referenced as 'Collier, *Essay*'.

¹¹⁹ Bree, 16.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 91.

¹²¹ Woodward, 'Who Wrote *The Cry*? A Fable for Our Times', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 1996, vol. 9. Part 1, 91-96, 96.

onstage that this indicates co-authorship? Note, for instance, the Prologue to George Lillo's tragedy, *The London Merchant, Or, The History of George Barnwell* (1731):

In ev'ry former age, and foreign tongue,
With native grandeur thus the goddess [muse] sung.
Upon **our** stage, indeed, with wished success, . . .
You've sometimes seen her in a humbler dress—
. . . Forgive **us**, then, if **we** attempt to show,
In artless strains, a tale of private woe.¹²²

Henry Fielding consistently uses 'our' and 'we' in the introductions to chapters of his novels, but no one disputes his sole authorship. Rather, scholars have concentrated on this as Henry's way of drawing his readers into the novels, to seduce the reader into his way of thinking. Both Bree and Woodward point out that 'the concept of multiple authorship was congenial within the Fielding-Collier circle'.¹²³ Given that Henry Fielding and Harris contributed to Fielding's *Familiar Letters*, this is true.

In *Familiar Letters*, however, there is a clear indication that Henry Fielding wrote the preface. He extols his sister's work in the same way that he does in the preface to the second edition of *David Simple*. He admits that his 'Relation and Friendship to the Writer' causes him to be biased in favour of the author, whose 'wisdom' shown in the work is 'amazing' coming from one who 'hath seen so little of the World'.¹²⁴ Regarding the novel's inclusions, 'Fashion' and 'Much Ado' (generally attributed to James Harris), Fielding adds a footnote stating: 'These Dialogues were a kind Present to the Author by a Friend'.¹²⁵ Throughout her oeuvre Fielding is careful to either acknowledge authors of quotations which she uses in her work, or resorts to italics to indicate that certain words or sayings are not her own.

¹²² David W. Lindsay ed. (1993, 2001), *The Beggar's Opera and other Eighteenth-Century Plays*. London: J. M. Dent, 265. I have emboldened the relevant words for emphasis.

¹²³ Quotation from Bree (1996), 91; see also Woodward (1996), 96.

¹²⁴ *Familiar Letters*, I: xii; xiv.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* II: 276.

This happens frequently in *The Cry*. In *Memoirs of Socrates*, Fielding acknowledges Harris's assistance with difficult passages in the text's footnotes. Therefore if she *was* assisted with the authorship of *The Cry*, it would have been out of character for her not to acknowledge so important a matter as collaborative authorship.

Bree states that the positive case for Henry's collaboration rests on the appearance in the Prologue of the 'hath grammatical construction'.¹²⁶ Yet Fielding often uses the same 'grammatical construction' in her works, sixteen times in the preface to *Dellwyn* plus once on page I: 9, twice on I: 23, I: 64, twice on I: 65, I: 66, I: 69, I: 110, and so forth, long after Henry's death. If Mrs. Thrale's statement in her letter to Chappelow is to be believed, Fielding 'was totally unassisted by her Brother whatever She Wrote'. Bree later decides that for her chapter on *The Cry*, 'In the absence of further external evidence of collaboration . . . I, too, will assume her [Fielding's] sole authorship'.¹²⁷

Woodward's article is a brave attempt to ascertain more *factual* evidence for co-authorship which she plans to include in her (then) forthcoming edition of *The Cry*, and to repudiate the 'irritating' claim of 'First Search Mail' that Fielding 'disclaimed responsibility' for the work.¹²⁸ Woodward is honest, admitting that when she 'first believed that Fielding and [Jane] Collier co-authored *The Cry*', she 'led with her heart' for she wanted to affirm 'the collaborative nature of writing': she also accepts that there is a place for 'hunches and knacks'.¹²⁹ After much deliberation she concludes her article by proposing that Fielding is the main author *with* some assistance from Jane Collier.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Bree, 163, n. 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 91.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 96; 94.

¹²⁹ Woodward (1996), 96.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Woodward is certainly not the first Fielding scholar to investigate *The Cry*'s authorship. In 1937 Oscar Herman Werner tried but failed to prove that Jane Collier was primarily responsible for the prologues of *The Cry* and 'perhaps' the Introduction, while Fielding was responsible for the critical debates and the narrative sections. He was forced to conclude: 'The prologues to the second and fourth parts are too short to show evidence one way or the other'.¹³¹

Probyn, in *The Sociable Humanist: The Life and Works of James Harris 1709-1780* (1991), names Jane Collier as the sole author of *The Cry*, his claim resting on Collier's letter to Harris dated 18th March 1753 in which she states: 'My Book waits on you in print . . . My being the Author is now one of those profound Secrets that is known only to all the People that I know'.¹³² In April 1753 Collier's *Essay* was advertised in the *Monthly Review*, but *The Cry* did not appear in the *Monthly Review* until April 1754, one year after Collier's *Essay* was published. Therefore I concur with Woodward in taking Collier's letter to indicate her *Essay* and not *The Cry*.¹³³ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu took both *The Cry* and Collier's *Essay* to be Fielding's: '*The Cry* made me ready to cry, and *The Art of Tormenting* tormented me very much. I take them to be Sally Fielding's'.¹³⁴ This is unsurprising since the words 'the Art of tormenting' appear in *David Simple*.¹³⁵

Collier's *Essay*, which to date is the only work of any length that is attributed to her, demonstrates that she shared Fielding's views on prevailing customs biased against her sex, particularly those which encouraged snobbery and jealousy among women. In the *Essay* Collier advises the lady in a rich household to 'scold' her

¹³¹ Oscar Herman Werner Jr. (written 1937, published 1939), *The Life and Works of Sarah Fielding*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 135-139; 125; 40-42.

¹³² Clive T. Probyn (1991), *The Sociable Humanist: The Life and Works of James Harris 1709-1780*, New York: Oxford University Press, 134.

¹³³ Woodward (1996), 93 n. 8.

¹³⁴ Halsband (1970), 265.

¹³⁵ Sabor (1998), 89.

companion ‘within an inch of her life’ if the children or the servants ‘make any complaints’ against her (65). This is not unlike Fielding’s attack on abusive patronesses in *David Simple*, or her portrayal of irresponsible parents and interfering servants who teach children bad habits in *The Governess*. Collier’s *Essay* is also on a par with two letters ‘on the topic of giving truthful characters of domestic servants’ bearing the initials ‘E.R.’ that Frederick Homes Dudden attributes to Fielding.¹³⁶ In the *Essay* Collier advises ‘a woman of prudence’ to play on her husband’s affections in order to pursue ‘the course of teasing and tormenting’ (107-8). This is not far from Fielding’s portrayal of Camilla’s wicked stepmother in *David Simple*, who torments her husband by spending all his money on fashion and stirs him to quarrel with his children. Woodward claims that the ‘tormenting’ ‘motif’ in Collier’s *Essay* links her to *The Cry*’s authorship.¹³⁷ No doubt Collier would sharpen her friend’s satiric sword as Fielding would, in turn, sharpen hers. All these factors can be used to argue the case for Collier’s co-authorship of *The Cry* — but they can also be used to argue collaborative authorship of the *Essay*, and Collier’s claim that it was all her work.

In his 1994 edition of *David Simple* Kelsall does not mention *The Cry* in his discussion of Fielding’s works, while Jane Collier’s name first appears in his ‘Biographical Essay’ as being listed by Jane Spencer among Fielding’s female milieu. Then *The Cry* suddenly appears in his chronology of Fielding’s works as the collaborative effort of Fielding and Collier.¹³⁸ This indicates that perhaps at the time of writing, Kelsall may not have known the content of *The Cry* but has suddenly become aware of its existence and the link with Fielding and Collier. Sabor, in his edition of *David Simple*, attributes *The Cry* to Fielding and Collier, but states it to be

¹³⁶ Frederick Homes Dudden (1952), *Henry Fielding; his Life, Works and Times*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2 vols., II: 893.

¹³⁷ Woodward (1996), 96.

¹³⁸ Kelsall, ix-xvii; xxiv-xxvi; xxvii.

‘at least primarily Fielding’s work’; he then cites Woodward’s ‘plausible’ suggestion that authorship may have extended to the Harris-Collier-Fielding ‘group’.¹³⁹ Downs-Miers suggests that ‘the basic form’ and ‘content’ of *The Cry* in relation to Fielding’s already published works and those ‘yet to come from her pen’, indicate that hers is ‘most likely the strongest and controlling voice in the work’.¹⁴⁰

In her introduction to *The Cry* (1986), Mary Anne Schofield nowhere mentions Jane Collier and refers to Fielding as the text’s sole author, linking her ‘technique’ in *The Cry* to Fielding’s ‘other novels’.¹⁴¹ Documented facts relating to *The Cry*’s authorship includes a letter from Fielding’s close friend Samuel Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh (February 1754) anticipating the appearance of a new work ‘by a Lady who has a good Heart as well as Head’.¹⁴² In his correspondence Richardson often refers to Fielding’s ‘good Heart’ and ‘good Head’.¹⁴³ In a letter to Fielding in 1757 he advises her to revamp *The Cry*, implying that she is the text’s sole author: ‘Should not our friend Mr. Dodsley advertise the cry, on the filling of the town? . . . Suppose you make Ferdinand as worthy of his mistress at last, as he was at first; and . . . publish a second edition of it?’.¹⁴⁴ By that time Jane Collier had died.

A further indication that Fielding was the sole author of *The Cry* comes from the *Monthly Review* (April 1754), which claims that *The Cry* was written ‘by a Lady*’. The asterisk indicates a footnote that states: ‘When this was wrote, the author of *David Simple* had not laid claim to the CRY’,¹⁴⁵ ‘laid claim’ suggesting that Fielding, widely known as ‘the author of *David Simple*’, had claimed sole authorship

¹³⁹ Sabor (1998), xxxix; xvi.

¹⁴⁰ Downs-Miers, (1975), 77.

¹⁴¹ Schofield (1986), 6.

¹⁴² Samuel Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh, February 1754. In John Carroll (1964), *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*. Oxford: Clarendon, 293.

¹⁴³ Barbauld, *passim*.

¹⁴⁴ Battestin and Probyn (1993), 135, Richardson to Fielding, January 17th 1757.

¹⁴⁵ *Monthly Review*, April 1754, 10: 280-82; 282n.

just before the *Review* went into print. Moreover, in letters exchanged between Catherine Talbot (1721—1770) and Elizabeth Carter (1717—1806), who knew Fielding and read her work, they refer to her as *The Cry*'s sole author. Talbot remarks: '*The Cry* pleased me mightily. There is sometimes rather too strong a spirit of refining in it, which I believe is the case in all Mrs. Fielding's compositions'.¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, Fielding signed a contract with Dodsley for *The Cry* and on her receipt for half the copyright payment of £50, she plainly states that it is for 'a Book written by me', displaying her authority by authorizing him to pay further 'profits' to 'whomsoever I shall appoint'.¹⁴⁷ Woodward is right to wonder why Fielding would do this if Jane Collier co-authored *The Cry*.¹⁴⁸ It is possible that Fielding owed money to her usual publisher, Andrew Miller, and had arranged that he could have the other half of the copyright provided that she was to have the profits from it. In one of her letters to Richardson she apologizes for being unable to repay him a loan of ten guineas 'but 'cannot contrive it' as 'Millar's Bill is so high'.¹⁴⁹

In one stage direction of *The Cry*, as Woodward notes, the Cry sing 'snippets of a parodic poem by Lady Mary that could only have been read in manuscript',¹⁵⁰ although it was not uncommon for manuscripts to be circulated among friends and associates. Woodward is therefore accurate when she claims the factual evidence indicates that 'within months of the publication of *The Cry*, literary London was in general agreement' that Sarah Fielding was the text's sole author.¹⁵¹ Woodward is finally forced to agree that those who 'read attentively' must 'decide for themselves'.

¹⁴⁶ Montagu Pennington (1808), *A Series of Letters Between Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot 1741-70*. London: F. C. & J. Rivington, 4 vols. letters I: 369 (14th Sept. 1754) and I: 373 (26th Nov. 1754).

¹⁴⁷ James Edward Tierney (1988), *The Correspondence of Robert Dodsley, 1733-1764*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31, 514; see also Battestin and Probyn (1993), 129.

¹⁴⁸ Woodward (1996), 95.

¹⁴⁹ Battestin and Probyn, 144, Fielding to Richardson from Bathwick, 14 Dec. [1758].

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 96.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 92; 96.

Therefore, in conclusion, after carefully considering all the aforementioned arguments, and having read *The Cry* ‘attentively’, I choose to view Fielding as the text’s sole author. Like all writers, she likely incorporated ideas and suggestions from people around her that she may have thought useful, but since quotations in *The Cry* are, as usual in Fielding’s works, meticulously footnoted or italicised indicating an earnest desire to avoid plagiarism, if there was a case for collaborative authorship, it would surely have been stated unequivocally and quite clearly on the title-page. Although some scholars will no doubt cling to the notion that the collective words ‘our’ and ‘we’ in the Introduction — which is clearly designed as a general Prologue — indicate collaborative authorship, they are words which one would expect to appear in a dramatic Prologue that is spoken on a stage to represent all the players in the drama that is about to take place. Surely this is Fielding’s attention to customary dramatic style. *The Cry* is, after all, a drama — ‘*A New Dramatic Fable*’.

Part VII: Conclusion: A Different Kind of Fiction

Fielding’s experimentation with literary forms makes her texts different from those generally circulating among readers around the 1740s—1750s. Her novelistic career began at a time when writers were repudiating the ‘adverse influence’ of French *romans* that had been flooding into England.¹⁵² Young readers were experiencing difficulties when reconciling the idealism of fantasy found in *romans* with the real world. Pope highlights this in *The Rape of the Lock* (1712, 1715), through his adolescent Baron, who creates an altar to ‘Love’ ‘Of twelve vast *French Romances*’ (approximately one hundred volumes), ‘neatly gilt’.¹⁵³ Pope’s Baron cannot reconcile his romantic idealism about love — which, in romance literature, is characterized by

¹⁵² Romans - like *Artamène* and *Clélie* by Madeleine de Scudéry, were popular texts.

¹⁵³ Alexander Pope (1715), *The Rape of the Lock*. Canto II, 1.161 (in the 1712 version, Canto I. 1. 53).

sacrifice and constancy — with his sexual drive and his need to indulge in fraternal boasting of his sexual prowess (he keeps ladies' garters as his trophies).¹⁵⁴ Charlotte Lennox parodies the romance genre in *The Female Quixote* (1752), where Arabella, an avid reader of *romans* while immured in her father's isolated castle, becomes a laughing stock in public when she expects men to behave like errant knights.

Fielding incorporates elements from the romance genre when it suits her, as in some of *The Governess* stories, but she also repudiates the genre for deluding young readers.¹⁵⁵ Rather, attempting verisimilitude, Fielding places before her readers the harsh realities of real life that women in particular must face. Her characters exhibit human emotions and operate in realistic situations consistent with her time, in real places such as London and Bath. Nevertheless, Fielding's novels do not fit squarely into the realism genre because she allots her characters allegorical names, and allegory detracts from realism. 'Mrs. Teachum' is aptly named, as is 'Lady Fanny Fashion' in *Dellwyn*; 'Simple' represents innocence, 'Varnish' superficiality, and 'Orgueil' is a French word for 'pride'. These appellations describe personalities in the simplest of ways, extending the author's meaning.¹⁵⁶ Thus, as Jeremy Hawthorn points out, the term 'realism' 'requires very careful definition and use': 'On a simple level it can be said that something — a character, an event, a setting — is 'realistic' if it resembles a model in everyday life', but 'the matter can become more complex'.¹⁵⁷

For instance, like Fielding, Defoe attempts verisimilitude in *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) but he does not allot his characters allegorical names. He includes real historical records of the number of deaths recorded around London

¹⁵⁴ See Margaret Anne Doody's introduction to Margaret Dalziel ed. (1998), *Charlotte Lennox: The Female Quixote*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, xv.

¹⁵⁵ Shown when Mrs. Orgeuil chastises Betty Dunster for reading 'romances' in *David Simple* (257).

¹⁵⁶ Henry Fielding does the same in *Tom Jones*, naming his characters 'Allworthy' (the good man) and 'Thwackum' (the harsh educator).

¹⁵⁷ See Jeremy Hawthorn (1985, 2001), *Studying The Novel*. London: Arnold, 9; 56-7.

during the year of the plague and supplies the reader with an enormous amount of detail, such as the width and depth of mass graves with charts showing the ‘Number of Burials’ in each parish.¹⁵⁸ Therefore Defoe’s text squares with the realism genre.

Adding to this ‘complexity’, as Jill Elizabeth Grey observes, Fielding’s fiction includes autobiography.¹⁵⁹ A straightforward autobiography was not apposite to her feminist cause. Apart from the fact that it was seen as an exclusively male genre, the ‘scandalous’ memoirists, Constantia Phillips (1709-65), Laetitia Pilkington (1708—1750), Charlotte Charke (1713—1760), and Lady Frances Vane (1713—1788) had aroused antagonism by ‘bragging about their spirit of survival against enormous odds’.¹⁶⁰ To Richardson, these ‘Wretches’ perpetuated ‘Infamy’.¹⁶¹

Another way in which Fielding’s fiction differs from that of her contemporaries is because it contains copious amounts of literary criticism. This will be fully addressed in the final chapter of this study, with an evaluation of Fielding’s placement among the few women whose *literary* criticism was published during her writing career (1742—62). It is an original review of her performance as a literary critic.

In conclusion, and with full appreciation to *all* scholars of Fielding whose texts have laid the foundations for this study, the following chapters are intended to support scholars who are working to restore the author’s eighteenth-century literary standing. Its ultimate aim, however, is to establish Fielding as a feminist writer, going beyond what has been written about her on this subject.



¹⁵⁸ Daniel Defoe (1722), *A Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. Louis Landa, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2-5 and passim.

¹⁵⁹ Sarah Fielding (1749), *The Governess; Or, Little Female Academy*, ed. Jill Elizabeth Grey, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, Introduction, 2.

¹⁶⁰ Lynda M. Thompson (2000), *Scandalous Memoirists*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1.

¹⁶¹ Letter to Sarah Chapone, 1750, in John Carroll ed. (1964), *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 173 n. 68.

Chapter 1

Sarah Fielding: A Biographical Account

This updated biographical account of Sarah Fielding (1710-68) will further explain why she was motivated to quest for the improved status of women, particularly in education, employment and marriage. Fielding's life-experience actually underpins her work, as the following examples show:

My mother [who] had Six Children . . . made it one of her chief Cares to cultivate and preserve the most perfect Love and Harmony between us . . .

After my Mamma's Death, my Aunt took Care of me . . . My Grandmamma . . . [took] care that we wanted for nothing . . .

I began to flatter myself, that I should lead a Life perfectly suitable to my Taste . . . this lasted but a very short time; for my Father . . . left me nothing.

Readers . . . will, I doubt not, make use of their own Imaginings, in drawing the Picture to the life . . .

[It is] perplexing and troublesome . . . to be involved with a tedious lawsuit . . .

I have learnt, that nothing is a Crime in polite Circles, but Poverty and Prudence.

The Indigent of a higher Rank . . . [are often] more wretched Beings, than those who were brought up to Labour.¹

For most of her life Fielding grew up among a family of six children. Following her mother's death she was raised by her great aunt Catherine Cottington and her maternal grandmother, who took good care of her grandchildren. Fielding's father left her nothing. She was drawn into 'tedious lawsuits'. Born into 'polite Circles' but reduced to 'Poverty and Prudence', Fielding would no doubt be made to feel as though she had committed some 'Crime' by some rich insensitive gentlefolk.

¹ *The Governess*, 26, 36, 29, 111-113; *David Simple*, 87, 247, 249; *Ophelia*, 109; *Dellwyn*, (I: 207).

Part I: *Lineage and Early Life*

Fielding's maternal grandparents, Sir Henry and Lady Sarah (née Davidge) Gould were affluent Somerset country gentry. Sir Henry was a well-respected judge of the King's Bench. Her father, Edmund Fielding (1680—1741), was related to the earls of Denbigh and Desmond, who, in the eighteenth century, were erroneously believed to be descendents of the Hapsburg family (the Fielding seal bears the imperial eagle of Austria).² Although allied to the aristocracy, the Fielding siblings lived on the edge of poverty because their father spent family money keeping up appearances amid London's social elite, bought commissions in the army and lost at gaming tables. In *Dellwyn*, Fielding reveals her contempt for a man who wastes his family's money on 'riotous Living', 'Gaming', and 'the Metropolis' (I: 13).

Edmund's family had a reputation for gaining social or economic advancement through marriage. His ancestor, William Fielding, became the earl of Denbigh in 1622 when he married the sister of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who was a favourite courtier of James I. Coming from a line of younger sons, Edmund had no inheritance rights to the Fielding estate, so chose an army career, fighting 'with bravery under Marlborough at the Battle of Blenheim' (1704).³ When Edmund married twenty-four-year-old Sarah Gould (1682—1718) in 1706, Sir Henry, who thought Edmund 'a feckless and self-indulgent man', distrusted his motives.⁴

Edmund's wife gave birth to Henry (22nd April 1707), Catherine (16th July 1708) and Ursula (3rd October 1709), at the Gould family home, Sharpham House, inherited from Lady Gould's father, the Dorchester-bred merchant, Richard Davidge. Now demolished, it was then a sprawling mansion set in the spacious grounds of

² In *Life* 7, the Hapsburg error is traced back to a fraudulent relative, Basil Feilding (c.1587-1675).

³ Grey, Introduction, 2.

⁴ *Life*, 20; 12.

Sharpham Park, Glastonbury. When Judge Gould died (1710) it passed to their son, Davidge Gould. Two months before his daughter Ursula was born, Edmund was in Dublin, where, on 1st August 1709, he purchased the commission of Kilner Brazier costing £2,800,⁵ one of many 'imprudent investments'.⁶ In December 1710 Edmund received orders to prepare for embarkation to Portugal in April, but shortly after arriving at Lisbon his regiment was judged one of the weakest under Lord Portmore's command and was ordered home. It disbanded during August 1712.⁷ For three and a half years Edmund endured the 'Indignities' of 'Poverty' as a 'Half-pay' officer,⁸ a subject treated sympathetically by Henry and Sarah Fielding through Billy Booth in *Amelia* (1751) and Captain Traverse in *Ophelia* (1760). Traverse suffers the usual 'Misfortunes' of men on 'Half-pay' who 'have Wives and Children to maintain'.⁹

II: *Life at East Stour*

Shortly before his death Sir Henry Gould purchased East Stour farm, a highly desirable Dorset property, for his daughter's growing family. By the terms of his will it belonged to his daughter and her children. Donald S. Thomas, a biographer of Henry Fielding, reports that Sir Henry also bequeathed to his daughter the substantial sum of £3,000, to be held in trust by his son Davidge and his attorney, paying the income directly to his daughter.¹⁰ In the event of her death the trust was to be administered for the maintenance and education of her children. Sir Henry directed the trustees to ensure that Edmund should not 'intermeddle' with his wishes.¹¹ Sarah Fielding, the subject of this study (named after her mother and grandmother), was the

⁵ Ibid. 12. Thereby Edmund was made 'colonel of a regiment of foot on the Irish establishment'.

⁶ Ibid. 12.

⁷ Ibid 13.

⁸ Officers who were not in active service received half of their usual pay.

⁹ Sabor (2004), 143.

¹⁰ Donald Serrell Thomas (1990), *Henry Fielding*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

first of four more Fielding children born at East Stour (8th November 1710). Anne followed (1713—1716), then Beatrice (20th June 1714) and Edmund (April 1716).¹²

According to Thomas Freke, a neighbour of the East Stour farm, Edmund ‘was frequently from home, in Ireland and places beyond the seas’, often ‘for a considerable time’.¹³ Since Edmund was at various times Colonel-in-Chief of a regiment, acting-Governor of the Isle of Jersey, and a magistrate, his absence from home is understandable. However, Aaron Hill reports that Edmund enjoyed the ‘taste’ and ‘gaiety’ of the social scene and ‘all that a mistress can provide’.¹⁴ Edmund wrote to Freke on 4th October 1720 regretting not being able to pay his debts owing to ‘the great fall which had lately been in Stocks’, meaning the financial fiasco known as ‘the South Sea Bubble’.¹⁵ This may have been true, but as Thomas points out, while this did ruin some investors, it also offered ‘an excuse for debtors’ with unpaid bills.¹⁶

Edmund was absent from home when his wife, Sarah, after bearing seven children within ten years, became ill following the birth of their last child.¹⁷ In *The Cry* Fielding notes how a husband can find his wife ‘so altered’ after having children that he ‘no longer enjoy’d those pleasing meals and cheerful hours . . . they had formerly experienced’ (I: 204). Catherine (or Katherine) Cottington, Sarah’s aunt and godmother to two of her daughters, moved with her sister, the widowed Lady Gould, into East Stour to supervise the family during Sarah’s illness. Marie Bentham was the housekeeper. Frances Barber was later recruited as nursery maid. A French woman named Anne Delaborde was the children’s governess, which would account for young

¹² *Parish Register*, Christ Church, East St., cited in *Life* 13.

¹³ Thomas Freke, (PRO: C.II.2171/12) cited in *Life*, 15-16.

¹⁴ Aaron Hill (1753), *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill Esq.* London, 4 vols. Letter to Edmund at Jersey, 30 May 1737, 1. 350-1; see also *Life*, 15 and 628.

¹⁵ Thomas (1990), 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, PRO C11 2726/91.

¹⁷ *Life*, 18. Edmund had a new commission (from 11th March 1718) as colonel of a new regiment raised from the out-pensioners of the Chelsea Royal Hospital.

Sarah and Henry Fielding's excellent knowledge of the French language and classics (shown in the several allusions to French authors contained within their works). Sarah (Gould) Fielding died and was buried (April 1718) four days before her son Henry's eleventh birthday, in the churchyard attached to the farm. By then, Lady Gould and Katherine Cottington had become the stabilizing factor in the children's lives. In *Ophelia* there is a hint that Fielding is recalling her memories of childhood when her eponymous young heroine recalls being with her aunt in the country:

[O]ne Evening we were just returned from walking by our little Brook, and admiring the Reflexion of the Moon, then at full, and which shining on the Water, a new Heaven in its fair Bosom shew'd . . . I accompanied my Aunt to a seat we had placed under the spreading Shade of a venerable oak. The freshness of the Air made us unwilling to leave it, and with no other Light than what the twinkling Stars afforded us, we sat singing of Hymns, inspired by the true Gratitude for the Blessings we enjoyed.¹⁸

Perhaps it was this close female community experienced by Fielding as a girl that, in the absence of her father, initially influenced her thinking that female security lay in sisterhood rather than marriage, and that the well-being of a family rests on the unwavering support that comes only from a small, close community. It is in such a community that Fielding places her characters Cynthia, Valentine, Camilla, David and their children in *David Simple*. Secluded from a corrupt world, the 'Family of Love' lives in a 'little Community' overflowing with 'Tenderness' and 'Benevolence' (238).

This fictional ideal of children being nurtured by loving parents contrasts sharply with Fielding's own experience of early life. Not quite eight years old, she was not only confronted with her mother's death and the sight of her grave a few yards from the house, she was to experience further emotional upheaval within a year of her mother's death when Edmund brought his second wife, Anne Rapha, back to

¹⁸ Sabor (2004), 45-51.

East Stour. Stories began circulating that the children were being mistreated. Whether or not this was true, in Fielding's work there are a number of wicked stepmothers and negligent fathers. For example, in *David Simple* Cynthia states:

I lost the best of Mothers, and from her Loss I date all the Miseries of my Life . . . this Woman . . . [made me] hated by my Father . . . in the Goddess of Justice's Mirror of Truth . . . Her fine Chestnut-brown Hair, which flowed in natural Ringlets round her Neck . . . that represented the Strings that held her Heart, must have become as harsh and unpliant as the stiffest Cord: Her large blue Eyes, which now seemed to speak the Softness of a Soul replete with Goodness, had they . . . been forced to confess the Truth, would have lost all their Amiability . . . Her Skin would have become black and hard, as an Emblem of her Mind; her Limbs distorted, and her Nails would have been changed into crooked Talons . . . I have really shuddered with Horror at the Image my own Fancy has presented me; and not withstanding all her Cruelty to me.¹⁹

Anne (Blanchfield) Rapha, the first of Fielding's three stepmothers, owned a London eating-house. She was the English widow of an Italian Roman Catholic and had two daughters in a Catholic convent abroad. Anne was a practicing Roman Catholic at a time when Catholicism was still regarded with suspicion by staunch Church of England families like the Goulds. When Edmund sold off part of the farm to raise money while continuing to reap its profits, which rightly belonged to his children, it infuriated Lady Gould, who was likely smarting at Edmund's remarrying so soon after her daughter's untimely death. Edmund must have been courting Anne shortly after, if not during, his first wife's fatal illness.

III: *Salisbury*

Fearing that the children were being encouraged towards Catholicism and abused by a stepmother trying to instil discipline, in 1720 Lady Gould removed the children to

¹⁹ Ibid. 112. This picture of evil is not unlike Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's later portrayal of the wicked stepmother in *Little Snow White* (1812).

rented accommodation in St. Ann Street near the beautiful Gothic Cathedral in New Sarum (Salisbury).²⁰ Fielding and her sisters were placed in the Academy (a medieval canonical residence built in 1294) with the Norman-French name, 'Aula le Stage', at 21 The Close. There they would 'be educated, & to learn to work & to read & write & talk French & dance & be brought up as Gentlewomen'.²¹ Aula was run by Anne Dear(e), proprietor. Following her death (April 1720), Mary Rookes took charge.²² That Fielding enjoyed being part of the female community at boarding school and respected Mrs. Rookes, is reflected in *The Governess* (1749), where she writes:

I shall attribute every happy Hour, Madam, that I may hereafter be blessed with, to your wise and kind Instructions, which I shall always remember with the highest Veneration, and shall ever consider you as having been to me no less than a fond and indulgent Mother' (243).

Little Edmund remained with his grandmother Gould. Henry was enrolled at Eton.

A few miles north of Salisbury stands mythical Stonehenge, which, according to local tradition, was the work of giants. This likely inspired Fielding's *Governess* tale about the two warring giants, Benefico and Barbarico. Fielding's bouts of ill health, the cause of which has often puzzled scholars, likely stems from her Salisbury days. Today, visitors to Salisbury may see the beautiful lawns of The Close and think how fortunate Fielding was to spend her childhood in such a pleasant environment. In her day, however, the grounds were 'unsightly', 'disgusting' foul-smelling bogs and part burial ground in which a large stagnating ditch emitted 'extremely offensive'

²⁰ In *Life* Lady Gould's rented Salisbury home is given as Church St. but according to Suzanne Eward, Librarian and Keeper of the Muniments, Salisbury Cathedral (2003), it was St. Ann Street.

²¹ PRO C11 259/37 fol. 2.

²² Aula le Stage is now modernized into three elegant residential apartments. It is so named due to the later addition of an upper chamber or stage to the original medieval hall. My thanks to Dr. Ken Sargeant for kindly giving me Walter Partridge's literature detailing the history of this building.

smells.²³ This, and breathing moist air in the old Aula building, would render Fielding susceptible to chest problems, arthritis, and other illnesses including smallpox, a terrible disease that causes disfigurement if not death. Isobel Grundy reports that from Dr. Henry Hele's list of Salisbury children inoculated, Ursula and Sarah Fielding are missing, which implies that they may have contracted smallpox before the list was compiled.²⁴

Edmund sent his servants to retrieve his daughters from Salisbury as he wished to introduce them to 'some noble family, as might be to their advantage', which suggests that he intended preparing the older girls for the marriage market. From 1701 the age of consent was fourteen years for a boy, twelve for a girl.²⁵ Mrs. Rookes would not give them up. Lady Gould refused Edmund's servants entry into her house.²⁶ In April 1721 Henry ran away from Eton and, to quote Bree, 'effectively declared his allegiance to Lady Gould by turning up at her house'.²⁷

On the 10th February 1720/1,²⁸ Lady Gould filed a case against Edmund as an unfit father and sued for custody of her six grandchildren. Her claim that he had openly 'commended the manner of education of young persons in monasteries' was a serious charge, for as Bree points out, 'in the early years of George I's reign, Jacobite sympathizers stealthily drank toasts to the ousted Stuart Catholic "king across the water"'.²⁹ Edmund counter-sued. His complaint lodged against Lady Gould was based on the damaging effects on his family caused by her enmity to him.³⁰ When the

²³ This is described by John Byng (1782), *Royal Commission's Book On The Houses of the Close*. Salisbury, 34. Documentation kindly supplied by Ms. Eward.

²⁴ See Isobel Grundy, 'Inoculation in Salisbury', *Scriblerian* 26: 1 (1993), 63—65.

²⁵ Stone, 35.

²⁶ *Life*, 35.

²⁷ Linda Bree (1996), *Sarah Fielding*. London: Twayne, 4.

²⁸ *Life*, 20. In the calendar reform (September 1752), the New Year in England (Old Style) officially began on 25 March, eleven days earlier than on the Continent (New Style). In *Life* the form '1720/1' relates to dates from 1 January to 24 March occurring before 1753.

²⁹ Bree (1996), 3.

³⁰ *Life*, 20.

case was finally heard, Bentham and Delaborde, for Lady Gould, testified that Anne Fielding and her housekeeper had emotionally and physically abused the children. Barber, for Edmund, refuted the allegations. Moreover, Barber deposed to the Court that Henry was rude, spat at the servants, and committed ‘indecent actions’ with Beatrice, then aged four.³¹ Although Barber failed to convince the Lord Chancellor, who dismissed her evidence, her allegations have subsequently fuelled debate about an incestuous relationship between Sarah and Henry Fielding.³² As if to exorcise the ‘incest’ stigma laid on the family by garrulous Barber, both writers include false accusations of incest in their fiction.³³ In *David Simple*, Camilla, who suffers because her stepmother falsely accuses her and her brother of incest, tells David:

Friends and former Acquaintance look on it as a Disgrace to own us . . . Loss of Reputation gave my Relations some Excuse for their Barbarity (132).

On 28th May 1722 the Lord Chancellor judged against Edmund on all counts: Edmund was required to relinquish the farm by September of that year.³⁴ Henry was to remain at Eton, the girls at the Salisbury Academy, and little Edmund left to his grandmother’s care. All the children were to spend their school holidays with Lady Gould. Edmund was ordered to repay a debt of £700 to their great aunt Cottington.³⁵

While attending the Salisbury Academy Fielding began her life-long friendship with Jane Collier, who may be the ‘Companion’ she was thinking of while writing in *David Simple*: ‘I had a Companion in a young Woman in the neighbourhood, who had

³¹ Statement of Frances Barber, servant at East Stour, PRO. C24.1396. Pt.1. No. 29.

³² See Martin C. Battestin, ‘Henry Fielding, Sarah Fielding, and the Dreadful Sin of Incest’, *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 13 (1979), 6-18 and Terri Nickel, ‘Ingenious Torment: Incest, Family, and the Structure of Community in the Work of Sarah Fielding’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 36, 3, 1995.

³³ See, for example, Fielding’s story of Anne Boleyn in Henry’s *Miscellanies*, *A Journey From This World to the Next* (1743); Valentine and Camilla’s account in *David Simple*; Henry’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749).

³⁴ Details of the final judgement are contained in PRO KB122 99/302, 502.

³⁵ PRO: C.33.337, Pt. 2, 377, see *Life*, 37 and 630. Edmund had also borrowed money from Mrs. Bentham, his previous housekeeper.

more Wit and Vivacity than any Woman I ever knew' (107-8). Fielding and Collier's mutual propensity for witty comments is documented in a letter to Richardson about a pompous, self-opinionated drunkard:

Miss Collier and I . . . were at dinner with a *hic, haec, hoc* man, who said, well, I do wonder Mr. Richardson will be troubled with such *silly women*; on which we thought to ourselves (though we did not care to say it) . . . we know you do love and like us . . .³⁶

Jane's sister Margaret Collier (1717—94) became governess to Henry's family.

Another lifelong friend of the Fielding siblings, wealthy James Harris (1709—80), lived at 15 The Close, a few metres from the Academy. All attended services in the Cathedral.³⁷ In later life Harris became known as a classicist for his book on grammar entitled *Hermes: or, a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (1751). He was also a politician and a musician, who organized St. Cecilia's day recitals in the Cathedral and concerts at his home, which Handel often attended.³⁸ Harris's mother, Lady Elizabeth Ashley Cooper, was a sister of the third earl of Shaftesbury, the deist philosopher and Whig politician.

Harris supported Fielding throughout her literary career: he subscribed to her works, contributed material for *Familiar Letters* and encouraged her to attempt her Greek translation. Fielding acknowledges his assistance with difficult passages in the text's footnotes. When she asked him to write a biographical 'Essay' on Henry Fielding, he did. Perhaps Fielding was thinking of Harris and Henry when in *David Simple* Isabelle recalls her brother saying that he and his closest friend were 'so fond of reading and study, that the boys of gayer disposition used to laugh at us, calling us book-worms, and shun us as unfit for their society' (159). According to Clive

³⁶ Battestin and Probyn, 123, letter 78, Sarah Fielding to Samuel Richardson, 8 Jan. 1748/9.

³⁷ Ms. Eward reports that Aula le Stage had permanently reserved seating in the nave of the Cathedral.

³⁸ Ms. Eward.

Probyn, it was probably 'Harris's influence' that enabled Fielding to purchase 'the lifehold of her Walcot cottage at Bath' at 'half price'.³⁹

While these friends were growing up in Salisbury it was bustling with activity. Defoe wrote that its 7,000 or so inhabitants were 'gay and rich, and have a flourishing trade; and there is a great deal of good manners and good company among them'.⁴⁰ In its Assembly Rooms, where they could meet and dance, Henry Fielding likely danced with his future wife, Charlotte Cradock(e) (1707—44), who lived directly opposite Harris's home at 14 The Close with her widowed mother and her sisters, Catherine ('Kitty') and Mary Penelope.

When young, Charlotte suffered an accident to her nose when a coach in which she was travelling shed a wheel. Thanks to the skill of an eminent surgeon (probably their neighbour at number 13, named Goldwyre), Charlotte retained her beauty except for a small scar.⁴¹ In Henry's *Amelia* (1751), Booth's wife is widely thought by scholars to have been drawn from Charlotte (as is Sophia Western in *Tom Jones*). Booth wonders whether 'the little Scar' on his wife's nose 'did not rather add to, than diminish Amelia's Beauty' (IV. ii).⁴² Henry married Charlotte in the quaint little church of St. Mary the Virgin, Charlcombe, on the outskirts of Bath, some distance from Salisbury (arousing speculation that the couple had eloped) on Thursday 28th November, 1734, by a license obtained from the Bishop of Wells.⁴³ Charlotte, her mother's heiress, brought Henry a dowry of around £1,500.⁴⁴ In the preface to

³⁹ Probyn, *DNB*.

⁴⁰ Daniel Defoe (1759-67), *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, 1724-26*, ed. Pat Rogers, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, 194.

⁴¹ *Life*, 177.

⁴² Henry Fielding (1751), *Amelia*, ed. David Blewett, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987. According to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the 'picture' of Charlotte drawn in *Amelia* did 'justice to the amiable qualities of the original'. Lady Louisa Stuart, *Introductory Anecdotes*. London, 1:105-6.

⁴³ Noted in the Charlcombe Church Register. My thanks to Rev. Ralph Osborne and Church Warden, Mrs Woodward, for their kind assistance during my visit to Charlcombe in July 2003.

⁴⁴ *Life*, 182. According to Arthur Murphy, Henry 'ran through' Charlotte's fortune in less than three years after their marriage. Mrs. Thrale reports that when Arthur Collier had visited the Fieldings,

Miscellanies (1743), Henry describes Charlotte as the one person from whom he draws ‘all the solid Comfort’ of his life.⁴⁵

When Lady Gould died in 1733, the Fielding siblings likely stayed on in the rented house at Salisbury among friends until the lease was up. They also had the options of living with aunt Cottington at Duke Street, Westminster, or at East Stour.

IV: A ‘Wit’ with ‘Misfortunes’

A major concern for Fielding was her father’s diminishing financial circumstances. After bearing Edmund another six children in eight years, Anne Fielding died (1727). In January 1729 Edmund married Eleanor Hill, a Salisbury widow who died that same year. In March 1741 he married his young maid, Elizabeth Sparrye. Any hopes Fielding may have had of receiving financial support from her father decreased as his offspring increased. This is reflected in *David Simple*, where Camilla, commenting on Isabella’s penury, asks, ‘was it not probable his marrying a second Wife might be the cause of her Misfortunes?’ (152).⁴⁶ Thomas reports that Edmund lost money at the card-table,⁴⁷ although in the Court of Chancery, charged with debt and fraud, he denied any knowledge of gaming.⁴⁸ While imprisoned for debt, Edmund died in 1741, a disgraced inmate of the Fleet Prison under the ‘Liberty of the Rules’.⁴⁹

Charlotte was sorry that she had no coffee to offer him, ‘nor two Pence in the House to buy any’. See Balderston, I: 14.

⁴⁵ Henry Fielding (1743), *Miscellanies*, 1:13.

⁴⁶ See Kelsall, 194. John Perceval, first earl of Egmont, recorded in his diary (24th April, 1730) that he had seen *The Author’s Farce* at the Haymarket, adding that ‘the author is one of the sixteen children of Mr. [Edmund] Fielding’, cited in Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood eds. (1969), *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*. London and USA: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 27.

⁴⁷ Apparently at one game of faro Edmund lost the considerable sum of £500. See *Life*, 17.

⁴⁸ Thomas (1990), 23.

⁴⁹ *Life*, 300 and 658 n. 65. The ‘Liberty of the Rules’ allowed Edmund to have keys to some ‘rooms’ (rather than a miserable cell), his wife and servants residing there with him. They were free to move within the nearby streets of the prison.

According to his widow, he was worth less than £5. Bree questions the validity of this statement since Edmund's last wife led a 'comfortable' life thereafter.⁵⁰

At Salisbury, Lady Gould's neighbour, Dr. Arthur Collier (1680—1732), a classicist, defied convention to teach the classics to his daughters and Fielding as well as his son, also named Arthur. Classical learning was then a prestigious area of *male* education.⁵¹ Later the group included Hester Lynch Salusbury (1741—1821, later Mrs. Thrale and subsequently Mrs. Piozzi). Thrale reports that Fielding was a precocious girl gifted with an excellent memory, 'an able Scholar both in the Latin language and the Greek', whom Collier taught with 'prodigious Assiduity': he 'held the Book' while Fielding 'repeated a Thousand lines at a Time without missing one'.⁵² Fielding's fictional account of Cynthia in *David Simple* being teased and labelled a 'Wit'⁵³ for her love of learning chimes with Thrale's observations in her letter to Chappelow, that Henry Fielding 'encouraged' his sister's 'Genius' until she could 'construe Virgil', but would 'teize and taunt her as a literary Lady'. When she 'became eminent in her Knowledge of the Greek and Latin', Henry 'never more could perswade himself to endure her Company with Civility'.⁵⁴ In the same letter Thrale claims that Fielding's amiable, docile character, Cordelia, in *The Cry*, is meant to represent her sister Beatrice and 'Portia' to represent Jane Collier.

On 3 February 1737, Henry, Catherine, Ursula, Sarah, Beatrice, and Edmund each signed the indentures to begin the sale of East Stour, just before Edmund, the youngest Gould grandchild, came of age (April 1737). These proceedings were finalized on the 14th May 1739. By then, Fielding's share was a mere £260,⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Bree (1996), 2.

⁵¹ Todd (1989), 32.

⁵² Balderston, I: 78. Mrs. Thrale could be exaggerating here.

⁵³ 'Wit' is derived from the Old English (Saxon) word *witan* meaning 'to know' implying knowledge.

⁵⁴ Letter to Leonard Chappelow, 15 March 1795.

⁵⁵ Bree (1996), 6.

insufficient to afford a woman of her status a comfortable, independent living. According to Wilbur L. Cross, Fielding and her sisters inherited annuities of twenty pounds from their uncle, George Fielding, a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Royal Horse Guards, who died at Windsor in the summer of 1738, but due to litigation, it is likely that they did not receive any of this money until the case was settled in 1745.⁵⁶

In 1739 Catherine Cottington died, leaving her Westminster house to her goddaughter, Catherine Fielding, thereby providing a home for the Fielding sisters.

V: *London and a Literary Career*

In London, Henry Fielding found success as a dramatist. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Fielding's second cousin, supported him and attended some of his plays. From her fictional accounts of unruly theatre audiences, it is clear that Fielding attended the theatre. In *A Comparison* she condemns the audience who attend a performance of *The Roman Father* for making a 'Variety of Noises' and 'Cat-calls' that sound from 'the House' like 'horrible Instruments' — like the disruptive chorus who later heckle Portia in *The Cry*.⁵⁷ Henry's career as a dramatist was cut short when Walpole's Licensing Act of 1737 closed all but two theatres in London. It was an Act brought on by satirical attacks on Walpole and his party expressing doubts about the Whigs' ability to govern the country wisely.

It is widely accepted (though not by Angela Smallwood)⁵⁸ that while Fielding was in London Henry allowed her to write the letter from Leonora to Horatio included in *The History of Joseph Andrews* (1742) and the Anne Boleyn story in *A Journey*

⁵⁶ Wilbur L. Cross (1918), *The History of Henry Fielding*. Connecticut: New Haven Press, I, 241-2.

⁵⁷ *A Comparison*, 2.

⁵⁸ Angela Smallwood (1989), *Fielding and the Woman question: the Novels of Henry Fielding and the Feminist Debate, 1700-1750*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 17-18. Smallwood cites Miriam A. Locke ed. (1964), *The True Patriot*. Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 183, as also disputing journalistic attributions to Sarah.

From This World to the Next in his *Miscellanies* (1743).⁵⁹ Henry also published contributions from his sister in *The Covent Garden Journal*, numbers 63 and 64 (1752), letters 5 and 21 in *The True Patriot* (1746) and letters 30 and 31 in *The Jacobite's Journal* (1748).⁶⁰ Spurred on by these inclusions Fielding obviously realized that she too could earn money by writing, although she would need to be quite daring since a paid female author was associated with sexual transgression and her work classed as an inferior product. *David Simple* was published anonymously, while Henry was out of town.⁶¹ Although Fielding adds that it is 'the Work of a Woman',⁶² many critics attributed the work to Henry. Consequently Henry immediately brought out a second edition of *David Simple* with a lengthy preface denying authorship.

Sadly, Henry's praise for his sister's work takes second place to his attack on his critics. Kelsall suggests that Henry's remark about the 'Free Briton' who has behaved as badly towards him as has his 'Muses' of late, is a direct attack on the Whig government, since *The Free Briton* is the title of a Whig newspaper.⁶³ Denouncing the 'Scurrilities' of critics, Henry, by then a magistrate, expresses his 'Indignation' at being blamed for writing the slanderous *Causidicade*, a work that attacked the legal profession. Whether intentional or not, despite attributing the novel to 'one so nearly and dearly allied to me, in the highest Friendship as well as Relation', Henry apologizes for his sister's 'Grammatical and other Errors in Style'.

⁵⁹ See Hugh Amory and Bertrand A. Goldgar eds. (1993), *Henry Fielding: Miscellanies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, II: Book XIX, Chapter VII. Fielding claims that the manuscript of *A Journey from This World to the Next* came 'accidentally' into his hands, part of a large folio that left in a 'Garret' (Introduction, 4). See also John Frederick Burrows and Anthony John Hassall, 'Anna Boleyn and the Authenticity of [Henry] Fielding's Feminine Narratives' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 21 (1988): 427—53.

⁶⁰ Grey, 23; Dudden, as well as attributing the two letters 'on the topic of giving truthful characters of domestic servants' bearing the initials 'E.R.' to Sarah Fielding, also attributes to her contribution no. 30 (25th June) from 'Honoraria Hunter' in *The Jacobite's Journal* (1749). See also *Life*, 440.

⁶¹ Anonymous publications were a common occurrence in the eighteenth century.

⁶² Sabor (1998), Advertisement to the Reader.

⁶³ Kelsall, 433, n. 1.

Sounding pompous and condescending, he claims the necessity of correcting ‘some small Errors, which Want of Habit in Writing chiefly occasioned’.⁶⁴

Like many eighteenth-century works, there are no known autographed manuscripts of Fielding’s texts, therefore one must rely on the first editions, which could have been amended or changed by printers and publishers during the publication process. Although it is possible that a compositor may have altered Fielding’s original version of *David Simple*, since this was not an unusual practice, Sabor claims that Henry made over three hundred emendations to the text.⁶⁵ Jeanine Casler finds Henry’s alterations ‘objectionable on many counts’, including his egoism evidenced in the size of ‘THE PREFACE’ printed in bold letters and his emphatic repetition of the word ‘I’ (ten on the first page alone).⁶⁶ Henry belittles his sister’s work as a ‘little Book’ with ‘little volumes’, ‘trivializing her novel overall’ with his ‘stream of apologies’.⁶⁷ Henry makes clear that *David Simple* is below *his* standard of workmanship; it is merely ‘the Writings of a young Woman’. He boasts his erudition by referencing Homer, Virgil, *Le Lutrin*, Cervantes, Milton, Butler, Pope, and his own *Joseph Andrews*. Furthermore, the only appearance of the ‘Fielding’ name appears in the second edition, as ‘Henry Fielding Esq.’. Despite Henry’s denial of authorship, in 1832 G. Virtue published an edition of *David Simple* attributing it solely to Henry.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Fielding appears to have appreciated Henry’s assistance, as his contributions to *Familiar Letters* (1747) shows. Henry was a charismatic, gregarious

⁶⁴ Ibid. 5.

⁶⁵ Sabor (1998) includes a list of Henry’s emendations.

⁶⁶ Jeanine Casler, ‘The primacy of the rougher version: neo-conservative editorial practices and Clara Reeve’s Old English Baron’, *Papers on Language & Literature: a quarterly journal for scholars and critics of language and literature*. Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Fall 2001, 404-437.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Bodleian Library, catalogued as ‘H. Fielding, Real Friend’ (shelfmark 256 e 15308), *The Adventures of David Simple* (1822), with an artistic frontispiece dated 1825, published by G. Virtue, 20 Ivy Lane and Bath Street, Bristol.

man who entertained many guests at his home. Lodging with him afforded his sisters opportunities for creating new interests and friendships. Harris, who was a frequent visitor to Henry's household,⁶⁹ married Elizabeth Clarke in 1745: she brought him a dowry of £3,000 plus further aristocratic connections.⁷⁰

In London, Fielding and Collier became members of Richardson's coterie of erudite men and women. Richardson and his family often had friends lodging with them for weeks at a time, including Fielding and the Collier sisters.⁷¹ It was probably here that Fielding met Samuel Johnson (1709—84) who is believed to be the 'critical judge' who told Richardson that Henry's knowledge of the human heart was as 'the outside of a clockwork machine', but Fielding's 'was all the finer springs and movements of the inside'.⁷² Fielding and Jane Collier became part of the mutually supportive 'sisterhood' of 'bluestocking' women writers around Richardson that included Elizabeth Vesey (1715—1791), Hester Mulso Chapone (1727—1801), and Elizabeth (Robinson) Montagu, who was nicknamed 'Queen of the Bluestockings' (1720—1800).⁷³ Montagu's sister, Sarah Scott (1723-95), was Fielding's friend.

Like Henry Fielding, Richardson was a lover of filial duty, shown in his character Pamela's remarkable devotion to her parents. Richardson expected his female followers to be like Pamela. For his support to women in real life as well as in his fiction, Richardson may be seen as an early feminist. Yet he accepted the patriarchal convention that women writers and their female characters had to be examples to their sex by illustrating virtue beyond reproach. Richardson departs from

⁶⁹ Battestin and Probyn, *passim*; see also Clive T. Probyn (1991), *The Sociable Humanist: The Life and Works of James Harris 1709-1880*. Oxford University Press, *passim*.

⁷⁰ Probyn (1991), 122.

⁷¹ Barbauld (1804), I: clxi-clxii.

⁷² Richardson to Fielding, 7th December 1756, Battestin and Probyn, 132.

⁷³ 'Blues' after Benjamin Stillingfleet, who wore blue stockings to meetings with erudite women.

convention by allotting his heroines intellect, but his female characters are valued above all else for their obedience and their chastity.

Sadly, in the same year that *David Simple* was published, Charlotte Fielding died (1744). She had borne Henry at least five children in less than ten years.⁷⁴ Fielding moved immediately into Henry's home at Old Boswell Court to supervise his household. Grey suggests that it was reading stories to Henry's children that prompted Fielding to write *The Governess*.⁷⁵ Old Boswell Court, near Lincoln's Inn Fields, was part of a highly fashionable residential area where upwardly mobile professionals and Members of Parliament resided. There, Fielding would have access to the new circulating libraries as well as Henry's 'extensive library'.⁷⁶

While Henry was studying law at the Middle Temple, he socialized with many leading figures of his day including William Pitt, Lord Lyttleton, and William Hogarth (1697—1764), who subscribed to *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757). A letter evidencing Fielding's association with Henry's friends comes from Joseph Warton (1722—1800), the son of Thomas Warton, an Oxford emeritus professor, who wrote to his brother Thomas from Basingstoke on 29th October 1746:

[L]ast week . . . I spent two evenings with Fielding and his sister, who wrote *David Simple*, and you may guess I was very well entertained. The lady indeed retir'd pretty soon, but Russell and I sat up with the Poet till one or two in the morning, and were inexpressibly diverted.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Paul John de Castro (1920), 'Review of Wilbur L. Cross's biography of Henry Fielding', *Modern Language Review*, 15; the children were Mary Penelope, Catherine, Eleanor Harriet (1737-66), Charlotte (1736-42) and Henry (1742-50).

⁷⁵ Grey, 23.

⁷⁶ Werner (1939), 34. Citing Dobson, *Eighteenth-Century Vignettes*, III, 164-178, Werner reports that Austin Dobson discovered in the depths of the British Museum "A Catalogue of the entire and valuable LIBRARY OF BOOKS of the late HENRY FIELDING ESQ., which by order of the administrator will be sold by AUCTION, by SAMUEL BAKER, AT HIS HOUSE IN YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, ON MONDAY FEBRUARY 10th, and the three following evenings for the benefit of his WIFE and FAMILY." For information on the circulating libraries see Charlotte A. Stewart-Murphy (1992), *A History of British Circulating Libraries: The Book Labels and Ephemera of the Papantonio Collection*. Newtown, PA: Bird and Bull Press.

⁷⁷ John Wooll (1806), *Biographical Memoirs of the late Rev. Joseph Warton*. London, 215.

Fielding must have written *Familiar Letters* (1747) while living at Old Boswell Court. She lived with Henry for three years until his remarriage (27th November 1747). It was a socially embarrassing event as Henry's second wife, his cook-maid, Mary Daniel (or Daniells), was heavily pregnant.⁷⁸ Henry was subsequently much satirized by his contemporaries.⁷⁹ On 20th January 1748, Henry and Mary moved quietly to Twickenham. Fielding rejoined her sisters at Duke Street. However, if there was any rift between the 'sisterhood' and Henry because of his second marriage to a woman below their status, it did not last long, as Ursula's letter to her Salisbury friend, Mrs Barker, on 25th October 1748,⁸⁰ conveys the sense of a united family. Ursula mentions that their cousin, Henry Gould, a joker, had pretended to have died, which had them 'in mourning for a fortnight', after which, he was seen 'alive and merry'. Ursula further reports that Kitty (Catherine) 'is at work', 'Sally (Sarah) is puzzling about it, Goddess, and about it',⁸¹ 'Bea (Beatrice)' is 'playing on her fiddle', while 'Patty (Ursula)' is 'scribbling'. This indicates that Fielding was busy with her work-in-progress, *The Governess*. Ursula adds:

My brother and family are come to Town for the winter, and have taken a house in Brownlow Street, near Drury Lane, where he intends to administer Justice. He keeps us all in awe for fear of being committed.⁸²

On 15 March 1750, Fielding produced her critical pamphlet entitled, *A*

⁷⁸ *Life*, 422, reads: 'Fielding never coveted a reputation for continence in his relations with women . . . he was guilty of the folly he ridiculed in the randy hero of *Pamela*'.

⁷⁹ In *Old England*, 23rd April 1748, Walpole wrote that Henry 'had been denied admission to a box at the theatre on the grounds that the woman with him was not his wife, but his maid and doxy, a person unfit to mingle with ladies'. Tobias Smollett, in *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), has Spondy advise Gosling Scrag that 'when he is inclined to marry his own cook-wench, his gracious patron (meaning Henry's patron, Lord Lyttleton) may condescend to give the bride away'. Later, when Smollett revised the novel, he deleted this passage. See *Life*, 423.

⁸⁰ The year is accurate since Ursula refers to her cousin Henry Gould's joke (pretending to be dead) and Henry Fielding erroneously publishing his obituary in *The Jacobite's Journal*, 20th August 1748.

⁸¹ Ursula's reference to Fielding's 'puzzling about it' shows that Fielding was thinking of Pope's satire on false pedantry, that he addresses to the Goddess of Dullness in *The Dunciad* (1741 version): 'For thee we dim the eyes and stuff the head / With all such reading as was never read: / For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it / And write about it, Goddess, and about it' (Book the Fourth, 249-252).

⁸² *Life*, 446.

Comparison in which she discusses ‘the fine acting’ of Whitehead’s new play, *The Roman Father* (February, 1750). This implies that she saw the performance so was in London at that time. Later that year her sister Catherine died (5th July). In Henry’s *Amelia* (1751), when Booth mourns his dead sister it seems autobiographical: ‘I cannot yet mention her Name without Tears. Never Brother and Sister had, I believe, a higher Friendship for each other’ (II. iv-v). Fielding’s grief was augmented when Henry’s son died that year aged eight, followed by Ursula in December, then Beatrice in February 1751 (probably from typhus, which swept the country at the time, carried by fleas).⁸³ On 28th December 1751 Fielding sent Harris a letter from Beauford Buildings, Westminster, thanking him for a copy of *Hermes*.⁸⁴ According to an article in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (1756), Henry was responsible for unpaid parochial taxes for a house in Beauford Buildings, occupied by him and Sarah,⁸⁵ although there is no evidence that Henry lived there.⁸⁶

In the peripeteia of *Volume the Last* (published February 1753), David Simple’s ‘Family of Love’ disintegrates as one by one members die, reflecting in fiction the depth of sadness that Fielding obviously felt as she mourned the deaths of her loved ones. Although London life afforded Fielding great opportunities for furthering her literary career, she came to view the city as a place of corruption.

VI: *Famous Brothers*

⁸³ See Stephen Halliday (2006), *Newgate: London’s Prototype of Hell*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 46-7. Halliday states: ‘. . . in 1750, ‘forty-three officials, including two judges at the nearby Old Bailey, along with the Lord Mayor and many jurymen, succumbed to gaol fever (typhus)’.

⁸⁴ Battestin and Probyn, 124-5. Fielding’s letter of thanks is dated 28 December 1751 (Letter 79, from Harris Papers, vol. 40, Pt. 4). *Hermes*, which was printed by Luke Hansard for John Nourse and Paul Vaillant, was first reviewed by Henry Fielding in the *Covent-Garden Journal* (14 Mar. 1752).

⁸⁵ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 56 (1786), 659-60.

⁸⁶ Battestin and Probyn, xxvi.

One of Fielding's half brothers by Anne was John (1721-80), who, in later life, like Henry, afforded the Fielding sisters some financial assistance.⁸⁷ An operation by the eminent surgeon James Wilkie to correct John's weak vision left him blind from the age of nineteen.⁸⁸ Being of Catholic denomination, John could not enter Eton, but working together, Henry, John, and Saunders Welch introduced into England its first police force known as 'The Bow-Street Runners' (currently being enacted in a British television series).⁸⁹ They saw, on 19th February 1749/50, the opening of the Universal Register Office, originally called 'The Office of Intelligence: Or, Universal Register of Persons and Things'.⁹⁰ For the first time in England, records of trials, crimes and felons were centralized. John was later knighted for his services to the law.⁹¹ Fielding's interest in legal affairs is shown when she considers inheritance, separation or divorce, as seen in *David Simple*, *The Governess*, *Dellwyn* and *Ophelia*. Talbot, in a letter to Carter (1717—1806) in 1760, threatens to have her friend 'before Mrs Fielding; Mrs. I say, for in points of delicacy and feeling she would certainly make the best justice'.⁹²

Fielding obviously enjoyed her brothers' company, particularly Henry's, as their literary collaboration shows. According to Murphy, Henry was 'powerfully built' and, unusual for an eighteenth-century male, 'rising above six feet'; 'not handsome in the conventional sense', but with a 'magnetism' that attracted people to

⁸⁷ Ibid. xxxviii. According to Arthur Collier, the Fielding girls had 'Parts above the common Run . . . Bee Fielding . . . had an exquisite hand upon the harpsichord, and was otherwise finely accomplished'. See Balderston, I: 78-9.

⁸⁸ Grey, 13.

⁸⁹ A five-part series entitled *City of Vice*, commenced 14th January 2008 (ITV 4). It is based on Henry Fielding's *An Enquiry into the Causes and Late Increases in Robberies Etc. (And Some Proposals for Remedying that Increase)* (1751). It features Ian McDiarmid as Henry and Iain Glen as John (historical consultant, Hallie Rubenhold).

⁹⁰ *Life*, 498.

⁹¹ John's achievements despite his blindness make him as interesting a figure as Henry.

⁹² Montagu Pennington ed. (1809), *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the year 1741 to 1770*. London: F. C. and J. Rivington, II: 356.

him despite his 'long nose and chin' which he would 'himself joke about'.⁹³ Harris reports that Henry had 'an Eye peculiarly penetrating' and a 'lively Witt'.⁹⁴ He pseudonymously published satirical tracts as 'Hercules Vinegar', 'Drawcansir' and 'Martin Scriblerus Secundus'. 'Harry', to give Henry his familial name, would be as entertaining as Jenny Peace's brother Harry in *The Governess*:

*Harry and I were playing in the Fields . . . a small Rivulet stopped me in my way. My Brother being nimbler and better able to jump than myself, with one Spring leaped over, and left me on the other Side of it; but seeing me uneasy that I could not get over to him, his Good-nature prompted him to come back, and to assist me, and, by the Help of his Hand . . . (29).*⁹⁵

Fielding would learn much from Henry, who from 1729 to 1737 wrote 'some twenty-five dramatic pieces'.⁹⁶ His satires dominated the stage of the Little Theatre in London as part of the 'Great Mogul's Company of Comedians'.⁹⁷

However, Henry's parody of Richardson's didactic novel *Pamela, Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), entitled *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741), which led his becoming a great novelist, was taken by some critics to be evidence of his own immorality.⁹⁸ *Pamela* tells of a virginal lower-class maidservant fending off her magistrate master, Mr. B.'s repeated attempts to rape her, until he eventually falls in love with her and they marry, elevating Pamela to aristocratic status. Henry claimed that Richardson was being unrealistic, for in such circumstances, Mr B. would have raped his servant, not attempted it. Henry's burlesque of *Pamela* mocks Richardson's unscholarly language and features the bawdy anti-heroine, shameless Shamela, who has an illegitimate child by the clergyman Williams, a prostitute for a

⁹³ From Arthur Murphy's biography of Henry Fielding, cited in *Life*, 48.

⁹⁴ James Harris (1758), *Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding*. London.

⁹⁵ Grey, 7, suggests that this passage is autobiographical.

⁹⁶ Henry Fielding (1749), *Tom Jones*. London: Penguin (1994), Introduction, 1.

⁹⁷ Brewer, 372.

⁹⁸ See Margaret Drabble and Jenny Stringer eds. (1996), *Concise Companion to English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 526.

mother, and deliberately sets out to seduce her master with marriage in view. That Richardson was offended is unsurprising!

Henry's *Shamela* and subsequent novels, *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Tom Jones* (1749) and *Amelia* (1751), drew for him notoriety as well as acclaim. Richardson thought him 'low', as his haughty letter to Lady Bradshaigh indicates:

I could not help telling his sister, that I was equally surprised at and concerned for his continued lowness. Had your brother, said I, been born in a stable, or been a runner at a sponging-house, we should have thought him a genius, and wished he had had the advantage of a liberal education, and of being admitted to good company; but it is beyond my conception, that a man of family, and . . . some learning, and who really is a writer, should descend so excessively low.⁹⁹

According to Michael McKeon, the rivalry between Richardson and Fielding 'signalled the climax' of 'the origins of the English novel and determined the direction the new form was to take'.¹⁰⁰ Caught between the two warring literary giants, Richardson's 'much esteemed Sally Fielding'¹⁰¹ must have walked a veritable tightrope of diplomacy. A clue that the tide had turned in 1748 is Henry's praise in the *Jacobite's Journal* for Richardson's 'ability to raise the passions' in *Clarissa*.¹⁰²

Fielding responded to *Clarissa's* critics by enthusiastically defending Richardson and his novel in her critical pamphlet, *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749). Although she had disagreed with Richardson when he suggested that she specify Mrs. Teachum's methods of punishment in *The Governess*, Fielding came to place tremendous faith in her literary 'brother'. In her letter to Richardson dated the 4th December 1758, Fielding asks him to alter anything he finds amiss with her grammar,

⁹⁹ Letter to Lady Bradshaigh, 22 Feb 1752, in Carroll (1964), 198-99.

¹⁰⁰ Michael McKeon (1987), *Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 410.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 131.

¹⁰² See the *Jacobite's Journal*, 2 January and 5 March 1747—48. For a discussion of the two rivals see Alan Mitchie (1999), *Richardson and Fielding: Dynamics of a Critical Rivalry*. London: Associated University Press, especially 38-9.

admitting, 'I am very apt when I write to be too careless about great & small Letters & Stops, but I suppose that will naturally be set right in the printing'.¹⁰³ Richardson also assisted Fielding with her financial situation by lending her money.¹⁰⁴

John Fielding, who was married twice without issue,¹⁰⁵ also allowed his sister some financial support. According to Philip Rawlings, Fielding quarrelled with John for supplying Arthur Murphy with information that 'cast Henry in a bad light'.¹⁰⁶ Through the efforts of Henry, John, and Saunders Welch, Bow Street became the example that instigated the establishing of several police offices under the Middlesex Justices Act of 1792. Although Robert Peel did not adopt this model for the Metropolitan Police in 1829, the Fielding brothers' view that an efficient detective system could prevent crime is 'a guiding principle of modern police work'.¹⁰⁷

John was a committee member of the Marine Society (established 1756) and 'Fielding's Seminary for Sailors' (1769), which assisted boys on London streets to acquire a naval career. He was a member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce and a life governor of the Female Orphans Asylum (later the Royal Female Orphanage) that encouraged girls away from prostitution. John was also involved with the British Lying-In Hospital (1749) and was a governor of the Magdalen Hospital (founded 1758) that sought to reform prostitutes. The latter lends weight to the claim that Fielding authored *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House . . . Related by Themselves* (1760).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Battestin and Probyn, 149.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. on 14th December, 1758, Fielding wrote to Richardson: 'I was in hopes . . . to have repayed you the Ten Guineas you so very kindly let me have before I left London . . .'. Battestin and Probyn, 149.

¹⁰⁵ His first wife's niece lived with them and called herself 'Fielding'. She married Henry's son Allen.

¹⁰⁶ Philip Rawlings (2004), *DNB*. 19: 509-510, 509.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 510.

¹⁰⁸ Grey, Introduction, 25. According to Grey, Fielding and the Collier sisters 'were part of Henry's household' when the family left Bow Street for Fordhook.

Since Fielding was brought up in a staunch Protestant family yet was obviously close to her supportive Catholic half-brother, she was bound to have had mixed views on religion. From her work it is clear that she was a moral author. David Simple, for instance, is the 'Good Samaritan' reborn, practicing good Christian ethics on his journey through life. *The Governess* also promotes Christian principles; it teaches children right from wrong, demonstrates how to form true friendships, encourages caring for one another and instils respect for another's property. To some extent Fielding's sentiments in *The Governess* align with those of Dr. James Fordyce, whose *Sermons to Young Women* (1765) lists female 'Decorums' as 'innate Honour, Modesty, Softness, and other Virtues peculiar to the sex', 'the least Deviation' from which would be 'an Inlet to Disorder'.¹⁰⁹ In *The Governess* the feral girls' early cat-fight over an apple is certainly 'disorder'; they have yet to be instilled with Mrs. Teachum's modesty, softness and other virtues.

Nevertheless, judging from the way that Fielding continually promotes the companionate marriage, it is hardly likely that she would agree wholeheartedly with Fordyce, who saw all women as biblical Eves, created by God as 'additions' to 'divert fancy, to gratify desire' and 'lighten the load' of men's 'cares', leaving them 'at leisure for rougher labours, or severer studies'.¹¹⁰ Being a radical author, she would not agree with male writers who constantly cite the Genesis story or the didactic writings of St. Paul to justify female subordination: 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord . . . For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church'.¹¹¹ Note, for instance, that pragmatic Mrs. Bilson in *Dellwyn* is by far the superior figure in her family, her reason and intellect

¹⁰⁹ James Fordyce (1765), *Sermons to Young Women*. London, 2 vols., I:15.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* I: 207-8.

¹¹¹ See 1 Corinthians 14: 34-5 and Ephesians 5: 22-4.

highlighting the numerous faults in her inadequate adulterous husband who selfishly reduces his family to poverty.

Fielding's friends included the Reverend John Hoadly who placed the tributary plaque to Fielding in Bath Abbey after her death. Her final resting-place in Charlcombe Church demonstrates her ultimate allegiance to the Church of England faith. Nevertheless, unlike Martha Mary Sherwood, who reworked *The Governess* to suit Victorian taste (1820), Fielding does not pepper her works with religious enthusiasm. Perhaps Fielding was thinking of her brothers Henry and John and how religion can unite or divide kingdoms and families when she wrote the following words: 'RELIGION' is 'a mystery . . . above mortal comprehension', so made of it what best suited her 'own rule of life' (*The Cry*, II: 257-85).

Part VII: Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) and the Later Years

Eighteenth-century London was an inhospitable place. Disease and corruption flourished in its sewage-filled streets. Fielding made several visits to Bath, believing its waters to be salutary. At some indefinite point, she took up permanent residency there. Speculation about when Fielding moved permanently to Bath varies from 1739 to 1758.¹¹² Robert Edward Myhill Peach, claiming that his assertion is based on the private papers of Henry and Sarah Fielding's patron, Ralph Allen (1694—1764), a rich entrepreneur of Bath, claims that Fielding moved to Bath in 1739, to Yew Tree Cottage, Church Lane, Widcombe, provided for her by Allen.¹¹³ Yew Tree Cottage, on the edge of Allen's expansive country estate, Prior Park, is now subsumed into the adjacent property known as Widcombe Lodge. A large weathered stone plaque that

¹¹² Battestin and Probyn, 124, claim 1751, citing Fielding and Collier's letter to Harris from Beauford Buildings; Sabor (1998), xl-xli, claims c. June 1754; Bree (1997) claims 1754; Janet Todd (1989), *Dictionary of British Women Writers*. London: Routledge, 246, claims 1758.

¹¹³ Robert Edward Myhill Peach (1895), *Historic Houses in Bath*. London, 2nd Series, 32.

rests above the old doorway, placed there by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859—1930), informs onlookers that Sarah Fielding once lived there.

Allen, who came from humble beginnings, accrued his wealth from instigating a new postal system in England while working as a clerk, then used his earnings to fund his more lucrative venture — quarrying stone for many of the Bath buildings. Allen’s hilltop Palladian mansion, with extensive gardens and ornate little bridge, still sits resplendent overlooking the centre of Bath. According to local tradition, Allen often sent his carriage to bring Fielding to dine with his family and friends. This is borne out by Frances Sheridan, who regularly saw Fielding at Bath, and Richard Graves, a rector from nearby Claverton, who, Thomas Hinde reports, ‘several times met Sarah dining at Prior Park’.¹¹⁴ Hinde claims that Fielding introduced Henry to Allen,¹¹⁵ but this seems inaccurate since Henry modelled Parson Abraham Adams in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) on Allen’s brother-in-law, the Reverend William Young (1702-57),¹¹⁶ curate of East Stour, whom Fielding had known since his boyhood. Through Young, the Fielding siblings would surely have known of Allen and perhaps met him before Fielding moved permanently to Bath, or met him through Richardson, whose brother-in-law, James Leake, owned the bookshop at Abbey Green, Bath, or Richardson’s friend Dr. George Cheyne, a Bath resident.¹¹⁷ According to Hinde,

¹¹⁴ Lefanu 95; Thomas Hinde (1987), *Tales From the Pump Room*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 118; Peach also claims that Fielding was ‘seldom omitted as a guest at his table’ at Prior Park, which was completed in 1741. In *The Life and Times of Ralph Allen*. London, Peach claims that in 1744 Allen was preparing to give a gift of £20 to Fielding and a pension of £100 per annum, 32.

¹¹⁵ Hinde, 118.

¹¹⁶ According to Thrale: ‘Parson Young was the Man from whom Fielding really drew his Parson Adams, & was indeed a very curious Fellow: He took his Eschylus one day & walked so far, it was in Germany the Year 1744: that he at last fairly found himself in the Enemy’s Camp: they laid hold on him of Course, & would have hanged him for a Spy, had not the odd Simplicity which carried thither saved him when there. Dr. Collier told this to me from his own Knowledge’. See Balderston, I: 247.

¹¹⁷ Richardson and his friend Dr George Cheyne of Bath thought Leake’s shop ‘one of the finest Bookseller’s Shops in Europe’. See Barbauld, IV. 286 and Thomas Cary Duncan Eaves and Ben Drew Kimpel eds. (1971), *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon, 74.

Henry rented a house at nearby Twerton, where he wrote *Tom Jones* (1749).¹¹⁸

Allen welcomed friends into his home, often for weeks at a time. They included Pope and his editor, William Warburton, Martha Blount, the actor David Garrick, Frances Sheridan, Elizabeth Carter,¹¹⁹ Robert Dodsley (one of Fielding's publishers), and William Whitehead.¹²⁰ Between London and Prior Park, Fielding must have met and conversed with several men and women of note. When Allen died (August 1764), Fielding moved to a smaller cottage at Wick on the outskirts of Bath. Allen bequeathed to Fielding and Henry's three remaining children the sum of £100 each.¹²¹

Fielding would find Bath's classical history as stimulating as its waters. Thomas records that curative claims of the waters had been established before the time of James II and Mary of Modena. Although in Fielding's time the Roman baths were as yet undiscovered, the 'famous head of the goddess Sulis Minerva, whose temple lay beneath the medieval abbey and the churchyard, was dug up in Stall Street in 1727'.¹²² Celia Fiennes thought that the spa waters tasted as if eggs had been boiled in them.¹²³ Bathers wore linen clothes, which, when wet, turned yellow and clung to the body shape giving the appearance of nudity and the whole scene an air of indecency. To the Puritan way of thinking, it was 'a Resurrection for invalids'.¹²⁴

From 1705 Richard 'Beau' Nash (1674-1762), a British dandy and one of Fielding's subscribers,¹²⁵ was Bath's Master of Ceremonies. He helped to make Bath the most fashionable 'watering-place' in England and instigated rules for a more polished code of manners, such as banning the wearing of swords in most public

¹¹⁸ Hinde, 118.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of Sarah Fielding and the Bath community of women see Betty Rizzo (1994), *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

¹²⁰ See Tierney, *passim*.

¹²¹ Sabor (1998), xxiii. See also Thomas (1990), xxiii and Hinde, 118.

¹²² Thomas (1990), 166.

¹²³ Christopher Morris ed. (1949), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*. London, 20.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 19.

¹²⁵ Nash subscribed to *Familiar Letters* (1747) and *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757).

places. This, added to street lighting and wide pavements, made Bath much safer and cleaner than London.¹²⁶ Pope, writing of Bath to Martha Blount in 1714 relates: ‘My whole Day is shar’d by the Pump-Assemblies, the Walkes, the Chocolate houses, Raffling Shops, Plays, medleys, etc.’: Eliza Haywood found Bath a place where ‘Love and Gaming engrossed all the Company’.¹²⁷ Writing to Harris in 1741, Henry Fielding describes Bath as ‘Nothing but Noise, Impertinence, and Confusion’, saying that he enjoyed more the walks along the Avon accompanied by Harris, (whom he nicknames, ‘Oroondates’ after an ancient lover), discussing ‘love and lust’ until ‘our Conversation was interrupted by several fair Objects of both these passions’.¹²⁸ This letter proves that Henry Fielding was acquainted with Bath before the publication of *Joseph Andrews* (1742). In all likelihood, so was Sarah.

VIII: Fordhook

In 1753-54 Henry Fielding endured a punishing winter in London implementing his plan laid out in *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1754) to curb murders on the streets, which successfully reduced crimes in London to the ‘lowest in twenty years’.¹²⁹ Exhausted, in May 1754 he went to rest at his ‘little farm’ at Fordhook, near Ealing, which was then a country village. Despite Henry’s modest description, Fordhook was a large mansion that Lord Byron’s wife would later occupy.¹³⁰ Today, it no longer exists. Fielding likely travelled from Bath to be with Henry’s family over Christmas 1753. They would still be mourning the deaths of the Fielding sisters and Henry’s son. Grey suggests that Fielding used this time to assist

¹²⁶ See the Bath *Museum of Costume Magazine* (sold during summer 2003), passim.

¹²⁷ See George Sherburn ed. (1956), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1: 260; Eliza Haywood (1725) *Bath-Intrigues: In Four Letters to a Friend in London*. London, 25-39.

¹²⁸ Fielding to James Harris, 8th September, 1741, cited in Thomas (1990), see 166 and 411.

¹²⁹ Grey, 23.

¹³⁰ *Life*, 584.

Henry with revising *Jonathan Wild*, which was first published as the third volume of his *Miscellanies* (1743), but later appeared as a posthumous edition on its own.¹³¹ Fielding likely stepped in to assist with the young children at Fordhook, as she did when Charlotte Fielding died. Henry's last child, Allen, named after Ralph Allen, had just been born (April).

On Wednesday, 26th June, 1754,¹³² hoping to improve his health, Henry embarked for Lisbon, accompanied by his wife, the older children, and Margaret Collier.¹³³ Jane Collier accompanied them to the docks, where Henry presented her with a rare edition of his favourite work of Horace, inscribed 'as a Memorial (however poor) of the highest Esteem for an Understanding more than Female'.¹³⁴ Harris and Saunders Welch were also there.¹³⁵ Fielding likely remained at Fordhook to supervise the smaller children. (Martin C. Battestin and Probyn suggest that she was ill, at Bath).¹³⁶ Henry, suffering from gout and dropsy (water retention), had to be hoisted aboard ship in a chair, his limbs unable to carry him. Jestering sailors shouting insults added to his misery.¹³⁷ Henry never returned from his harrowing journey: he died on the 8th October that year and is buried at Junqueira, Lisbon. Back at Fordhook, on October 14th, Henry's mother-in-law, Elizabeth Daniel, perhaps fearing that her daughter would be unable to return from Lisbon, leaving her responsible for the small children, committed suicide by slitting her throat in the 'necessary-house' at the bottom of the garden, adding to the family's misfortunes.¹³⁸

¹³¹ Grey, 23-24.

¹³² Humphreys, 202. Sabor (1998), xl, gives the date as 30th June.

¹³³ See Arthur R. Humphreys ed. (1973), *Jonathan Wild the Great and A Voyage to Lisbon*. London: Dent, and Grey, 10.

¹³⁴ *Life*, 587.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 587.

¹³⁶ Battestin and Probyn, 127.

¹³⁷ Humphreys, 202.

¹³⁸ *Life*, 605.

John conscientiously assumed responsibility for Henry's family, raising money for them through the sale of Henry's library via Samuel Baker, the founder-auctioneer of Sotheby's, London. Of the 653 lots, there were no copies of the novels by Henry or his sister.¹³⁹ In his notebook, John records one year's 'disbursements': 'To the widow pr. ann., £60. To the educating Wm. At Eaton School, £40. To the educating Allen at Mr. Skelton's at Warfield, £20. To Harriet's clothes and maintenance, £40. To Sarah, sister of the said Henry, £20'.¹⁴⁰ Fordhook was sold at auction in December 1754.¹⁴¹ Following Henry's death, Fielding's letter to Richardson dated June 26th 1755 reveals her loneliness, wishing to be part of his family that she describes as having 'one . . . enlarged single heart':

To live in a family where there is but one heart . . . and to have a place in that enlarged single heart, is such a state of happiness as I cannot hear of without feeling the utmost pleasure. Methinks, in such a house, each word that is uttered must sink into the hearer's mind, as the kindly falling showers in April sink into the teeming earth, and enlarge and ripen every idea, as those friendly drops do the new-sown grain, or the water-wanting plant. There is nothing in all the works of nature or of art too trifling to give pleasure, where there is such a capacity to enjoy it, as must be found in such an union.¹⁴²

On her return from Lisbon, Margaret Collier led a lonely existence residing in a small cottage on the Isle of Wight, near Ryde. According to Grey, Fielding 'spent at least one holiday' with her.¹⁴³ This reveals that Fielding was fit enough to travel after Henry's death. When Jane Collier died (summer 1755), Fielding coped with the loss of her loved ones by devoting herself to writing, producing the *Lives* (1757), *Dellwyn* (1759), *Ophelia* (1760) and *Memoirs of Socrates* (1762), her *magnum opus*. *Memoirs* is the only work that carries her name in bold letters on the title-page, 'By Sarah

¹³⁹ Grey, Introduction, 26-7.

¹⁴⁰ R. Leslie-Melville, *Sir John Fielding*. London, 61, cited in *Life*, 615.

¹⁴¹ Battestin and Probyn, 119.

¹⁴² Barbauld, II, 71-72.

¹⁴³ Grey, 27.

Fielding'.¹⁴⁴ The only other time that the name 'S. FIELDING', appears, as is at the end of her dedication to the Countess of Pomfret in the *Lives*.

VIX: A Female Community at Bath

Fielding is often seen as a reclusive figure, but Mrs. Ruth Hayden of Bath, a descendent of Fielding's associates, Mrs. Delany and Mrs. Dewes, affirms that this was certainly not the case,¹⁴⁵ lending credence to Betty Rizzo's report, that Fielding was a significant influence in a community of like-minded women at Bath. These women included friends of the Duchess of Portland, who entertained many erudite women at her nearby home, 'Bulstrode'. Among them were Elizabeth Elstob (1683—1756), 'the Saxon Scholar', who acted as governess to the Duchess's children, Sarah Scott (née Robinson), Lady Barbara Montagu (sister to the second earl of Halifax, and no direct relation to Scott's sister, Mrs Elizabeth Montagu), Elizabeth Cutts, Mrs Arnold, Mrs Adams, Margaret Riggs, Margaret Mary Rivaud,¹⁴⁶ Miss Chudleigh, Mrs Anne Robinson Knight and possibly the poet, Esther Lewis.¹⁴⁷ Scott, as 'Miss Sally Robinson', and Chudleigh, subscribed to Fielding's *Familiar Letters*

¹⁴⁴ *Memoirs* was received favourably by a critic of the *Monthly Review* (27 September 1762), 171, who states that Fielding executed her task in a manner that does her honour, noting the work's 'distinguishing excellence'. Bree (1997) reports: 'Fielding's translation was included in the *Minor Works of Xenophon* (1813) and *The Whole Works of Xenophon* (New York, 1855). The 'Defence of Socrates' was reprinted in *Socratic Discourses by Plato and Xenophon* (Dent, 1910) that was reprinted in 1913, 1915, 1918, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1933, 1937, and possibly later.

¹⁴⁵ My thanks to Mrs. Ruth Hayden, a Bath descendent of Mrs Dewes, for this and other information gratefully received.

¹⁴⁶ Rizzo, 384 n. 30. According to Rizzo, Margaret Piggott Riggs (c.1714-88) had a daughter Anna (1741-81) who was later Lady Miller of Batheaston vase fame. Margaret Mary Ravaud, her friend and companion, was also a friend and correspondent of Mrs. Delany, who referred to her as "my niece". Elizabeth Carter, visiting them in June 1759, found them "very agreeable people" in "one of the most enchanting spots I ever beheld". See Pennington (1809), 1: 48.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 383 n 28. Rizzo notes that Elizabeth Cutts was probably the sister of Mordecai Cutts Esq., of Thorne, Yorkshire, a subscriber to some of the community members' publications. After the death of Barbara Montagu, Cutts sometimes was (as was Miss Arnold), Scott's companion in an egalitarian sense. Miss Arnold is connected in a Fielding subscription list (1762) to a Mr Arnold of Wells, probably Christopher Arnold, Esq. (1757). William Adams, Esq. And Mrs Adams were also subscribers to Fielding (1757, 1762). For Esther Lewis, see Clive Probyn, *DNB* 19. 513.

(1747).¹⁴⁸ According to Rizzo, these women, who had experienced ‘rejection and pain’, enjoyed ‘the benefits of liberation from male protection’.¹⁴⁹

Scott and her sister Elizabeth Montagu, (dubbed ‘Queen of the Blues’), had been educated by Conyers Middleton, a Cambridge classics professor who married their maternal grandmother. Fielding would enjoy sharing her knowledge of the classics with them. Scott’s sister, Elizabeth, having married wealthy coal merchant, Edward Montagu, had money and prestige. At her extravagant dinner parties held at various times in her three lavish houses, Montagu’s wit apparently sparkled like her diamonds. Scott was quite the opposite. Her unhappy marriage to George Lewis Scott in 1751, the year he became tutor to the Prince of Wales, lasted one year until she was ‘taken from her house and husband by her father and brothers’ in mysterious circumstances.¹⁵⁰ Lady Barbara Montagu, (‘Lady Bab’), had accompanied the Scotts on honeymoon (a contemporary custom) and lived with them during their year together. Lady Bab, who went to Bath because she was suffering from an incurable illness, set up home with Scott in a Bath suburb.

Rizzo reports that the Bath community of women was strong, self-sufficient, and resourceful, each supporting the other morally, raising one another’s self-esteem and efficacy by encouraging each other to publish. They pooled their incomes from publications to help finance their works. From the lengthy extant correspondence between ‘Lady Bab’ and Richardson, it appears that these women had invented some kind of learning game comprised of cards bearing mathematical, historical, geographical, and other information, the proceeds of which were dedicated to help a

¹⁴⁸ Rizzo, 383 n 26. Little is known of Cutts, Arnold, Riggs or Ravaud except that in 1775 Cutts published *Almeria: or Parental Advice: A Didactic Poem. Addressed to the Daughters of Great Britain and Ireland, By a Friend to the Sex*, to benefit ‘two worthy people’. Riggs lived in Batheaston with her infant daughter, the future Lady Miller, and Ravaud.

¹⁴⁹ Rizzo, 39-40.

¹⁵⁰ Walter Marion Crittenden ed. (1955), *Sarah Scott: A Description of Millenium Hall*. New York: Bookman Associates, preface.

‘poor neighbour’.¹⁵¹ When Richardson was asked to help publish the *Penitents*, a work that may be Fielding’s, Lady Bab paid his charges (most of the penitent prostitutes were under eighteen, and many no older than twelve: having been ‘deserted by their parents, they had no other means of livelihood’).¹⁵² Lady Bab bequeathed £10 to Fielding plus £10 per year for life and £10 for the rental of her garden.¹⁵³ In September 1760 Fielding moved to a small cottage at Walcot, a suburb of Bath.¹⁵⁴

This Bath community of women practiced the benevolent ideal advocated by Fielding in her novels. In *Dellwyn* she imagines a large House . . . for Gentlewomen,

[W]ho either had no Fortunes, or so little that it would not support them . . . the Rules of the House, which were regulated in the most exact and punctual Manner; and the wisest Regulations were to secure the Peace and Happiness of the Society, who were provided with all Conveniences for rural Amusements, a Library, musical Instruments, and Implements for various Works . . . managed with so much Oeconomy . . . (I:207-8)

Fielding’s idea of an all-female establishment that mirrors Astell’s, helps to lay the foundations for Scott’s *Millenium Hall* (1762), which depicts a female community run by five women on an egalitarian rather than a hierarchical basis.

Word of the Bath community of women spread, bringing many upper and middle-class women to Bath, not just for the waters, but to mingle in the Bath bookshops. One of Richardson’s correspondents, Mrs Dewes, relates that after having met Fielding at Bath, and liking her, wondered if she would be a ‘Mrs. Teachum to Mary’, which Bree rightly translates as an offer of paid employment.¹⁵⁵ To date,

¹⁵¹ Rizzo, 310.

¹⁵² Eaves and Kimpel, 463-64. Todd (1989) also suggests that Fielding may have authored the work, 248. Grey, 29, suggests that the ‘tone, style and content’ of *Penitents* ‘point to Sarah Fielding’.

¹⁵³ Rizzo, 314.

¹⁵⁴ Sabor (1998), xl.

¹⁵⁵ Barbauld, IV, 109. Mrs Teachum is Fielding’s fictional teacher in *The Governess*.

there is no evidence that Fielding took up the offer. Mrs Dewes's sister, Mary (née Granville) Pendarves, later Delany (1700-1788), a friend of Jonathan Swift, Richardson, George III and Queen Charlotte, wrote to her sister from Bath: 'Lady Shelburne is here, and has subscribed to Mrs. Fielding' (1755). In another letter dated September 1757, Mrs Delany wrote: 'Mrs Fielding is here, and has taken a lodging cross the water at Bathwick; she and Mrs. Forth dined with me last Friday. After dinner came two Irish ladies, Mrs. Greene, her fair daughter, Lady Falkland and Miss Leake'.¹⁵⁶ This information gives further insight into Fielding's circle of friends.

In her fiction, Fielding appears to incorporate various events from the real life experiences of the women she knew. For instance, in *Dellwyn*, a novel that condemns young girls being coerced into marrying much older men, Fielding writes: 'Seventeen Years of Age is very young to enter into the Cares and Duties of Wedlock' (I: 159). In real life, Mrs Delany, when a girl, had been coerced by her uncle into marrying Alexander Pendarves, an old man who died soon after their marriage. Hester Thrale (1741-1821), who visited Bath with her young friend, Burney, had been married off in her teens by her mother to the rich, belligerent brewer, Henry Thrale, by whom she was pregnant thirteen times in fourteen years (only four children survived infancy).

Thus it is clear that the Bath community of erudite women provided Fielding with ideas for her work, as well as supporting her morally. Thrale typifies learned women who, burdened with unappreciative husbands and domestic duties, were prevented from further learning and writing. After her husband's death Thrale married Gabriel Piozzi. Her diaries, especially *Thraliana*, begun in 1776, like Mrs

¹⁵⁶ The Right Honourable Lady Augusta Llanover ed. (1861), *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*. London: Richard Bentley, 6 vols. Vol. III, Delany to Dewes from Bath, 17 Nov. 1755; III, 464, Mrs Delany to Mrs Dewes, 4 Sept. 1757. Information also gratefully received from Mrs. Ruth Hayden.

Delany's letters, provide an illuminating account of the everyday lives of many eighteenth-century gentlewomen, including Fielding.

X: Conclusion: Erroneous Epitaphs

Unfortunately, Fielding seems to have constantly struggled to overcome bouts of ill health. Travelling in an uncomfortable, cramped coach between Bath and London for work or familial matters must have been difficult, especially in later years. In his letter to Fielding at Bath dated 7th December 1756, Richardson is pleased that she had recovered from a recent bout of illness.¹⁵⁷ Writing to Harris from Bathwick on 21st October 1758, Fielding conveys her reluctance to socialize at that time: 'I am told that the Bath is very full this Season, but I only know it by hear-say, for I have no Inclination to go amongst them only when my perticular [*sic*] friends come'.¹⁵⁸ In late 1760 Fielding wrote: 'I have been so much confined with Illness since the beginning of the Spring as put me backward in my Translation'.¹⁵⁹ Fielding was likely working on the *Memoirs* while working on *Dellwyn* and *Ophelia*. In her letter of 22nd April 1761 to Harris, Fielding laments her inability to 'Journey to London' and the news that he and his family were intending a long stay there.¹⁶⁰ When Richardson died that year she must have felt the loss of another friend very deeply.

In *Memoirs* there is an indication that Fielding's health is deteriorating, as on the introductory pages she apologizes to her subscribers for its delayed production (originally planned for April 1761) owing to being unwell. Her poor health and stressed state of mind were exacerbated by Murphy's biography of Henry, evident in her letter to Harris dated the 4th March 1762 from Walcot. Fielding writes: '[Y]ou

¹⁵⁷ Barbauld, II: 68-70, 101.

¹⁵⁸ Battestin and Probyn, 143.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 156.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 169.

never saw such a shocking Creature as it had made of my Brother, and not only of him but of his Father too'. She insists that Murphy 'knew little or nothing' of Henry, adding, 'Millar says he has printed a Small Number now, and if I will write another Life of my Brother . . . and with your leave, add your Essay to it, he shall rejoice to prefix it to another Edition'.¹⁶¹ Harris sent Fielding his essay but Millar did not fulfil his promise. If Fielding's denunciation of Murphy's biography as inaccurate 'Bow Street gossip' is true, scholars quoting from it may be tapping into an unreliable source. Whether Murphy was right or wrong, Fielding certainly wanted a different public image of her brother.

Fielding was well enough to return to London for the wedding of Henry's daughter (Eleanor Harriote) to Colonel James Gabriel Montresor on 25th August 1766, when she stayed with her half-brother John at Bow Street. Elizabeth Carter passed on the news to Elizabeth Montagu, whose response was: 'So you went to dine with Mrs Fielding, a very pretty fancy! You might as well have dined with Duke Humphrey [a euphemism meaning 'to eat nothing at all'] . . . poor Fielding never thinks of dinner till it is time to eat it',¹⁶² (which implies that Fielding may have been of slim build).

Montagu settled an annuity of £10 on Fielding, to be given as a gift each Christmas. Rizzo reports that at some point in 1766 Fielding moved in with Sarah Scott. In November 1767 Elizabeth Montagu wrote to Carter, 'Poor Mrs. Fielding is declining very fast'.¹⁶³ Fielding was living with Scott during the spring of 1768, when the Bath community of women opened an all-female establishment on the lines of *Millenium Hall* at a house in Hitcham owned by Elizabeth Montagu's relative.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 172, Letter 108, from Walcot (Bath) dated 4th March, 1762, 172.

¹⁶² Grey, 35.

¹⁶³ Reginald Blunt ed. (1923), *Mrs Montagu, "Queen of the Blues": Her Letters and her Friendships from 1762 to 1800*. London: Constable, II, 144.

¹⁶⁴ Bree (1996), 307, citing letter MO 5319, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, California.

Fielding apparently ‘helped with the planning’.¹⁶⁵ These women tried to show society an alternative way for genteel spinsters to live, encouraging an ethos of self-help, and initiating an improving atmosphere in the neighbourhood that included educating the poor. Astell had suggested a similar project in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694). Montagu sent livestock and offered to pay Fielding’s travelling expenses to join them,¹⁶⁶ but Scott’s letter to her sister reveals Fielding’s reticence to travel:

I wou’d have had her come last Monday, but she had affairs to settle; of what nature I can not guess, as she had no rent rolls or Bonds to look over, nor even a Band box of ribbons to sort; from Papers of consequence or the frippery of ornament I imagine no one clearer, . . . but what she intends to do, or where to fix, we are totally ignorant.¹⁶⁷

Sadly, the real life Hitcham ‘female utopia’ was to fail by December 1768.¹⁶⁸

Despite being paid above the average for her works, earning £150 for *The Lives* (1757) compared to the nine guineas paid to Scott for *Millenium Hall* (1762),¹⁶⁹ Fielding constantly struggled to support herself financially. Fielding’s friends, including Elizabeth Montagu, paid a doctor to attend her before she died at Bath on the 9th of April 1768, aged fifty-seven.¹⁷⁰ She was interred on 14th April beneath the rector’s seat within St. Mary’s Church, Charlcombe, approximately one metre from where Henry had stood to marry Charlotte Cradock. Although she is uncertain, the Church Warden advises that when the Victorians installed an organ, Fielding’s bones may have been removed to a grave outside, and, over time, buried over. On the back inside wall of the church are memorial tablets to Fielding and ‘Lady Bab’.

¹⁶⁵ Rizzo, 318.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. Montagu wrote to Scott: ‘we can cheat her as to the knowledge of ye expence & let her imagine her present income equal to it’, Battestin and Probyn, xxxvii.

¹⁶⁷ Bree (1996), 26, citing MO5319.

¹⁶⁸ Rizzo, 318.

¹⁶⁹ Tobias Smollett’s *Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1777) earned him nine guineas. Bree (1996), 25.

¹⁷⁰ Bree (1996), 28. The *Bath Journal* for Monday 18th April 1768 gives the date of Fielding’s death as Sunday 10th April (‘Yesterday se’ennight’).

Another tribute to Fielding is a walled funerary tablet inside Bath Abbey, placed there by her friend, Dr. John Hoadly. In *Ophelia* Fielding reveals her scepticism of erroneous epitaphs written on the gravestones of the rich when Dorchester remarks:

The Writer collects together all the Virtues, Graces, and Accomplishments, that are scattered among Mankind, and when these are all blended together with all the Elegance he is Master of, he applies them to any one who, at his Death, wants that memorial of his Goodness, which his Life has not testified (1:56).

It is therefore ironic that three details on the Abbey funerary tablet are incorrect: Hoadly describes Fielding as the second daughter, not as she was, the third, and cites Henry, not Edmund Fielding, as her father. Hoadly also gives the year of her birth as 1714 when it was actually 1710. Twelve years later while perusing Fielding's epitaph in Bath Abbey, Burney wondered, 'Will any future doctor do as much for me?'¹⁷¹

In her lifetime Fielding earned praise for her work from contemporaries including George Ballard, an amateur historian who mentions her in his *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (1752).¹⁷² Mary Scott (1752—93) places Fielding at the head of a list of notable eighteenth-century literary women that includes Charlotte Lennox, Catherine Macaulay, Lady Pennington, Anna Williams, Elizabeth Montagu, Catherine Talbot, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld. Scott, in her vigorous, overtly feminist appropriation of 'Learning's awful throne' in *The Female Advocate* (1774), writes:

'Twas FIELDING's talent, with ingenious Art
To trace the secret mazes of the Heart.
In language tun'd to please its infant thought,
The tender breast with prudent care SHE taught.
Nature to HER, her boldest pencil lent,
And blest HER with a mind of vast extent;
A mind, that nobly scorn'd each low desire,

¹⁷¹ Austin Dobson ed. (1904-5), *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*. London: Macmillan, *Journal* (June 1780), I: 409.

¹⁷² Not to be confused with the rambling work of Thomas Amory (1691-1788), published under the same title in 1755, promising details of eighteen imaginary ladies although he confines himself to one.

And glow'd with pure Religion's warmest fire.¹⁷³

Grey notes that Fielding, known among her contemporaries as 'the author of David Simple', was included in L. M. Stretch's early book of biography for young readers entitled *The Beauties of Biography* (1777) and *The Governess* was recommended 'for the use of schools'.¹⁷⁴ During the 1780s *David Simple* and *Ophelia* were reprinted in Harrison's 'Novelists Library' with images and engravings by William Blake.¹⁷⁵

In conclusion, this biographical account has shown that Fielding's real life experiences are written into her work. It also explains why Fielding used her fiction to quest for social change and, as the following chapters will also show, why she continually highlights the disastrous effects of gambling and duelling on family life. Given her aristocratic connections and her impecunious circumstances, it is understandable that she calls for a review of the impoverished gentlewoman's situation and quests for the improved status of women in general, particularly in education, employment and marriage. Fielding's life experiences and those of her friends are recorded in her novels, making her fiction in part autobiographical and historical. That she valued her friends is recorded in *Dellwyn*, where she writes: Friendship, which is real, and built on right Principles, where just Esteem is the strong Foundation, is unalterable by Time or Accident, whilst Life itself endures' (I: 89).



¹⁷³ Mary Scott (1774), *The Female Advocate: A Poem. Occasioned by Reading Dr Duncombe's Feminead*. (London: Joseph Johnson, lines 256-64).

¹⁷⁴ Grey, 37-8.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 2

Questing for Change in the Sentimental Novel

Since Fielding is known as a sentimental novelist, this chapter investigates her use of sentimentalism in her quest for a more harmonious society, one in which women would have increased status. Part I offers a clarification of ‘sentimentalism’ according to its eighteenth-century meaning before considering Fielding’s subversive methods and literary style. Part II will assess Fielding’s placement in the sentimental novel tradition, with references to the work of Samuel Richardson (1689—1761), Thomas Gray (1716—71), Laurence Sterne (1713—68), and Henry Mackenzie (1745—1831). Part III considers Fielding’s politics relevant to her vision of a better society. This will, of necessity, include some historical data. Part IV considers Fielding’s call for ‘sisterhood’. Part V will examine Fielding’s portrayal of men.

Part I: *Sentimentalism and Style*

‘Sentimentalism’, according to a modern dictionary definition, is ‘a disposition to wallow in sentiment’; a ‘self-conscious working up of feeling’.¹ Brewer notes that in the eighteenth century, ‘sentiment’ and ‘sensitivity’ were ‘technical terms employed in medicine, philosophy and psychology’, evolving from mid-century to become ‘widely and loosely used to describe the expression of heightened, intense human feelings’.² A key figure in its development was the Scottish physician Dr. George Cheyne, who popularised scientific views on the human nervous system in *The*

¹ See *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary*, Edinburgh, 1983. ‘Sentimentalism’ and its related term, ‘sensitivity’, describe works written during the ‘Age of Sensibility’ (c.1740 to c.1785). See also Janet Todd (1986), *Sensibility, An Introduction*. London: Methuen. Todd discusses ‘the cult of sensibility’.

² Brewer, 113-4.

English Malady; or a Treatise of Nervous Disorders (1733), which went through numerous editions. Cheyne's patient and friend, Richardson, responded by incorporating the nervous female characters, Pamela Andrews and Clarissa Harlowe, into his novels. 'Together', states Brewer, 'they put sentiment on the cultural map' and the 'refined person' came to mean one with an overwhelming, spontaneous emotional response to the suffering of others and to art.³ As a consequence, 'sensibility' became an umbrella term for a family of words and meanings including delicacy, compassion, a feeling heart, benevolence, virtue, melancholy, and an interest in what Fielding calls, 'the Labyrinths of the Mind'. By the time Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768) and the *Sentimental Magazine* appeared (1773), 'sentiment was firmly associated with moral and aesthetic refinement'.⁴

Markman Ellis argues the impossibility of legislating between the terms 'sensibility' and 'sentimental', not because they share one unitary meaning, but because 'they amalgamate and mix freely [in] a large number of varied discourses'.⁵ Fielding recognised sentiment as a spontaneous emotion, a response that came naturally from within. Unlike the artifice and show of polite society, sentimentalism springs from the heart, the throbbing hub of an individual's emotional life. References to the heart as the key to sentiment appear in other works of the period, such as *Pamela* (1740), where Mr. B. vows 'with all his Heart' to care for Pamela after his mother's death, but makes unwanted amorous advances towards her in the 'Summer-house' as her 'Heart went pit-a-pat'; Pamela's heart 'throb, throb, throbs.'⁶

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. 113.

⁵ See Markman Ellis (1996, 1998), *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 4-7; Downs-Miers also acknowledges the 'broad and complex' use of sensibility in eighteenth-century literature in *Labyrinths*, 61.

⁶ Samuel Richardson (1740), *Pamela; Or, Virtue Rewarded*, eds. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely, 2001, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 16; 30; 342. See also Brewer, 117.

In Fielding's novels, the heart is 'kind', 'honest', 'tender', and 'fond'. A 'feeling' heart is 'melting', 'swelling' or 'ready to burst' as characters experience 'rapture' or 'transport of Delight', words and phrases indicating a pardonable excess of emotion. In *David Simple*, Fielding's 'Tender-hearted' hero is juxtaposed with his surreptitious brother, Daniel, who 'masks' the 'Baseness of his Heart' as he attempts to cheat David out of his inheritance with a forged will (8-9). Nanny Johnson's father's 'Heart leaped' at the 'mention of money' when David offers to marry her (25). David is 'broken-hearted' when he overhears his fiancée's 'Secrets of her Heart' (31). Fielding's moral dilemmas arise from heart-less individuals, or from 'Temptation', 'Vanity', lack of 'delicacy', 'virtue', 'esteem', or 'Love'. Thus it is said that sentimental novels are written in 'language of the heart'.

In *David Simple* physical expressions of pity, sighs and tears are everywhere. David encounters Cynthia, an oppressed lady's companion who is 'dissolved in Tears'; later, Camilla's 'Sobs and Tears' cause David to burst into tears (95-99). Fielding's adjectives describing their emotions gain intensity through the prefixes 'over', 'ever' and 'all', as in 'all-conquering', and through the adverbs 'vastly' and 'exceedingly'. Her aphoristic texts are full of *sententiae* (maxims full of meaning), with abundant references to classical and contemporary authors. In the following example from *Volume the Last*, Fielding shows off her unorthodox erudition by including an extract from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (V: 130-34) to emphasize Camilla's distress at the news of her brother's death and David's sympathy for her:

SHE silently a gentle Tear let fall
From either Eye—
Two other precious Drops that ready stood
Each in their chrystal Sluice, he, e'er they fell,
Kiss'd— (298).

‘Consolation’ (the human ability to cope with grief, particularly attendant on the deaths of relatives and friends), a topic addressed by several classical authors including Cicero and Seneca, was a contemporary *male* topic that Richard Terry observes appeared in Christian ‘treatises and funeral sermons’.⁷ Like Fielding, Johnson deferred to John Milton’s consolatory passages when composing *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749, adapted from *The Tenth Satire of Juvenal*), evidenced in the line: ‘Now lacerated Friendship claims a tear’ (304).⁸

Fielding’s texts also display her penchant for the dash. While this may be construed as a poor command of the English language, it is, however, deliberate disarticulation, to mark pauses, form aposiopesis (the intentional refusal to complete an idea, name, or phrase) and make rhetorical transitions. Janine Barchas notes nine different lengths of the dash in the first edition of *David Simple* (808 in all), used to convey what words cannot at salient moments, such as indicating the perplexed emotions in characters’ conversations.⁹ Fielding frequently uses the dash in combination with other marks of punctuation, between sentences already syntactically distinguished by full stops to represent the speaker’s emotional state. This allows the reader visual signposts as to how the characters’ thoughts and events of the novel are developing. Fielding uses the dash to heighten the novel’s emotional impact since it replaces the words that are ‘choked’, prevented from being uttered due to the character’s emotional state, as when David hears ‘snippets’ of a conversation:

He . . . confusedly heard the words Love, Passion—the Marquis *de Stainville*—*Isabelle*—and from what he could gather, he fancied that he had very convincing Proofs that there was an Intrigue (185).

⁷ Richard Terry, ‘*David Simple* and the Fallacy of Friendship’, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, vol. 44, no. 3, Summer 2004, 525-544, 539.

⁸ See Price (1973), 533; 540.

⁹ Janine Barchas, ‘Sarah Fielding’s Dashing Style and Eighteenth-Century Print Culture’, *ELH* (1996), vol. 63, 633-56.

Here, the dash does four things: it heightens emotion; it visually documents auditory and temporal aspects of real speech which cannot be adequately captured by verbal transcription alone; it enhances the listener's confusion and conveys David's spontaneous thoughts. While use of the dash is a common enough feature of eighteenth-century novels, Fielding unusually combines the dash with fractured speech for onomatopoeic effect, as when she mimics disputing critics as 'Cackling Geese' or 'Gobbling Turkeys' in *David Simple*:

The words *Genius*,— and *no Genius*; —*Invention*,-- *Poetry*, —*fine Things*, --*bad Language*, —*no Style*, —*charming Writing*, —*Imagery*, —and *Diction*, with many more Expressions that swim on the *Surface of Criticism*, . . . (67).¹⁰

Fielding's texts carry numerous exclamation marks, italics for emphasis, simile, metaphor, and words capitalised to further signify the importance of meaning.

Sentimentalism evokes compassion for the suffering individual combined with a desire to alleviate that suffering. Fielding's literature is defined by its ability to arouse pathos through conventional situations, stock familial characters and rhetorical devices. Janet Todd notes how sentimental literature 'buttonholes the reader' and demands an emotional, even physical response: it 'provoke[s] tears in a way that no other literature does'.¹¹ Fielding's literature, that has recognisable characters operating in real-life situations, opens the reader's eyes to the helplessness of those whose last chance for survival rests on the benevolence of others and shows her readers how to respond in certain circumstances. Had it not been for David Simple's kindness, Camilla and Cynthia could not have survived. Thanks to the benevolent

¹⁰ Fielding's Etonian brother Henry, who saw the dash as vulgar and downgrading, uses it extensively in *Shamela* (1741) (to give the burlesque its shorter title) as a means of parodying Richardson's literary style as well as the heroine. Sabor (1998), xxix, suggests that Henry removed the dash for the second edition to make Sarah write more like him 'and less like his great rival Richardson, whose *Pamela* is also liberally bestrewn with dashes'.

¹¹ Todd (1986), 2-3.

Bath family, Cynthia and little Camilla are saved from destitution at the close of *Volume the Last*. Unlike the fantasy of happy-ever-after romance novellas, Fielding's fiction is often grim because real life can be grim, as her portrayal of Camilla begging on dangerous streets effectively illustrates. Through Camilla, Fielding shows what can happen to women who suddenly find their fortunes reversed.

Fielding uses her fiction to investigate the underlying principles that give shape and meaning to people's lives, which she calls exploring the 'Labyrinths' of the mind. She illustrates how and why people behave in certain circumstances. For example, Nanny Johnson is quite happy to marry David Simple until her greedy father encourages her to jilt him for a richer man. Consequently Nanny's mind goes into overdrive as she imagines riding in the rich man's 'coach and six', bejewelled and fashionably dressed. She loudly admits, not without vanity at being desired by two men, 'I am so divided, by the Desire of Riches on the one hand . . . and the Man I like on the other' (27). When sensitive David overhears Nanny's deliberations as he approaches her door, it is not surprising that he is surprised and angry at discovering the fickle nature of his 'ideal' woman. Fielding ensures that her readers can understand why David becomes temporarily disillusioned with the female sex and why he quickly releases Nanny from their engagement. When David walks away, Fielding makes clear that it is because of her youth and her confused state of mind that Nanny becomes hysterical at the thought of losing the man she liked most.

Fielding also offers her readers an insight into the minds of her characters by combining omniscient narration with first-person narration, which allows the reader an overall knowledge of events, how and why they occur. By switching between these two methods of narration (metalepsis), Fielding ensures the clarity of her meanings. Her usual method of promoting her feminist points is through dialogue, a

literary strategy that allows her to present both sides of an argument before passing her final judgment. For instance, when David Simple asks Mr. Spatter why single women are required to remain silent in company. Spatter replies:

[I]t is reckon'd a very ill-bred thing for Women to say any more than just to answer the Questions ask'd them, while they are *single*. I cannot tell the Meaning of it, unless it is a Plot laid by Parents to make their Daughters willing to accept any *Match* they provide for them, that they may have the *Privilege of Speaking* (68).

Fielding's italics underscore her irony as she mocks the tradition that dictates when and where a woman is allowed to speak. Subversively distancing her own voice through Spatter, she cleverly makes room to sidestep any adverse criticism of his radical comments. Moreover, by using Spatter to highlight the unfair treatment of women, Fielding adds *male* weight, albeit fictional, to her feminist argument.

Part II: *Fielding and the Sentimental Novel Tradition*

According to Margaret Drabble and Jenny Stringer, 'the sentimental novel tradition can be traced back to the work of Sarah Fielding and Samuel Richardson'.¹² Yet in most texts that list sentimental writers, the names begin with Gray, for *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* (1747), Sterne, for *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) and Mackenzie for *The Man of Feeling* (1771). How, one may ask, does Fielding's sentimental work differ from that of these male writers?

In some ways, as shown, Fielding's and Richardson's sentimental style and 'language of the heart' are not dissimilar. Unlike Fielding, however, Richardson does not use allegorical characters and his method of 'writing to the moment' is his own innovation. Both novelists use first-person narration within their epistolary novels,

¹² Drabble and Stringer, 526.

but in her prose works Fielding's omniscient narrator takes prominence. Richardson's method of first-person narration, particularly his 'writing to the moment' technique, encourages the reader to believe that events in the novel are happening before their eyes, which heightens both the suspense and the text's realism.¹³ Richardson's intention in *Pamela* is to 'improve the minds of the YOUTH of both sexes',¹⁴ but as Tom Keymer and Alice Wakely point out, there is an 'uneasy relationship' to the text's 'own genre' since it 'is always on the point of lurching back into pornography' and his 'purging of the erotic is never secure'.¹⁵ This could not be said of Fielding. Richardson resolves Pamela's dilemma by 'rewarding' her with elevation into the aristocracy when she marries her 'Lord'. Fielding would not consider this 'reward' sufficient recompense for Pamela's suffering: as she points out in *The Governess*, wealth and status do not guarantee a woman's happiness (228).

Unlike Richardson, Fielding takes pains to promote sentimentalism as the bedrock of every healthy relationship, familial and communal. In her fiction it is sentimentalism that binds people together. Where there is an insufficiency of sensibility, the suffering individual is without hope and societies crumble. Fielding's reader can discern this through David Simple's lachrymose eyes on his peregrinations through Westminster trying to find an elusive 'true Friend'. Fielding paints with words a series of sorry pictures of her society, opportunely addressing the woman's allotted role. Unlike Richardson, whose *Pamela* highlights the plight of a beleaguered maidservant, Fielding brings into public view the pathetic lives of various disadvantaged women.

When David meets Cynthia she is enduring a miserable life as the companion of a 'tormenting' patroness. Cynthia represents women who become dispirited through

¹³ See e.g. Keymer and Wakely (380) when Pamela sees the arrival of hostile Lady Davers.

¹⁴ Ibid. 3.

¹⁵ Ibid. xxii.

having passively to accept their unfortunate circumstances, for the alternative — homelessness, hunger, and possibly prostitution — was worse. Thereby Fielding highlights the adverse effects of patriarchal capitalism, seeing it responsible for the maintenance in society of what Woodward terms, ‘negative feminine virtues: innocence and passivity’.¹⁶ Sentimental David can sympathise with Cynthia’s dilemma, but he can only relieve her distress because he has sufficient money, his patrimony having been swelled with an inheritance from his uncle. Thus, as Fielding points out, sentimentalism alone is not enough to effect radical change: it is inextricably linked to money.

In some ways, David Simple can be viewed as representing Fielding herself. She implies that what is written in the novel is the truth: ‘this History is taken from his [David’s, actually her own] Mouth’ (1). David’s feelings and emotions are hers. That Fielding would choose a male character to represent herself is understandable since this literary tactic enables her to place before her readers the larger picture of London society with its unhealthy social mores. David, as Bree observes, can wander alone around ‘St. James’s Park’ and places where women would be chaperoned:

David changes his lodgings at will. If he hears the sound of weeping in the next room, he can walk in and ask what is wrong. If he decides to give his money away, nobody has the power to stop him. If he wishes to indulge his quixotic impulse to spend his time travelling ‘through the whole World’ . . . he can.¹⁷

A feminizing of the traditional aggressive, ego-centred hero does take place in the novel. David is not a Rabelaisian¹⁸ character like Henry Fielding’s Parson Adams or Tom Jones: he has ‘more of what *Shakespear* calls the *Milk of Human Kind* . . . his Sensations were too strong, to leave him the free Use of his Reason’ (100). Milk, of

¹⁶ Woodward (1992), 65-81, 66.

¹⁷ Bree (1996), 32.

¹⁸ François Rabelais (?1494-1553), author of ‘Pantagruel’ in *Gargantua* (1532). His narrative provides occasions for abundant satire targeting monks, schoolmen, papacy and magistrature.

course, is associated with motherhood and nurturing. ‘*David’s Tears*’ flow as fast as Camilla’s (99).¹⁹ His experiences are hypothetical inasmuch as men cannot precisely experience events as women can, but that does not prevent the reader from seeing Fielding’s feminist objectives as she highlights the vulnerability of naïve women through naïve David and how easily the unworlly can be exploited. Using this fictional role-reversal technique, termed ‘narrative transvestism’,²⁰ Fielding offers a more positive portrayal of woman through Cynthia. It is she, not David, who withstands life’s ‘trials’ to emerge the lone surviving adult from his ‘Family of Love’ in *Volume the Last*. This complex methodology makes clear the fact that Fielding ‘eludes strict categorization as a sentimentalist in the Richardson vein’.²¹

Unlike Richardson and Fielding, Gray, an Etonian who became Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, wrote sentimental poetry in ‘lapidary form’²² (dignified, concise, elevated language). He was, as Jean H. Hagstrum observes, ‘one of the most learned men of his day’, interested in painting and the classical, concerned to capture romantic pictures of landscapes in his ‘Claude glass’ then transmit them into poetry, obviously adhering to Horace’s maxim, ‘*ut pictura poesis*’, painting pictures of the natural world with words.²³ In ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College’ Gray compares the transience of human life (boys at play) with the permanence of Nature (the river Thames):

Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
His silver-winding way: (7-10).

¹⁹ See also Felicity Nussbaum, ‘Effeminacy and Femininity: Domestic prose Satire and *David Simple*’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* vol. 11, no. 4 (July 1999), 421-444, 439.

²⁰ Madeleine Kahn (1991), *Narrative Transvestism*. New York: Cornell, 2-3.

²¹ Downs-Miers (1975), 29.

²² Price, 657

²³ The ‘Claude glass’ was ‘a convex mirror which had curved glass tinted with two or three colours and mounted on black foil. It was carried by travellers and walking tourists and used to modify natural scenes, arranging them like an idealized landscape’. See Hagstrum, 141-42.

He reveals his ‘sense of tradition and of historical continuity’²⁴ as his speaker looks at the ‘distant towers’ of buildings and schoolboys playing games on lawns by the ‘silver-winding’ Thames before resting in a ‘pleasing shade’ where flowers grow. ‘[M]omentary bliss’ is felt on heated brows as the wind ‘breathe[s] a second spring’ into tired bodies. When Gray considers the innocence of children, the ‘little victims’ at ‘play’, there is emotional pathos — even bathos — in his descriptions:

Alas, regardless of their doom,
The little victims play!
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond today: (51-54)

In describing the children as ‘little victims’ vulnerable to the ‘Ministers of human fate’ / And black Misfortune’s baleful train!’ Gray conveys a sense of foreboding: the children play happily, unaware that they will inevitably experience the ‘hard Unkindness’ of a selfish society that with ‘grinning Infamy’ ‘mocks the tear . . . forced to flow’. Nor will they escape the unhappiness of ‘pining Love’ and ‘Jealousy’ that ‘inly gnaws the secret heart’, words revealing Gray’s disappointments in life. Fielding also addresses childhood innocence in *The Governess*, where children play in the Academy garden or a flowery orchard, oblivious to life’s future disappointments. Gray’s purpose, like Fielding’s, is didactic; he wants to teach the reader how to *feel*. Gray’s poems reveal a fascination with nature and the sublime that is seen in James Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1726—30) and the works of William Wordsworth (1770—1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772—1834).

²⁴ Andrew Sanders (1994, 1996), *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 320. Hereafter cited as ‘Sanders (1996)’.

Unlike Fielding, who uses sentimentalism to underscore the gravity of the social issues her novels deal with, Sterne pokes fun at sentimentalism and pathos with bawdy humour. His narrative, *A Sentimental Journey*, is an extension to his nine volumes of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767), in which the old soldier Uncle Toby has his tender emotions damaged by the widow Wadman, and Eugenius sheds tears for the dying country parson, Yorick.²⁵ Tristram, the narrator, catalogues his series of 'unfortunate accidents' from the moment of his conception, when his mother inopportunately reminds his father that the clock needs winding up, thereby damaging the 'HOMUNCULUS'.²⁶ Toby sheds tears lamenting 'Tristram's misfortunes', begun 'nine months before entering the world'.²⁷

Unlike Fielding, whose episodic narrative is easy to follow, Sterne's narratives jolt the reader backwards and forwards. Experimenting with form, he omits chapters in *Tristram Shandy* then brings them in later. He illustrates various points with squiggles and diagrams. Black pages signify Yorick's demise. Sterne also breaks off sentences surprisingly and abruptly leaving the reader to decipher lines of asterisks. *A Sentimental Journey*, a parody of the travel-book genre that is narrated by Yorick, has much the same experimentation with form and content as *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne, in the *Journey*, is obviously recalling memories of his time spent on the Continent (1762-65). He dupes the reader into thinking that his narrator will relay scenes from France and Italy, but Yorick never reaches Italy.

²⁵ According to Mrs. Thrale: 'Tristram Shandy itself is not absolutely original: for when I was at Derby in the Summer of 1774 I strolled by mere chance into a Bookseller's Shop, where however I could find nothing to tempt Curiosity but a strange Book about Corporal Bates, [*The Life and Memoirs of Mr. Ephraim Tristram Bates, commonly called Corporal Bates, a broken-hearted Soldier* (1756)] which I bought & read for want of better Sport, and found it to be the very Novel from which Sterne took his first Idea: the Character of Uncle Toby, the behaviour of Corporal Trim, even the name of Tristram itself seems to be borrowed from this stupid History of Corporal Bates', see Balderston, I: 23-4.

²⁶ Sterne alludes to the belief that the male sperm contained the whole child, to be nourished inside the mother during pregnancy.

²⁷ Laurence Sterne (1759-67), *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, eds. Melvyn New and Joan New, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978, 7.

On the one hand Yorick is like David Simple, a 'tender-hearted man'. In the *Journey* when he sees a caged starling shouting "I can't get out" he tries to set it free, but cannot open the door of the cage, so the bird continues to screech, "I can't get out". Yorick vows that his 'affections' were never more tenderly awakened'.²⁸ Unlike David, Yorick is careful with his money, berating foreigners who sell the 'expatriated adventurer' clothes at an inflated price.²⁹ Unlike David, Yorick is dishonest: when he forgets his passport he allows the French authorities to believe that he is *Hamlet's* Yorick from the King of Denmark's court, which enables him to travel without it. Yorick also has lascivious thoughts and the reader is never sure about his sexual activity when he comforts Maria of Moulines, a girl thwarted in love whom Tristram meets in Sterne's earlier novel. In a Parisian hotel bedroom Yorick feels 'something' for a young '*fille de chambre*' 'which was not in strict unison with the lesson of virtue' he had given her the night before:

I took her by the hand, and led her to the door . . . she turned about, and gave me both her hands, closed together, into mine—it was impossible not to compress them in that situation—I wish'd to let them go; and all the time I held them, I kept arguing within myself against it—and still I held them . . . I felt my legs and every limb about me tremble at the idea.

The foot of the bed was within a yard and a half of the place where we were standing . . . how it happened I can give no account . . .³⁰

The novel ends abruptly with Yorick's broken sentence: 'I caught hold of the Fille de Chambre's —'. Weaving such sexuality into a story is hardly what one would expect from a clergyman. Andrew Sanders notes that Sterne attempts to write like Henry Fielding, but there are 'no predetermined comic expectations' in Sterne's narrative and the 'sense of an ending is consistently denied' in 'various episodes of the book'.³¹

²⁸ Laurence Sterne (1768), *A Sentimental Journey*, ed. Douglas Grant, *Sterne: Selected Works*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1950, 530; 587.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 529.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 604.

³¹ Sanders (1996), 316.

Like Sterne, Mackenzie uses asterisks as a means of expressing inexpressible emotions',³² but he does not manipulate time, for despite misnumbering chapters, the narrative is continuous. Mackenzie's sentimental hero, Harley, like David Simple, is kind. He assists a beggar who, having been caught in a fire, is too ill to work, and he is equally charitable to pathetic old Edwards. Like David, Edwards is rendered bankrupt, moves to a smaller property, and is oppressed by uncaring associates. Edwards' son, out hunting, trespasses on the squire's land: his dog is shot and he is imprisoned and fined. Later, on Christmas Eve (the child's birthday), the family bless Providence that they are reunited and are playing a game of blind-man's-buff when a press-gang arrives to seize the blindfolded son as if in play.

Brian Vickers observes that this 'laborious piling-on of pathos'³³ adds to Harley's 'feast of disappointment' when he visits Bedlam³⁴ with its 'clanking' chains and wild cries in scenes 'inexpressibly shocking'.³⁵ In Bedlam Harley meets a mathematician whose theories are spoiled by the return of a comet; a financier ruined by a 'fluctuation of stock', and a woman driven mad by love. He puts 'a couple of guineas' into the keeper's hand saying, 'Be kind to that unfortunate' then bursts into tears. Harley is, however, vindicated in his trust of a pathetic prostitute led to ruin by Sir George Winbrooke's son, a selfish product of the patriarchal system. Harley himself is a victim of unrequited love, pining away with self-pity, dying (overwhelmed with joy?) when he learns that his love was reciprocated after all. Unlike Harley, David builds a 'Family of Love'. Sanders describes Harley as 'a

³² Ibid. 318.

³³ Henry Mackenzie (1771), *The Man of Feeling*, ed. Brian Vickers, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, xvii.

³⁴ 'Bedlam' – (Hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem), a London asylum for the insane.

³⁵ Ibid. 30.

gushing fount of human sympathy'.³⁶ According to Vickers, 'Mackenzie's eclipse was part of the larger decline of sentimentalism'.³⁷

In most studies of sentimental fiction, little attention is paid to Fielding. Brewer affords her one sentence while Ellis allots her two. John Mullan, in his discussion of 'Sensibility and Literary Criticism', ignores Fielding's contribution to both genres.³⁸ Downs-Miers suggests that this may be due to Fielding's 'ironic edge'.³⁹ Fielding's use of satire in her work is certainly extensive, used particularly when she targets those at variance with sentimentalism. In *David Simple*, for instance, she satirically attacks pompous pseudo-critics as 'Jays' who persuade themselves that they are 'Peacocks': they attempt to 'blind other Men's Eyes' by 'impos[ing] their own Understandings' on them (82). Fielding points out that society regards a '*good Man*' as one who gets away with 'Villainy', 'Deceit', 'Low-Cunning' and 'Treachery', or one who is 'worth a Plumb' (100,000 guineas). Fielding's italics, '*good Man*' underscores her ironic view of the epithet. In *The Cry* her satire is caustic when through Portia, she admonishes men who boast of seducing women:

'Tis only to talk a rhapsody of nonsense properly larded with oaths; to brag of leading a life of intrigue, and to talk of women only as the natural prey of men: to boast therefore of every successful snare you have laid for the innocent, and to declare yourself above being restrained from acting such a cruel part by any laws either human or divine; to throw into your discourse over a bottle a good quantity of obscenity, and the more blasphemy is added . . . (III: 259-60).

This attack on male promiscuity, that is daring and unusual for a female writer at this time, is another way in which Fielding's fiction differs from that of Richardson, Gray, Sterne, and Mackenzie.

³⁶ Sanders (1996), 318. Henry Morley's 'Index to Tears' in his 1886 edition of Mackenzie's novel lists forty-seven references. See Ellis, 19.

³⁷ Sanders, *Ibid.* viii.

³⁸ See Ellis, 131, 179 and John Mullan, 'Sensibility and Literary Criticism' in Nisbet and Rawson (1997), 419-433. Fielding fares a little better in Todd's elucidating text (1986) discussing sensibility.

³⁹ Downs-Miers, *Labyrinths*, 29.

Thus the claim that Fielding and Richardson pioneered the sentimental novel evoking a shift in public consciousness for the suffering individual is irrefutable. Gray, like Fielding, notes the innocence of children unaware of life's pitfalls. Sterne mocks sentimentalism with a 'cock-and-bull' story and a naughty parson. Long before Harley appeared, Fielding created the original 'man of feeling', David Simple.

Part III: *Fostering A New Sense of Community*

Throughout her oeuvre Fielding strives to foster a new sense of community, using her fiction to impress upon her readers the benefits of sentimentalism. Even her most whimsical of tales are used to political advantage, such as her *Governess* tale about the two giants, where 'a Giant is called so only to express a Man of great Power', power he must use for the good of the community, or he will lose it as easily as the bad giant in her story loses his head.⁴⁰ Fielding uses her fiction to highlight all that she feels is wrong in her world and suggests ways of improving it, seeing most of society's problems arising from the way people are educated to uphold traditions concerning inheritance laws and the unfair distribution of wealth.

In *David Simple* Fielding's eponymous hero has been 'Bred up' by mercantile parents to become one of the *nouveaux riches*, to join the leisured elite in the upper echelons of society, but since he has been, to some extent, sheltered from the world, he is also naïve. David is as shocked at London's scenes of depravity as Fielding would have been when arriving there from Salisbury, with its more civilised society. When David meets Spatter, he learns that all he has to do to enter the exclusivity of London 'High Life' is to acquire a 'fine Coat, a well-powdered Wig, and a *Whist-Book* and he would soon be invited to more Routs than he would be able to go' (61).

⁴⁰ Grey, 68.

Fielding, here, is mocking the idle rich while highlighting the erosion of class boundaries. Gaming, however, is synonymous with dishonesty, so it conflicts with David's ethics. Thus stereotypical Spatter serves to test David's moral worth in the stakes for class status. At the card tables David sees the eyes of the 'Conquerors' sparkle with joy while the 'Vanquished' withdraw in 'black Despair'. In Fielding's choice of adjectives, the consequence of losing money at cards is as damning for a man and his family as the 'Vanquished' soldier in an epic battle. David sees polite men suddenly switch from amiable conversationalists to 'Enemies' for 'the winning of a Guinea': it is 'Proof of the selfish and mercenary Tempers of Mankind' (63).

When Spatter takes David on a 'Coffee-house' tour then on to St James's Park, Fielding satirically describes the parading effeminate fops as being 'adorned with all the Art imaginable', strutting 'their fine Feathers' (73). These scenes contrast with her darker portraits of starving beggars on filthy streets, where women are 'tearing one another to pieces from Envy, and the Men sacrificing each other for every trifling Interest' (36). 'In short,' writes Fielding, 'the Generality of Scenes he saw, he could never mention without a Sigh, or think of without a Tear' (36).

In her damning satire of London society, Fielding shows her concern for neglected children when David reflects, 'how much happier the World would be if all Parents would sustain the helpless Infancy of their Children, with that Tenderness and Care, which would be thought natural by every good Mind' (36). In this 'Sink of Iniquity' men 'devoid of every Virtue, and possessed of every Vice', impute 'every good Action' to 'some bad Motive' (58). Finding a 'true Friend' in this place is equivalent to discovering 'the *Philosopher's Stone*' (59).⁴¹

⁴¹ Fielding refers to the futility of the alchemists' search for a stone they could turn into gold.

That Fielding portrays London as a corrupt place desperately in need of social reform is not surprising. In the *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) Johnson decries ‘crowds with crimes’, the hiring of assassins, and corrupt judges: ‘For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws / For gold the hireling judge distorts the law’ (24-26). In 1704 when Astell was lamenting ‘the Nation being in a perpetual Hurly-burly’ through those with ‘evil Designs . . . Tricks and Artifices’, she blamed society’s obsession with ‘Riches and Power’: men’s ‘Hopes to gain more, or at least to secure what one has, will always be a Handle by which Humane Nature may be mov’d’.⁴²

Historical records show that in mid-eighteenth-century London streets, brutal unprovoked assaults were regularly carried out by gangs of youths such as the Mohawks.⁴³ Accounts of public hangings, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, duelling, and general cruelty to animals and children testify to society’s high tolerance level of physical violence. It has been suggested that the acceptance of such a level of violence stemmed from the customary use of flogging as an educative method.⁴⁴ William Hogarth (1697—1764) illustrates with his veridical paintings that, in London, luxury and abject poverty existed side by side; profligacy, crime, prostitution, drunkenness, gaming, theft and embezzlement were rife.⁴⁵ Brewer mentions giddy fops ‘affecting unintelligible terms of speech’ in elegant mansions while in coffee houses orators were being ‘drowned out by the curses of drunken oafs’.⁴⁶

Roy Porter reports that unpaid Justices of the Peace whose duties were ‘onerous and Sisyphean’⁴⁷ ‘broke the law with impunity when it suited them’.⁴⁸ John Fielding

⁴² Mary Astell (1704), *An Impartial Enquiry into the Causes of Rebellion and Civil War in this Kingdom*. London, 32; 195.

⁴³ Stone, 77.

⁴⁴ See e.g. 77 and James Beattie (1986), *Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 134.

⁴⁵ See e.g. ‘Gin Lane’. London was a place of opportunities for vice with brothels in abundance.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 53.

⁴⁷ In Greek mythology, Sisyphus’s task in Hades was to push uphill a stone, which immediately rolled down again.

wrote of 'girls of the labouring poor, from eleven years of age and upwards' coming to London seeking employment but falling 'a sacrifice to the bawd'.⁴⁹ Saunders Welch wrote that a genteel woman whose parents could not supply her with an appropriate dowry, could 'mend her fortune by captivating some rich gudgeon, be qualified to wait upon a lady, or at least to be a chambermaid'.⁵⁰ Defoe records that wife-beating was so common among the 'meaner sort of people, that to hear a woman cry murder now, scarce gives any alarm'.⁵¹ Lord Chesterfield viewed women as 'children of a larger growth' that 'a man of sense would only trifle with'.⁵²

Unconventionally investigating how society operates, Fielding concentrates on familial relationships to illustrate how a lack of sentimentalism arising from biased customs can tear families apart. According to the patriarchal code, David Simple, as the eldest son, stands to inherit his father's estate. His younger brother Daniel knows that he will have to depend upon David for his keep. This makes Daniel resent David's good fortune, a resentment that separates the brothers forever when Daniel tries to cheat David out of his inheritance. Another custom that causes problems concerns education. Cynthia tells of her brother being whipped because, as the future patriarch, he is expected to become erudite, but he cannot assimilate what he is being taught. No sympathy is afforded for the boy's emotional or physical suffering. Cynthia, on the other hand, learns quickly on her own from 'good books', which annoys her family.

Cynthia's parents, mindful that learning spoiled a woman's chances of marriage, confiscate her books. Her siblings develop 'an inveterate Hatred' of Cynthia because

⁴⁸ Roy Porter (1982), *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 139.

⁴⁹ John Fielding, *London Chronicle* (1758), vol iii, 327.

⁵⁰ Saunders Welch (1753), *A Proposal to Render Effectual a Plan to Remove the Nuisance of Common Prostitutes from the Streets*. London, 4.

⁵¹ Daniel Defoe (1724), *The Great Law of Subordination Consider'd*, 6-7, cited in Hill (1989), 199.

⁵² Porter, 38.

their friends find her conversation more interesting. Cynthia is further marginalized in this unsentimental family when she refuses to participate in an arranged marriage. She tells David: 'I cannot say, I ever had any Happiness in my Life' (80-1). Cynthia's 'Indignities' and memories of tyrannical others disturbs her sleep. Fielding's narrator explains that recurring nightmares are 'usual' for 'the Unfortunate' (151).

With David and Cynthia's stories, Fielding places the family itself at the centre of social conflict. Unfair patriarchal traditions causing animosity undermine the ethos of domestic and communal harmony. Family members, like Daniel Simple, will act in society according to how they fare at home. Exiled from his family when his wickedness is discovered, Daniel becomes a sinister figure, a filthy drunk (his clothes are dirty when he confronts Cynthia later in the novel) and an atheist. Fielding's unidealized portraits of family life with its unhealthy tensions, challenge the very tenets of domestic ideology. David and Cynthia's consanguine families lack the sentimentalism they later experience in his cognate 'Family of Love', where 'SHARING' was ever 'friendly Practice' (265). Fielding's message is clear: traditions that tear families apart inevitably disturb the harmony of the wider community: a better society can only materialize when biased traditions are gone.

To illustrate the difference in familial relationships when children are taught to love and respect each other as equals regardless of gender, Fielding offers the happy childhood picture of Camilla and Valentine, whose parents 'did not adopt the 'usual methods' of educating their 'Little-ones' with 'Whips and Rods', nor did they terrify them into action 'by servile Fears' (104-5). Their punishment for offending 'Faults' was being sent *together* from their parents' sight. Rather than adopt the 'customary' (negative) response to children who asked questions, Valentine and Camilla were never told to be silent, were never accused of impertinence, or allowed 'to go

uninformed'. This 'Encouragement', Camilla tells David, 'heightened our Curiosity' and enabled them to acquire 'Knowledge beyond our Years' (105).

Due to the siblings having been raised on equal terms, Valentine, the future patriarch, does not affect superiority over his sister. He has not been imbued with patriarchal attitudes. Camilla and Valentine were never told one was 'loved the best' (105). Without 'envy' or 'Partiality' in their lives, the siblings regard each other 'with a perfect Fondness' and have developed into sentimental adults, in their coalescence embodying all the ethical characteristics that Fielding sees are necessary for constructing a more humane society. Consequently Valentine is 'different' from:

Those brothers, who, by their Father's having more Concern for the keeping up the Grandeur of their Names . . . allow their sisters enough out of it to keep them from starving in some Hole in the Country; where their small Subsistence just serves to keep them the longer in their Misery, and prevents them from appearing in the World, to *disgrace their Brother, by their Poverty* (121).

In the above passage Fielding's italics combine with her vitriolic tone to emphasize her sense of injustice at the custom that allows brothers to lavish their inheritance on fashionable lifestyles while their unfortunate sisters are forced to live on the borderline of poverty. Fielding, here, is unmasking further consequences resulting from dominant patriarchal traditions that effectively sideline women.

Unfortunately for Valentine and Camilla, their wicked stepmother, Livia, is the spiteful product of a patriarchal household. She is devoid of sentimentalism because from birth she has been forced to exist in her brother's shadow. Livia hates him because he has inherited the family estate, leaving her a very small dowry (108). Livia cannot understand Valentine and Camilla's fondness for each other, or the loving relationship they share with their father, so she destroys it. Fielding explores the 'Labyrinths' of Livia's mind to explain the thoughts that trigger her actions, as

Livia develops into a female version of Daniel Simple. Like him, Livia monitors family members to learn all the 'Arts' useful in making their lives miserable.

Livia typifies women who are schooled from childhood in the art of manipulation to gain attention. She tests the 'bent' of Camilla's father's 'Temper, spending his money on fashion and 'friperies', causing her stepchildren concern for their worried father and his dwindling finances. Just as early in the novel Daniel provokes David until he raises his voice in anger within earshot of the servants so that he is seen as the violent offender, Livia causes Camilla and her father to 'dispute into Madness' (117). After various unsuccessful attempts to disgrace Camilla, Livia eventually accuses the siblings of 'the crying and abominable Sin of Incest' (or 'criminal Conversation' according to their hostile aunt) (126-7). Stunned 'with Amazement and Indignation', the siblings 'knew not which way to turn' (129).

In an age when female virginity was paramount to a gentleman seeking a gentlewoman to supply him with an heir, rumours of incest would ruin Camilla's chances of marriage. Her father reacts to Livia's false accusation by striking his daughter in a scene of domestic violence that illustrates the tenuous nature of familial relationships. Camilla states:

My Father looked wild . . . I confess, I was quite unguarded, and said whatever I was prompted to by my Rage . . . the poor unhappy deceived Man stared with Fury, his Eye-Balls rolled, and like *Othello*, he bit his nether Lip with Fury. At last, he suddenly sprung forward, and struck me (120-21).

Physical abuse underscores the emotional abuse suffered by Camilla. Hence the veracity of George E. Haggerty's claim, that Fielding 'goes to great lengths in *David Simple* to dramatize the effects of familial abuse'.⁵³

⁵³ George E. Haggerty (1998), *Unnatural Affections: Women and Fiction in the Later Eighteenth Century*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 25.

Disowned by their father, then rendered homeless by their aunt, the siblings are further accused of incest by their 'hard-hearted' landlady, who is ready to evict them from their Spartan lodgings for unpaid rent. She, like Livia, cannot accept that a loving relationship can exist between brother and sister: '*Brother!* . . . very likely, indeed . . . that any one would be so concerned for *only a Brother*' (99). Due to the hostility she has been forced to endure, Camilla would have 'sank' under the 'Weight' of her 'Afflictions' had it not been for her consideration of Valentine's illness (129).

When David meets Camilla she has been begging on the streets, but other beggars have attacked her and taken the half-crown she has managed to collate all day, for '*they would have me to know, that Street belonged to them*' (131). Here, again, Fielding deploys physical abuse to underscore the effects of psychological damage. Even among the poorest in society, boundaries exist which mirror those at the top of society's hierarchical structure. Camilla is nevertheless thankful that her 'borrowed Ugliness', her false 'Hump back', painted yellow spots and darkened skin (imitating the skin disease 'cloasma'), has prevented another kind of 'brutal Usage' (rape). Camilla says, 'I look'd in the Glass . . . frighten'd at my own Figure' (130).

Camilla tells David that when she approached her former friends for assistance she found that 'Men think our Circumstances gives them a Liberty to shock our Ears with Proposals ever so dishonourable; and I am afraid there are Women, who do not feel much Uneasiness, at seeing any one who is used to be upon a Level with themselves, thrown greatly below them' (132). In the eighteenth century, women of genteel status were not expected to earn a living, or 'go into trade'. Fielding writes:

[T]here is no Situation so deplorable, no Condition so much to be pitied, as that of a Gentlewoman in real Poverty . . . not having sufficient to procure us Necessaries . . . Birth, Family, and Education, become Misfortunes, when we cannot attain some Means of supporting ourselves in the Station they throw us into; our Friends and former Acquaintance look on it as a Disgrace to own us . .

. Persons who are so unfortunate as to be in this Situation, are in a World full of People, and yet are as solitary as if they were in the wildest Desart; no body will allow them to be of their Rank, nor admit them into their Community (132-33).

While writing the above passage, that addresses serious social and moral problems, Fielding may be envisaging what could happen to her if her writing failed to pay.

Fielding's treatment of the incest motif is totally different from the way her brother Henry treats it in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749). Henry mocks incest with playful humour, as rambunctious Adams is almost driven witless with the twists and turns of the incest theme. Henry heightens the tension with artificiality as Joseph and his sweetheart Fanny almost marry, then discover they are siblings, then they are not, until Adams is animated to jump up and down thanking God that the wedding can at last take place. In *Tom Jones* Henry mischievously dupes the reader into believing for a while that Tom has slept with his mother. Fielding, however, finds nothing comical in the subject. Her tone is deadly serious, as if to emphasize the damage such an accusation does to a woman's reputation. Moreover, the threat of a tragic death hovering over Valentine and Camilla verges on the macabre. Clearly, honour and family name were very important to Fielding, who 'despised' 'Rumour's hundred babbling Tongues' spreading 'various Reports'.⁵⁴

Martin C. Battestin suggests that the 'curious—and persistent—feature' of the incest motif in the Fieldings' works originates from Barber's allegation of sibling incest when Lady Gould sued for custody of her grandchildren. Battestin suggests that Henry, during childhood, was 'subjected to influences which would have deepened his emotional attachment to his sisters', an attachment 'which might express itself in overt erotic experimentation of incestuous fantasies' but which 'will surprise

⁵⁴ Fielding alludes to Virgil's *Aeneid* IV, 170-190, where Fame (Rumour) with her many tongues spreads lies and distortions about Dido and Aeneas.

no one' who is 'familiar with the findings of modern psychoanalysis'.⁵⁵ Terri Nickel comments that Battestin resolves the problem of incest in Henry's work' by 'normaliz[ing] familial incest as part of Henry's sexual maturation'.⁵⁶

Nickel's explanation of the incest motif is rather more complex. Pointing to the most common themes in (Sarah) Fielding's narratives: 'the victimization of feeling men and women, the corruption or delusion of the father, the death of the mother, the false accusation of incest, the pressures of sibling rivalry, the search for a true friend, the impoverishment and abuse of the educated ladies' companion',⁵⁷ Nickel claims that Fielding 'vents her unease with various forms of alliance' by 'productively turn[ing] these forms of familial abuse into occasions for sympathetic identification' with the dependent woman's situation. Thus 'incest serves as a potent occasion for Fielding to negotiate a range of alliances, both familial and social'.⁵⁸ Camilla, bearing the burden of an incest allegation, is marginalized by other women and regarded by salacious men as promiscuous. Fielding writes: 'a Woman, who has lost her Virtue . . . [is] ever afterwards to be *purchased by the best Bidder*' (217). That Camilla, in a state of economic dependency can be purchased, is yet another of Fielding's feminist protests against women's bondage to a system of oppression and corruption.

Paradoxically, with the Camilla-Valentine episode, Fielding points to incest as an emotional power that brings about the inverse of Camilla's pain, since ironically, it is because of the allegation of incest that the siblings' egalitarian relationship becomes

⁵⁵ Battestin (1979), 6-18, 13. Battestin quotes from J. C. Flugel, *The Psycho-Analytic Study of the Family* (1926), and Sigmund Freud (1927), *Totem and Taboo*. New York: New Republic, 29. Flugel observes that the 'displacement of love from parent to brother or sister may . . . be regarded as a normal transitory phase', although 'the intensity of the attachment' is often 'retained in the unconscious right on into adolescent and adult life'. According to Freud, who also sees a childhood interest in a sibling's body as normal, 'Psychoanalysis has taught us that the first object selection of the boy is of an incestuous nature and that it is directed to the forbidden objects, the mother and the sister . . . '.

⁵⁶ Nickel (1995), 239.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 235.

even closer. It is through the incest allegation that she meets and marries David. It is the emotion generated by the *undoing* of family ties — the siblings separate from their father and wicked stepmother by leaving the family home — that enables them to become participants in David's new, remodelled, egalitarian 'Family of Love'. Incest, therefore, becomes a key metaphor in Fielding's work through which she calls for an alternative to the troublesome consanguine family by creating an imagined, mutually supportive 'little community' founded on sentimental values.

In *David Simple* Fielding continues to promote sentimentalism as the bedrock of healthy relationships with a digressive tale replicating a French Romance novella. Once again, familial relationships are shown to be tenuous. In this story, the Marquis⁵⁹ de Stainville and his faultless sister, Isabelle, enjoy a loving relationship, but this is ruined by Stainville's jealous wife, Dorimene, a spoiled melancholy heiress who is given to 'wild rages' and 'outrageous Passions'. Dorimene, devoid of sensibility, effectively deconstructs the family, making it a counterpoint to David Simple's 'Family of Love' by attempting to seduce Dumont, Isabelle's husband. This results in Dumont's death when he duels with Stainville. In this scenario Fielding makes clear that women like Dorimene, who view their 'conquests' as trophies, offend against the principles of sentimentalism. When events go against her will, Dorimene kills herself. Isabelle, the devastated widow, rejects the vicious world to enter a nunnery.

Terry suggests that this divagation 'may have been inserted to pad out the work'.⁶⁰ Felicity Nussbaum, however, sees this subplot as Fielding's (unorthodox) comment on the adverse influence that the 'morally degenerate French aristocracy' were currently having on the British race, 'influences that threaten to neuter England

⁵⁹ A Marquis is below the rank of Count but above a Duke.

⁶⁰ Terry, 527.

or to blur its gender boundaries'.⁶¹ Nussbaum mentions Isabelle's story while discussing the century's concerns that sensibility was turning men into effeminate fops and women into Amazons. Leading up to the Seven Years War (1757—63)⁶² between England and France over the Colonies, internal struggles within the nation arose from worries about the 'manly John Bull' being replaced by effeminate 'macaronis' who were likely to be unequipped to defend the British nation.

While it is possible that Fielding was, as Nussbaum suggests, concerned that 'effeminacy' within society 'could enslave the British nation',⁶³ since she kept a keen eye on contemporary debates, Fielding is certainly criticizing her violent society. In the Isabelle novella, Fielding opportunely attacks the tradition of men wearing swords, lamenting the ease with which a man can speedily take another man's life. When Stainville kills his friend he immediately regrets it, blaming his sword: 'Thou fatal Instrument of hellish Jealousy', then attempts to kill himself (192). Fielding's condemnation of duelling seen here is reiterated in *Ophelia*, where she writes that duelling is 'Defiance of the Laws of God' and suggests that it is a more 'manly' act to walk away from a duel: 'true Courage was the Resistance of a Custom which contradicted the divine Will'.⁶⁴

In Fielding's fiction, the brother-sister relationship is a recurring motif, evidencing the importance Fielding places upon it. In *Familiar Letters* Celia's epistle to Sophronia includes a sentimental anecdote detailing an evening ride in a carriage with her brother that has both autobiographical and pre-Romantic overtones:⁶⁵

⁶¹ Nussbaum (1999), 439.

⁶² Known to Americans as the French and Indian War.

⁶³ Samuel Johnson, *Adventurer*, 11th December 1753, cited in Nussbaum (1999), 424.

⁶⁴ Sarah Fielding (1760), *The History of Ophelia*. London. Facsimile (1974), Illinois: Garland, II: 144.

⁶⁵ This little vignette depicting Nature's beauty is reminiscent of James Thomson's (1700-48) portraits of Nature in *The Seasons* (1726-30).

My Brother drove me into the Country in a Chaise. The Beauties of the Evening, and the various prospects we beheld, are not to be described. We sat in our Vehicle on *Wimbleton-Common*, where we could at one View behold the largest and most beautiful Rainbow I ever saw, all the various Colours in nature were there displayed. The whole City of *London* gilded by the setting Sun, and the Country all around us intermixed with Hills and Valleys, Wood and Water, was placed before our Eyes. You know my Brother's Imagination is so lively, that such a Scene could not be lost upon him; and his Remarks and taste made me doubly enjoy it (Vol. II, Letter XXIII, 42-3).

In *The Governess* Jenny Peace recalls a loving brother-sister relationship along similar lines with her 'entertaining' brother Harry, whose stories were enhanced by his 'judicious' remarks.

Fielding's portrayal of relationships, however, has brought criticism from Kelsall for her inability to portray courtship, which he describes as 'the gaping hole' in her work⁶⁶ (there is not so much as an exchange of tender glances between the David and Camilla or Valentine and Cynthia). This omission is hardly surprising considering that Fielding was conscious of her virtuous (chaste) reputation, which she needed to protect in order to attract affluent subscribers. Anticipating adverse criticism for her lack of sexual details, Fielding writes of David and Camilla's courtship: 'I have too much Regard for my Readers to make them *third Persons to Lovers*' (230). It is sufficient for Fielding to inform her readers that David felt for Camilla 'something more soft than Friendship, and more persuasive than common Compassion . . . touched his Heart in this young Woman' (103).

Details of courtship are also excluded from Portia's relationship with Ferdinand in *The Cry*. Portia falls in love with Ferdinand for including her in conversations, for passing on his knowledge to her, and for his sympathy for a young gentlewoman who suddenly finds herself in distressed financial circumstances. Obviously, physical

⁶⁶ Kelsall, xiv.

attraction in relationships was of lesser importance to Fielding than friendship, which, in her fiction, means a non-hierarchical sharing of values.

Fielding's optimism for social reform is evidenced in the happy endings of *David Simple* and *Familiar Letters*. In *Familiar Letters* she praises the Master of Ceremonies at Bath for managing 'all public Diversions' with 'decorum'.⁶⁷ Fielding writes: 'The only distinguishing mark he wears, is that of a white Hat; and as this immediately makes him conspicuous to Strangers, they deservedly respect him, and he in his turn takes effectual care, that no Civility be omitted towards them . . . all Parties concur in applauding his Administration'.⁶⁸ It is another autobiographical inclusion, for the man who is fostering a new society at Bath is Richard 'Beau' Nash (1674—1762), the real-life Master of Ceremonies. Nash, with his white hat, played a part in the banning of swords in public places and general Bath decorum.⁶⁹

In *Volume the Last* Fielding's hopes for a sustainable harmonious community seem to melt into despair. Orgueil makes David's life a misery. Childless Mr. Ratcliff usurps David's parental authority by promising to make David's son his heir, requiring the boy to distance himself from his parents. When David loses his money, Ratcliff changes his mind. Next, David is exploited by Nichols, the usurer,⁷⁰ whose 'Knowledge of Characters' Fielding likens to a fisherman's knowledge of 'Baits to catch fish' (292). Nichols notes 'with a careful Eye' that David's 'little House and Garden' are worth 'Thirty Pounds', so advances him 'Five, on a Bond for fifteen', an enormously high rate of interest that David ultimately cannot pay (252). It is a sad reflection of power and greed that is nurtured by a corrupt society. In desperation, Valentine and Cynthia journey to the Colonies to earn money for the family, but

⁶⁷ Cynthia at Bath to Camilla at London, *Familiar Letters*, I: 130.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 131.

⁶⁹ See Thomas (1990), 204.

⁷⁰ Usurer - a moneylender who can charge excessive rates of interest.

Valentine dies there. Cynthia is swindled by ‘an Angelo’⁷¹ and offended by Mrs. Darking, another awful Mrs. Orgueil (310). In this novel, corruption spreads to the Colonies from England like a terrible infection.

Within the last few pages of *Volume the Last* David loses all his possessions in a house fire caused by Nichols’ debt-collector knocking over a candle as he falls into a drunken stupor (315-17). David’s family, asleep upstairs, is saved, but in the following pages, Fielding culls them relentlessly with a variety of illnesses, until only Cynthia and little Camilla remain. In what amounts to a *deus-ex-machina* resolution, the reader suddenly hears of a benevolent family Cynthia had met at Bath while convalescing there, who offers her protection. It is an unmistakable allusion to the family of Fielding’s patron and benefactor, Ralph Allen of Bath. Fielding satirically describes this sentimental family’s generosity as ‘uncommon Treatment’ (339).

This novel, as Stuart Sim and David Walker rightly observe, is an ‘almost unrelieved tale of woe’ in which the human goodness represented by David and his ‘Family of Love’ is ‘systematically extinguished’.⁷² Fielding intends to bring home the ‘Truth of that Observation . . . namely, “That solid and lasting Happiness is not to be attained in this World”’ in which ‘fancied Friends’ are ‘Plagues’ working on one’s ‘Heart’ to tear it out ‘by the Roots’.⁷³ Linking the slavery metaphor to her interest in human psychology, Fielding states that for a ‘Mind in such Chains’ it is ‘much worse than any Slavery of the Body’.⁷⁴ It seems that Cynthia, despite her courage, is yet again a victim of ‘adverse Fate’: she is a poor widow who loses her only child and her best friends, is cheated out of her husband’s estate and is forced to beg assistance

⁷¹ Angelo- an audacious lawyer, like the Deputy in *Measure for Measure* who makes sexual advances to Isabella.

⁷² Stuart Sim and David Walker (2003), *The Discourse of Sovereignty, Hobbes to Fielding: The State of Nature and the Nature of the State*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company, 192.

⁷³ Sabor (1998), 341.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

from the family at Bath. Cynthia's miserable circumstances, therefore, as Sim and Walker point out, 'sit oddly' with Spencer's claim that Fielding endows Cynthia 'with intelligence and a competence in dealing with the evils of this world that prevents her from ever becoming its victim'.⁷⁵ Gillian Skinner notes that the end of this narrative constitutes the triumph of 'the early modern commercial world' over 'the sentimental community', or as Sim and Walker put it, 'the triumph of the [Hobbesian] state of nature' where human survival depends on selfishness — 'the fiercely competitive strain' that Hobbes affirms is inherent 'in human nature'.⁷⁶

Thus it is clear that for Fielding, sentimentalism underpins every healthy relationship. Without it, harmony cannot be sustained. In her vision of a better, benevolent society in which members respect one another as equals, the benefits of sentimentalism must be learned from childhood. Children must be shown how to form true and lasting friendships while traditions that fuel disharmony must go, or the vulnerable will continue to be exploited by predators. Nash's real 'better world' at Bath demonstrates that Fielding was not alone in questing for social reform.

Part IV: *Calling for Sisterhood: Fielding's Portrayal of Women*

Fielding, like Astell, obviously realized that female equality could only be achieved when daring like-minded women rallied together to form a 'sisterhood' to demand change.⁷⁷ In her preface to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Letters* (widely circulated in manuscript form but unpublished until 1763), Astell encourages women to support their 'own Sex', 'be pleas'd' when a learned '*Woman Triumphs*, and [be]

⁷⁵ Sim and Walker, 192; Spencer (1986), 94.

⁷⁶ Gillian Skinner (1999) *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel, 1740-1800: the Price of a Tear*. London: Macmillan, Introduction, 1; Sim and Walker, 193.

⁷⁷ This move for female equality, however, does not call for the kind of violent methods such as those used by women in the later suffragette movement which won for women the right to vote in 1918.

proud to follow in her Train'.⁷⁸ Fielding delivers a strikingly similar feminist message through her character Portia in *The Cry*, encouraging women 'break through' their 'servile and ridiculous chains' (II: 266). She also chastises women who 'give up the world with a submissive spirit' (III: 231).

Astell knew the benefits of female friendship having been supported by several rich women.⁷⁹ Fielding knew the value of a hermetically sealed female community since she and her sisters often described themselves as 'the sisterhood'.⁸⁰ Fielding also had early support from her like-minded friend, Jane Collier. Thus from her own experience, Fielding was well placed to explain 'the cultural, historical context of women's lives through the descriptions and actions of fiction while analysing the ways women's minds work'.⁸¹ Fielding's anecdotal fiction illustrates the importance of mutual female sensibility, at the same time revealing her abhorrence of insensitive, selfish women who work against sisterhood. It effectively illustrates *how* women, perhaps unwittingly, uphold the notion propagated by dominant men, that women are erratic, unintelligent beings who must be controlled by their patriarchs.

In one of her first illustrations of erratic female behaviour, Fielding creates three vindictive sisters, the 'three Furies', as David Simple refers to them.⁸² Initially impressed by their apparently assiduous care for their dying father, David pities the sisters when they loudly lament his death. Later, he is amazed to see them engaged in a vicious quarrel, frantically tearing their late father's valuable carpet into shreds rather than allow one of them to own it (37). Their artless greed is destroying the very

⁷⁸ Halsband (1965), I: 467. See Astell's preface to the Embassy Letters.

⁷⁹ Among Astell's supportive friends were Lady Catherine Jones, Lady Ann Coventry and Lady Elizabeth Hastings. See Perry, chapter one and *passim*.

⁸⁰ *Life*, 179-80. The Fielding sisters appear to have lived amicably together at various times.

⁸¹ Downs-Miers, *Labyrinths*, 308-9.

⁸² In Greek mythology the 'Furies', 'Eumenides', or 'Erinyes' were the avenging deities, Allecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone, who executed the curses pronounced upon criminals, tortured the guilty with stings of conscience, or inflicted famines and pestilences. 'Eumenides' (the kindly ones) is a euphemism used with a propitiatory (atoning by sacrifice) purpose.

fabric of familial sisterhood as well as the carpet. In what Fielding satirically terms ‘the *Ceremony of Crying*’ she denounces shallow individuals like the ‘Furies’ who outwardly ‘cry and mourn’ for ‘Relations’ but are inwardly impatient to proceed with claiming their inheritance (38). Other women in *David Simple* who work against ‘sisterhood’ are those who regard Camilla with ‘Disdain’ when she approaches them for assistance while struggling to support herself and her sick brother (129).

Vicious Mrs. Orgueil is another spiteful character in *David Simple* who works to uphold the patriarchal status quo. A heartless, irascible snob, ‘practised’ at sowing ‘Dissent’ (260), Mrs. Orgueil believes that having money affords her the right to wield power over the poor. Accustomed from birth to a life of indulgence, Mrs. Orgueil has received ‘every Blessing’ with no ‘real Misfortunes’ yet she constantly complains. Having brought to her husband a dowry of ‘above Thirty thousand Pounds’, she remains alert to his methods of spending it, anxious to keep it in the family. Like her husband, Mrs. Orgueil lacks compassion. When she hears of a young girl on the verge of suicide because she has been abandoned in pregnancy by a man who promised marriage, she immediately condemns the girl, not the faithless renegade: ‘*Truly, if Women would be such Fools to put themselves in Men’s power, it was their own Fault . . .*’ (49). Fielding’s italics emphasize her disgust of such women who readily condemn members of their own sex before predatory men.

Fielding portrays Mrs. Orgueil as a mendacious, manipulative, Janus-like character with an ‘Incapacity of Feeling’, ‘sometimes extremely civil, at other times overbearing and insolent’ (260). In *Volume the Last* she develops her into a demonic villain who exorcizes her ‘inveterate Hatred’ of Cynthia on Cynthia’s child. Mrs. Orgueil despises Cynthia because despite being poor, she is more popular than herself. Unlike Camilla, who, like her husband David is duped by Mrs. Orgueil’s

pretended friendship, perceptive Cynthia is aware of the woman's spiteful nature. Consequently she is reluctant to allow Mrs. Orgueil to take her little daughter Cynthia to Bath as a playfellow for the Orgueils' wilful daughter with the ostentatious name, '*Henrietta-Cassandra*'. Against her better judgment Cynthia is persuaded by Camilla to let little Cynthia go to Bath, swayed by the belief that the spa waters will help her child to recover more quickly from a recent illness, never imagining for one moment that Mrs. Orgueil would make little Cynthia travel in a box beneath the coach (270). Its cold, dark atmosphere foreshadows the child's grave.

At Bath, displaying a total lack of sensibility, Mrs. Orgueil isolates little Cynthia in a cold, damp room, unmoved by the frightened child's tears. Fielding writes:

[L]ittle *Cynthia* was afflicted with a fixed Pain in her Head, occasioned by a violent Cold given her in that wet Room she lay in the first Night of her Arrival at the *Bath*. It might reasonably have been hoped that the seeing the poor Child's Pain would have mollified Mrs. *Orgueil*; but so far from it, that it seemed rather to irritate her Passions (271).

In a temper brought on by a headache, 'this fond Mother', as Fielding satirically describes her, 'in a violent Rage' beat her own noisy child 'with an uncommon Severity' (271). When David learns from Betty Dunster's mother that little Cynthia's health is rapidly declining, he hurries to retrieve the child. Mrs. Orgueil shows no concern for little Cynthia's condition; rather, she castigates David for spending money on the luxury of a carriage to transport the child home, then persuades her husband to write a letter complaining about the ungrateful behaviour of David's family. Little Cynthia dies within a week of returning home.

In this damning picture of an evil woman, Mrs. Orgueil completely overturns the 'nature, nurture' concept of motherhood. With this story, Fielding also targets mothers who 'cast' their daughters in the same mould as themselves, passing on

spiteful attitudes from one generation to the next. Henrietta-Cassandra ('Cassy') is a mirror-image of her vicious mother, 'bred up in the very School of Insolence' a little snob who has learned from her mother 'innumerable perverse and sly Tricks' (260). Clearly, for Fielding, progression towards a more sentimental society cannot be achieved until this cycle of female selfishness is broken. Fielding takes pains to show that little Cynthia is a more refined child than Mrs. Orgueil's spiteful daughter because her mother is refined, which is owing to Cynthia's sensibility.

Cassy typifies the girl who is the focus of her mother's attention, subjected to indulgence one moment, physical abuse the next. Cassy will grow up thinking that such treatment is normal and, as an adult, impose the same inconsistent lifestyle on her children, emulating her mother. Cassy's jealous nature, obviously inherited from her mother, will prevent her from forming true friendships with other women. When Cynthia describes Mrs. Darking in the Colonies as another Mrs. Orgueil, Fielding is warning her readers that such evil women are to be found in every society (310). Unlike Fielding's spiteful female characters, who destroy harmony within their communities, Cynthia and Camilla share a bond of affection that arises out of their mutual experience of dependency and suffering. Both are sensitive to the other's feelings. Through these and her other amiable characters, Fielding illustrates the joys of sisterhood that can be shared by all women, regardless of money or status.

Returning to the sisterhood motif in *The Cry*, Fielding extols its benefits through her mutually supportive characters, Portia, Cyllinda and Cordelia, who form a close friendship at the end of the text. In the dénouement of the 'Dramatic Fable', after giving an account of her promiscuous life, Cyllinda repents before Portia and the carping critics who collectively form 'the Cry'. Acting as a 'true Friend', Portia begs Una, the (female) presiding judge over the critical 'assembly', to show Cyllinda

mercy. Emulating her Shakespearean namesake, Portia delivers Fielding's didactic message to the reader:

[M]ercy must dwell in our hearts, it must regulate every common conversation; otherwise insult on the one hand, and malice on the other, will render [split apart] all intercourse between the nearest kindred or the greatest professors of friendship . . . for (as Shakespear says)

*It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes* (III: 289).⁸³

With this argument Fielding is obviously attempting to stir her female reader to conscious thought about forgiving other women as opposed to holding grudges or instigating petty quarrels. Portia's requesting forgiveness for Cylinda's past life is obviously Fielding's attempt to placate critics who would condemn her as an author who condoned promiscuity in a woman. In Fielding's day, a woman living with a man out of wedlock was ostracized by her society, regardless of mitigating circumstances. In a statement that vigorously attacks obstinate critics, Fielding adds that Portia's words:

[H]ad just as much weight with the *Cry* as the same speech coming from her namesake in the *Merchant of Venice* had on *Shylock the Jew*: for so inveterate was the rancor of their unmerciful hearts against her, that, had they been possessed of *Shylock's* inhuman bond, like him they would not willingly have abated one scruple of its full forfeit and penalty' (III: 290).

Obviously Fielding realized that her call for a mutually supportive, non-hierarchical sisterhood would be viewed by women inculcated into patriarchy with contempt.

Nevertheless, Fielding remained undaunted in her quest for sisterhood. In *Dellwyn* (1759) she portrays Mrs. Bilson as a loving mother and patient wife reduced to poverty by her husband, a gambler. Mrs. Bilson triumphs over adversity because

⁸³ In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* the character Portia pleads for mercy to be shown towards Antonio, from whom Shylock is demanding the extraction of a pound of his flesh (IV.i.184-7).

compassionate Lady Dently comes to her assistance. Fielding rewards Lady Dently's kindness by drawing her into a warm relationship with Mrs. Bilson and her family, underscoring the benefits of sisterhood to both parties, taking pains to show that it is not the acquiring of riches but the acquisition of true friends that makes people happy. Mrs. Bilson and Lady Dently add to Fielding's list of compassionate female characters who form a fictional sisterhood of mutually supportive women.

Fielding, clearly a perceptive woman, would see that sisterhood could only be achieved in real life by re-educating girls from childhood. This is evidenced in *The Governess*, where Mrs. Teachum acts as a successful reformer of girls who initially behave like Cassy Orgueil, girls who have been imbued with snobbery and selfishness, and who readily inflict abuse on others. Through Mrs. Teachum and Jenny Peace, who teach by example, the girls learn to care for one another, learn to forgive, and form a happy little community. In Fielding's fiction, as shown, sentimentalism underpins every harmonious relationship, familial and communal.

Part V: Imperfect Patriarchs: Fielding's Portrayal of Men

Judging from her portrayal of men throughout her oeuvre, it is apparent that Fielding found much to be desired in their attitudes towards women. Of the male characters who pay court to Corinna and Sacharissa in *David Simple*, (201-14), the '*Balancer*', as Fielding satirically names him, will go 'no further' than telling Corinna that he 'liked her' in case he 'afterwards could not disengage himself' (210). *Balancer* is the stereotypical rake who takes whatever he can get from a woman, then walks away. Another admirer is a vain fellow who wants women to esteem him as a '*witty and wise*' man. Le Vive, who courts Corinna, is an ill-tempered man who will not be 'dallied with'. Sacharissa eventually settles for marriage to a 'querulous' man who is

mistrusted by his associates (210), which does not auger well for her future happiness. Another male character wants 'the handsomest Wife' who will entertain a 'train' of lovers so that he can claim to be the 'best lover' because she stays married to him (210). It is an unsavoury account of male behaviour.

Men, according to Fielding, are never satisfied because they are naturally ungrateful creatures. Even when they win a 'perfect' woman they want more. They are like '*Pigmalion*' who 'fell in love with a Statue', and so asked the gods to send him a woman who looked like her. His wish was granted, but he wanted more, requiring 'the Gods to give her Life and Motion', but even this failed to satisfy him (211).⁸⁴ To illustrate that 'Ingratitude' is inherent in most men, Fielding invents the story of a man falling into the Thames. On the point of drowning he is rescued but his ear is accidentally hurt in the process. Initially the rescued man is grateful, but he later chastens his saviour for causing him earache (210).

In Fielding's fiction, ungrateful men who can never be satisfied are on a par with those, like Cynthia's family, who refuse to credit a woman with intelligence and instead deny her access to a better education. Like Astell, Fielding insists that women are not inferior beings, but are born with an innate capacity to 'Reason' (work things out) as well as men, which morally justifies a woman's right to develop her mind. For Fielding, the sentimentalist, the *feelings* of her characters are paramount. A sentimentalist is one who 'regards sentiment as more important than reason'.⁸⁵ In her fiction Fielding explores the protean nature of 'Reason', equating it with soundness of mind (like the confused souls in Bedlam who have lost their 'Reason'), or working things out, or an excuse. In *Reflections* Astell argues that for years men have denied women the faculty of reason, regarding them as 'little more than Brutes' in order to

⁸⁴ Pygmalion, the legendary king of Cyprus, fell in love with a statue. He begged Aphrodite to send him a wife resembling it, which she did.

⁸⁵ *Chambers Dictionary* (1985).

‘confine’ them ‘to the Chimney-Corner’.⁸⁶ In words strikingly similar to Astell’s, Fielding insists in *Volume the Last* that ‘one human Creature should assist another, as an Acknowledgment that they were all dignified and exalted above the brute Creation, by the Possession of Reason’ (320). In her logical arguments she points out that if women lacked the faculty of reason they could not perform any task properly.

Fielding equates ‘reason’ with an excuse when affluent Orgueil defers to ‘right Reason’ to avoid assisting those less fortunate than himself:

I look upon Compassion, Sir, to be a very great Weakness; I have no Superstition [religious beliefs] to fright me into my Duty . . . the real Love of Rectitude is the Motive of all my Actions. If I could be moved by Compassion in my Temper to relieve another, the Merit of it would be entirely lost, because it would be done chiefly to please myself (55).

Fielding’s narrator informs the reader that David, the good Samaritan, ‘was amazed at this Doctrine’ that counters Christian ethics (55). Acting as a counterpoint to David, who readily opens his purse for the needy, phlegmatic Orgueil is antithetical to sentimentality because, as Terry observes, he remains emotionally unaffected by those in distress, exhibiting a ‘cold, fastidious moralism’⁸⁷ that stems from a heart that is ‘hardened to all tender sensations’ (55-6). Orgueil measures success by a man’s bank account and his prowess in exploiting others. People he cannot use are cast aside. Fielding makes clear that while the Orgueils of this world continue to cause divisions in society, anarchy will flourish and the poor must turn to vice or starve. Didactic, as ever, Fielding conveys the following message to her reader: ‘To rejoice indeed at the Sufferings of any Individual . . . or to see another in Misery, and be insensible of it, would be a Proof of want of . . . Tenderness’ (149).

⁸⁶ Astell, *Reflections*, xxiii.

⁸⁷ Terry, 530.

Orgueil's 'unsparing lexicon of rectitude' (534) is concomitant with Bernard de Mandeville's assertion, that no action was meritorious 'if inspired by selfish emotion' or 'done from natural impulse' without regard to the 'consequences that follow that action which affect the doer'.⁸⁸ Orgueil personifies Mandeville's interpretation of 'reason' and 'rational' that Frederick Benjamin Kaye notes is an antithesis to compassionate emotion and spontaneous assistance.⁸⁹ Kelsall views Orgueil as Fielding's 'caricature of a Stoic' and the model for Square in *Tom Jones* (1749).⁹⁰ In Fielding's discourse, compassion for unfortunate others should not be seen, as Orgueil sees it, a foolish indulgence. Orgueil's vindictive associate, Spatter, also offends against the principles of sentimentalism because he denigrates people behind their backs and would 'pursue a Man' who had injured him 'to the very Brink of Life' (98). Another compassionless male character in *David Simple* is Mr. Varnish. When he hears of another's misfortune, he shrugs his shoulders then changes the subject.

From the early pages of her first novel Fielding makes clear her dim view of men in general. Greedy Mr. Johnson manipulates his daughters by exploiting their vanity as opposed to protecting them. When a wealthy Jew offers to buy his daughter rather than marry her because '*Women's Souls were of no great Consequence*' (25), cunning Johnson accurately calculates that by holding out, the Jew will marry her. Here, Fielding opportunely addresses the contemporary philosophical debate about whether women, like animals, had no souls,⁹¹ her italics underscoring her contempt of the notion. Her sentiments echo Astell's, who, in her poem entitled 'Ambition',

⁸⁸ Bernard de Mandeville (1714), *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. Frederick Benjamin Kaye, Oxford: Clarendon (facsimile), 1934, cxx. *Fable* was reissued (1723) with a prose commentary as *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* cxx.

⁹⁰ Kelsall, 434, n.2.

⁹¹ According to Vickers (1967), 'that women have no souls is apparently a myth derived from foreign travellers' deductions from the way Turkish men treated their women'. See 134 n. 16.

demands to know: 'Who falsely say that women have no Souls [?]'.⁹² Fielding, like Astell, is again attacking the tradition that has made marriage a commercial enterprise between men. By introducing the Jew's comments about soul-less women, she illustrates how religious views are sully women's reputations. When Christian women are regarded as 'soul-less' creatures, it demeans Jesus's mother and consequently Christianity itself. Fielding is pointing out that the 'soul-less' allegation is contributing to the breakdown of Christian religion that is taking place around her.

Cynthia's insensitive father is another patriarch, like greedy Johnson, who has no regard for his daughter's feelings. To him, Cynthia is nothing more than an expensive burden to be offloaded to an older stranger who needs an heir to his estate. Fielding's didactic message here is clear: fathers who require their daughters to participate in a marriage arranged purely on a commercial basis are forcing them to prostitute themselves. Camilla's father is shown to be a weak man and a bully. He allows himself to be manipulated by his second wife, Livia, but because he cannot control his emotions, he physically abuses his daughter.

Even in her novel for children Fielding makes space to target male exploitation of women. In *The Governess* story, that is designed to demonstrate 'the miserable Effects' of 'Deceit and Treachery' (102), Sempronius, a dashing soldier, intrudes upon a harmonious sisterhood consisting of the devoted cousins Chloe and Caelia, who live with their loving aunt, and almost destroys it. Sempronius pays attention to both cousins knowing that he can marry only one of them. He surreptitiously questions each cousin about the other to decide which one he should marry. Chloe, realizing his intentions and afraid of being parted from her beloved cousin, possibly left behind to become an old maid, gives a dishonest account of Caelia. When

⁹² 'Ambition', in Perry, 9-10.

Sempronius discovers this he ensures that Chloe is disgraced and immediately marries Caelia. Isolated from her family, Chloe almost dies from loneliness and remorse. In Sempronius's absence, Chloe begs her aunt and her cousin's forgiveness, which is readily given. By the time Sempronius returns, the sisterhood is happily reunited. Thus his attempts to fragment the sisterhood are thwarted.

Reading beneath the surface text of this story, it is obvious that Sempronius is more guilty of 'Deceit and Treachery' than Chloe, not least due to his underhand behaviour. In his absence the women revert to their original harmonious relationship. When he returns the sisterhood is stronger than ever. Fielding's subversive anti-male sting-in-the-tale to this story is her comment that the cousins' aunt 'settled all her Fortune to be divided at Death equally between her Nieces; and in her Life-time there was no Occasion of Settlements, or Deeds of Gift' (101). Fielding pointedly omits Sempronius from the aunt's will as if in retribution for 'Deceitfully' and 'Traacherously' interfering with the happy sisterhood.

Other male characters in *The Governess* who do not fare well include Lord X—, an arrogant product of a patriarchal upbringing who is accustomed to having his own way in all things. Another is a dishevelled stranger who begs money from Mrs. Teachum's girls during their outing to a dairy. A redeeming male character in *The Governess* is Jenny Peace's brother Harry, who treats his sister well. However, since Jenny's father died when she was six months old, the siblings' 'perfect Amity' is owing to their mother's influence. Fielding's ideal man in *The Governess* is a dead man, Mr. Teachum, the 'sensible' clergyman who loved, respected, and passed on his education to his wife while he was alive. Thereby Fielding implies the impossibility of finding such a man in real life.

In *The Cry*, Fielding's character Nicanor is another flawed father-figure. Like King Lear, he is blind to the love of his aptly named dutiful daughter, Cordelia, who is treated unmercifully. Focusing on the selfishness of a father and the adverse effects his 'gloomy' moods have on his family when he is displeased, Fielding writes:

There is not perhaps any thing more unhappy for a family, than to have the head of it a pleasure-loving man soured by disappointments. Such a one is always gloomy and morose to those around him, and if he ever indulges the least vein of cheerfulness or good-humour, 'tis the company of strangers before whom he may still have some little restraint (I: 281).

Fielding's comment concerning Nicanor's lack of 'restraint' is loaded with speculation about the miseries a father can inflict upon his family in private.

Cordelia is the stereotypical heroine of traditional eighteenth-century narrative, but as Fielding demonstrates, such heroines make perfect *victims*. Instead of protecting Cordelia's interests, Nicanor spends her maternal inheritance after wasting his own money on a holiday abroad and a mistress. Fielding's condemnation of Nicanor's behaviour is evident in her description of his love affair as the 'unfortunate accident' that caused the 'future misfortunes of his family' (I: 215-16).

Fielding makes clear that Nicanor's selfish behaviour stems from his patriarchal upbringing, his being educated from birth to 'the pursuit of any pleasure' (II: 229). Orphaned young, Nicanor at the age of eighteen had married a young woman with a fortune 'equal to his own'. During their six childless years he was happy as the focus of his wife's attention (obviously she replaced his dead mother). This changed when his wife diverted her attention to their first child, Oliver. With the arrival of the twins Ferdinand and Cordelia, Nicanor was further removed from his wife's gaze, so that when she died, Fielding writes with her satirical pen, his grief was 'half' to 'what it would have been, had he lost her before the birth of Oliver' (I: 209).

Fielding takes pains to point out that Nicanor's conception of 'love' is his own selfish desire to be adored and placated. His 'love' for his wife—an 'excellent oeconomist' who looked well after their money — ultimately amounts to nothing. Knowing 'the turn of his mind' she had prudently persuaded Nicanor to settle part of *her* fortune on their children prior to her death. When widowed, Nicanor assumes the role of both parents, isolating himself with his children in the country for a year, after which, he abruptly leaves them to accompany a new acquaintance abroad. Completely disregarding his children's feelings, Nicanor dispatches the boys to Eton and Cordelia to a previously unheard of aunt. Fielding's caustic comments illustrate her contempt for such fathers:

As soon as he had got rid of his sons, he gave a loose to his enjoying himself . . . intoxicated by his own passions, he acted little otherwise than as a downright madman, and wrapped up in luxurious enjoyments, lost all sense, feeling, and regard for any human creature but himself (I: 222).

Pursuing her interest in the 'Labyrinths of the Mind', Fielding illustrates how the behaviour of such a selfish father can adversely affect his children. Oliver, previously his mother's 'idol', becomes a damaged, sensitive child who feels unloved. Wanting attention, he becomes adept at cunning practices, developing into 'not quite the Machiavel' (I: 212). At Eton, Oliver falls behind in his studies and begins to hate his younger brother Ferdinand when he surpasses him in learning. Oliver lies, cheats, and attempts to destroy Ferdinand's relationship with his father, sister, and Portia, whose dislike of *handsome* Oliver 'was unconquerable' (II: 134). Here, Fielding opportunely warns her female readers not to be duped by a man's physiognomy.

Nicanor's behaviour affects his younger son differently. Although Ferdinand loves Portia, he has doubts about the stability of their relationship, which no doubt stems from his childhood experiences of his mother's sudden demise and his father's

subsequent abrupt departure. Basically good, Ferdinand goes abroad to earn money for his family, who have been reduced to poverty by their spendthrift father. While abroad, he decides to test the strength of Portia's love for him by sending home the false message that he has debauched then abandoned a rich heiress. On his return he acts as a rake to give credence to the lie, to see if Portia will stand by him whatever he does. Ethical Portia, however, broken-hearted by his rakish behaviour, vacates the town. Obviously Ferdinand has difficulty in understanding how relationships work.

Clearly, Fielding blames Nicanor for his sons' troubled dispositions and likens him to the tyrant Nero, who has a 'darling image of his own authority'. She warns that 'a latent *Nero* might but too surely be found in many private families' (II: 129). Fielding sees 'Man' as 'a mischievous animal; men betray and murder one another . . . the wise are cautious' (I: 213). Fielding's words are similar to those of Astell, who writes: 'Men . . . dispute for Truth' yet 'argue against it'; they 'recount each others great Exploits', glorying in 'the Invention of Guns' and they bring 'Gaming to an Art and Science' while woman is 'nothing' in 'their Care'.⁹³

Fielding's negative portrayal of men is constant throughout her oeuvre. In *Dellwyn*, Charlotte Lucum's selfish father coerces his daughter into marrying decrepit Lord Dellwyn then disowns her when Dellwyn divorces her for committing adultery. In this novel, Fielding creates her 'new' man, Sir Harry Cleveland, who is 'wise' because he rejects 'Foolish customs' (I: 269). In *Ophelia*, duplicitous Mr. Darking courts a woman with 'sweet words', all the while intending that after marriage, he will make her work in his dairy, bear his children, and entertain his visitors while he spends her annuity.⁹⁴ Darking's 'Metamorphosis' from lover to husband, Fielding satirically likens to a 'Bee' changing into 'a Serpent', a 'more dismal Change' than

⁹³ Astell, *Reflections*, 88.

⁹⁴ Sabor (2004), 179-80.

‘industrious Arachne’ who changed ‘into a Spider’.⁹⁵ Darking, when married, rages at his terrified wife and ‘trounces’ his children with ‘that great Instructor, the Rod’.⁹⁶

In this, her final novel, Fielding eventually undermines dominant male power as Ophelia reforms her rakish abductor, Lord Dorchester. However, judging from the way Fielding portrays most men, it is no wonder that she remained unmarried.

Part VI: Conclusion

Fielding’s sentimental fiction, as shown, evidences the truth of Ellis’s statement, that ‘the sentimental novel is often a site for ‘considerable political debate’.⁹⁷ Fielding considers a plethora of topics including those designated the preserve of masculine discourse. She attacks traditions concerning arranged marriages, education, corporal punishment and, through Isabelle’s story in *David Simple*, points to the adverse influence of French customs and condemns the tradition of duelling. She satirically targets the idle rich and the effeminate fops who parade their ‘fine Feathers’ while beggars on the streets fight one another to survive. Deploying the theme of usury Fielding attacks greedy moneylenders and duplicitous men like Orgueil who will always find a ‘right Reason’ for turning their backs on the needy.

Fielding’s fiction effectively illustrates the desperate plight of the impoverished gentlewoman and conveys feelings of desperation that are indicative of her real life experiences. She links the woman’s situation to the sensitive subject of slavery — ‘the legal and economic status of being another’s property’⁹⁸ — and is unafraid to promote her views on what was considered an exclusively male topic:

⁹⁵ Ibid. 181. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a (Latin) epic poem of fifteen-books, Arachne, an industrious weaver, is turned into a spider.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ellis, 4-7.

⁹⁸ Horsley, 1148.

The word *slavery* had before sufficiently raised my horror; but when the picture of slavery illustrated by a man bound in chains was placed before my view . . . I fled immediately from such a disagreeable spectacle' (*The Cry*, II: 278-9).

Many people in the eighteenth century felt agitation concerning the slave trade.⁹⁹ Heavy investments were made in plantations abroad. Fielding's attention to the subject is seen when she sends her characters Valentine and Cynthia to the 'Barbadoes' seeking a fortune in *Volume the Last*. In Fielding's fiction slavery becomes a metaphor for women's subjugation, the words 'irrevocable chains of marriage' indicating the inability of women to obtain a divorce under patriarchal law (*The Cry*, III: 297-300).¹⁰⁰ Astell and Wollstonecraft use the same metaphor: Astell asks, 'If all Men are born free, how is it that all Women are born slaves?'¹⁰¹ Wollstonecraft laments 'with indignation' 'notions that enslave my sex' and denounces 'obsequious slaves' who allow themselves to be led 'in chains' by men.¹⁰² Fielding does not idealize women as extreme versions of female purity, virtue, and passivity, heroines who sacrifice themselves 'with a masochistic relish to flawed husbands . . . winning total appreciation'.¹⁰³ Rather, she creates heroines like Cynthia and Portia who rebel against patriarchal constraints. Docile heroines of traditional narrative, she portrays as society's *victims*, like dutiful but pitiful Cordelia in *The Cry*.

Continually performing the unorthodox role of social commentator since, as she writes in *Dellwyn*, it is 'droll to be a Spectator only' (I: 276), Fielding opens a window onto eighteenth-century life, enabling the modern reader to see sick people

⁹⁹ Slavery, revived with the colonization of America in the sixteenth century, was abolished in England in 1807.

¹⁰⁰ Stone reports: ' . . . in England. . . marriage was an indissoluble union, breakable only by death', 34.

¹⁰¹ *Reflections* (1706), xi.

¹⁰² Brody, 122; 142.

¹⁰³ Jacqueline Pearson (1988), *The Prostituted Muse: Women Dramatists and Images of Women, 1642-1737*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 58-9.

like Valentine being turned out of doors when they cannot pay the rent. In the unfair distribution of wealth, the poorest in society, including impoverished gentlewomen, must survive how they may. Since it was frowned upon for gentlewomen to write for money, enter into trade, or beg on the streets, how, the modern reader may ask, were these women meant to survive? Fielding's only solution to this dilemma is to bring in assistance from a benevolent other, but in a society where Christian ethics are preached but rarely practiced, a 'true Friend' is hard to find.

With *David Simple* and *Volume the Last* Fielding portrays mankind as having rejected God and Christian values, rendering each novel a satire on her society. Although the reader may bemoan David's insipience throughout the two novels, as Fielding demonstrates, a simple, kind-hearted man is no match for unscrupulous men who can gain 'Ascendency' over an innocent mind.

Yet before David tragically loses everything, he does accomplish his goal and establishes a little community of like-minded people who experience 'Tenderness and Benevolence, which alone can give any real Pleasure' (238). When members of David's family experience loss or defeat in social conflict, it is the support of the cognate family that carries them through. Sentimentalism underpins all of Fielding's harmonious relationships. In order to form true friendships, Fielding writes:

The heart must be innocent, and have no sinister plots to carry on . . . there must be no jealousies, no rivalry for wit, and fear of another's shining; no desire to lessen or degrade each other's faculties . . . in all families of love, there is no dispute about any kind of property (*The Cry*, II: 59).

Her recipe for a better society could not be clearer.

Ultimately Fielding's fiction conveys the message that without money, which equates to power, even a good, sentimental man like David is not allowed to simply exist in the corrupt eighteenth-century world. In her novels Fielding tries to resolve

tensions between sensibility and vulnerability, but it is shown to be unresolvable in a patriarchal culture. She uses sentimentalism to illustrate the psychological damage caused to the powerless by patriarchal traditions. Under the guise of fiction she participates in subjects considered the preserve of male discourse, as if to show that women, when afforded the opportunity, can play an important part in furthering the progress of society. Although perhaps not as popular as Richardson, whose *Pamela* had obtained a wide readership almost four years before *David Simple* appeared,¹⁰⁴ Fielding's placement in the sentimental novel tradition is nearest to his, at the forefront. By the end of the century, 'everything under the denomination of sentimental' was viewed with contempt.¹⁰⁵



¹⁰⁴ Evidencing Fielding's popularity, Sabor points out that sales of *David Simple*, 'which at six shillings cost the same as *Joseph Andrews*, must have been brisk' due to the second edition appearing only ten weeks later, with subsequent editions of the first edition in Dublin (1744) and second edition (1761), German (1746 and 1759) and French (1749).

¹⁰⁵ Price, 740.

Chapter 3

Sarah Fielding: A Mid-Century Call for Female Equality in Education

Focusing on Fielding's call for a better education for women, this chapter explores the extent of her subversive feminist activity with particular reference to *The Governess; Or, Little Female Academy* (1749). Leading up to her first novel, Fielding's brother Henry and Samuel Richardson each claimed to have invented 'a new species of writing'.¹ Evading taxonomy as if to appease both authors who saw themselves as her mentors, Fielding invites the reader to call *David Simple* a 'Moral Romance (or whatever Title the Reader shall please to give it)'.² *The Governess*, however, evidences the fact that Fielding was just as capable of producing 'a new species' since it is an original, *educational* novel that is an important contribution to the genre of literature for children. This venture shows Fielding's ongoing determination to operate in the male-designated literary arena, to show the world that a woman can perform there as well as, if not better than, most men.

Therefore this text will be explored in Parts I, II and III of this chapter. Part I provides historical data in order to illustrate the originality of *The Governess*. Part II considers Fielding's educative methods. With reference to other of Fielding's texts, Part III compares her challenge for female equality in education with Astell's. Part IV addresses Fielding's satirical attack on male pomposity and philosophical theories.

¹ With *Pamela* Samuel Richardson claimed to have invented a 'new kind of writing' that he called 'Writing to the moment'. Henry Fielding termed *The History of Joseph Andrews* (1742) 'a new species of writing' (see the prefaces to both novels).

² Sabor (1998), 'Advertisement to the Reader'.

Part I: *Awaiting Mrs. Teachum*

Produced when the concept of ‘a literature for children’ was just beginning to emerge, *The Governess* is an original idea, a new kind of book for children that breaks new ground as ‘the earliest known full-length original story-book written for children’, the ‘first school story’, the first book with ‘the realistic setting’ of a boarding school featuring ‘realistic’ characters children can identify with, and ‘the first *educational novel* preceding Rousseau’s *Émile* [1762] by thirteen years’.³ Peter Jimack explains that the word ‘educational’ covers ‘every aspect of the raising of children’.⁴

Before the arrival of *The Governess*, educative literature for children was predominantly a male-authored mixture of ABC, verse-picture material, bowdlerized chapbook versions of adult books, French romance novellas (which *David Simple*’s Cynthia disdains) and fantasy from foreign sources. There were no children’s ‘annuals’ as modern readers know them. Most books for children were quite small, composed of pictures accompanied with a few lines of verse to relay a moral lesson. John Newbery’s *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744), sufficiently small to fit into a child’s pocket, is a prime example.⁵ *The Governess*, however, has the same octavo format as Fielding’s adult novels. Newbery is a significant author in the history of children’s literature, but he did not print any full-length storybooks before *The Governess*. Most of his books for children, from 1745—8, were part of his instructive series known as *The Circle of Sciences*, covering only traditional school subjects.⁶

Literature for eighteenth-century children was mostly presented in hornbook or battledore structures, or in chapbooks, which were distributed by itinerant pedlars

³ Grey, Introduction, v; 1.

⁴ Peter Jimack ed. (1974), *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Emile*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., xiii.

⁵ For a discussion of Newbery’s literature for children see Sydney Roscoe (1973), *John Newbery and his Successors, 1740-1814*. Hertfordshire: Five Owls Press Ltd.

⁶ Grey, 19.

known as 'chapmen'. Hornbooks developed from the Roman *tabella* on which wax was smeared allowing letters or pictures to be scored on it with a stylus. Since the hornbook measured a mere three and one half inches by two and one half inches excluding the handle, it was an ideal educational tool that could be held comfortably by a young child. Hornbooks were relatively indestructible, lightweight wooden cases in which paper was placed, usually bearing a cross in the top left corner followed by a capital 'A' next to other letters of the alphabet, followed by the Lord's Prayer and covered with a thin layer of translucent animals' horn, hence the name 'horn book' or, the 'Chris-cross' book, from the crucifix usually displayed in the top corner.⁷ Narrow edging-strips of brass held the horn in place, fixed to the wood by small nails. A derivation of the hornbook, the battledore, was a folded cardboard construction on which was printed letters or pictures from traditional tales such as Aesop's *Fables*. At first, the battledore had a handle, but this disappeared when it took the paper format. Later, the battledore became synonymous with the game of shuttlecock, since the older type of instrument resembled a racquet.

Chapbooks⁸ were slim pamphlets in buff wrappers, often with crude woodcuts. They offered bowdlerized versions of adult books such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605-12),⁹ which was translated into English in 1612. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), a political satire that was adapted as a story for children, appeared later in the century.¹⁰ Thus children's literature, as Robert Bator's observes, 'is not an island completely

⁷ See Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard eds. (1984, 1999), *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 260.

⁸ A derivation of the Anglo-Saxon *céap*, meaning 'barter, or business', hence the word 'cheap'.

⁹ Charlotte Lennox's parodied *Don Quixote* in *The Female Quixote* (1752).

¹⁰ Robert Bator, (1983), *Signposts to Criticism of Children's Literature*. Chicago: American Library Association, xiii.

distanced from mainland literature.’¹¹ From chapbook versions of Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou contes du temps passé: avec des moralitez* (Paris, 1697), translated into English by Robert Samber and published as *Histories, or Tales of Past Times. Told by Mother Goose* (1729), English literature has inherited *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (*Sleeping Beauty*), *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (*Red Riding Hood*), *La Barbe Bleue* (*Bluebeard*), *Le Maistre Chat, ou le Chat Botté* (*Puss in Boots*), and *Cendrillon ou la petite pantoufle de verre* (*Cinderella*) and *Petit Poucet* (*Hop o’ My Thumb*).

Children could learn of popular heroic characters from Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* (translated into English by Sir Thomas North in 1579), editions of which were still being reprinted in 1763 by Newbery. This *adult* text contains stories about ancient heroes such as Cicero and Pericles, whose mother dreamed she would be delivered of a lion just before he was born with a misshapen head (which is why he is often portrayed wearing a helmet and was called ‘Schinocephalus’, or onion-head).¹² Such stories fired the imagination of children. Henry Fielding kept a copy of Plutarch’s *Lives* in his extensive library, where, Werner states, ‘Miss Fielding spent many an hour’.¹³ Plutarch’s *Lives* forms the basis of Fielding’s fictional biography, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757).

Fantasy appeared in chapbook versions of *Alladin* and *Sindbad* from the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, which appeared in two volumes in 1706.¹⁴ Popular Christian fantasies were Richard Johnson’s *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (c.1597), Thomas Langley’s *The History of Tom Thumbe King Arthur’s Dwarf*

¹¹ Ibid. See also Peter Hunt (1994), *An Introduction to Children’s Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 21 and passim.

¹² Langhorne translation, Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, London: Frederick Warne and Co., 147-48; see also Paul Turner’s (1963) edition of the *Lives*, Sussex: Centaur Press, 22; 69.

¹³ Werner, 35.

¹⁴ Sindbad’s adventures resemble the *Odyssey* in many incidents.

(1621), and Sir Thomas Malory's Arthurian romances.¹⁵ Orthodox Puritans like Cotton Mather (1663-1728) condemned fantasy as 'damnably wicked' lies from 'Satan's Library': he included *Sir Bevis of Southampton*, a popular verse-romance originating from the twelfth-century *chanson de geste*.¹⁶

In *The Governess* Fielding wisely links her characters to Christian principles, and so gets away with using pagan or oriental material. Fantasy was, for her, a useful educational tool. Peter Hunt, a modern critic, shares Fielding's view. He states: 'Fantasy . . . can handle large, rather than local, problems', such as helping the child 'to overcome difficulties' when dealing with evil or death, and 'by adapting the rules of romance and adventure to settings in a recognizable world'.¹⁷ Anticipating adverse criticism for her use of fantasy, Fielding has her fictional governess warn her pupils (and Fielding's readers), that 'Magic' and 'Fairies' are amusing inventions: 'by no means let the Notion of Giants or Magic dwell upon your Minds' (68).

In Fielding's day, aristocratic children from the age of five or six usually received formal instruction at home, from private tutors. Boys would later attend college or university to learn classical history, heraldry, Latin, and French literature. Education for girls consisted of little more than needlework or whatever was suitable for their destined domestic roles. Children's education was synonymous with corporal punishment,¹⁸ which was inflicted by (often sadistic) tutors using the fescue (pointer) and ferula (rod). Jimack reports that 'whether or not children were happy was irrelevant: they were viewed as miniature, imperfect adults' who 'must be protected from such evils as fresh air and exercise, while being beaten for

¹⁵ In 1691 John Dryden's *King Arthur* was set to music by Purcell and termed a 'dramatick opera'.

¹⁶ Drabble informs that Mather, a tyrannical Puritan minister, was noted for the part he played in the Salem witchcraft trials of New England (1692).

¹⁷ Hunt, 167. For further discussion of this topic see Samuel F. Pickering, (1993), *Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children, 1749-1820*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 21.

¹⁸ This barbaric educative method was used in English schools well into the twentieth century.

disobedience'.¹⁹ He further states that as soon as middle- and upper-class boys could read they were usually forced to devote 'long hours' to study.²⁰

To a religious society with a high infant mortality rate, it was imperative that children were educated for death and heaven. Hence the popularity of Benjamin Keach's *War With the Devil* (1673), John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684) and Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs, Attempted in Easie Language for the Use of Children* (1715), that educates for death and heaven with the lines, 'Hush! My dear, lie still and slumber, / Holy angels guard thy bed!' Children had to learn by heart the Primer, described in Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) as 'A small prayer-book'.

Casting an astute eye around the literary marketplace, Fielding clearly saw the need for a new kind of educational book for children upwards of 'infant age'. With the arrival in 1749 of her motherly, kind but firm story-telling Mrs. Teachum, children could begin to enjoy the type of literature that the modern child takes for granted.

Part II: *The Governess* (1749)

Fielding's decision to construct her educational novel around the hebdominal life of an Academy was apt for her time. By 1749 academies were becoming popular places to educate (or offload) girls. Fielding condemns parents or guardians who place small children in boarding schools then subsequently ignore them through her portrayal of seven-year-old Polly, the youngest pupil in the Academy who has been there so long that she cannot remember any other life (214).²¹ This vulnerable 'little Cherub' with 'a hundred agreeable Dimples' constantly seeks affection, often placing her hand in Mrs. Teachum's or one of the other girls, who are, Jenny Peace (aged 14), Sukey

¹⁹ Jimack, 118.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dr. Johnson typified men who advocated boarding schools for educating daughters, telling Mrs. Thrale: 'I would not have them about me; Boarding Schools are made to relieve Parents from that anxiety'. He also advised the Strahans to put their daughter into a boarding school, Balderston, 178.

Jennett, Dolly Friendly and Lucy Sly (11), Patty Lockit (10), Henny Fret, Betty Ford, Nanny Spruce (9) and Polly Suckling (7). Polly says, 'it is a great Pleasure to me to be loved, and every Miss is kind and good to me, and ready to assist me whenever I ask them. And this is all I know of my whole Life' (214). Here, Fielding challenges the traditional view of children being regarded as 'imperfect' adults whose feelings are immaterial. Rather, she is making her reader think about the needs of a small child whose very life depends upon those charged with her education.

The Governess shows that Fielding was obviously impressed with the educative precepts advocated by John Locke (1632—1704) in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), an influential treatise produced for the education of one boy.²² Despite its modest title, *Some Thoughts* covers every aspect of the upbringing of children and was 'a definite step forward in educational theory'.²³ Fielding feminises Locke's treatise by adapting his precepts for the education of girls, making *The Governess* a kind of educational treatise in anecdotal form.

Grey notes that Fielding also incorporates into her text six maxims from the Abbé Fénelon's²⁴ *Parisian Essays* (1697, translated into English as *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter* in 1707): '(1) Give her a fine pleasing Idea of Good and a frightful one of Evil (2); Watch over her Childish Passions and Prejudices, and labour sweetly to cure her of them (3); Inculcate upon her that most Honourable Duty and Virtue of Sincerity (4); Be sure to possess her with the Baseness and Vileness of telling a Lye (5); Set before her the several Excesses of all the Rougher Passions, in the most ugly Shapes you can (6); Give her to understand that outward Beauty proceeds from an inward order and harmony'.²⁵

²² Locke's work was based on letters advising his friend, Edward Clarke, how to educate his son.

²³ Richard Ithamar Aaron ed. (1971, 1973), *John Locke*. London: Oxford University Press, 1.

²⁴ Abbé Fénelon (1651-1715), later Archbishop of Cambrai, was tutor to the son of the Dauphin.

²⁵ Grey, 46-7.

In *Some Thoughts* Locke advises that children should be instilled with ‘a love of Credit, and an apprehension of Shame and Disgrace’.²⁶ They must be shown good ‘Habits’, for they are ‘Good or Evil by their Education’:

Impressions on our tender Infancies, have very important and lasting Consequences . . . We must not hope wholly to change their original Tempers, nor make the Gay Pensive and Grave, nor the Melancholy Sportive, without spoiling them. God has stampt certain Characters upon Men’s Minds, which, like their Shapes, may perhaps be a little mended . . . If they are cruel to animals they should be taught the contrary Usage. For the custom of tormenting and killing of Beasts will, by degrees, harden their Minds even towards Men.²⁷

Locke advises that learning ‘must never be imposed as a task’: rather, by piquing their curiosity children will be ‘cozened’ into learning their letters’.²⁸ He suggests that a child is more effectively controlled if no visible adult control is operated upon him: if the child believes that what he does is determined by his own desires rather than by the demands of an external authority, he learns quicker and is easier to control.²⁹ Thus through psychological manipulation the educator’s wishes come to coincide with the child’s own desires. The whip is to be used as a last resort. Judith Burdan notes that this shift ‘from the physical to the psychological’ had a great impact in reshaping the relationship between parent and child and the educational process as a whole, ‘instituting a pedagogy of domestic surveillance over children’.³⁰

Fielding’s interest in the mind, like her feminist activity, can be seen throughout *The Governess*. At a time when educators were supposed to teach girls that young unmarried women were to remain silent until spoken to, Fielding breaks with tradition

²⁶ Ibid. I: 6; I: 5.

²⁷ Ibid. 1: 1-8.

²⁸ MS 38771, British Museum; John Locke (1683, 1752), *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 12th ed. London: S. Birt, Section 73: ‘None of the things they are to learn should ever be made a burden to them, or imposed on them as a task . . . Let a child be but ordered to whip his toy at a certain time every day and see whether he will not soon be weary . . . What they do cheerfully of themselves, they do not presently grow sick of’. Locke’s treatise went to twenty-five printings during the eighteenth century.

²⁹ See Judith Burdan’s essay ‘Girls *Must* Be Seen and Heard: Domestic Surveillance in Sarah Fielding’s *The Governess*’, *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*. 1994, vol. 19, PT 1, 8-14.

³⁰ Ibid.

and allows each of the book's nine fictional girls a voice to air her views. Thus her radical message is that a woman has the right to freedom of speech and to her own opinions from an early age. For the first time in fiction children are afforded space to relate their thoughts and feelings, providing reasons for their actions.

Taking the unorthodox step of inventing the first 'monitor', Jenny Peace, Fielding anticipates the modern prefect system. Following Locke, she allows the fictional girls a great deal of independence. Jenny supervises them and reports to Mrs. Teachum on their leisure-time activities, which consist of storytelling, relating their 'histories', discussing their 'Faults' and learning from one another how to correct them. This usually takes place in an arbour of the Academy garden. Mrs. Teachum ensures that the children understand the moral message in whatever is taught or heard, so they take from their 'lessons' only what she (Fielding) judges to be good. In opposition to the traditional method of educating girls by keeping them indoors to become etiolated weak beings, since weakness and a pale complexion were customarily thought to be attractive female attributes, Fielding adopts the Lockean view: her fictional girls walk to a local dairy, run through an orchard and pick flowers (114-17; 218-228). Consequently Jenny, for example, is a picture of 'perfect Health' with 'an exceeding fine Complexion' (24-25).

Fielding does not advocate the socially accepted method of punishment for children (corporal punishment) for, as Locke points out, this makes children accustomed to cruelty. It also teaches them to hate their educators and despise learning. Fielding's governess is the 'Widow of a Clergyman, with whom she has lived nine Years in all the Harmony and Concord which forms the only satisfactory Happiness in the married State' (2). She has also lost her children to a 'fever' (3). Her husband, when alive, respecting her level of intelligence as equal to his own,

passed on to her his education, enabling her to take on the role of governess after his death. Mrs. Teachum needs to support herself having been swindled by a corrupt banker (3). Thus Fielding opposes the prevailing notion that women were unintelligent beings who needed to be controlled by men, advocates the companionate marriage and condemns fraudsters. Mrs. Teachum fulfils the Lockean role of interested observer, her 'lively and commanding Eye' (4) watching over her pupils who regard her with awe yet love her. Through Mrs. Teachum and the fictional girls, Fielding shows her readers how to develop 'Good habits' and form friendships.

Since Mrs. Teachum 'did not seek to raise a great Fortune' she took 'no more Scholars than she could have an Eye to herself without the Help of other Teachers' (3). This statement can be seen as Fielding's satirical arrow aimed at greedy governors who care more about money than the welfare of children. Fielding also criticizes education in the home, as some girls who enter Mrs. Teachum's Academy are initially disruptive due to 'that sort of Learning' Astell describes as 'worse than the greatest Ignorance'.³¹ For Fielding as for Locke, the new-born child's mind is a *tabula rasa*; what is placed there is what the child learns from association with his or her environment and its inhabitants.³²

Fielding, however, shows that if children are brought into a way of life that is different from their 'norm', they will adapt accordingly. This is illustrated early in *The Governess* when Mrs. Teachum asks Jenny to distribute apples from a basket. They fight one another for the largest apple 'like an enraged Lion on its Prey' (7). Fielding's animal imagery indicates the level of bad behaviour the girls have learned at home. To restore 'Concord', horrified Jenny throws the offending apple out of reach. Mrs Teachum confiscates the apples, promising the worst offenders the 'most

³¹ Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, 23.

³² Locke, Section 1: ' . . . of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. 'Tis that which makes the great difference in mankind'.

severe Punishment' (10) although the reader never learns what this punishment is. As Nickel observes, Fielding is representing the children 'in a state of nature': if a social contract is to emerge from this, 'discipline of one's natural emotions' must follow.³³

Fielding makes the girls take responsibility for their actions through Jenny, who asks the girls what they have achieved by fighting. Spirited Sukey says, 'I cannot say I got anything by it: For my Mistress was angry, and punished me; and my Hair was pulled off, and my Cloathes torn in the Scuffle' (12). Jenny suggests that Sukey would have shown 'more Spirit' and gained a friend if she had she 'yielded the Apple to another'. Subsequently Sukey lies awake all night thinking about Jenny's comments, her mind in 'turmoil' as she undergoes a process of self-examination. She realizes that through continually fighting for her 'rights' she is friendless, so weeps 'bitterly', but as she 'reflects', she begins to see the wisdom of Jenny's words (17).

Sukey's agony reveals what Patricia Demers and Gordon Moyles describe as 'a psychological acuteness quite unique in children's stories of the mid-eighteenth century'.³⁴ Ward associates Sukey's experience with the 'spiritual wrestlings' seen in dissenting works,³⁵ typical examples of which are Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1720). As Ward points out, Fielding obviously 'believed in the possibility of redemption'.³⁶ Sukey and her fellow pupils do undergo a kind of spiritual conversion under the tutelage of the 'good Girl, Jenny', who persuaded them 'one by one' to be 'reconciled to each other with Sincerity and Love' (18).

³³ Nickel (1995), 245.

³⁴ Patricia Demers and Gordon Moyles eds. (1982), *From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 123.

³⁵ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1st part published in 1678; 2nd part, 1684), an allegorical narrative depicting the character Christian's experience of the fundamental verities of life, death, and religion. Bunyan describes his spiritual turmoil in his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666).

³⁶ Ward, Introduction, 34.

Jenny rewards the reformed girls with another basket of apples and tells them, 'My dear Friends . . . you cannot imagine the Happiness it gives me to see you thus so heartily reconciled' (19). Here, Fielding puts into anecdotal form Locke's theoretical concept, that children learn right from wrong by making them feel shame when they err and receive praise when they do well.³⁷

Gathered together in the garden, the girls, led by persuasive Jenny (Fielding's model pupil), are encouraged to admit to the group any 'Faults' in their characters that they may have learned at home. Lucy confesses to the other girls that her fear of being severely punished for breaking a china cup was so strong that she placed it in the 'Foot-boy's room' causing him to be whipped for her 'crime' (104). Lucy's 'confession' prompts Sukey to admit that she regularly beat her playfellow, the child of a servant, because she thought people of lowly status were oblivious to pain (76-77). Nanny, accustomed to having all she desired, confesses that when she saw a girl at the Academy wearing a handsome damask cloak, she assumed the right to take it from her. When prevented from doing so, Nanny vented her frustration by damaging the cloak (188-89). Patty, a withdrawn child, reveals that her parents ignored her, favouring an older child. Her feelings of rejection were exacerbated by a maid telling her that she 'was not as good' as her sibling (112).

With these 'confessions', Fielding paints a damning picture of the lives some children lead in private households. After one fictional child confesses her 'Faults', the others follow. In this way Fielding shows that the key to an individual's true personality, how one thinks and acts, lies deep within the 'Labyrinths of the Mind', but to find it, the child must be allowed to speak — to a patient listener. Thus, in Fielding's educative text, the notion of confession is moving away from the purely

³⁷ Locke, Section 54: ' . . . reward and punishment, are the only motives to a rational creature . . . the spur and the reins whereby all mankind are set on work and guided, and therefore they are to be made use of to children too'.

religious connotation, becoming mundane, ordinary, and as a result, natural — just another part of the daily routine. It is also further evidence of Fielding's unorthodox interest in the human mind and how thought triggers actions (human psychology).

Fielding's didactic message to educators is clear: when a child voluntarily confesses to committing misdemeanours, that child must be able to do so without fear of punishment. The educator can then, with patience, discover the best way to help the child. Without the burden of guilt, the child will become more open to suggestion. This is best achieved by allowing children to freely 'confess' within a group of children (as happens in the *Governess*) for this encourages them to open up to each other in language they all comprehend. Fielding demonstrates that when children work as a group they learn how to please one another rather than offend, to control their 'passions' and form a mutually supportive 'little Community'. Fielding also points out that an errant child may not know when he or she is committing a 'Crime': Dolly says that because she defended her sister, she 'scrupled no Lyes to excuse her Faults' and 'had no Notion' that she was being 'unreasonable' (82).

For Fielding, one's duty to another is to ensure that honesty and love prevail: whoever tempts another person to 'err', or justifies someone's 'error', is 'not a real friend' (xiv). Through Sukey and Nanny, who initially cannot control their 'Passions', Fielding demonstrates that in behaving this way they only make life harder for themselves. Fielding is actually preoccupied with 'passion' throughout *The Governess*, as in 'keeping down the passions' and Sukey's 'ungovernable passions' (the word 'passion' is mentioned thirty-six times in the text), pointing to her participation in the 'predominant passion theory' that accords a person's character and

behaviour to one controlling, innate, 'passion'.³⁸ Since *The Governess* children learn to control their 'passions', Fielding obviously felt that while a 'predominant' passion may predispose a personality, it does not maintain sovereignty over it: rather, it is education that shapes the individual. Fielding rejects the predominant passion theory that could be used as an excuse by sadistic educators for whipping a child to eradicate a rebellious innate passion that is thought to be 'controlling' him or her.

A political anecdote in *The Governess* linking control of the passions to the use of power, concerns Fielding's tale of the two giants, Benefico the good (beneficent), and Barbarico, (the barbarian), (40-75).³⁹ Sadistic Barbarico, who delights in 'Acts of Inhumanity' (40), imprisons and tortures the dwarf, Mignon, which can be viewed as analogous to an educator who is empowered to torture children with the rod or whip while they are virtually prisoners in educative establishments. Barbarico, who cannot tolerate happiness in others, attacks the pastoral lovers, Fidus and his shepherdess Amata. He takes Fidus prisoner and leaves Amata almost dead (43-52). Like all of Fielding's stories in the text, the narration breaks off at strategic moments leaving the fictional girls, and the reader, eager to hear more (as with modern television 'soaps').

Worried for the prisoners locked in the 'gloomy labyrinths' of the giant's cave, Dolly is so fearful of what Barbarico 'with the most hideous Roar' may do to them, that she cannot sleep that night (55-59). Dolly typifies the child who turns into a trembling, nervous wreck when confronted with violent images. When the story

³⁸ The 'predominant passion theory' evolved from the four humours theory, where 'humour' is defined as the embodiment of some dominating individual passion or propensity. Of the four cardinal humours, blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy (or black choler), the balance was thought to determine a person's nature. Blood, which predominates over the other humours, indicates a sanguine personality, a ruddy complexion, an ardent, confident person inclined to hopefulness, with a cheerful disposition. A phlegmatic person is thought of as cold, indifferent, not easily excited. Choler (or bile) indicates an irascible person (quick to anger), while melancholy (or black bile, or black choler) is used to describe someone who constantly indulges in sad thoughts, indicating depression.

³⁹ The 'Two Giants' story is likely to have been inspired by the ancient Salisbury tradition that two ancient giants were responsible for moving huge stones around nearby Stonehenge than Thomas Boreman's *The Gigantick Histories of the Two Famous Giants and other Curiosities*. A model of a giant was currently on show in the doorway of Salisbury Museum in July 2003.

resumes, a fight between the two giants ensues and the good giant wins (61).⁴⁰ Fielding ensures that the children and her readers understand that a giant is a 'contrivance' to signify a mortal man of great power, power he must use for the good of the community or he will lose it (68).

In some ways Fielding's anecdotal educative method in *The Governess* resembles that of Richardson's heroine Pamela. In 1748-9 storytelling was in vogue. Joseph Highmore's picture of Pamela demonstrating the importance of storytelling to young children (1748) had won public acclaim. Obviously, Fielding, Richardson's friend and member of his exclusive coterie, assessed the prevailing public mood and saw that her new kind of fiction for children could be modelled on similar lines, with Mrs. Teachum replacing Pamela. Richardson advised Fielding to specify Mrs Teachum's methods of punishment, but through their mutual friend, Jane Collier, Fielding tactfully declined, insisting that it was better left to the imagination. Collier's letter is a reasoned argument that illustrates Fielding's views on educational methods as well as her tactics regarding other educators. Collier states:

As this book is not so much designed as a direction to governesses for their management of their scholars (though many a sly hint for that is to be found, if attended to) as for girls how to behave to each other, and to their teachers, it is, I think, rather better that the girls (her readers) should not know what this punishment was that Mrs Teachum inflicts; but they should each, on reading it, think it to be the same that they themselves have suffered when they deserved it; for though Miss Fielding (as well as yourself) is an enemy to corporal severities, yet there is no occasion that she should teach the children so punished that their punishment is wrong; for it is the governors only that should be taught that lesson, and this may be done in her *Book upon Education*;⁴¹ and this is the reason for leaving it as it is with regard to her little readers.⁴²

⁴⁰ This story caught the imagination of an American publisher who produced it separately in Boston (1768) without acknowledgement to Fielding. See Grey, 69.

⁴¹ To date, Fielding's planned 'Book upon Education' has yet to materialize. In Section 52 Locke advises against 'Beating' children: 'slavish and corporal punishments, are not the discipline fit to be used in the education of those we would have wise, good, and ingenuous men; and therefore very rarely to be applied . . . in cases of extremity'.

⁴² Barbauld, II: 61-65.

Collier points out that while Fielding is ‘against corporal severities’ administered by ‘the Thwackems’ (as Mr Fielding calls them)’, if she is seen to be so, critics will say that she is ‘an enemy’ of what they call ‘proper discipline’. In which case, they will say that her educational ideas ‘cannot be worth reading’.

Collier is expressing Fielding’s concern, that specifying Mrs. Teachum’s methods of punishment would damage the success of her forthcoming ‘Book upon Education’. When educators see the words ‘*severe punishments* etc.’ they will view *The Governess* more favourably. Those opposed to ‘corporal severities’, when they see that ‘no whipping is mentioned’, will also be inclined to ‘engage’ with Fielding’s book. Collier’s letter shows that Fielding was obviously in tune with the literary marketplace and the changing mood in society with regard to educative methods. That Richardson subsequently printed *The Governess* unchanged reflects the persuasive power of Fielding’s argument conveyed by Collier. That *The Governess* was hugely successful, testifies to Fielding’s astute business acumen.⁴³

Richardson’s concern about Mrs. Teachum’s methods of punishment is understandable, since he was strongly opposed to birching children,⁴⁴ but so were the Fieldings. One of the important messages in *The Governess* is that an educator must be tolerant of what Henry Fielding called, ‘harmless weaknesses’.⁴⁵ Although the book encourages children to be polite, generous and amiable, they are, after all, shown to be mortal, and being so, make mistakes. Fielding points out ‘the importance of sincerity and truthfulness’ and ‘warns against deceit’, but she also recommends that educators should look for the ‘fairest side’ of a child’s actions.⁴⁶ In *Tom Jones* (1749), Henry bitterly recalls ‘Learning’s birchen Altar’ at Eton, where, ‘with true

⁴³ *The Governess*, which was first published 2 January 1749 by Andrew Millar (second edition August 1749), was translated into German (1761) and Swedish (1790)).

⁴⁴ Grey, 43.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 52.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Spartan Devotion, human blood is ‘sacrificed’ (XIII.i). Fielding reveals her abhorrence of corporal punishment in *David Simple*, where Cynthia laments the death of her brother at the age of fifteen:

[H]e had but a weakly Constitution, and the continual tormenting and beating him, to make him learn his Book (which was utterly impossible) had such an Effect on the poor Boy, it threw him into a Consumption, and killed him (88).

Fielding’s condemnation of sadistic ‘educators’ could not be clearer. Following Locke, Fielding illustrates the adverse effects of inculcating children to violence through corporal punishment through the story of Jenny’s cat ‘Frisk’, who is tortured to death by wilful boys (32-5). Fielding’s ‘principal Aim’ in *The Governess* is to imprint this maxim on the minds of her readers: it is ‘Love and Affection for each other, not violent actions . . . [that] makes the Happiness of all Societies’ (xiii).

Further evidence of Fielding’s unorthodox educative methods combined with her unusual interest in the mind is further seen when the girls’ garden tranquillity is disturbed by the screams of an eight-year-old girl being beaten by her mother. Showing how one child’s pain adversely affects another, Fielding’s Jenny begs the woman ‘to forbear’ while little Polly ‘cried as much as the Girl, and desired she might not be beat any more’, but the woman is ‘resolved to *break*’ her child of the ‘horrid Custom’ of lying (79-80). Here, Fielding’s animal imagery coupled with the italicised word ‘*break*’ conveys the picture of a horse whose spirit is cruelly being broken by the whip, making the child analogous to a wayward animal. Dolly is ‘frightened out of her wits’ at the scene. She admits that she once lied to protect a friend, but vows never to do it again (80). Thus *The Governess* teaches readers that lying — even to protect a friend — is wrong, but it also condemns the use of undue or excessive punishment, for cruelty has an adverse influence on those who witness it.

For Fielding, telling lies, like affectation, is abhorrent, especially in women, since it reinforces the notion that the sex is unreliable and inclined to folly. In *The Governess*, Fielding scorns affected women in her satirical portrayal of the Delun sisters, whose father has unexpectedly inherited a title (183-186). These new 'Ladies of Quality' visit Jenny at the Academy, where they behave as 'contemptible' little snobs to whom the other children are required by tradition to curtsy. The Deluns curtsy to each other so often throughout the duration of the visit, requiring the children to curtsy too, that the sentiment of respect is lost in mockery of the tradition. Fielding writes that although Jenny prefers to be 'in Company who did not deserve Ridicule, yet had she the Humour enough to treat Affectation as it deserved' (185).

Obviously Fielding viewed curtseying between friends or humbling oneself to vain, foolish women as undue rigorous formality. In this scenario, Fielding's satire is to the fore: vain Lady Caroline, dressed in 'a Pink Robe, embroider'd thick with Gold, and adorned with very fine Jewels, and the finest Mechlin Lace', addressed 'most of her Discourse to her Sister, that she might have the Pleasure every Minute of uttering your Ladyship, in order to shew what she herself expected', her fingers in 'perpetual Motion . . . adjusting her Tucker' (187). Mrs Teachum's girls 'rejoice' that they are 'made wiser' by learning from the 'Folly' of these vain young women (187).

Thus it is obvious that Fielding shared her brother Henry's views on affectation expounded in his prefatory critical essay in *Joseph Andrews* (1742), that 'Life everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous', but the 'only true source' of the ridiculous 'is affectation'. Fielding's underlying message in *The Governess* is that women should adapt themselves to learning rather than become obsessed with fashion or trivia. Women who refuse to improve their minds are analogous to the 'contemptible Owl', who, 'drawing a film over his eyes, keeps

himself in darkness (x). Her admonition targets women who feign ignorance, possibly to attract a suitor who would not wish to have an educated ‘monster’ for his wife.⁴⁷ Fielding condemns ‘fancied Humility’, women who pretend not to understand what is being discussed, happy to confess their ‘Ignorance’, and likewise admonishes women who think themselves wise without ‘taking Pains to become so’ (x).

Like her brother Henry, and Astell, Fielding obviously valued sensible women while deploring those who prized fashion and ‘fripperies’ above all else. Astell likens such women to ‘Tulips in a Garden’, content ‘to make a fine *shew* and be good for nothing’, each one a ‘garnish’d Sepulchre, which for all its glittering, has nothing within but Emptiness and Putrefaction!’⁴⁸ Fielding’s satirical portrayal of the Delun sisters in *The Governess* conveys the same sentiments, for they also ‘make a fine *shew*’ and are ‘good for nothing’ silly, superficial, puppets. They may also be likened to birds trapped in a gilded cage, content to spend their time pluming themselves.

In *The Governess*, Fielding confidently tackles educationalist issues, despite the subject matter being the assumed province of literary men. The text has been praised by Grey and George Sherburn, who claim that it is ‘the first important educational novel’ in England’.⁴⁹ Mary Cadogan, editor of the 1987 edition of *The Governess*, applauds Fielding’s ‘progressiveness’ as the ‘pioneer’, the ‘founding-mother’ of a new genre that deals with the ‘aspirations and anxieties of young girls growing up’.⁵⁰ Considering the prevailing tide of prejudice towards literary women, *The Governess* is a remarkable achievement and a significant contribution of Fielding’s towards modern

⁴⁷ Fielding’s second-cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, advised her daughter to ‘conceal’ her granddaughter’s learning for that very reason. See Halsband (1970), 237.

⁴⁸A *Serious Proposal*, 7. Astell, who blamed women’s obsession with fashion on their reading French novellas, found it ‘strange’ that English women should ‘imitate their Fashions and Fopperies’ rather than apply themselves to study like women such as Anne Lefèvre Dacier (1654-1720), see p. 85.

⁴⁹ Grey, 51.

⁵⁰ Mary Cadogan ed. (1987), *Sarah Fielding: The Governess; or, Little Female Academy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, vii.

society's eventual acceptance of the educated woman. *The Governess* is the forerunner of works such as Maria Edgeworth's *Tarltton* (1809), Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1847), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850). Madame de Beaumont instigated a succession of imitators of *The Governess* with her *Magasin des Enfants* (1756). Lady Eleanor Fenn, Dorothy Kilner, Charlotte Yonge and Hannah More produced variations on its themes.⁵¹ When Sherwood published her version of *The Governess* in 1820 it was without proper acknowledgement to Fielding, saying only that 'a sister' of Henry Fielding was believed to have written it. In Sherwood's hands the book's aesthetic charm enhanced by fantasy and storytelling is replaced with religious sermonizing *ad nauseam*, rendering her edition a dry, dull, bowdlerized version.⁵²

No critical reviews of *The Governess* were published on its initial appearance,⁵³ which suggests that critics were unsure what to make of it, or Fielding's unorthodox venture into educational texts. Millar, who published the text, advertised it widely as a book 'For the use of SCHOOLS' and 'For the Entertainment' of young ladies.⁵⁴ Most modern scholars regard it as a conduct book for girls, but as shown here, it can also be seen as a radical educational treatise for girls in anecdotal form, promoting freedom of speech for women and female equality in education.

Part III: Astell and Fielding: 'An Union in Partition'

At a time when women were denied by gender entrance to universities, when a woman aspiring to learning rendered herself open to ridicule, it is clear that Fielding, like Astell, resented what Astell called, the 'groundless prejudice' against the

⁵¹ Ibid. 70-77.

⁵² Martha Mary Sherwood (1822), *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy*. London: F. Houlston & Son.

⁵³ Ward, 36.

⁵⁴ Grey, 60.

'Education of Women'.⁵⁵ Astell argues: '[H]ow unjustly Women are denied opportunities of improvement . . . Women were they rightly Educated . . . [would] see through and scorn those little silly Artifices which are us'd to ensnare and deceive them.'⁵⁶ Similarly, Fielding writes in *The Cry*:

[T]hat learning was a fine thing for a man, but 'twas both useless and blame-worthy for a woman, either to write or read . . . [is] bare-faced contempt (I: 51)

If in the education of young women . . . we were to convince them, that admiration is not necessary to their well-being, we then might perhaps effectually guard them against being in the power of every man (II: 85).

In *The Governess*, as in the above passages, there are several occasions when Fielding parallels Astell's unorthodox views on female education. Her notion of an all-female academy reflects Astell's proposal for an educative establishment for women in *A Serious Proposal*.⁵⁷ In her political treatise, Astell urges genteel spinsters to pool their dowries to found a school for women, who, 'unjustly denied opportunities for improvement from without', will attain them 'from within'.⁵⁸

Astell argues that women imbued patriarchal prejudices must be re-educated by first removing all 'Prejudices and Passions' from the mind.⁵⁹ Similarly, in *The Governess* Fielding intends 'to take from young and tender Minds all those Desires and Passions, which Vanity or Ambition might inspire' (Dedication, v). Astell urges her readers to improve their minds with good books: Fielding advises her readers to learn from the 'best' books to make you 'wiser and better' (vii-x). Astell makes women's brains analogous to good 'Soil': like a woman's intelligent mind that lacks a

⁵⁵ Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Astell proposes the erection of 'a *Monastery*' for improving women's minds.

⁵⁸ Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 138.

good education, if left undeveloped, ‘noxious Weeds’ will thrive in it.⁶⁰ Fielding makes the same analogy: the mind must be exercised or the ‘seeds of goodwill’ will be ‘choked and overrun’ with ‘weeds’ (20). At a time when educated women were, as Astell complained, ‘Star’d upon as Monsters’,⁶¹ a statement that Fielding reiterates in *The Cry*,⁶² Fielding’s proposal that her readers should develop a keen interest in learning from ‘good books’ (meaning the classics), is overtly radical.

That Fielding chose to style *The Governess* as a conduct book rather than promoting her feminist views in a polemical treatise was a clever ploy, for as Janet Todd observes, women ‘to some extent were indoctrinated’ by conduct books, so adapted ‘their actions and gestures accordingly’.⁶³ Fielding correctly calculated that the work could carry her call for female equality in education to a large audience of women as well as being a lucrative venture. However, since conduct books were traditionally written by authoritarian *male* writers to show women how men wanted them to behave in accordance with the patriarchal social order, Fielding’s decision evidences her determination to defy convention.

Like Astell, whose work calls for a sisterhood of women, urging them to feel as she did, and to strive for female equality in education, *The Governess* also promotes sisterhood. Underscoring her radical intent, Fielding uses an apt quotation from Shakespeare, prominently placed on the title-page of the first edition, which can be viewed as a call-to-arms urging women to form a mutually supportive bond and, like her, quest for social change. Within the sisterhood every individual will retain the right to her own thoughts and opinions — ‘an Union in Partition’:

⁶⁰ Ibid. 10.

⁶¹ Astell, *Reflections*, xxii.

⁶² *The Cry*, I: 158.

⁶³ Janet Todd (1996), *Female Education in the Age of the Enlightenment*. London: W. Pickering, vii.

Shall we forget the Counsel that we have shar'd
 The Sister's Vows, the Hours that we have spent,
 When we have chid the hasty-footed Time
 For parting Us? O! and is all forgot
 School-days, Friendship, childhood Innocence?
 We, Hermia, like two Artificial Gods,
 Created with our Needles both one Flower,
 Both on one Sampler, sitting on one Cushion;
 Both warbling of one Song, both in one Key,
 As if our Hands, our Sides, Voices and Minds,
 Had been Incor'rate? So we grew together,
 But yet an Union in Partition

(Helena to Hermia, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III: ii).

In *A Serious Proposal* Astell advises women against 'turning over a great number of Books'; rather, they should 'take care to understand and digest a few well chosen and good ones' (22). In *The Governess* Fielding likewise advises her readers against 'running through Numbers of Books' without 'making any Advantage of the Knowledge got thereby' (x). Astell warns that a woman advocating female learning could expect 'all the Fops in Town to shoot their impertinent Censures at' her.⁶⁴ Fielding caters for antagonistic critics by claiming to have incorporated the sentiments of 'the wisest Writers' and sets up as her patron, the Honourable Mrs. Poyntz as the book's ideal female role model (Dedication). Poyntz, one of Queen Caroline's Maids of Honour, is a prestigious endorsement for Fielding's book. Her husband, Stephen Poyntz, was appointed by George II as Governor of his third son, William, later the Duke of Cumberland, who was the first Hanoverian to be brought up in England.

Astell's ideal woman corrects the faults of her friends with 'sweetness not severity; by friendly Admonitions, not magisterial Reproofs'.⁶⁵ Astell explains that 'Friendship' does not mean 'insignificant dearnesses'; rather, it means 'the most refin'd . . . Benevolence', a love that 'makes no distinction' between 'Friend' and

⁶⁴ *A Serious Proposal*, 33.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 28.

‘self’ (36). Jenny Peace, Fielding’s ideal pupil, fits Astell’s description of the ideal woman, an amiable ‘charming Creature’. Her selfless example of true friendship is ‘the ‘Cement of Union and Harmony’ in the book’s ‘well-regulated Society’ (244).

Fielding’s call for female equality in education, evident throughout *The Governess*, is also shown in Henny Fret’s narration concerning her brother. Henny confesses that because she was denied the education offered to her brother, she exorcised her disappointment on him. She states: ‘I had a better memory than my brother, and whenever I learnt anything, my comfort was to laugh at him because he could not learn so fast’ (209). Henny felt ‘so aggrieved’ at being denied the educative opportunities available to her ungrateful brother that she secretly physically abused him: his pain, she says, ‘did not make me cry’ (209-10).

Henny’s confession recalls Cynthia’s tale in *David Simple*, where she laments being denied the education available to her reticent brother (84). In *The Governess*, Jenny is more fortunate. She fondly recalls being educated at home with her brother Harry, when ‘no Partiality’ was shown to either (27). Jenny remembers that during his holidays, Harry shared with her all that he had learned at school (29-31). Grey suggests that this reference is autobiographical, that Fielding is recalling childhood memories with her brother Henry, whose familial name was ‘Harry’.⁶⁶

In *A Serious Proposal* Astell states: Friendship is a Vertue which comprehends all the rest . . . were the World better, there wou’d be more Friendship, and were there more Friendship we shou’d have a better World (36). Similarly, in *The Governess*, Fielding views friendship as the key to forming a society of ‘Benevolence and Love’ where ‘Peace and Harmony’ reign supreme (244-45).

⁶⁶ Grey, Introduction, 8.

Fielding's text does not follow convention: as well as encouraging female readers to assert their right to learning and freedom of speech, it does not stress a devotion to needlework. This subject is mentioned briefly, such as when the girls view tapestries in Lord X—'s home (221). When Richardson's heroine, Pamela, diligently makes her master a waistcoat, the needle becomes synonymous with her virtue, but for women who loved learning, the needle was a symbol 'of female drudgery'.⁶⁷ Haywood objected to the notion that women should be confined to domesticity, making shirts and other household garments. In *The Female Captive* (1721) she advises aspiring literary women who dared to 'exchange the Needle for the Quill' that they would need to swim against 'that Tide of Raillery' aimed 'at all of my Sex'.⁶⁸ Elizabeth Cady Stanton describes the needle as 'that one-eyed demon of destruction', 'that evil genius of our sex, which in spite of all our devotion, will never make us healthy, wealthy, or wise'.⁶⁹ Charlotte Brontë saw needlework as 'the direct antithesis of creative writing'.⁷⁰ Cecilia Macheski states:

For many women, the needle became not the symbol of innocence and chastity that Richardson portrayed . . . but, more realistically, a symbol of the roles and responsibilities that fettered women.⁷¹

In *A Serious Proposal* Astell argues that customs of domesticity such as needlework prevented intellectual women from learning. 'Custom', she claims, 'has usurpt such an unaccountable Authority, that she who would endeavour to put a stop to its Arbitrary Sway and reduce it to Reason' risks censure (33). Astell urges women to 'rescue' themselves from 'that woeful incogitancy [*sic*] we have slipt into, awaken

⁶⁷ Macheski, in Schofield and Macheski, 91.

⁶⁸ See Kirsten T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio eds. (2000), *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on her Life and Work*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 10.

⁶⁹ Cited Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

our sleeping Powers and make use of that reason which GOD has given us' (33). In *The Governess* Jenny Peace is a model pupil not for her needlework, but because she has been educated by her mother to be her brother's 'equal in all things' (27). Clearly, Fielding shared Astell's view that 'Reason' is God-given to women as well as men. Fielding constantly promotes the notion that a woman can be as intelligent as a man, even superior. This is underscored with the dove fable that is included in the final pages of *The Governess*. In a contest to find the best bird the dove wins over the eagle because she has more common sense than the preening birds who boast of their famed beauty. Moreover, she considers the care of her young more important than competitions. Obviously Fielding viewed the care and protection of the young as paramount and, like the vulnerable fledglings in the fable, young children need diligent, loving care to make them sensitive to the needs of others (228-236).

According to Ward, Fielding's text offers 'no resistance to the patriarchal society that imposed strictures on women's education in the eighteenth century'.⁷² It is true that *The Governess* is not an overt polemical treatise like Astell's *A Serious Proposal*, but in her call for female equality, subversively couched within her fiction, Fielding appears to borrow extensively from Astell's radical treatises. Furthermore, although *The Governess* purports to be a conduct book for young women, Fielding acts in accordance with Schellenberg's definition of a feminist, which is, a woman who continually places her female 'self' in 'opposition to her society'.⁷³ By encouraging her female readers to think of themselves as rational creatures with every right to speak, study 'good books' and take responsibility for their own actions, Fielding challenges the very foundations of patriarchy.

⁷² Ward, 32.

⁷³ See Betty A. Schellenberg, (1996), *The Conversational Circle: Re-reading the English Novel, 1740-1775*. Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 22-35.

Part IV: Questioning 'A Man's Business'

Although in the eighteenth century classical learning and philosophy was, as Fielding states in *The Cry* (I: 122), 'a man's business', she mocks the notion. For instance, in *Familiar Letters* (1747), Fielding has her character Cynthia state: 'BOOKS of Philosophy are now my Delight; I can sit Hours under the Shade of a great Tree, conversing with those Sages of Antiquity' (II: 30-31). Among Cynthia's 'Ethical Companions' are Homer, Shakespeare, and '*Rochefocault*', but because she is ridiculed for her love of learning, Cynthia reads her 'good' books at home in her closet, 'under the pretence' of looking through 'Fans and sorting Ribbands' (II: 151).

While sitting beneath a tree, Cynthia's thoughts are disturbed by an angry husband admonishing his wife, associating her stupidity with Eve's 'foolishness' in the Genesis story of the Fall. Fielding satirically adds in parenthesis, '*(An Example not perfectly forgot by the greatest part of his Posterity)*', her italics underscoring her scorn of the notion that Eve was solely responsible for humanity's downfall (II: 97). It transpires that while the noisy gentleman was reading aloud Milton's *Paradise Lost* to his poorly educated wife, her questions about parts of the text beyond her understanding had irritated him. Fielding mocks the man's pomposity as Cynthia imagines him dangled by Eve in mid-air, about to fall:

[W]hilst he was thus enjoying his own Perfections, I was placing him in my Fancy in *Gulliver's* Stead on the *Brobdingnag's* Table . . . held up in the Air between the Finger and Thumb of one of those Giants . . . (II: 99).

This satirical display of an important biblical issue is daringly unorthodox for an eighteenth-century female writer. Fielding is radically assailing the very foundations of patriarchy. This scenario recalls Astell's forthright observations about the Fall:

Adam's being Form'd before Eve, seems as little to prove her Natural Subjection to him, as the Living Creatures, Fishes, Birds and Beasts being Form'd before them both, proves that Mankind must be subject to these Animals. Nor can the Apostle mean that Eve only sinned . . . Adam sinn'd wilfully and knowingly, he became the greater Transgressor.⁷⁴

Obviously for Fielding as for Astell, assumed male superiority originating from the Genesis story is untenable. Astell points out that physical strength does not imply a superior intellectual capacity, for if 'Strength of Mind goes along with Strength of Body,' as philosophers claim, why is it that 'the Sturdiest Porter is not the Wisest Man [?]'.⁷⁵ In Cynthia's story, had the wife of the reader of Milton educated his wife to his level of erudition (like Mr. Teachum in *The Governess*), she would have had no cause to interrupt him and been a more interesting companion.

In *The Cry* Fielding becomes more overt in her call for female equality in education. Through her main protagonist, Portia, who is repeatedly called upon by the Cry to make rational judgments, she argues that while every woman ought to be 'thoroughly acquainted' with 'so-call'd' mundane 'female accomplishments', women are capable of much more (I: 156-9). Portia agrees that a 'learned education' is unnecessary for *all* women, but she defends the woman's right to a good education. She vehemently defends 'Miss C—' (Jane Collier?) who is accused of laziness because she prefers learning languages to performing domestic chores (I: 157-8). Representing women who (perhaps unwittingly) work to maintain gender-biased customs by preferring to remain ignorant, or feign ignorance for fear of being marginalized by society as 'monsters', the feminine part of the Cry react antagonistically towards Portia. Unlike them, Portia has been educated by her father to be a future companion to a man of *real* understanding', not to 'be forced on the

⁷⁴ Astell, *Reflections*, xiii-xiv.

⁷⁵ See also Perry's comments, 501, n 28.

trifling practice of gossiping about other peoples affairs' or 'grow into a stupid lump of inanity' (III: 112). He hoped that she would marry a man who would 'rejoice in a wife's perfections, without any mixture of paltry envy' (III: 112).

Consequently Portia is an overtly radical figure who studies languages and 'the most admired ancient authors' (II: 256). Unlike pompous male philosophers, Portia is devoid of 'philosophic pride', happy to trust 'the wisdom of Socrates' who had discovered the 'narrow bounds of all mortal knowledge' (III: 112). Through Portia, Fielding challenges the notion that philosophers are 'unfathomable gods': they are merely mortals, and because they are so, they can make mistakes.

In Fielding's argument, women who are interested in philosophical discourse should be educated thoroughly to understand what philosophers mean, and how philosophical theories should be applied to living a better life. Women who try but fail to understand them because they have not the privilege of a good education, can, she argues, be misled into a degenerate life. Fielding demonstrates this through her character Cylinda, who, like Portia, studies the classics and philosophical works rather than 'dress or person, which so fills and possesses most girls'. Cylinda's 'great love' of reading enables her to attain 'swift progress in learning' (II: 256). Unlike Portia, however, who has been grounded in philosophical education by her father, Cylinda has tried to educate herself, experimenting with one system of ethics after another. After becoming totally confused by what she has read Cylinda concludes that with 'impunity,' she can 'settle' her 'own rule of life' (II: 256-8).

Cylinda persuades herself that according to philosophical teachings, a woman as well as a man can choose whether or not to marry, so she lives life to the full as a mistress to her succession of lovers as opposed to marrying them. She had 'no inclination for marriage' (II: 271). Her promiscuous performance can be viewed as a

reversal of gender roles in accordance with the prevailing sexual ‘double standard’, the tradition that condoned male adultery while women were expected to remain chaste. After using Cylinda to argue her feminist point about women being seriously misguided due to the lack of a sound education, in the dénouement of *The Cry* Fielding brings her back into the conventional fold, as it were, to repent her promiscuity and seek forgiveness. It is a late inclusion that can be seen as Fielding’s last-minute attention to the necessity of protecting her own virtuous reputation, remembering her dependence on subscribers. Nevertheless, her resentment of women being regarded as inferior beings is perfectly clear. For most of *The Cry* Fielding’s radical characters Portia and Cylinda live according to their own wishes, flouting patriarchal conventions.

Through Portia, Fielding also claims the right for women to formulate a new language. Language is, after all, she points out, entirely *man*-made. In this way, Fielding radically assails the foundations of education. Portia derives ‘new’ words from Latin etymology: ‘dextra’ means rightness of mind (1:18), ‘sinistra’ signifies ‘evil passions’, such as ‘wrath, hatred, malice, envy, trouble, bustle, and confusion’, while ‘turba’ (derived from ‘perturbation’) describes a mind in turmoil (1: 194-95).⁷⁶ Obviously anticipating a negative reaction from critics for proposing a woman’s right to invent new words, Fielding has Portia castigated by the *Cry* for interfering with the English language. They condemn her new words as ‘gibberish’. Undeterred, Portia continues her etymological discourse, arguing that ‘teazing and tormenting’ actions emanate from a mind full of ‘Turba’.

In Portia’s expatiation on education, Fielding opportunely compares the ‘torture’ in English public schools (corporal punishment), with the pleasure intended by

⁷⁶ ‘Dextra’ (right) and ‘sinistra’ (left) are words still used to denote the two sides of a heraldic shield.

ancient writers for students. Portia contends that an Indian visitor to England would think the Bible ‘heathen mythology’, and that society worshipped more than one God from the reverence paid to Homer, Virgil, and Horace — ‘gods’ of the ‘highest learning’ (II: 36-40). On his return home, Portia’s imaginary Indian would inform his countrymen ‘that the doctrines of these deities, and their religious rites, were so hard to be learnt, that the *English* youth were forced to undergo a very rigorous discipline, even to the loss of blood, before they could attain such knowledge’ (II: 41-42). Fielding repeatedly insists that corporal punishment removes the ‘delight’ pupils could find in reading the ‘best authors’ (II: 45).

Through Portia Fielding also assails male ‘dictators’ who impart their own confused ideas to women and children (I: 82-3). Knowledge, Fielding argues, should not be retained for a select few but should be passed on to everyone, including women, by those who ‘really know’ what they are talking about (I: 83-84). When Portia attempts to explain her interest in ‘logic’ (a branch of philosophy) to the Cry, they are aghast that a woman dares to mention the word ‘Logic’, for it is ‘a man’s business’, like the learning of ‘Greek and Latin’ (I: 120-22). Fielding argues that women have as much right to ‘learning in languages’ as those who relish ‘cards’:

[When] a young lady employs her leisure hours in acquiring as much as will enable her to have (by which means she may indeed have something a less relish than other young ladies for cards and public places) ‘I see not why she should be stared at as a monster, reviled as a slattern, or ridiculed as an absurd animal, not fit for the company of either men or women’ (I: 158).

Fielding’s words, ‘stared at as a monster’ is a direct borrowing from Astell, who vehemently objects to learned women being ‘Star’d at as Monsters’ in *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*.⁷⁷ Like Shakespeare’s Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*,

⁷⁷ Astell, *Reflections*, xxii.

who confronts a man over matters outside a woman's sphere and wins, Fielding's Portia takes on her critics, male and female, to challenge 'a man's business'. Portia's several forceful arguments in support of a higher level of female education, as Bree observes, is 'beyond anything Fielding had outlined in *The Governess*'.⁷⁸ Portia's (Fielding's) arguments parallel Astell's, who argues in *Reflections*, that God has given 'Sense' to 'both Sexes with an Impartial Hand, but Learning is what Men have engross'd to themselves'.⁷⁹ Astell points out that one would expect 'Men's Understandings' to be 'superior to Women's, for, after many Years Study and Experience', they should 'be wise and learned', whereas women, denied the educative opportunities offered to men, cannot be expected to be as wise.⁸⁰

Thus, as seen here, Fielding uses her fiction to urge women to realize that there is no valid reason why they should not have the right to the type of education reserved for men. Like Astell, who urges women to 'fortify' their 'Minds against foolish Customs', to open their eyes to 'the Faculties' given them from 'that All-Perfect Being',⁸¹ Fielding writes, 'as Christ himself witnesses' and an old English proverb reminds us, '*Who so blind as those that will not see?*'. Obviously Fielding viewed 'wilful blindness' as 'the darkest and most incurable defect' in women (II: 166-7).

Part V: Conclusion

Clearly a radical author, Fielding used her fiction to quest for a better education for women as she constantly pushed against the literary boundaries defining the assumed province of men, unashamedly showing off her own unorthodox erudition, innovative prowess and ability to adapt male-authored theories into anecdotal form. Bree notes

⁷⁸ Bree (1997), (Internet, no pagination).

⁷⁹ Astell, *Reflections*, xii.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* xii.

⁸¹ Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, 96.

that ‘one of the most striking aspects of *The Governess* is the way in which Locke’s ideas ‘become principles of female education’.⁸² Applauding the text’s distinctive contribution to children’s education, Richard Lovell Edgeworth was later to remark that as a child he had ‘no resource’ to books for children except ‘Newberry’s [*sic*] little books and Mrs. Teachum’.⁸³ Fielding demonstrates with her fiction and her own unorthodox lifestyle that intelligent women can think and act for themselves, but they can only become accepted as rational beings when they divest themselves of foolish affectation, such as exhibited by the Delun sisters, whose lives revolve around fashion and status to the point of ludicrousness.

This chapter has shown that Fielding, like Astell, sends out the message to women that they can attain the same level of ‘Understandings’ as men, provided that they are willing to apply themselves to learning and risk ignominy by defying convention. Like Astell, Fielding notes the difficulty of re-educating her sex away from traditions that subjugate women, aware that social reform will be no easy task. In *The Cry*, she writes: ‘Mankind will seldom be at the trouble to cleanse their minds, and throw out from thence that confused heap of lumber’ (II: 168), lumber that prevents women being viewed on equal intellectual terms as men. Fielding’s fiction urges women to assume the right to voice their opinions and take responsibility for their actions. Sisterhood would add strength to the feminist cause.



⁸² Bree (1996), 59.

⁸³ Gray, 1.

Chapter 4

A Mid-Century Call for Female Equality In Employment and Marriage

This chapter examines Fielding's call for female equality in marriage and employment. Part I will provide historical information to explain why Fielding would quest for change in these areas. Although Fielding's main focus centres on the plight of the impoverished middle- or upper-class woman like herself, Part II considers her concerns for *all* disadvantaged women. Part III examines Fielding's views on the lives of gentlewomen who fulfil the role of governess or lady's companion, specifically the latter. Part IV compares Fielding's views on marriage with those of the recognised early English feminist, Mary Astell.¹

Part I: *Established Customs and the Need for Change*

Eighteenth-century gentlewomen, as Hill points out, were educated primarily for a career in marriage, but without a dowry, as Fielding and her sisters would discover, there was little chance of marrying a young man of equal status.² Whereas lower-class women could find employment in agriculture, cotton-spinning, weaving, domestic service, or working for village and market-town traders, employment opportunities for gentlewomen who needed to support themselves were few.³ Hester (Mulso) Chapone (1727—1801), a member of Samuel Richardson's coterie, complained: 'Custom . . . allows not the daughters of people of fashion to leave their fathers family to seek their own subsistence, and there is no way for them to gain a

¹ See Perry, *passim*.

² Hill (1989), 41.

³ *Ibid.* 222; Stone, 244-5.

creditable livelihood'.⁴ In 1753 Jane Collier declared: '[T]here are many methods for young men . . . to acquire a genteel maintenance; but for a girl I know not one way of support that does not by the esteem of the world, throw her below the rank of gentlewoman'.⁵ Moira Ferguson reports that by mid-century, men had replaced women in 'millinery, hairdressing, and mantua-making'.⁶ Wollstonecraft was also to lament the few 'modes of earning a subsistence' open to gentlewomen, who, had they been given the opportunity, 'might have practised as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their own industry'.⁷

In a society where women are valued for procreation, 'A single woman . . . is felt both by herself and others to be a kind of excrescence on the surface of society, having no use or function or office there'.⁸ A modest single gentlewoman with a little education could be invited into a rich family to act as a governess or an unpaid lady's companion, but in either role, she could be made to feel subservient. Spencer notes that Wollstonecraft 'tried the two most usual yokes of lady's companion and governess' but 'chafed bitterly under them'.⁹

Stone observes that governesses suffered 'social stigma' and were very poorly paid, earning as little as '£12 to £30 per year, although with some 'knowledge of French a genteel woman with the right connections could earn up to £100 per year'.¹⁰ They worked a seven-day week 'from 7a.m. to 7p.m.', and were often 'more a prisoner than any servant in the house'. Stone comments:

⁴ John Murray (1807), *The Posthumous Works of Mrs. Chapone, Containing her Correspondence with Mr Richardson* . . . 2 vols. London, II: 94.

⁵ Collier (1753), 38.

⁶ Moira Ferguson ed. (1985), *First Feminists: British Women Writers 1578-1799*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1.

⁷ Brody, 267.

⁸ John Stuart Mill, cited in Stone, 244-5.

⁹ Spencer (1986), 13. Before becoming governess to Lord Kingsborough's children, Wollstonecraft and her sister, Eliza, managed a school at Newington Green.

¹⁰ Stone, 244.

Worst of all was that their equivocal social status deprived them of any companionship or sense of belonging. A governess is almost shut out of society, not choosing to associate with servants, and not being treated as an equal by the heads of the house and their visitors. Not a relation, not a guest, not a mistress, not a servant, the governess lived in a kind of status limbo . . . not a daughter of the house and so open to marriage offers, she was nothing . . .¹¹

According to Hill, 'genteel waiting-women, ladies' maids, and companions' enjoyed a high standard of living and were seen as the 'elite of female domestic servants'.¹² Even so, in Fielding's fiction, the lady's companion usually leads a miserable life.

Hill reports that lower-class women enjoyed more freedom of choice in marriage than upper-class women, who were customarily used as marriage 'bargains' to seal agreements between patriarchs when exchanging land, money, or for political advancement.¹³ Stone notes that the possession of property and the laws concerning primogeniture 'vitally affected family structures and marriage arrangements among the propertied classes, but left the propertyless masses untouched'.¹⁴ While the age of consent was fourteen for a boy and twelve for a girl,¹⁵ Dr. Thomas Cogan, reflecting medical opinion, blamed the falling average height of upper-class Englishmen on the physical immaturity of the parents, while others believed that childbirth, with ill-trained midwives who often horribly botched the job, and lack of hygienic precautions causing puerperal fever, was excessively dangerous for very young girls.¹⁶

While documenting the lack of sentiment or 'wooing' in upper-class marriages, Hill notes that 'often the couple concerned had barely met'.¹⁷ This is borne out in fiction by Fielding's brother Henry, whose character Sir Positive Trap, arguing that there was no need for courtship, states: 'I never saw my lady . . . till an hour before

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hill (1989), 41.

¹³ Stone, 73.

¹⁴ Ibid. 27.

¹⁵ Hill (1989), 203.

¹⁶ Stone, 42; 64.

¹⁷ Hill (1989), 174.

our marriage. I made my addresses to her father, her father to his lawyer, the lawyer to my estate . . . the bargain was struck . . . What need have young people of addressing, or anything, till they come to undressing?’¹⁸ In real life, Lady Sarah Pennington relates that she had never been in a room alone with her future husband until the marriage ceremony.¹⁹ Fielding addresses this subject in *David Simple*, where Cynthia’s father introduces her to a stranger as her future husband (85-6).

According to the prevailing system of dower, an aristocratic bride was expected to contribute a cash sum known as a ‘portion’ usually provided by her father, in proportion to his and the groom’s status. While the groom’s father could use the dowry to marry off one of his daughters, it was customary for him to retain part of the dowry to support his daughter-in-law should she become widowed. This was termed a ‘jointure’. In cases involving a widow’s right to her jointure, lawyers had to prove that a marriage had occurred, the most infallible proof of which was the evidence of a church wedding conducted by a member of the clergy and which had been duly certified and recorded.²⁰ Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act (1753) required all girls under the age of twenty-one to have parental consent to their marriage. Nevertheless, clandestine marriages in London numbered 300,000 by 1754.²¹

Not surprisingly, among landowners looking to protect their wealth and property rights, there was a ‘high degree of social and economic endogamy’²² (marriage inside one’s own group — inbreeding). Paradoxically, while a woman’s ‘virtue’ (chastity)

¹⁸ Henry Fielding (1728), *Love in Several Masques*, II, vi.

¹⁹ Lady Sarah Pennington (1770), *An Unfortunate Mother’s Advice to Her Absent Daughters*. London, 9-10.

²⁰ Hill (1989), 203.

²¹ Roger Lee Brown, ‘The Rise and Fall of Fleet Marriages’ cited in Hill (1989), 203. Hardwicke’s Act had some effect in preventing rich heiresses being abducted to enter secret binding engagements with ‘unsuitable’ persons. After 1754 clandestine marriages could only be performed in Scotland.

²² Stone, 50.

was a necessary qualification in marriage to protect the line of inheritance, it was socially acceptable for a husband to indulge in extra-marital activities.

In her overtly feminist treatise, *Reflections upon Marriage, Occasion'd by the Duke & Duchess of Mazarine's Case* (1700), which was widely circulated and reprinted in 1706 with a lengthy preface, Astell protested the system of dower. She maintained that happy marriages were few due to money replacing love as the primary qualification for most marriages. There was no room for emotional compatibility when a man's 'first enquiry' is 'How many Acres' she will bring him, 'Or how much ready Coin?'²³ Judging from the several occurrences in her fiction where Fielding appears to borrow directly from Astell, it is obvious that she had read Astell's work. Fielding could have met Astell through Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who, according to Perry, was Astell's 'spiritual daughter' who would help to 'convince London society of women's intellectual potential'.²⁴ Astell's polemics and her battles with traditionalist clergymen over a woman's right to freedom of choice in education and marriage made her a 'celebrated figure' at the turn of the century.²⁵

In Fielding's day, divorce was not easy to obtain. 'Separation' was the acknowledged practice for a marriage that had broken down. Separation, however, 'discredited a woman' more than a man 'regardless of her circumstances'.²⁶ Fielding addresses separation in *The Governess* (1749), with the story of Lord and Lady X—who part because Lady X— cannot provide her husband with an heir to his estate (227-28). Marriage was virtually an indissoluble union, breakable only by death. Fielding refers to this in fiction as 'the irrevocable Chains of Marriage', the analogy linking marriage with the topical subject of slavery.

²³ See Astell, *Reflections*.

²⁴ Perry, 12; 275-77. Astell wrote the preface for Lady Mary's posthumously published travel memoirs, the *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763).

²⁵ Perry, 12.

²⁶ Katherine M. Rogers (1982), *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*, Sussex: Harvester Press, 8.

That a husband could physically chastise an errant wife behind closed doors or lock her away in an attic is a given. It is an issue addressed in the nineteenth century by Charlotte Brontë (1816–55) in *Jane Eyre* (1847). A husband could sell his wife at a ‘Jade-fair’, where, led in ignominy with a halter around her neck she could be auctioned off in the same way that animals were (a practice Thomas Hardy adapts as his theme in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886)). Since a popular place for a ‘Jade-fair’ was Smithfield meat market in London, such wives were referred to as ‘Smithfield bargains’.²⁷ At mid-eighteenth-century Chapone referred to marriages ‘amongst people of quality of great fortune’ as ‘mere Smithfield bargains, so much ready money for so much land, and my daughter flung in into the bargain!’²⁸

Richard Steele (1672—1729), the Irish essayist, dramatist and politician, viewed women as ‘an additional Part of the Species’, a fact that they should accept ‘for their own Happiness and Comfort’ as well as ‘those for whom they were born’.²⁹ George Savile, Marquis of Halifax (1633-1695), informed women in *Advice to a Daughter* (1688), which ran to seventeen editions before 1791: ‘[T]here is inequality in the sexes . . . for the better economy of the world, the men, who were to be the law-givers, had the larger share of reason bestowed upon them, by which means your sex is the better prepared for the compliance that is necessary’.³⁰ According to Halifax, a woman’s ‘duties’ included compliance in marriage to the man chosen for her by her family elders, bearing his children, and turning a blind eye to his extra-marital affairs. Nor should a woman think of separating from a hated husband because the sordid washing of dirty linen in public would bring disgrace upon the families involved. In

²⁷ Stone, 35, suggests that this medieval procedure, which often had the consent of the wife, was more common among the lower classes but became ‘far more frequent in the eighteenth century’. Hill reports that plebian wife-sales ‘parodied aristocratic practice’, 217-220.

²⁸ Murray (1807), II: 121-2.

²⁹ Richard Steele, *The Spectator*. London: J. M. Dent (Everyman, 1950), III: 70-71.

³⁰ Cited in Stone (1977, 1979), 186-7.

any case, he demurred, ‘an indecent complaint makes a wife much more ridiculous than the injury that provoketh her to it’.³¹

Halifax further advises that ‘it will be no new thing’ if a woman ‘should have a drunkard for a husband’; his consumption of alcohol may even make him ‘more affectionate and tolerant’. Halifax stipulated that it was a wife’s duty to handle her short-tempered husband with ‘extreme tact and discretion’, while the best a wife could hope for if married to a niggardly husband was to cajole him into spending more generously.³² Stone describes Halifax’s gender-biased maxims, which were ‘widely approved of in aristocratic circles throughout the century’, as ‘counsels of resignation and despair’ for women.³³ A wife who murdered her husband was committing a crime tantamount to treason: in 1726 a woman of Tyburn who killed her irascible husband was punished under the law for treason rather than for murder.³⁴

Mrs. Thrale, Fielding’s associate, reports that her husband’s parasitic friend and lodger, Guiseppe Baretti, had more authority in her home than she did:

Not a Servant, not a Child did he leave me any Authority over; if I would attempt to correct or dismiss them, there was instant Appeals to Mr. Baretti, who was sure always to be against me in every Dispute. [W]ith Mr. Thrale I was ever cautious of contending, conscious that a Misunderstanding there could never answer; as I have no Friend or Relation in the World to protect me from the rough Treatment of a *Husband* shou’d he chuse to exert his *Prerogatives*. . .³⁵

In such times as these, it is no surprise that women like Astell and Fielding were urging women to challenge unfair established customs.

³¹ Lord Halifax (1688) *Advice to a Daughter*. London, which ran to seventeen editions before 1791.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Perry, 164.

³⁵ Balderston, I: 43.

Part II: A True Feminist

While Fielding is mainly concerned for women of upper-class status like herself, she is a true feminist who positively intervenes in issues operating outside her novels, particularly those that affect *all* disadvantaged women.

For instance, in *Volume the Last* (1753), Fielding evokes sympathy for Betty Dunster, an intelligent girl from a poor farming family whose eagerness to learn and ability to absorb what is taught to her is stifled to please her prospective employer, the affluent snob, Mrs. Orgueil. It is a kind of ‘psychic numbing’ (breaking the child’s will), to use Stone’s terminology.³⁶ The Dunsters are neighbours of the Orgueil’s and David’s extended family, which includes Cynthia and Valentine. With Cynthia’s tuition, Betty quickly learns ‘to write and to read’. In return she teaches little Camilla to ‘knit and spin Flax’ until she presents her mother with a pair of stockings (256). Fielding portrays David’s home as a busy hive of happy cottage industry, where attention is lavished on the mental and physical welfare of the children (293). Thanks to David’s agrarian aptitude, in their villeggiatura the children play freely in a garden full of flowers and vegetables, freedoms that are unusual to see in fiction before Fielding’s. Mrs. Orgueil objects to Betty’s erudition and the ‘freedoms’ allowed in David’s home, so she insists that Betty’s parents break her away from David’s family.

On hearing that Betty can read, Mrs. Orgueil bustles (uninvited) into the Dunster’s home to remonstrate with her mother, casting a tangential barb at romance novellas:³⁷ ‘Romances . . . fine reading indeed, for a Country Wench! And you will find what a pretty Figure she will make, when, after she is married to some honest

³⁶ Although the Bristol milk-maid turned poet, Ann Cromartie Yearsley (1756—1806), was born after Fielding’s novel, the fact that Yearsley’s class and circumstances defeated her early aptitude for reading and writing is testament to the realism of Betty’s situation. Stone, ‘psychic numbing’, 80.

³⁷ Romance fiction that can delude impressionable readers into believing that courtship always leads to marriage and future happiness, which did not happen often for eighteenth-century women.

farmer, she is caught, instead of minding her Dairy, poring over a Romance!’ (257).

When Mrs. Orgueil discovers that Betty is actually studying serious texts, ‘History and the Bible’ she can hardly contain herself and angrily explodes:

Reading is not a proper Employment for a Farmer’s Daughter . . . I am resolved . . . if she can be made to forget all the Stuff *Cynthia* has taught her, and behaves well, I will keep her as my Woman. Or if Miss *Cassy* should like her, she may be her Maid. And she will find some Difference between living in my House in any Station, and herding with a Parcel of beggarly Wits (257).

In the above passage Fielding’s carefully chosen words for Mrs. Orgueil’s offensive language are laden with sarcasm. Use of the first-person pronoun ‘I am resolved’, ‘I will keep her’ — not only indicates Mrs. Orgueil’s selfishness, it emphasizes her assumption of power over the Dunster family. Mrs. Orgueil will ‘keep’ Betty as one might ‘keep’ an animal, far below her own status, down in the lower chain of being. Fielding emphasizes this point when she refers to Betty’s relationship with David’s family as ‘herding’. David’s family are objectified as a ‘Parcel’ — a group of objects rounded up as one whole to be dispatched from one place to another. They are ‘beggarly Wits’ — beggars because they are not rich like the Orgueils, and they are eager to learn, which, to Mrs. Orgueil, is as offensive as their lack of wealth.

Fielding, here, is again exposing the ill-effects of a social system that equates money with power, the recurring motif in her fiction that is evident from her first novel to her last. ‘Money’, Fielding writes, ‘is a very necessary Thing . . . Nothing is to be had without Money, our Doctor must have his Fee or we can have no Cure’.³⁸ Money dictates the way a woman is viewed by her society: ‘If a Woman has Assurance enough to be ashamed of Infamy, and a Fortune to afford every fashionable Expencc; the World may blame her ill Conduct, but it will not desert her, while they

³⁸ Sabor (2004), 68-9.

censure her Behaviour they will Court her Acquaintance'.³⁹ Conversely, a woman born into 'polite circles' who is reduced to penury, even if it is not of her own doing, is made to feel as if she had committed 'a Crime'.⁴⁰ 'Eighteenth-century sensibility', as Skinner observes, 'is linked inescapably to the economic'.⁴¹ Money affords Mrs. Orgueil the power to control the lives of the Dunsters.

In her determination to gain an ascendancy over David's family and the Dunsters, Mrs. Orgueil uses her power as a prospective employer, confident that by offering Betty 'a place' in her home the Dunsters will comply with her demands. Evoking sympathy for Betty and her mother, Fielding writes: 'Mrs. Dunster . . . easily perceived the Difference there would, indeed, be to her poor Girl; but she durst not, by a Refusal, disoblige Mrs. Orgueil . . . yet so little Joy did she express for this Prospect of her Daughter's Advancement, that Mrs. Orgueil bid her gone, for an ignorant ungrateful Fool, and send her Husband directly thither' (257). Mrs. Orgueil completely disregards Mrs. Dunster's natural feelings for her child. Sadly, the Dunsters are forced to comply with Mrs. Orgueil's demands because of their dire economic circumstances.

Fielding's sympathy for girls like 'poor Betty' and her brow-beaten parents is clear. Coming from a loving family, Betty is totally unprepared for the miserable life she is destined to lead with her 'invidious' mistress. Betty typifies the girl of a tender age who leaves the family home to enter domestic service, where, subject to the demands of an abusive employer, she could be constantly tormented in various ways as a subservient being. She is without hope of ever rising above her lowly 'station'.

With this scenario Fielding also points out how affluent women like Mrs. Orgueil make themselves friendless and miserable because they do not know how to

³⁹ Ibid. 109.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Skinner, Introduction, 1.

form true friendships. Accustomed to the trappings of wealth from birth and coached to be proficient in the 'Art of Tormenting' like her affluent female ancestors, Mrs. Orgueil represents women who work to uphold unfair traditions. In a way, her mental attitude can be viewed as a kind of deformity: tradition has 'turned' her brain. Through her omniscient narrator Fielding explains that if Mrs. Orgueil would only channel her energy into sharing her time and money with those less fortunate, she would reap 'more Benefit to herself' and form true friendships (259). Instead, she lavishes affection on her lapdog. Fielding satirically equates Mrs. Orgueil's regard for her husband to that of the dog, whose death Mrs. Orgueil 'lamented in full as pathetic Terms' as the previously imagined 'Death of her Husband' during his recent bout of sickness (335).

Mrs. Orgueil grows more miserable, more 'overbearing and insolent' throughout the text, exorcising her 'malice' on young Betty, who dare not offend her mistress or her spiteful daughter. Shortly after joining the Orgueils, Betty is subjected to a hail of 'stigmatizing' 'shouts of Creatures, Trollops, &c' which 'puts her to flight': for 'a long time after' she dared not enter into Mrs. Orgueil's 'enraged presence' (260).

Further evidence of Fielding's concern for *all* women is seen in *Familiar Letters* (1747), a text that Carpenter describes as an 'epistolary conduct book for women'.⁴² Here, Fielding draws attention to the needs and feelings of physically deformed women through her portrayal of Lydia, which is another unusual subject for a female eighteenth-century novelist to address. Born deformed, Lydia has been treated cruelly by her parents. They and her society regard her as 'a Monster in Nature' (I: 234). Reviled and unloved, Lydia is prevented from 'approaching' her baby sister, Lindamira, whom she loved from the moment she saw her. Delia, one of Fielding's

⁴² Carpenter, 42.

fictional correspondents, relates that when she first met the two sisters as adults, she was immediately repelled by Lydia's ugliness, but came to know that her 'beautiful' nature 'more than compensated' for her outward appearance (I: 234).

Delia reports that Lydia's subjection from childhood to name-calling, such as 'Little ugly Wretch Pigmy' (I: 236), inured her to verbal abuse, but being barred from her sister's presence caused her to spend hours weeping in corners alone until her eyes became 'so weak' that she 'could hardly see' (I: 237). Lydia recalls that at the age of thirteen, she unexpectedly met her sister in the garden, and in her excitement, she tripped, causing her sister to fall, for which her father beat her so 'unmercifully' that she left home to 'wander through the World' (I: 240). While sleeping under a tree, Lydia recalls being attacked by a group of boys who called her a 'Baboon' and left her tied to the tree. After hours of pain, scratched, bleeding and starving, Lydia 'wished herself out of this world' 'where she had experienced such cruelty'. A woman passing by refused to release her, convinced that Lydia must have behaved very badly to warrant being punished in such a way (I: 234-244).

With this scenario Fielding yet again positively intervenes in issues operating outside the novel. She condemns society's abuse of unfortunate, physically disadvantaged human beings who, in her day, were regarded by most people as pernicious animals. Through her portrayal of the woman who leaves Lydia tied to the tree, half-dead, Fielding targets people who will always find a reason to excuse their unwillingness to interfere when they see another in distress. Fielding, here, is painting a damning picture of society's high tolerance level of cruelty. Lydia is eventually rescued by Emilia, the squire's daughter, who persuades her associate, Miss Brompton, to give Lydia shelter, only to learn seven years later that Lydia's deformity had provided entertainment for Brompton's stream of visitors (I: 273).

Although the story has a happy ending with Lydia and her sister reunited as adults, Fielding makes clear that for women like Lydia, who are outcast from society, life is extremely hard. For such victims of 'adverse Fate', opportunities for employment or marriage are virtually non-existent. Without a benevolent 'other', one may ask, how were these unfortunate human beings meant to survive in the eighteenth century? Fielding's portrayal of the cruelty inflicted upon Lydia explains how people encumbered by deformity can become mentally unhinged through being constantly subjected to cruel treatment and incarcerated by unsympathetic relatives in Bedlam. Brompton's visitors being 'entertained' by Lydia's deformity is analogous to the 'constant stream of visitors' who in real life visited Bedlam, to laugh or 'gawp' at the unfortunate inmates.⁴³ Fielding writes, as if bristling with anger: 'What could tempt People unprovoked to make Lydia's form the Object of Mirth?' and further argues, 'if those who are convulsed with Laughter by improper Objects, were bled, physick'd, and kept in a Regimen used to Lunaticks, till they are cured of such Convulsions, it would be for their own Emolument, and the publick Good' (I: 285). Fielding adds weight to her argument by quoting Henry's sentiments in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, that 'Infirmity or Poverty' did not warrant ridicule (I: 286-7).

In *Familiar Letters* Fielding also protests the patriarchal tradition that allows widows to be turned out onto the streets by uncaring sons. Through her fictional correspondent Delia, Fielding gives an account of a woman who marries a man with a ten-year-old son named Rufus, but because her husband's 'Love for her was only an ungovernable Passion for her Person', he grows weary of her after she bears him two daughters and begins to lament the extra cost of keeping a woman he has grown to dislike (II:18-19). Her husband's son, who has inherited his father's 'covetous

⁴³ See Liza Picard (2000), *Dr. Johnson's London*. London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 90. See Stone's comment, 220, that 'most of the young female inmates had been unhinged by thwarted love'.

Disposition', fuels his father's agitation when he sees his inheritance dwindling away. Fielding writes: 'the Life the poor Woman led between them, was too miserable to admit of a Description' (II:19).

On her husband's death, the widow discovers that her husband had 'settled but half enough' to sustain her and their children. Moreover, according to patriarchal law, she had no claim on his estate. Heartless Rufus, her husband's heir, immediately turns the grieving widow and her 'two little Girls' out of their home, 'to wander and provide for themselves as they could', justifying his actions by insisting that by law he has 'a right to do as he pleases with his own Property' (II: 20) — (a subject later addressed by Jane Austen in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)). In the conclusion to Fielding's story, the reader is left wondering how the widow and her two small daughters are meant to survive. Fielding makes clear her contempt of 'the *lawful* practice' by including the acid comment, that the 'moral' 'must be so very clear to you [the reader] as to want no further Explanation' (II: 20).

Fielding's concerns for all women in *Familiar Letters* leads to one of her favourite themes — the fallacy of marriage being viewed as the ultimate career prize for women. Here, her character, Cleora tells of being educated by her mother to view lovers as 'a Tradesman sees the Instrument of his Trade' (II: 79). Cleora quickly learns how to manipulate men. Eventually she secures a rich husband and becomes a successful socialite, but finds that her fashionable lifestyle cannot compensate for her husband's coldness. Trapped in a loveless marriage, Cleora does not wish the same for her daughter, so determines to educate her child differently. Elsewhere in *Familiar Letters* Fielding criticizes men who view rich women as 'prizes' through her portrayal of Isabinda, who is 'besieged' by 'Monkeys' after her fortune (II: 72). In this novel, as in all of her novels, Fielding satirically targets the tradition of

bargaining off a young girl in marriage to a profligate old man whose 'Body shared the Infirmities of its Ally, the Mind' (II: 298).

Although *Familiar Letters* went through a 1752 edition it was virtually ignored by contemporary critics. Dudden thought the text 'a dull book', full of 'irrelevant matter'; Werner found it 'uninspiring'.⁴⁴ From a feminist perspective, however, it is quite clear that Fielding's epistolary novel is designed to stir the reader to conscious thought about what was happening to *all* disadvantaged women in her society. Fielding is holding up 'a Glass' [mirror] so that people may see their faults and work to rectify them, as Henry Fielding states in his prefatory remarks to the text. Consequently *Familiar Letters* is not full of 'irrelevant matter', nor should it be dismissed simply as a conduct book for women. Rather, it is an important milestone in the history of fiction and in the history of feminism, not least for its unusual satirical attack on society's jaundiced view of physically challenged women, an attack that comes from the pen of a woman.

Fielding's concerns for all women who suffer humiliation or abuse inevitably leads her to condemn society's malevolent attitude towards spinsters. In the eighteenth century, Hill reports, 'an ageing single woman was looked upon by society as 'an anomaly'.⁴⁵ Stone notes that in the eighteenth century a spinster had 'a reputation for malice and ill-temper' and, in 1723, Defoe likened the bite of an old maid to 'the bite of a mad dog'.⁴⁶ From then on, Stone observes, 'the ill-natured old maid became a permanent feature of the English novel, and a subject of hostile comment by all writers of domestic handbooks. In *The Cry*, during an exchange of dialogue between spiteful Miss Notable and Fielding's heroine, Portia, Notable

⁴⁴ Dudden, 545-6; Werner, 103.

⁴⁵ Hill (1989), 222.

⁴⁶ Stone, 245. He also cites William Hayley, who declared against 'that coarse and contemptuous raillery with which the ancient maiden is perpetually insulted'.

ridicules her aged maiden aunt, who vows that all the men she had met were ‘chaste and innocent’ gentlemen. Notable smirks, then sarcastically retorts, ‘it is the fate of all ugly women to meet with nothing but ‘chaste and innocent’ men’ (I: 108-9), a remark that reduces the mocking Cry to laughter.

Fielding follows Notable’s derision of her spinster-aunt with a bristling attack on people who delight in poking fun at these women. She then turns to chastening women who marry for fear of becoming ridiculed as an old maid. Fielding writes: ‘The ridicule fixed on the appellation of old maid hath, I doubt not, frightened a very large number into the bonds of wedlock’ where they become ‘enchained’ to men totally ‘unsuited to their taste’ (I: 72). Later in the text Fielding argues:

[T]he woman who is continually expecting great offers of marriage, which may never happen, knows not when to give up her expectations. This is, I believe, a very good account for the peevishness of old maids; and the old maid who is not peevish, plainly proves that she hath led no such life, nor been accustom’d to frequent disappointments (I: 109).

Through her character, Cylinda, in *The Cry*, Fielding defends a woman’s choice to remain single. Loving her ‘darling Freedom’, Cylinda chooses the life of a mistress rather than be subsumed into a husband’s identity in the irrevocable ‘chains of marriage’ (I: 219). Through Cylinda, Fielding points out that marriage, for a woman, can be much worse than spinsterhood, for a wife must be forever at her husband’s disposal, whereas a spinster can be as ‘free as air’. Cylinda states: ‘The loss of liberty which must attend being a wife, was of all things the most horrible to my imagination . . . [I] could not bear the thought of putting myself in any man’s power for life’ (III: 320). Thereby Fielding again challenges the notion that ‘securing a husband’ should be seen as the ultimate ‘career prize’ for a woman.

Although Fielding did not style herself ‘A Lover of her Sex’ as Astell did on the title-page of *A Serious Proposal* (1694), her fiction demonstrates that she, like Astell, can be seen as a ‘true feminist’ who used her fiction to challenge traditions biased against her sex on behalf of *all* disadvantaged women, regardless of status.

Part III: *The Art of Tormenting*

When Fielding turns her attention to the few employment opportunities open for the impecunious single gentlewoman, she focuses particularly on the role of the governess and the welfare of the gentlewoman who acts as a lady’s companion. It is clear from her educational text, *The Governess* (1749), that Fielding had firm ideas about the person chosen to educate children as she advocates persuasive and heuristic educative methods. Grey suggests that Fielding was ‘the Governess herself—the presiding genius’ of her ‘little Academy’.⁴⁷ In *The Governess* Fielding formulates in fiction her feminist ideas for educating girls to form a mutually supportive sisterhood. She encourages the fictional girls and consequently her readers to voice their opinions and study good books. Fielding also shows them how to act as a literary critic.

Fielding had first-hand knowledge of governesses operating in a private household through her friends, the Collier sisters. Margaret Collier was governess to Henry Fielding’s children until they quarrelled.⁴⁸ Judith Hawley, editor of a recent edition of Jane Collier’s caustic satire, *An Essay On The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753), claims that Margaret ‘keenly experienced the frustrations of an educated dependent woman’ which perhaps found ‘their vent in acrimony and

⁴⁷ Grey, 1.

⁴⁸ See Judith Hawley ed. (1994), *Jane Collier: An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting, With Proper Rules for the Exercise of that Pleasant Art*. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, x.

scheming'.⁴⁹ Jane's title for her *Essay* is borrowed from *David Simple*, where Fielding satirically describes abusive employers of gentlewomen as being skilled in the 'Art of Tormenting' (89). Tormenting, as Hawley points out, leaves no marks on the body, but it damages the human psyche, which is 'no trivial matter'.⁵⁰

In *The Governess* Fielding highlights the difficulties a governess in a private household is likely to encounter through the 'confessions' of her initially disruptive fictional pupils such as Sukey Jennett, who behaves appallingly towards the servants (76-77), and Lucy Sly, who watches the 'Foot-boy' being whipped for breaking a cup that she had broken (103-4). Henny Fret is initially very difficult to please, while Betty Ford cries crocodile tears. Life would not be easy for a governess trying to cope with such children while parents and servants were at hand to interfere with her educative methods.

Fielding continually highlights the difficulties experienced by the lady's companion from her first novel to her last. Although to date there is no evidence of Fielding having been a lady's companion, Carpenter plausibly suggests that Fielding's bitterness in describing at length the miserable life of a woman fulfilling that role could stem from her 'own experience'.⁵¹ Cynthia, in *David Simple*, having been omitted from her father's will and rendered homeless for refusing to participate in an arranged marriage, is invited into the home of her rich friend. Cynthia relates how initially her patroness treated her so kindly that she 'loved' her 'with the utmost Sincerity' (88), but over time, her employer began to make her life a misery, humiliating her at every opportunity. Cynthia tells David that she is constantly mocked as a 'Toad-eater', which, she explains:

⁴⁹ Hawley, x.

⁵⁰ Ibid. xiv.

⁵¹ Carpenter, 269.

[I]s a Metaphor taken from a Mountebank's⁵² Boys [*sic*] eating Toads in order to shew his Master's Skill in expelling Poison: It is built on a Supposition, (which I am afraid is too generally true) that People who are so unhappy as to be in a State of Dependence, [*sic*] are forced to do the most nauseous things that can be thought on, to please and humour their Patrons . . . The *Satire* of the Expression . . . is generally used, by way of *Derision*, to the unfortunate Wretch who is thrown into such a miserable Situation (89).

Cynthia's misery is compounded by her devastation at finding insincerity in the woman she had thought was her friend. Her patroness's snobbish attitude stems from an assumption that her affluence accords her the right to treat Cynthia as her 'Slave'.

Among company, as required, Cynthia remains silent. She is expected to suffer without complaint the hurtful jibes from her heartless patroness and her rich friends. One of them, who 'loves' to ridicule toadeaters, refers to Cynthia as 'that dumb Creature' (89). Her obnoxious offender finds amusement in the fact that 'toadeaters' like Cynthia have previously been 'fine Ladies' with manners, but now are conditioned by their affluent 'superiors' to have 'no Minds of their own' (90). Cynthia must endure such 'Indignities' or be thrown on the streets. Cynthia tells David that whenever she speaks, she offends her patroness, when silent, she is pronounced 'out of humour'; she is declared 'whimsical and ungrateful'. Forbidden to have '*Passions*' or '*Inclinations*' of her own, Cynthia feels like 'a piece of Clock-work, which her Ladyship was to wind up or let down, as she pleased' (91). David hears another patroness telling her affluent friends that her companion is an 'ungrateful Mynx' who complained of being tired although she 'only' had to:

[*K*]eep her House, to take care of her Children, to overlook all her Servants, to be ready to sit with her when she call'd her—with many more trifling things . . . how unbecoming it was in her to think herself on a footing with *People of*

⁵² Samuel Johnson (*Dictionary*) gives mountebank as 'assistant to a quack doctor that mounts a bench in the market, and boasts his infallible remedies and cures' (Sabor (1998), 383 n. 56). Betty Rizzo explains that the word *toadeater* as applied to a political lackey was new when in 1742 Horace Walpole called Harry Vane "Pulteney's toadeater". See Rizzo, 41.

Fortune . . . left by her Father on the World, without any Provision . . . I never talk'd to her [but] she had Tears in her Eyes for a Week afterwards (79-80).

Fielding's italics and satirical syntax evidence her disgust at this offensive practice.

With Cynthia's story, Fielding offers her readers what Carpenter terms 'an illustration of the mental bludgeoning inflicted upon a woman who shapes against the restrictions of an ideology of femininity'.⁵³ Thanks to David's benevolence, Cynthia is released from her servitude, but in making her decision, she has no alternative but to accept the largesse of a man she barely knows. Fortunately David has honourable intentions. His kindness, given with respectful esteem, is shown to be markedly different from the humiliating support shown to Cynthia by her patroness.

Conversely, while Fielding evokes pity for the vulnerable lady's companion, she is unsympathetic towards the woman who exploits her patroness. In *Dellwyn* for instance, unlike Cynthia or Camilla, whose poverty is not of their making, Miss Weare imprudently spends her fortune on her appearance among the fashionable milieu, then accurately calculates that young Lady Dellwyn will support her. Lady Dellwyn, a rich but unloved young woman who is learning to live with the stigma attached to being a divorcee, is duped into believing that Weare is her friend, but she is a devious woman who is out to control her kind young patroness.

Rizzo observes that Weare, after considering 'marriage and companionship to be the only two options open to a lone young woman of no fortune',⁵⁴ becomes a disreputable character whose 'utmost Ambition' is to maintain her 'Rank' within the fashionable *demi-monde*. Fielding develops her into a manipulative, sinister figure who gradually assumes control over her benefactor. By the time Weare threatens to leave, Lady Dellwyn has become so dependent upon her, that in desperation she

⁵³ Carpenter, 31-32.

⁵⁴ Rizzo, 43.

bribes Weare to remain by allowing her a generous stipend. Fielding writes, with obvious sarcasm, that Weare accepts the bribe because of her 'Poverty, and not her Will' (II: 273-74). Through her portrayal of Weare, Fielding demonstrates 'the bad effects of toadyism' since Weare is 'cowardly and dishonest in every particular'.⁵⁵

In *Dellwyn* Fielding creates her new, modern woman, Mrs. Bilson, who becomes a successful businesswoman. Unable to depend upon her imprisoned adulterous husband to support her starving family, twenty-seven-year-old Mrs Bilson first organises the sale of her furniture, then opens a shop selling 'Female Ornaments' (1:184-86). Here, in her penultimate novel, Fielding overturns Camilla's reticence in *David Simple* to seek employment in trade for fear of offending people below her 'station'. Fielding justifies Mrs. Bilson's venture into trade by pointing out that this 'good' mother needs to feed her starving children. Thus a natural, moral precedent overrides tradition. Fielding places Mrs. Bilson in the traditional narrative as society's ideal woman, loyal to her husband throughout his profligacy and accepting his illegitimate child as her own, but thwarts it, for Mrs. Bilson has integrity, determination, and triumphs over adversity. By portraying her character as an excellent wife and mother, Fielding effectively wards off critics who would object to her radical presentation of woman as erstwhile shopkeeper.

In allotting Mrs. Bilson the courage to take control of her own life, Fielding demonstrates how women can transcend the limitations of her patriarchal society. While she justifies Mrs. Bilson's radical achievements in the area of female employment, she also justifies her own determination to flout convention and write for pay. Fielding makes clear, however, that Mrs. Bilson's improving circumstances can only happen as a result of a benevolent 'other', in this case, Lady Dently. On her

⁵⁵ Ibid.53.

death Lady Dently leaves her considerable fortune to Mrs. Bilson, knowing that it will be used wisely. Mrs. Bilson shares it with others and ‘all such Prisoners in the Fleet as deserved it’ (I: 202). Here, again, Fielding is extolling the benefits of sisterhood.

Lady Dently’s timely intervention to relieve Mrs. Bilson’s penury is, however, a *deus ex machina* solution to her desperate circumstances, just as Cynthia’s benevolent Bath family steps in at the last minute to save her and little Camilla from destitution in *Volume the Last*. While Fielding’s use of this literary device may be construed as a weakness in her narratives, it is nevertheless testament to her belief that, in the final analysis, only the benevolence of others can save penurious gentlewomen who are struggling to survive. Fielding’s impoverished gentlewomen are almost all reduced to begging: Camilla begs on the streets, Cynthia goes to Bath begging for help, and Mrs. Bilson, when ill, begs Lady Dently to care for her loved ones.

In *Ophelia*, Fielding’s final novel, she is still satirically targeting abusive employers. Fifty-year-old Mrs Herner, who has ‘sold herself to the most abject Slavery’, acts as an unpaid companion to her cousin, the Marchioness of Trente. Despite being regularly subjected to the Marchioness’s ‘extremely violent’ ‘Passions’ (164), sycophantic Herner is unwilling to seek other means of support, and so pacifies her patroness by ‘descend[ing] to the meanest Flattery’. Herner, who has ‘*Pride that licks the Dust*’,⁵⁶ allows herself to be ruled ‘by a Frown or a Nod’, has ‘lost all Liberty of Thought’ and ‘entirely forgot the Method of pronouncing the word No’ (164).

Interestingly, Fielding sends out mixed messages in her portrayal of Herner. On occasions her character appears as a bitter and twisted woman, whose mental degeneracy is underscored by her ageing physical appearance. Herner is very thin,

⁵⁶ Fielding is quoting lines from Alexander Pope’s *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735), I: 133: ‘Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the Dust’.

has grey hair that she vainly conceals beneath a cap, a long nose, sallow wrinkled skin and beady eyes, which dart glances in quick succession enacting her mental frustration at being suppressed by her 'mistress'. On the other hand, Fielding writes that Herner's grey eyes 'were not void of a Sweetness, denoting some Portion of good Humour in the Mind' (163). Having to rely on the Marchioness for survival, Herner emulates her 'mistress' by bullying Ophelia, her charge, whom the Marchioness, viewing Ophelia as her rival for the amours of Lord Dorchester, imprisons in her isolated castle.

In this text Fielding highlights the fact that a woman can enter employment in a grand house in the city, only to find herself transported to another residence that may be a remote, unhealthy habitation. Mrs. Herner's confinement as Ophelia's jailer in the Marchioness's dark, foul-smelling castle that is 'tottering with Age' and resounds with Gothic strains⁵⁷ of croaking frogs, dogs barking at midnight, owls hooting, and the wind whistling through the 'Old Towers', is as dire as Ophelia's:

Poor Mrs. *Herner* was full as miserable as . . . any of the Inhabitants: Grief had so relaxed every Muscle, that there were none but long Faces in the House. Mrs. *Herner's* fell away very fast . . . (172).

Herner must travel how, when, and where her mistress desires. In a tragi-comic episode that would not be out of place in one of Henry Fielding's comedies or a collection of Hogarth's works, Ophelia and her jailor spend a night at an inn en route to the castle. While Herner is tucked up in bed, an inebriated magistrate mistakes her room for his. In the darkness, he feels the woman's body and quietly thanks the innkeeper for providing him with extraneous hospitality.

⁵⁷ *Ophelia* anticipates the Gothic genre and Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764).

Groping Herner, the magistrate becomes even more excited at her resilient cries of ‘Fire, Murder, Rape, Beast, Brute, Savage! . . . ‘O save me! Preserve my Honour!’ that awakens the household, who rush to ascertain the cause of ‘The Clamour’ (165). Herner is discovered being chased around the room by the lusty magistrate who is determined on his pleasure. By the light of a candle he suddenly sees Herner, her head wrapped in a towel, her eyes blackened with ‘Ointment’, her lips ‘greased with Tallow’ and her ‘yellow Skin’ ‘resplendent’ through the holes in her tattered nightdress (165-6). Momentarily astonished, he recollects himself then bellows, with ‘Scorn and Distaste’: ‘[T]hou Monster, full Light would better have obtained thy Release than all thy Struggling’. Adding further insult to injury he roars, ‘I had rather have . . . my Crop Horse for my Bedfellow’ (166).

Shocked and humiliated in front of residents and servants, who laugh loudly at her appearance, the ‘timerous Virgin’ runs from the room and the man who now calls her a ‘Succubus’ (165-6).⁵⁸ Herner appears at once a laughable caricature of womanhood yet a sad, humiliated old lady who deserves the reader’s pity. Fielding’s criticism of Herner’s vanity fades as she points out the vulnerability of the lady’s companion who is required to sleep alone at an inn, at possible risk from a disreputable landlord. Had the magistrate been able to silence and overpower Herner before she was able to raise the alarm, it would not be a comical affair at all. Moreover, she would have had no recourse to the law, since her assailant is a magistrate. Fielding underscores this point through her fictional landlady, who, with a ‘sonorous Voice’, castigates the ‘*Justice of the Peace and Quorum*’⁵⁹ for ‘disturb[ing] a quiet Family’ (165). Fielding’s italics emphasize her moral point.

⁵⁸ Succubus — an evil spirit in female form who intends sexual intercourse with a sleeping man.

⁵⁹ ‘*Justice of the Peace and Quorum*’ — a magistrate, one who usually presides in a county town.

Later in the novel Fielding sends out more mixed messages of Herner. In a garden scene, Fielding uses Herner to highlight the pathetic situation of an ageing woman whose last hopes of escape from her miserable life as a lady's companion through marriage are raised then dashed in a moment, when Mr. South, a clergyman whom Herner admires, seeks 'an interview' with her. Poor Herner mistakenly translates this as his intention to propose their marriage. Ophelia relates that while she was seated in the garden, 'the God of Laughter' brought the pair,

[T]o a Bench full in my View; I observed her Eyes rather twinkling than sparkling, every Feature wore a Smile, and she had pulled up her Head till she was as upright as a May-pole. After they were seated, and she had blushed, drawn down her Handkerchief, stroaked her Ruffles, pinched her Apron, and played over all the pretty Airs of Confusion . . . with great Hesitation and Difficulty, enquired his Reason for desiring this Interview (187-8).

When it suddenly dawns on befuddled Herner that South is proposing to marry Ophelia, she becomes a raging termagant, loudly berating South for committing 'Perdition' and bringing dishonour to his profession (188).

Thus, on the one hand, it can be said that Fielding pokes fun at Herner for demeaning womanhood by allowing herself to degenerate into a servile sycophant, emulating her vile mistress by tormenting innocent Ophelia. On the other, however, the reader may pity Herner. As if pitying Herner at the last, Fielding finally releases her from her miserable servitude when Lord Dorchester forces the Marchioness to provide her with a 'stipend'.⁶⁰

In *Ophelia*, although Fielding by no means approves of her immoral character Lady Palestine, she draws attention to another way in which a gentlewoman was able to survive — as a procuress. Some gentlewomen, as Katherine Rogers points out,

⁶⁰ 'stipend' — an independent living.

found it impossible to ‘reconcile proper feminine behaviour with survival’.⁶¹ Married to a rich old lord at the age of fifteen, Lady Palestine has become accustomed to ‘all the Dissipations which the gay World affords’, including a train of lovers, but when widowed, was left ‘a poor despicable Pittance’ (108-9). Paid by Dorchester to assist him in his planned seduction of Ophelia, Lady Palestine maintains her life of luxury.

Fielding’s illustrates through her attention to the employment opportunities open to gentlewomen, that impoverished single gentlewomen who struggle to survive must prostitute themselves in ways other than that of a sexual nature, which Fielding clearly deplores. In a private household the governess can be isolated and friendless, perhaps suffering abuse from children for, if she retaliated, she could find herself homeless, while gentlewomen who perform the role of the (usually unpaid) lady’s companion need to cope with rich women who are skilled in ‘the Art of Tormenting’. Through Mrs. Teachum, her clever governess, and entrepreneurial Mrs. Bilson, Fielding convincingly argues that women ought not to be regarded merely as procreators; given more freedom of choice and a ‘liberal education’ they can function as more useful, self-supporting members of society. Obviously a moral woman who would not demean herself by acting as a procuress like Lady Palestine or a parasite like Miss Weare, Fielding uses her fiction to seek justification for the woman like Mrs. Bilson who dares to venture into trade. Thereby she justifies her own decision to write for pay. Obviously, for Fielding, having to cope with hostile critics was better than a lifetime of humiliation as a poor, miserable ‘Toadeater’.

Part IV: *Fielding’s ‘Reflections Upon Marriage’*

⁶¹ Rogers (1982), 67.

In her satirical portrayal of the marriage-market, Fielding mirrors Astell.⁶² Betraying overtones of Hobbesian cynicism, Astell's *Reflections* is written in defence of her popular but poor Chelsea neighbour in Paradise Row, French-born Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarin, who fled to England to escape a terrible husband.⁶³ Before she died in 1699, the Duchess was a well-known figure in London, her beauty and charm attracting many suitors.⁶⁴ Astell's ideas for *Reflections* originated from reading Mazarin's autobiography entitled, *Mémoires D'Hortense et de Marie Mancini* (1676).

In *Reflections*, Astell warns women to consider the serious implications of marriage rather than rush into it, for 'She who Elects a Monarch for Life' gives him 'an Authority she cannot recall however he [may] misapply it'.⁶⁵ Similarly, in *David Simple* Fielding advises women:

[B]e most careful how you enter into any Engagements of Love; for that Softness of Disposition, and all that Tenderness you are possessed of, will expose you to the utmost Misery; and, unless you meet with a Man whose Temper is like your own, which will be no easy matter for you to do; you will be as unwise to throw away all the Goodness you are mistress of on him, as a Man would be, who had a great Stock in Trade, to join it with another, who not only was worth nothing of his own, but was a Spend-Thrift, and insensible of the great Good he was doing him (121).

In the above passage, Fielding takes a step further than Astell by making a woman's chances of happiness in marriage analogous to a tradesman's precarious investments, tuning in yet again to her society's obsession with money. Money, Astell states in *Reflections*, was generally what motivated 'kind Parents and Guardians' to arrange

⁶² Astell's readers included Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the Platonist John Norris, Rector of Bemerton; Bishop Francis Atterbury and his wife; Lady Catherine Jones and Lady Ann Coventry.

⁶³ A sexually obsessed religious fanatic, Mazarin mutilated magnificent statues in the Palais Mazarin to make them 'decent', took offence at farmers milking cows, threatened to saw off their daughters' teeth to make them unattractive, sold off Hortense's jewels and was quickly diminishing the large dowry she brought him. He made her life 'a nightmare'. See Perry, chapter six.

⁶⁴ Perry, 153.

⁶⁵ Springborg (1996), 34. Pagination for *Reflections* is Astell's own in Springborg's facsimile edition.

marriages ‘without ever consulting the Young ones’, who ‘must be satisfied or pretend to be so’ ‘upon pain’ of incurring ‘displeasure’.⁶⁶

Throughout her oeuvre Fielding, like Astell, deploys her satire to likewise target the arranged marriage tradition. In *David Simple* Cynthia’s unsympathetic siblings who torment her for being a ‘Wit’ for her love of learning, which, they say, would ‘never get her a husband’, add to Cynthia’s feelings of alienation when she refuses to comply with her father’s decision to marry her off to a complete stranger. In this illustration of a family torn apart by patriarchal customs, Fielding subverts the ethical concept of parental nurturing, and, like Astell, objects to daughters being objectified as marriage ‘bargains’.

Astell points out that while incompatible participants in an arranged marriage may suffer lifelong ‘heavy Consequences’ thereafter, it is the woman who suffers most, for she is nothing more than an unpaid ‘upper Servant’,⁶⁷ who must produce children to ‘keep up’ the family name while the husband spends her dowry indulging his ‘irregular Appetites’.⁶⁸ Like Astell, Fielding rejects the notion that marriage is every girl’s dream. Instead, she mocks the tradition as an insult to intelligent women, seen, for instance, in Cynthia’s account of her arrogant suitor’s proposal of marriage:

[H]e supposed my Father had informed me that they two were agreed on a Bargain. I replied, I did not know my Father was of any Trade, or had any Goods to dispose of . . . he had all the Assurance of a Man, who from knowing he has a good Fortune, thinks he does every Woman an Honour he condescends to speak to; and assured me . . . I have seen you two or three times, altho’ you did not know it; I like your Person, hear you have had a sober Education, think it time to have an Heir to my Estate, and am willing, if you consent to it, to make you my Wife; notwithstanding your Father tells me, he can’t lay you down above two thousand Pounds. I am none of those nonsensical Fools that can whine and make romantick Love . . . you will retire into the Country with me, and take care of my Family. I

⁶⁶ Ibid. 21.

⁶⁷ At this point Astell uses ‘upper Servant’ in the 1700 edition but this is replaced in the 1706 edition with ‘a necessary Evil’ (34). ‘Upper Servant’ appears in the 1706 edition on page 89.

⁶⁸ Springborg, (1996),34.

must inform you, I shall desire to have every thing in order; for I love good Eating and Drinking, and have been used to have my own Humour from my Youth, which if you will observe and comply with, I shall be very kind to you, and take care of the main Chance for you and your Children (85-6).

Fielding's satire, underscored as usual by her italics, is to the fore in the above passage as she takes pains to show the lack of sensitivity for Cynthia's emotional needs in the arrogant stranger's proposal of marriage. Inculcated into patriarchy, her suitor is accustomed to his 'own Humour' with which she must comply or suffer his anger. Fielding is showing her female readers that women who accept men on these terms can expect to enter into a loveless role as procreator and unpaid upper-servant. This fictional scenario, laden with feminist sentiments, closely recalls Astell's caustic condemnation of male presumption in the following ironic passage from *Reflections*:

[A] Woman has no mighty Obligations to the Man who makes Love to her . . . or to reckon it a piece of Preferment when she is taken to be a Man's Upper-Servant'.⁶⁹

Using Astell's very words, Fielding's rebel Cynthia disdainfully replies that she has 'no Ambition' to become the man's '*upper Servant*' (86).

Here, again, Fielding takes a step beyond Astell as she uses Cynthia to deliver her views on the subject, as with trenchant sarcasm she condemns the arranged marriage tradition: '*I shall always call it Prostitution, for a Woman who has Sense, and has been tolerably educated, to marry a Clown and a Fool*' (86). Fielding's comments here are overtly feminist. She is subverting the prevailing notion that a woman who sacrifices herself to a man is an heroic gesture, or that a woman's self-control in adversity 'is a service to God': in the eighteenth century, a woman's self-control in adversity was regarded as part of her apology to God for causing

⁶⁹ Springborg (1996), 89.

humanity's downfall.⁷⁰ Fielding's words carry an urgency that can be viewed as inciting her female readers to rebel, like Cynthia, against a marriage arranged without her knowledge to a man she doesn't know. Fielding makes clear that in her opinion, the arranged marriage tradition was instituted for the benefit of men.

In *Reflections*, Astell challenges the notion that marriage should be thought the ultimate prize for a woman by asking, 'if Marriage be such a blessed State as clerics avow, why are there so few happy Marriages?'⁷¹ Through Cynthia, Fielding admits that there are men who delight in seeing their wives dressed in finer clothes than their rivals' wives or neighbours, but, as she satirically points out, a woman wearing 'gaudy Trappings' is 'in the situation of the Horse' (an animal whose very existence equates with work), who wears them 'only to gratify his *Master's* Vanity' (87). Cynthia has too much self-respect to allow herself to be subjected to 'the Humours of a Man' or wear the 'gaudy Trappings' he may provide. Nevertheless, as Fielding shows, a rebellious woman like Cynthia, who becomes a miserable 'toadeater', must be prepared to suffer for her principles.

In *Reflections* Astell states, 'Happiness does not depend on Wealth'.⁷² Likewise in *The Governess* story of Lord and Lady X—, Fielding states: 'Grandeur and Happiness do not always go together' (227-28). 'Insolent' Lord X— 'is the wretchedest Creature breathing' because after seven years of marriage he is without an heir. Fielding portrays him as the quintessential patriarch, impatient and indulged from childhood in 'all sorts of Excesses'. His wife, bred to value her own beauty and money, 'greatly resents' his 'neglectful Usage of her', particularly as she brought him a very large dowry. Consequently the couple have lived 'in the most jarring and disputing manner' without taking care to 'conceal their Quarrels from the World'

⁷⁰ Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 51 and passim; see also Stone, 128-138.

⁷¹ Springborg (1996), 11.

⁷² Ibid. 12.

(228). Fielding's fictional *Governess* girls (and her readers) are advised 'to thoroughly reflect that money does not equate with happiness' (228).

Fielding's portrayal of Lord X— recalls Astell's observation in *Reflections*, that 'A Man enters into Articles very readily before Marriage, for he performs no more of them afterwards than he thinks fit . . . [he] will not at all abate of his Authority and right to Govern, whatever fair promises he might make'.⁷³ Fielding makes the same point in her story as she casts a satirical barb at the bad examples shown to the lower classes by selfish aristocratic members of her mercenary, self-centred society. Lord and Lady X—, as members of the aristocracy, are a bad reflection on the governing elite, the 'Giants' of the country who hold 'Power' over their communities.

In *Reflections* Astell claims that women are 'destin'd to Folly and Impertinence' because of the way they are educated for marriage, which renders them 'Illiterate', 'Ignorant', open to flattery and ready to make themselves 'Slaves' to ardent admirers.⁷⁴ Likewise in *The Cry*, Fielding satirically describes the way women are educated to put themselves into marital 'slavery':

Women . . . lead their whole lives in expectation, which makes them liable to the vexation of a disappointment. Little Miss is taught by her mamma, that she must never speak before she is spoken to . . . looking from one to the other, in hopes of being . . . ask'd some questions, for which her nursery maid perhaps hath furnish'd her with a smart answer: but if this should not happen . . . should there be another miss in the room caress'd and taken notice of, whilst she is thus over-look'd, it will be impossible for her to contain her tears (I: 62-3).

Taught by her mamma and her nursery maid — women who adhere to patriarchal customs, who work to 'silence the female self and to repress her own desires' — 'Little Miss' soon learns that she must compete with others of her sex for the attention

⁷³ Springborg (1996), 37.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 61.

she must never seek but only wait and hope for.⁷⁵ Fielding, here, is pointing out that woman is not born vain, spiteful and envious; it is the process of ‘feminization’—women being made to conform to society’s expectations of them — that causes them lifelong pain. Fielding writes:

When the white frock is laid aside, the bigger Miss seats herself in public at a ball, expecting every moment to be chosen by some man for a partner for that evening. If she is baulked, what galling disappointment doth she feel within! Her heart is ready to burst with envy, at all those who are so happy as to be taken out . . . The same expectation of being chosen out as the partner for life . . . the woman who is constantly expecting great offers of marriage, which may never happen, knows not when to give up her expectations (I. 63-65).

The white frock, of course, is the symbol of virginity. It is virginity that is being sidelined as the ‘bigger Miss’ is brought to the ball, to be put on show like a prize animal, hoping to attract a ‘partner for life’.

Here, Fielding is illustrating *how* eighteenth-century women were taught to quell their desires, to silently dwell ‘in expectation’ of male attention and approval, simultaneously imbued with a mistrust and envy of other women. Through Portia, Fielding explains how vanity spoils female friendship and makes women gullible, ready to accept without question the words of a flattering suitor. Portia satirically likens the woman who ‘triumphs’ over other women seeking male attention to a ‘goddess’. Sat upon her throne, this ‘goddess’ receives the adulation of her ‘worshipper’ who ‘makes himself the humblest of her slaves’. This ‘kind of adulation’ and pretty words, however, Fielding writes with sarcasm, when translated into ‘plain English’ mean:

Madam, I like you (no matter whether from fortune, person, or any other motive) and it will conduce much to my pleasure and convenience, if you will become my wife; that is, if you will bind yourself before God and man to obey

⁷⁵ See Woodward (1987), 143.

my commands as long as I shall live. And should you in marriage be forgetful of your duty, you will then have given me the legal power of exacting as rigid a performance as I please (I: 66-70).

Through Portia, Fielding explains that vain women are foolish when they believe flatterers. 'Flattery in courtship', she writes, is 'the highest insolence' directed at a woman, for while a man is bestowing on her 'more than she deserves' he intends to take away her freedom. In her argument that is heavily loaded with feminist sentiments, Fielding warns women against allowing themselves to be 'fix'd for life the slave of your deluder' (I:71-73). Her lengthy expatiation on false flattery almost duplicates Astell's discussion of the subject in *Reflections*, where Astell states:

[N]othing is in truth a greater outrage than Flattery and feign'd Submissions, the plain English of which is this, 'I have a very mean Opinion both of your Understanding and Vertue, you are weak enough to be impos'd on, and vain enough to snatch at the Bait I throw; there's no danger of your finding out my meaning, or disappointing me of my Ends . . . I would not give my self this trouble, did I not hope, nay were I not sure, to find my own account in it . . . This is the Flatterer's . . . true sense of his heart.'⁷⁶

Astell further warns women against being led into 'Snares' by men who 'pretend to be Saints', men who prey upon women's 'unworldliness' to 'ruin' them purely for their 'Entertainment' (61). In *David Simple* Fielding puts Astell's protest into anecdotal form when she invents the story of a fifteen-year-old pregnant girl abandoned by her lover, a twenty-year-old 'Spark'⁷⁷ who '*gave himself no trouble what price she paid for gratifying him*', but soon became bored with her (47). Fielding's italics and choice of words underscore her feminist point, that a young woman's naivety renders her 'easy prey' to a 'master' of 'all the Arts' of seduction, which may not have happened had the girl been educated in the ways of faithless men. Shortly after

⁷⁶ Springborg (1996), 24.

⁷⁷ Not to be confused with the modern colloquial connotation of a 'spark' meaning an electrician.

disclosing her plight to her devoted father, in a scene of heartbreak in which his distress exacerbates the young girl's, she dies 'in shame' while her lover goes unpunished, free to move on to his next unsuspecting victim (47-8).

Fielding's annoyance at the unfairness of this sexual double standard and her society's acceptance of it is clear, as is her sympathy for such duped 'poor young Creature[s]'. One can sense Fielding bristling with anger and disgust as she denounces such men, asking, 'what could induce the Wretch to so much Baseness?' then follows this up with David's condemnation of his fellow-man:

Good God! Is this a World for me to look for Happiness in, when those very Men, who seem to be such Favourites of Nature, that she has taken particular Care to give them every thing that is agreeable, can be guilty of such Crimes as make them a Disgrace to the Species they were born of! (48-9).

In *The Cry*, Fielding again attacks men who have no intention to marry the naïve young women they exploit through the unfaithful rake, Demetrius, who marvels at the implicit trust of a young lady who follows 'one who loved her not' (meaning himself) into a lonely wood (I: 112).

In *Reflections* Astell satirically condemns the socially accepted sexual double standard of male adultery, pointing out that when a wife fails to 'please' her husband, 'he can find entertainments abroad . . . but neither Prudence nor Duty will allow a Woman to fly out, her Business and Entertainment are at home' where 'she must be content and make her best on't'.⁷⁸ In *Dellwyn*, Fielding portrays Mrs. Bilson as such a woman whom society would expect to 'make the best' of her life as the traditionally submissive woman who patiently suffers her husband's extra-marital activities and accepts his illegitimate child as her own. Fielding, however, uses Mrs. Bilson's husband to highlight his wife's superior intellect and courage. While he is portrayed

⁷⁸ Ibid. 30-1.

as a somewhat useless individual, the ‘weaker vessel’ in this marriage, who loses the family’s money gambling, irresponsibly putting his family into penury, Mrs. Bilson, through her ethical conduct and enterprising industry, is shown to triumph over adversity: she is, therefore, a shining example to her sex.

In *The Cry* Fielding audaciously subverts the sexual double standard by allowing her character Cylinda to live as a mistress with her lovers as opposed to marrying them, reluctant to ‘forsake her darling liberty’ (III: 22). Far ‘too liberal to be confined by such slavish rules’ (III: 9), Cylinda deplures ‘the chains’ or ‘snares of matrimony’, where, ‘in sickness and in health’, a wife is ‘obliged to attend every summons’ (III: 23-27). Adulterous Cylinda behaves discreetly, protecting her reputation by keeping her own house while sleeping with her lovers. *The Cry* views this as the redeeming factor in her immoral behaviour, the ‘essential Virtue’ they most admired (III: 15). Fielding, here, is aiming her satirical arrow at her hypocritical society that attaches more value to reputation than promiscuity.

Cylinda’s rejection of male authority can be likened to Astell’s remarks in *Reflections*, where she questions men’s ‘imperfect’ leadership:

Have not they founded Empires and overturn’d them? Do not they make Laws and continually repeal and amend them? Their vast Minds lay Kingdoms wast [*sic*]. . . They make Worlds and ruine them, form Systems of universal nature and dispute eternally about them . . . ⁷⁹

Fielding, like Astell, questions why a woman allows herself to be led by patriarchs who have proved by their actions that they are unreliable. In the closing pages of *The Cry*, Fielding’s Portia reveals that she has been married to Ferdinand for two years, a union agreed on *her* terms, since, like almost all of Fielding’s male characters, Ferdinand is imperfect, having lied to Portia to test her moral worth. Portia admits

⁷⁹ Ibid. 55-6.

that she remains cautious about their relationship. Fielding, like Astell, is pointing out that men are not gods, and being mortal, they make mistakes.

In *Reflections*, while lamenting ways in which mercenary men coerce or ‘betray’ women into marriage, Astell asks, ‘what can she expect who is Sold, or nay otherwise betray’d into mercenary Hands, to one who is in all, or most respects unequal to her?’⁸⁰ Fielding parallels this in *The Cry*, where Nicanor plans to trade his dutiful daughter as a marriage bargain to Ruffinus, who is, in every respect, unequal to gentle, refined Cordelia. Ruffinus, as his allegorical name suggests, is a mean-minded man who rides ‘rough-shod’ over his dependent brother and his crippled sister, as well as his business associates. He offers Nicanor a generous settlement to ‘gratify that liking’ for Cordelia, which had grown in him ‘from first seeing her’ (I: 274). Fielding loads Nicanor’s coercive approach to his horrified daughter with foreboding:

Nicanor urged to his daughter, that common reports of the avaritious [sic] temper of *Ruffinus* must be false, when he could thus generously offer to take her without a shilling; and this being evidently the effect of love, that love must make him to her the best of husbands: he omitted not also to remind her, that from her own disposition she could not but be happy, as the whole pleasure of her life, he knew, consisted in the kindness and affection of the person with whom she was most nearly connected (I: 273).

Fielding’s irony in the final sentence illustrates her contempt for the way Nicanor swings Cordelia’s future unhappiness back on herself. Since her ‘whole pleasure of life’ stems from her ‘own disposition’ it will be her own fault if she is unhappy. Cordelia is grateful when her brother Oliver returns home rich in time to prevent the match, although his ulterior motive is to gain power over her and their family.

In *Dellwyn*, Fielding’s ‘rebellious note’ is still being sounded as she yet again satirically targets men who objectify women as marriage ‘bargains’. Here, Charlotte Lucum, a seventeen-year-old virgin, is coerced into marrying an old man by him and

⁸⁰ Ibid. 34.

her politically ambitious father. Dellwyn, who needs an heir to his estate, has promised Mr. Lucum preferment if their plan succeeds. Fielding begins her novel by launching into a mocking tirade against such marriages. In a scene worthy of Hogarth's brush, Fielding contrasts Charlotte's healthy countenance in her first throes of womanhood with the decrepit body of sixty-three-year-old Lord Dellwyn, who sits quivering with excitement in his wheelchair:

His Lordship pronounced his Assent to take to Wife his destined Prey (in the Words *I will*), with a Voice as audible, as generally breaks forth from a Mouth vacated by the Inhabitants, its Teeth . . .

When the Bridegroom was to place the ring on the Finger of his Bride the Spirit was indeed so willing . . . yet was the Flesh so truly weak that thrice, oh! fatal Number! Thrice

The gilded Chain dropp'd from his trembling Hand;

And had his Lordship received no Assistance, his purposed Marriage had been absolutely baffled: but Mr Lucum, the Lady's father, thrice eagerly presented it to his Right Honourable Son-in-Law. The Number Three, even from ancient Times, has been suspected by the Superstitious, to involve in it some fatal Mystery of ill boding Destiny . . . (1: 7).

Fielding makes clear that the marriage is an affront to the moral sentiments of sanctified marriage, verified in her description of Charlotte as Lord Dellwyn's 'destined Prey'. Charlotte's father is compared with St. Peter, who thrice betrayed Christ⁸¹ since Lucum retrieves the fallen wedding ring, three times. It is the golden link in the 'gilded Chain' that will bind Charlotte to Dellwyn in the 'irrevocable chains of marriage'. Unwilling to face the reality of this ceremony and the ensuing consequences of being married to repugnant Dellwyn, Charlotte focuses her thoughts on her anticipated reception amid 'Scenes of Grandeur'. This 'blooming Virgin' has no conception of the seriousness of the holy marriage vows she is making. Initially, Charlotte rejected marriage to Dellwyn, seeing it as 'Prostitution' (I: 30).

⁸¹ Jesus predicts Peter's denial (John: 38): 'Will you [Peter] really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times!'

Fielding, however, does not intend to ridicule old age *per se*. She writes: ‘Old Age, after a well spent Life, if attended with tolerable Ease, hath in many Particulars the Advantage even of Youth itself’ (I: 9). She is objecting to the notion that a man, after ‘destroying’ his ‘Health by riotous Living’ (he may have a sexual disease), would readily despoil a healthy young virgin. When Charlotte, as Lady Dellwyn disappoints her husband, whose will is ‘absolutely his Law’, he locks her in a dark room in his remote castle:

[A] small Voice issued from a Bed placed in utter Darkness . . . her disordered Head was disturbed; and several of her Women were dismissed her Service, because they were not possessed of the Power ascribed to Ghosts, of creeping through the Key-hole. Imaginary Distempers, which arise from the Perturbation of the Mind, are, in the Language of the Grave-digger in Hamlet, as whoreson Decayers of the human Body as Fevers . . . (I: 111-12).

Like Astell’s account of the unfortunate Duchess of Mazarin, Charlotte, as soon as she is married, begins a miserable journey through life. Unlike the fantasy of romance novellas, no ‘Prince Charming’ comes to rescue her. All the men in this novel, including Charlotte’s later lovers, Lord Clermont and Captain Drumond, are selfish individuals out to exploit her naivety before deserting her. Fielding advises that when a man sees a ‘gay Wife of an old gouty Man’ it ‘kindles a Passion’ within him ‘and the first Motive’ of his ‘Address shall be the Persuasion that it will be well received’ (II: 57-8). Fielding’s satire in this novel leaves the reader in no doubt that she despised men who viewed women solely as the means of personal gratification.

Fielding continues her attack on predatory men in her final novel, *Ophelia*, where Lord Larborough tells the naïve eponymous young heroine that it is ‘customary for Gentlemen to live with Women as if they were married, without being so; which has this Convenience, that they can leave them whenever they are tired, or see another

they like better'.⁸² Fielding vehemently condemns this 'vile', 'treacherous' practice.⁸³ Such men, she writes, are 'a degenerate People' devoid of 'consummate Virtue': among their sex 'it was scarcely possible to find a Man who had any Scruples in Regard to his behaviour to Women'.⁸⁴ Men, she writes, 'esteemed Matrimony as a political Institution, that though each might approve of it in Society, many did not like it for themselves . . . they looked on the Life of a Woman who lived with them without being married, as generally the most happy' (because they can leave them whenever they wish).⁸⁵ Ophelia rejects the 'Force of Custom and Education' that encourages men to ridicule chastity: for Fielding, a woman's love should not be the 'Means' of her ruin 'by the Person who ought most to protect them'.⁸⁶

Fielding, like Astell, debunks the notion of 'Man's Superiority'. They question a husband's 'Fitness to Govern' his wife, as Astell puts it.⁸⁷ From Fielding's portrayal of marriage, the reader may easily conclude that she, like Astell, believed that if intelligent women of her generation were allowed a choice in marriage, and time to 'reflect upon it, they seldom wou'd marry'.⁸⁸

Part V: Conclusion

It is clear from the examples shown above that Fielding was keen to bring before her reading public the plight of penurious women, particularly impoverished gentlewomen, who needed to find a way to support themselves and possibly their families at a time when employment opportunities for such women were scarce. Through her portrayal of gentlewomen who act as companions to rich women skilled

⁸² Sabor (2004), 261.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 229.

⁸⁷ Springborg (1996), 92.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 90.

in 'the Art of Tormenting', Fielding exposes the miserable lives such women may lead. She challenges traditions that restrict a woman's chances of earning a living by virtuous means through her portrayal of Camilla in *David Simple* and Lady Palestine, the procuress in *Ophelia*. Affluent men want 'favours' in return for any assistance given to women. Even begging on the streets offers no solution to the gentlewoman's problems since other beggars refuse to tolerate her. In Fielding's fiction, survival by virtuous means depends on the last-minute kindness from sympathetic benefactors.

Fielding's concerns for impoverished gentlewomen seem to originate from her own, or others' real-life experiences, evidenced in the bibliographical details included in this study. Through the role-reversal technique, when David Simple appears to represent Fielding herself, the dependent woman's situation is superbly conveyed:

If David would have been satisfied to have lived in his Brother's House, in a State of Dependency; to have walked about in a rusty coat, and an old Tye-Wig, like a decayed Gentleman, thinking it a Favour to have Bread, while every Visitor at the House, should be extolling the Goodness of his Brother for keeping [him] . . . he might have stayed there . . . he resolved to stay in his Room till the Evening to see if there yet remained Tenderness enough in Daniel to endeavour to remove his present Torment. What he felt during that Interval, is not to be expressed or understood, but by the few who are capable of real Tenderness; every Moment seemed an Age . . . (13-14).

In the above passage Fielding brings into public view the private torment of one who feels, or is mad to feel, a burden to one's family.

Therefore it is unsurprising given the constraints placed upon women, particularly those of Fielding's status, concerning education, employment and marriage, that Fielding uses her fiction to highlight the difficulties women inevitably encounter in everyday life, simultaneously challenging the offending laws and traditions biased against her sex. Through her portrayal of Mrs. Teachum, who manages her own 'little Academy', and Mrs. Bilson, who defies convention by 'going into Trade', Fielding shows her readers the way forward for women and urges them to

widen their horizons. In this way, Fielding offers her solutions to the impoverished gentlewoman's financial situation. This is underscored by Fielding's own unconventional lifestyle — writing for money, study of classical literature, and her determination to erode the male-designated literary boundaries.

Through Cynthia and Charlotte Lucum, Fielding impresses upon her readers the fact that marriage, even to a rich husband, should not be viewed as the ultimate career prize for women, since money does not guarantee happiness. Her portrayal of men suggests that Fielding sees them as setting a bad example to the rest of society.

This chapter has shown that Fielding, a true feminist, was concerned for all women, shown in her sympathetic portrayal of poor little Betty Dunster in *David Simple*, Lydia, the deformed woman in *Familiar Letters* and the widow disadvantaged by patriarchal law who is turned onto the streets with her small children. These are highly unusual subjects for a female eighteenth-century novelist to address. Contrary to the claim that the rebellious note in *David Simple* is 'muted' thereafter, as shown above, it resounds loudly and clearly throughout her novelistic fiction.



Chapter 5

Flying the 'Lofty Realms of Literary Criticism'

This final chapter examines Fielding's unorthodox performance as a literary critic. According to Matthew Arnold (1822—88), the function of literary criticism is to 'learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world'.¹ John Dryden first used the word 'criticism' in print, to mean 'any formal discussion of literature, stating in the preface to *The State of Innocence* (1677): 'Criticism, as it was first instituted by Aristotle . . . meant a standard of judging well.'² Literary criticism is often condemned as being secondary and parasitic, inferior to the writing or 'creation' that is being criticised. For Samuel Johnson, perhaps the greatest eighteenth-century critic, the task of the literary critic was not to justify or recommend a writer or work, but to 'ascertain and apply general principles of poetic excellence':

[T]o exalt opinion to knowledge, and to distinguish between those means of pleasing which depend upon unknown causes and rational deduction from the nameless and inexplicable elegancies which appeal wholly to fancy.³

Johnson's theory of literary excellence is founded on the works of ancient writers — great literature will be distinguished by its lasting power. To ascertain what is the best and most beautiful in literature, he states, 'would perhaps require a very great part of the life of an Aristotle and Plato'.⁴ Since the genre involves study, discussion, evaluation, and the ability to interpret classical and contemporary literature, it was, in Fielding's day, the assumed province of elite 'men of letters', those accorded

¹ James Reeves (1988), *The Critical Sense*. Oxford: Heinemann Ltd., 7.

² See George Watson (1968), *The Literary Critics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 11.

³ *Ibid.* 81.

⁴ *Ibid.* 86-7.

importance for their polished literary works and ability to discern meanings, men such as Alexander Pope, who translated ancient works into English, and Johnson.⁵

Male writers who expressed antagonism towards female literary critics included Henry Fielding. Playing the role of ‘Censor’ to the ‘great Empire of Letters’ in the *Covent-Garden Journal*, he debarred ‘fine Ladies’ from admission to the lofty ‘Realms of Criticism’.⁶ Female critics were ‘Gothic marauders’ in the ‘Republic of Letters’, usurping authority ‘without knowing one Word of the ancient Laws, and original Constitution of that Body of which they have professed themselves to be Members’.⁷ Nevertheless, his sister assumed the office of literary critic at will, even *feminising* critical works written by men to suit her purpose (see Part II).

Part I of this chapter begins with a brief definition of the terms of literary criticism since this will be helpful in identifying Fielding’s *modus operandi* within the hostile world of literary men. In literary criticism, gender plays a complex and significant role. Therefore the language of gender will be explored to show how it operates as a cultural matrix through which criticism is used to express male antagonism towards literary women in general and female literary critics in particular.

Part III considers Fielding’s daring subversion of the philosophical theories published by Thomas Hobbes (1588—1679) and Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury (1631—1713). Part IV assesses Fielding’s placement among the few female literary critics whose contributions to the genre were *published* during her literary career (1742-1762). This requires processing through a certain amount of

⁵ E.g. Pope translated the *Iliad* and Johnson appraised Shakespeare (1745 and 1765) plus several poets.

⁶ Henry Fielding, *Covent-Garden Journal*, 18 and 96. Cited in Terry Castle, ‘Women and Literary Criticism’, in Nisbet and Rawson (1997), 434-469, 434.

⁷ *Ibid.* Thrall reports that Henry edited the second edition of *David Simple* (1744) but did not assist Fielding with the actual writing of it. In her letter to Rev. Leonard Chappelow, 15 March 1795, she states: ‘Miss Fielding was totally unassisted by her Brother whatever She Wrote’. Rylands, MS 533/16.

material produced by relevant female authors. Part V concludes the chapter with an examination of Fielding's critical comments in the preface to *Dellwyn*.

Like all feminist texts, Fielding's contribution to the genre is marked by the eagerness with which she opportunely promotes her concerns for women. Thus a specifically *female critical voice* resonates through her work. This chapter will show that Fielding played an important part in the century's desire to evaluate literature.

Part I: *Eroding Literary Boundaries*

Determined to erode literary boundaries, Fielding argues in *The Cry* that since, as Plutarch wrote, studying literature provided a way 'to discover the human heart', women should not be 'excluded' from 'this road' to 'knowledge' (I: 128). Obviously wanting to prove that women were just as capable as men in distinguishing specific 'qualities' in literature, Fielding argues that learning is not the 'centre of true wisdom' that 'dwells' among the 'clouds' deserving 'preposterous admiration': it was here and available for all to pursue (III: 107).

Laura L. Runge notes that during the eighteenth century, England saw a 'proliferation of literary criticism' when literature 'was explored in scientific, moral, national, and aesthetic ways by a society that sought after 'truth'.⁸ In order to establish 'truth', to define what was verifiable and useful, critics scrutinized authors, readers, and works of art, which they categorized and debated. Systems of value were proposed, dismissed, and modified. Consequently, as Runge observes, 'the act of writing or speaking about literature assumed a certain authority, and despite (or,

⁸ Laura L. Runge (1997), *Gender and Language in British Literary Criticism 1660-1790*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 5.

perhaps, because of) that century's keen awareness of the limitations of language, the critic became responsible for discerning truths about literature'.⁹

Literary criticism can be categorised as *theoretical*, *legislative*, or *descriptive*.¹⁰ *Theoretical* literary criticism is an interest in aesthetics (the appeal of beauty, taste, the sublime), as seen in the essays on the pleasures of the imagination in the *Spectator* (1712) by Joseph Addison (1672—1719). Addison, a participant in the century's debate about laughter and the merits of ridicule, extolling the beauty of flowers and trees, observes that 'the metaphor of laughter' can be 'applied to fields and meadows when they are in flower, or to trees when they are in blossom', like the metaphors of 'fire and burning when they are applied to love'. He concludes that laughter 'is in itself both amiable and beautiful'.¹¹

Legislative (didactic) literary criticism is intended to instruct the writer how to write, or write better. In composition, legislative criticism is similar to a recipe in a cookery book. A typical example is *The History of Rasselas* (1759), where the old philosopher Imlac spells out Johnson's 'rules'. According to Imlac (Johnson), the literary critic should examine the 'species' (text) not the 'individual' (meaning the author). He should ignore minor details, like 'the streaks of a tulip' and look for 'the most striking features' exhibited in 'portraits of nature'.¹² Literature must also be imaginative, taking into account 'the power of passion'; 'changes of the human mind' from the 'spriteliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude' must be traced, so

⁹ Ibid. 5-6.

¹⁰ See e.g. Watson, chapter 1.

¹¹ *Spectator* 249, December 15, 1711, in Scott Elledge ed. (1961, 1966), *Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell U. Press, 2 vols., I: 32.

¹² See Raman Seldon ed. (1988), *The Theory of Criticism, from Plato to the Present*. Essex: Longman Ltd., 89-90 for critical comments in *Rasselas*. In *Rambler* 92 Johnson asserts: 'It is the task of criticism to establish principles, to exalt opinion to knowledge'.

the critic must 'divest himself of the prejudices of his age and country'. Good literature, Johnson affirms, will be proven by its 'posterity'.¹³

Descriptive literary criticism, or the analysis of existing literary works, is a vigorous kind of criticism that is by far the most voluminous. It can be seen in the works of Henry Fielding, the first critic of the novel, in his three prefaces within *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and the eighteen prefaces to each 'Book' of *Tom Jones* (1749). For instance, commenting on characterization, Henry states: 'It hath been thought a vast commendation of a painter to say his figures seem to breathe; but surely it is much greater and nobler applause, that they appear to think'.¹⁴

Fielding interpolates all three kinds of literary criticism into her fiction. In her educational novel, *The Governess*, she encourages her readers to become literary critics by demonstrating *how* to critique a text. Daring to criticize the work of a male author, Fielding focuses on Richard Steele's play, *The Funeral; Or, Grief à la Mode* (1701). In the play old Lord Brumpton feigns death to test his second wife. Steele portrays her as a mercenary woman who tries to swindle his son out of his inheritance while refusing to allow her husband's wards to marry. In the dénouement of the play, Lady Brumpton is revealed to be a bigamist. Her real husband-accomplice sees Lord Brumpton sat at his desk, thinks him a ghost come to haunt him, and, terrified, confesses their guilt. Harmony is restored when the miserable villains flee.

Emphasizing the psychological aspects of the play, Fielding, through her fictional governess, describes the events in true Shakespearean style, with echoes of *Macbeth*. Her use of the dash and apotheosis emphasizes the play's tensions:

Lady Brumpton, when alarm'd with the least Noise, breaks out into all the convulsive Starts natural to conscious Guilt. "Ha! what Noise is that—that

¹³ Seldon, *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Preface to *Joseph Andrews*.

Noise of Fighting?—Run, I say—Whither are you going?—What, are you mad?—Will you leave me alone?—Can't you stir?— . . . Go see what's the Matter . . . Whither shall I turn me?" (205).

Lady Brumpton's 'confused' behaviour, Mrs Teachum points out, shows that she has 'the miserable Mind of a close, malicious, cruel, designing Woman' (207-8). 'Old Trusty', the faithful servant, shows by his tearful sensitivity that he has 'Honesty and Faithfulness' (206). Lady Harriot cannot be trusted because she displays 'Coquetry' and is a foolish woman, which, Fielding writes (opportunistically delivering her feminist point), is the fault of an 'improper' (poor) education (206).

In her critique of Steele's play, Fielding switches from descriptive literary criticism to legislative criticism as she offers a brief overview of each character, stressing that 'good Characters must be successful in the last Act', as Steele has successfully shown (207). With didacticism to the fore, she fires a satirical arrow at writers who 'cloathe Vice in so beautiful a Dress, that, instead of deterring, it will allure and draw into its Snares the young and tender Mind', adding, 'too many of our dramatic Performances are of this latter Cast' (208). Fielding advises that literary critics must exercise their minds, 'dig deep' to find the moral and search for the 'truth', for what the writer actually intends the reader to know lies beneath the surface text. 'Truth', she argues, can only be found in works written by the 'best authors'.

In *The Cry* (1754), Fielding's search for the true value of a text leads her to compare a selection of writers and their works. Of Montaigne, she writes:

There is scarcely to be found in any author such an inexhaustible treasure, such an immense fund of knowledge, as in *Montaigne*; but like a heap of pearls for want of being strung, half their beauties are lost in confusion. His intrinsic worth, by not being stamp'd with some outward image, is not always current with the memory; and to digest such rich matter as is scatter'd about in every chapter, requires a very searching and attentive mind. Yet it is hardly to be doubted that the fine manner of writing that he assumed, was most fitted to his own genius, and by chusing any other he might have lost part of the force and

energy of his images, which could not have been compensated by regularity and method. (I: 6-7).

Werner states that if this ‘forward looking liberal criticism’ of Montaigne (1533 —92, the famous French moralist and essayist) is original, ‘it is certainly to be praised as the critical opinion of an eighteenth-century feminine author’.¹⁵

Fielding’s ‘pearl’ metaphor prompts her to defend an author’s (and her own) use of allegory, which, she explains, ‘is a flight by which the human wit attempts at one and the same time to investigate two objects’. She points out that ‘*Ariosto, Spenser,* and even *Milton*, ran into allegory, as there is nothing to which a great and lively imagination is so prone’ (I: 5). Allegory, a popular literary tool in the eighteenth century,¹⁶ is a form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative, a figurative mode of representation conveying a meaning other than the literal, like the allegorical name ‘Thwackum’ to mean a teacher keen to ‘whack’ his pupils with the rod.

Commenting on the work of Ben Jonson (1572—1637), Fielding admires the ‘strong pictures of nature in his comedies’ and ‘extremely fine’ speeches in his tragedies *Catiline* and *Sejanus* (I: 166), while his most ‘impressionable’ characters are ‘*Morose, Macilente, and Lady Woud-be*’.¹⁷ In her critique of Jonson’s Roman tragedy, *Sejanus*, Fielding’s feminine voice comes through in her eagerness, as a feminist, to identify with Sejanus’s daughter, whose ‘distress’ at being ill-used by an ‘inexorable mob’¹⁸ ‘must move the hardest heart’ (I: 166).

¹⁵ Werner, 125.

¹⁶ Hagstrum states: ‘No age has been blamed more for its innumerable allegories than has eighteenth-century England’, 147.

¹⁷ Lady Woud-be, from *Volpone* (1607); Morose, from *Epicine* (1609-10); Macilente from ‘Every Man Out Of His Humour’ (1598).

¹⁸ *Sejanus* (first performed 1603) is set in the reign of Tiberius. Ambitious Sejanus rises to power by destroying Germanicus’ family and poisoning Tiberius’ son Drusus. Tiberius leaves Rome but sets his agent Macro to spy on Sejanus, then denounces him in a letter to the Senate, which condemns him to death. Sejanus is torn to pieces by an angry mob, stirred up by Macro.

Fielding then changes tack to assail Jonson on a personal level for his ‘side-way reflexions’ on Shakespeare:

Johnson [sic] . . . making the most glaring shew of his own learning, he endeavoured to fix the highest admiration on himself; casting at the same time an imputation on Shakespeare, for want of learning, and spared no pains in exhibiting what he thought so much his own superiority in that single point . . . [the] strongest proofs of his malevolence and impudence of heart. I would not use such words, if softer terms could convey my meaning . . . ’(I: 162-3).

According to Fielding, Shakespeare ‘saw a rising genius’ in Jonson so ‘prevailed on the managers of the theatre to encourage him . . . to exhibit his first performance on the stage’ not realizing that he ‘had nourish’d in his breast this young and venomous snake’ (I: 164). Fielding sees Shakespeare as a ‘strong mastiff’, incapable of Jonson’s ‘paltry spite’. Jonson, the ‘whiffling cur’, has intractable ‘malice’ that ‘break[s] out, where gratitude should have with-held it’ (I: 165). Consequently, Fielding argues, ‘the monument’ Jonson ‘hath left to posterity of his genius, he hath join’d to it a strong picture of his unconquerable envy’ of Shakespeare (I: 165).

Fielding’s comparison of Shakespeare as the ‘strong mastiff’ implies that he is more ‘manly’ than Jonson (the ‘whiffling cur’).¹⁹ In eighteenth-century texts, ‘manly’ is used to describe literary superiority in the way that Dryden describes Virgil’s texts as ‘manly’, or Joseph Warton (1722-1800) describes Pope’s work as ‘solid and manly observations on life or learning’.²⁰ In this way, texts replace the human body, and since the female body is understood as ‘the biological inverse of the ‘manly’ male, the female-authored text is often displaced with a female body’.²¹ ‘Manly’ denotes physiological and mental strength, as shown in Henry Fielding’s pugilistic character Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews* (1742), or Samuel Richardson’s

¹⁹ A mastiff is a thick-set, powerful breed of dog, often used as a watchdog, like a bulldog or bull-mastiff, which is a cross between a bulldog and a mastiff, the mastiff strain predominating.

²⁰ Joseph Warton (1756), *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*. London, 103.

²¹ Runge, 86.

‘grand’ man aptly named Sir Charles Grandison, who is ‘manly’ because he refuses to duel. ‘Manly’ used in this sense is meant to be complimentary, but when the word was used to describe a literary woman, it held a derogative connotation. It made her into an object of derision, emphasizing her unseemly behaviour in assuming a role ostensibly beyond her natural and intellectual remit.

Male antagonism towards female authors can be seen in the *Adventurer* (11 December 1753), where Dr. Johnson makes the misogynist remark: ‘The revolution of years has now produced a generation of Amazons²² of the pen’ asserting ‘their claim’ to ‘science’ and usurping male ‘virility’.²³ Johnson’s words endorsed the myth that learned women were ‘unsexed’ Amazons who were out to ‘create a Utopian society in which men are unnecessary for procreation or protection’.²⁴ A misogynistic male narrator in *Beauty’s Triumph* (1751), lamenting masculine deficiency, blames mothers for training ‘Boys . . . from earliest Infancy, to Folly, Foppery, Effeminacy and Vice’.²⁵ In the language of criticism the words ‘feminine’ and ‘effeminacy’ denote a counterpoint to the ‘manly’ male or scholarly text.

Consequently, any unpolished texts with errors in language or style, including crude texts composed by the ‘Grub Street hacks’ (as writers of doggerel were known), were categorised as ‘feminine’. In *The Governess*, Fielding argues that if a female writer is criticised for grammatical errors it is ‘the fault of an ‘improper’ education’: while women were being denied by gender a university education, their language could hardly be expected to be as polished as university-educated men (206). Terry

²² Amazons - in Greek mythology, a nation of warrior-women who fought on the side of the Trojans during the Greek siege of Troy. Their leader, Penthesilea, was killed by Achilles, who was smitten with the beauty of the corpse. Male offspring born to Amazons were mutilated, killed, or outcast.

²³ Samuel Johnson: *The Idler and the Adventurer* no. 115 (11 Dec. 1753), in W. J. Bate et al eds. (1963), *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2:457-58.

²⁴ Felicity A. Nussbaum (1984), *The Brink of All We Hate*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 44. In Nussbaum (1999), 426, Britannia, the female representative of the British nation ‘resonates in her Celtic origins with the ancient Amazons, as she is sometimes figured with one breast bared’.

²⁵ *Beauty’s Triumph, or, the Superiority of the Fair Sex Invincibly Proved*. London, 1751, III: 268.

Castle notes that ‘The persistent preference of women critics’ for Richardson over Henry Fielding was ‘partly due to the fact that Richardson was perceived as less educated — and hence [wrote] more like a woman — than his rival’ (Henry Fielding).²⁶ Barbauld reports that Richardson spoke no language but English, ‘not even French’.²⁷ Novels were viewed as a ‘feminine’ works because they were written in plain English and could be composed at the kitchen table. Thus men like Richardson and Henry Fielding who wrote novels, helped to erode gender differences in the literary arena.

At the most basic level, as Runge observes, gender provides an everyday vocabulary through which the critic constructs literary distinctions’ that ‘inform British literary judgment’.²⁸ In terms of gender applied to literature by British critics, women did not fare well. On the one hand, a male writer’s female muse was his idealized inspiration, spurring him on to achieve great things. On the other, she was a ‘literary Eve’, a destructive tormentor out to destroy his creative power, evoking his antagonism. George Ballard (1706-55) and John Duncombe (1729-86) wrote encomiastic works celebrating women’s contribution to the world of arts and letters; Thomas Seward (1708-90), the father of the poet and letter-writer Anna Seward (1747-1809), published a poem provocatively entitled ‘The Female Right to Literature’ in Robert Dodsley’s *Miscellany* (II) in 1748. Bonnell Thornton, however, personified satire as a vicious female ‘busily employ’d in sharpening her darts, and dipping the points of them in gall’; ‘CRITICISM’ cannot move without her companion, ‘JUDGMENT’ who refuses to stir; ‘CENSURE’ ‘falls indiscriminately on every one in her way, as she wants [needs] the guide of REASON’;

²⁶ Castle, 445.

²⁷ Barbauld, I:xvi.

²⁸ Runge, 3.

‘IMPUDENCE with her brazen front’ accompanies IGNORANCE’, who has a ‘leaden head’ on her shoulders.²⁹

In *The Battle of the Books* (1704), which is invigorated with the semiotics of gender, Swift depicts criticism as an invidious ‘mother’. Illustrating the sexual tensions prevalent in eighteenth-century intellectual culture, Swift makes ‘mother Criticism’ the central figure in his diatribe against the corruption of learning: she is a rampant, monstrous, incestuous female, chaotically ruling over her offspring the Moderns (bad writers and writers of novels who ‘feminize’ literature). In her ‘Den’ atop ‘a snowy Mountain in *Nova Zembla*’, Criticism lay,

[U]pon the Spoils of numberless Volumes half devoured. At her right Hand sat *Ignorance*, her Father and Husband, blind with Age; at her left, *Pride* her Mother, dressing her up in the Scraps of Paper herself had torn. There was *Opinion* her Sister, light of Foot, hoodwinkt, and headstrong, yet giddy and perpetually turning. About her play’d her Children, *Noise* and *Impudence*, *Dullness* and *Vanity*, *Positiveness*, *Pedantry*, and *Ill-Manners*. The Goddess herself had Claws like a Cat; Her Head, and Ears, and Voice, resembled those of an *Ass*; Her Teeth fallen out before; Her Eyes turned inward; as if she lookt only upon herself; Her Diet was the overflowing of her own *Gall*; Her *Spleen* was so large, as to stand prominent like a Dug of the first Rate, nor wanted Excrecencies in form of Teats, at which a Crew of ugly Monsters were greedily sucking; and, what is wonderful to conceive, the bulk of Spleen encreased faster than the Sucking could diminish it.³⁰

Castle describes this passage as ‘a flagrant image of a threatening gyno-criticism’.³¹

Schofield notes that Swift, like his Scriblerus club ally, Pope, ‘worried profoundly about the challenges to their moral and aesthetic values posed by a changing social

²⁹ Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood eds. (1969), *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 341-42, citing Bonnell Thornton, *Have At You All: or The Drury-Lane Journal*, 12 March 1752, 211-14.

³⁰ Jonathan Swift, *Battle of the Books*, 240, cited in Nisbet and Rawson, 436.

³¹ Castle, 437. ‘Gynocritics’ is a term associated with Elaine Showalter in ‘Towards a Feminist Poetics’, in Mary Eagleton ed. (1986), *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 188-191. Showalter explains: ‘The programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture’, 190.

order and an emerging popular culture'.³² Traditionalist antagonism towards literary ladies or 'feminine' writing often caused writers like Fielding to protect their 'virtuous' reputations by publishing anonymously or under a pseudonym. 'Publication', as Jacqueline Pearson observes, was 'the barrier beyond which it was felt a good woman must not go'.³³ Perhaps this is why Fielding's critical pamphlet, *A Comparison* (1750), has only recently been unearthed: others may yet come to light.

Although Fielding's performance in the literary domain was highly unorthodox, she did not go as far as Haywood. During the 1720s, Haywood opened a bookshop in Covent Garden under 'The Sign of Fame', a venture that enabled her to keep profits that had in the past gone to male booksellers. It was an act that Karen Hollis states, 'held the potential for being scandalously subversive' because 'a woman's selling of books equated to the selling of her body'.³⁴

Part II: *Feminizing 'Dramatick Poesy': Remarks on Clarissa*

Fielding's unorthodox venture into composing critical pamphlets begins (as far as is known) with *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749).³⁵ This fifty-six-page pamphlet of descriptive literary criticism is 'a critical dialogue in the fashion of Dryden's *Essay of Dramatick Poesy*' (1668).³⁶ It also emulates *The Moralists*, a popular epistolary work by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury that is modelled on Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian rhetorical dialogues. In Shaftesbury's text, Theocles writes

³² Schofield and Macheski, 8.

³³ Pearson, 12.

³⁴ See Karen Hollis, 'Eliza Haywood and the Gender of Print', in *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1997, 43-62, 55-56. Hollis states that the word 'Fame' could easily slide into 'infamy', becoming a 'sexual rather than a literary definition which emphasized the negative connotations of a woman involved in commerce'.

³⁵ Sabor (1985). All further references are to this edition.

³⁶ Johnson (1994), 15.

to Philocles reciting comments overheard from ‘Conversations on Natural and Moral Subjects’ (*Characteristics*, III: ii).

Fielding adopts the masculine dialogic format used by Dryden (and Shaftesbury), but feminizes it. First, she replaces Dryden’s mouthpiece, Neander, his leading, most convincing conversationalist, with Miss Gibson, an intellectual woman who wins all her arguments including her disputes with men. Miss Gibson is also accorded the last words of the pamphlet. Secondly, Fielding substitutes an assembly of mixed company for Dryden’s all-male characters. This allows her to explore masculine and feminine critical responses to Richardson’s novel *Clarissa* (1748). Thirdly, while Dryden’s characters debate the merits of classical French and English drama, Fielding’s characters debate the merits of Richardson’s work. Fourthly, whereas Dryden’s intention is to justify drama as a legitimate art form, Fielding defends Richardson’s language and style and his heroine’s behaviour. Dryden’s setting for his work is a barge en route to Somerset-Stairs after his conversationalists have witnessed a naval battle. Fielding’s is the domestic setting of a sitting-room.

In his prefatory address ‘To the Right Honourable CHARLES Lord BUCKHURST’, Dryden declares his impartiality, unwilling ‘to combate, nor well able to resist’ arguments offered, but merely present his Lordship with ‘the Relation of a Dispute betwixt some of our Wits’.³⁷ In *Remarks*, Fielding emulates Dryden’s ‘impartiality’ in her opening letter to Richardson, acting, like Dryden, as an unbiased persona reporting various overheard criticisms of *Clarissa*:

I have not willingly omitted any one Objection I have heard made to your favourite Character, from her first Appearance in the World; nor, on the contrary, have I either diminished or added to favourable Construction put on her Words or Actions. If the Grounds for the Objections are found to be deducible from the Story, I would have them remain in their full Force; but if the Answers her Admirers have given to those Objections are found to result

³⁷ See Jack Lynch, online edition, <http://newark.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/dramapoet.html>.

from an impartial and attentive perusal of the Story, I would not have her deny'd the Justice they have done her.³⁸

Given that Jane Collier was driven to defend the erotic fire scene in *Clarissa*,³⁹ in which Lovelace touches Clarissa while she is clothed in a nightdress that clings to her body shape, the critical comments listed by Fielding in *Remarks* are likely to be genuine reflections of the novel's readers. Fielding's strategy incorporates both the role of spectator and her insider knowledge of Richardson and his text, which, she clearly feels, authorizes her to judge as a 'candid' critic, with reason taking precedence over prejudice.

In Richardson's novel, his young heroine, Clarissa Harlowe, writes to her close friend, Anna Howe, of events resulting from her desperate flight from an arranged marriage to the awful landowner Roger Solmes. Lovelace, a duplicitous hedonist, assists Clarissa. He feigns friendship but eventually rapes her. Rendered unchaste and therefore unworthy of marriage to another suitor, Clarissa prepares to meet her maker, triumphing in a 'noble' death knowing her soul is purer than Lovelace's. Clarissa's conduct and her fortitude in facing death cause a reformation in Lovelace's correspondent and fellow profligate, Belford. Clarissa's cousin, Colonel Morden, avenges her death in a duel with Lovelace. Hence the novel addresses several issues of concern to Fielding, specifically women's lack of choice in marriage, failure to educate women about the dangers of the outside world, duelling, and 'True and false Friendship', which, she states in *Remarks*, 'was never more beautifully displayed than in this work'.⁴⁰ Thus Fielding's enthusiastic support for *Clarissa* is unsurprising.

³⁸ Sabor (1985), 3.

³⁹ See Tom Keymer, 'Jane Collier, Reader of Richardson, and the Fire Scene in *Clarissa*', Albert Rivero ed. (1996), *New Essays on Samuel Richardson*. New York and London: St. Martins, 141-161.

⁴⁰ Sabor (1985), 46.

In *Remarks* Mr. Johnson (Fielding may be inferring Richardson's friend, Dr. Johnson), backs up Miss Gibson's defence of the novel's prolixity by pointing out that one of the 'chief Beauties' of the twenty-volume history of Rome is its length, which, like *Clarissa*, is necessary to display the actions of so many 'various Characters, and the diving into the Motives' of people's actions. Johnson's lengthy, dogmatic expatiation on historical events is characteristic of assumed male importance. In response, the 'Lady of the house' points out that the management of a household as discussed in the novel is as important to a family as the management of 'a Kingdom'. Fielding, here, deftly equates the politics of warring Rome to the management of a house, subversively undercutting patriarchal supremacy.

Furthermore, Fielding shifts the importance of classical literature from the education of the elite to accommodate the rising bourgeois readership. Runge, like Bree, notices that when Fielding presents her critical views through the relation of private conversations in domestic spaces in this manner, the 'universal application of such private knowledge further authorizes her own criticism'.⁴¹ Bree views Fielding's assertion that domestic fiction is more important than managing a kingdom, as 'an extraordinary claim for the importance of that upstart genre—the novel',⁴² or to use Runge's words, 'granting it the transcendent qualities required of art'.⁴³

Although *Remarks* was published anonymously on the 7th January 1749, five days after publication of *The Governess*, Fielding's circle of friends, including Richardson and Jane Collier, were left in no doubt that it was her work. It is a seminal and emotive response to *Clarissa*, the first in a flood of criticism of Richardson's novel. Sabor, editor of the modern edition of *Remarks*, notes that 'no

⁴¹ Runge, 150-51.

⁴² Bree (1997), (Internet, no pagination).

⁴³ Runge, 151.

critical response or translations were produced.⁴⁴ That Fielding has not been recognised as the author of the pamphlet for the last two hundred years or so is unsurprising since it is wrongly attributed to ‘W. Freeman’ at the British Library. *Clarissa* was published in three instalments (December 1747, April 1748 and December 1748)⁴⁵ and the dialogic flow of *Remarks* replicates the chronological appearance of each instalment. Ensuring that Richardson would know her as the author of the pamphlet, Fielding dispatched a copy of *Remarks* to Richardson on 8th January, one month after the final instalment of *Clarissa* appeared,⁴⁶ with an accompanying effusive letter in which she seeks his approval for ‘daring but to touch the hem’ of Clarissa’s ‘garment’. The following passage from her letter, that oozes sensibility, is a typical example of how Fielding feminizes her literary criticism:

[M]y words flow into an easy and *nervous style* . . . when I read of her [Clarissa], *I am all sensation; my heart glows; I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears* . . . I cannot speak . . . I become like the Harlowes’ servant, when he spoke not; he could not speak; he looked, he bowed, and withdrew. In short, Sir, no pen but your’s can do justice to Clarissa. Often have I reflected on my own vanity in daring but to touch the hem of her garment . . .⁴⁷ (*italics, mine*).

Here, Fielding’s self-deprecating stance, obviously calculated to function as a placatory measure and to feed Richardson’s ego, bears the apologetic tone of the ‘Advertisement’ to *David Simple*. It reveals her wariness of treading on male territory in assuming the male privilege of composing critical essays early in her literary career. Fielding’s actions on these occasions typify what the modern French psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva, describes as ‘over-zealous conformity with patriarchal values’ stemming from a ‘repressed desire’ not to be identified with revolution.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Sabor (1985), 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* iv.

⁴⁶ Fielding’s speedy production of *Remarks* is unsurprising since she likely had prior knowledge of the final instalment. At Henry Fielding’s request, Richardson had sent him an advance copy.

⁴⁷ Fielding to Richardson, 8 Jan. 1748/9, in Battestin and Probyn, 123.

⁴⁸ Morris (1993), 151, citing Toril Moi ed. (1986), *The Kristeva Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Obviously conscious that she is operating within the masculine values of literature where the emphasis is on judgment, intellect, and imagination, Fielding anticipates reactions to the legitimacy of *Remarks* by acknowledging that Richardson (or other readers) may find it ‘whimsical’.⁴⁹ Sabor terms the opening comments of *Remarks* a ‘stiff apostrophe’, quickly dispelled as ‘the practiced novelist takes over from the laboring woman of letters’.⁵⁰ Here, Sabor identifies an important distinction in gendered discourse: Fielding labours, ‘not because the matter is intellectually beyond her capacity’, but because she is very much aware of operating in a socially unacceptable role.⁵¹ From the start, Fielding’s subversion is clear: she gives her critical readers the impression that she is operating in the socially acceptable female pose of letter-writer, but masquerading in the guise of epistolary author, she infiltrates the male critical arena to perform as a literary critic. Employing both genres to suit her own ends is another way in which Fielding effectually feminises Dryden’s text.

Fielding’s innovative idea of incorporating letters into her critique of *Clarissa* indicates her awareness of the genre’s popularity. At the time, letters were regarded as part of the expected repertoire of female accomplishments, with Madame de Sévigné and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu recognized as exemplars in the genre.⁵² Little education is needed to inscribe private, domestic detail, plus the discursive nature of the letter is naturally given to narrative. In using the letter form, with its feminine associations, as well as mitigating the impropriety of assuming the (male) office of literary critic, Fielding parallels Richardson’s narrative technique.

⁴⁹ Sabor (1985), 46.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* v.

⁵¹ Runge, 148.

⁵² Castle claims that the acclaim bestowed upon de Sévigné ‘bordered on hero-worship’, 451. For the importance of letter writing to the rise of the novel see Ruth Perry (1980), *Women, Letters and the Novel*. New York: AMS Press, esp. 63—91.

In *Remarks*, Fielding follows up a conversation between enthusiastic Miss Gibson and ‘Bellario’, an elite, candid ‘Gentleman’ conversationalist, with an exchange of letters. This allows Fielding to air her views unhindered. Miss Gibson eventually converts Bellario from his initial position of scepticism after reading the first instalment of *Clarissa*, to one of its enthusiastic supporters at the end. He therefore serves to prove the truth of Fielding’s maxim, that a reader should judge a novel as a whole, after reading it ‘thoroughly, through to the end, when all the vast Building centres in the pointed View of the Author’s grand Design’.⁵³ Miss Gibson serves to promote Fielding’s major feminist point, which is, that when intelligent, educated women are allowed a voice, they can conduct intellectual discourse just as efficiently as erudite men. Thus, again, the specifically female critical voice emerges.

Runge observes that when Fielding’s characters ‘debate the merits of [Richardson’s] epistolary style’ they offer an instance of ‘meta-criticism’ on Fielding’s own epistolary critical strategy.⁵⁴ Fielding highlights the flexibility of the genre when Miss Gibson responds to Mr. Delincourt’s censure of Richardson’s linguistic innovations, such as his coining ‘new Words’ and ‘writing a Spelling-book, instead of relating a Story’. Miss Gibson replies: ‘Indeed, Sir, I do not pretend to be any Judge of the Accuracy of Stile, but I beg to know, if in the writing familiar Letters, many Liberties are not allowable, which in other kinds of writing might perhaps be justly condemned’.⁵⁵ These are clever tactics. In defending Richardson’s digressive, inventive style Fielding is justifying her own use of the epistolary form and the ‘many liberties’ she takes to accommodate *her* critical dialogue.

Miss Gibson’s response, offered with humility, like Fielding’s opening remarks in her letter to Richardson, falls in line with the gendered behaviour expected of

⁵³ Sabor (1985), 14.

⁵⁴ Runge, 150.

⁵⁵ Sabor (1985), 12.

women who tentatively address a 'manly' subject. Her inquisitive, self-deprecating stance minimizes the presumption of a female correcting male judgment. This disguises the fact that Miss Gibson, professing her inability to judge, manages to obviate Dellincourt's objections. Fielding allows a relationship to develop between her 'heroine' and Bellario, whose 'Impartiality' and 'Reason' takes precedence over 'Prejudice' as she skilfully manages to change Bellario's initial scepticism into praise.

Bellario's sixteen-page letter to Miss Gibson is peppered with moral reflections on ancient and modern writers. It dominates *Remarks* as Fielding creates an opportunity for what Runge terms, 'the most sustained scholarly treatment of the novel'.⁵⁶ Through Bellario Fielding evaluates the design of Richardson's novel, the action, character and moral, according to the classical tradition following Aristotle's 'rules' and neoclassical convention, displaying her erudition through the masculine character. Obviously Fielding does not wish Miss Gibson to be censured as a 'wit', aware that the learned lady was seen as a figure of contempt in her day, and so takes pains to ensure that her female character appears differently.

Fielding does not 'labour' when she creates Bellario's dissertation in educated criticism, expressing through Miss Gibson the value of *Clarissa's* uniqueness by comparing it with Homer's epic. Fielding suggests that like Homer, Richardson determines his own literary standards: 'the painting Nature is indeed his Aim, but the Vehicle by which he conveys his lively Portraits to the Mind is so much his own Invention . . . Aristotle drew his Rules of Epic Poetry from Homer, and not Homer from Aristotle'.⁵⁷ Following his expatiation on the epic, Bellario quotes a 'celebrated French critic' in support of his admission that Richardson's text has justness and proportion. This critical evaluation takes in other celebrated authors including

⁵⁶ Runge, 152.

⁵⁷ Sabor (1985), 35.

Shakespeare and Milton. Fielding's joy at being able to expatiate on classical writers and their works permeates the text.

In Miss Gibson's return letter, Fielding just as easily assumes the feminine voice of sensibility to describe the emotive power of Richardson's novel, seen in Miss Gibson's lachrymose laudation:

Whilst we seem to live, and daily converse with her [Clarissa] through her last Stage, our Hearts are at once rejoiced and amended, are both soften'd and elevated, till our Sensations grow too strong for any Vent, but that of Tears; nor am I ashamed to confess, that Tears without Number I have shed . . .⁵⁸

Significantly, Fielding evidences the mid-century shift from satirical literature to one emphasizing feeling. Furthermore, by adopting the dialogue form for her literary criticism, Fielding is able to slip easily between the masculine mode of literary criticism and feminine sensibility, where the emphasis is on the internal feelings of the self and sympathy with the sufferings of others.

Clearly, Fielding's motivation for producing *Remarks*, which is a worthy exercise in descriptive criticism, is to defend Richardson and his novel, which demonstrates the depth of her admiration for her friend and to some extent, mentor.

* * *

Like *Remarks*, Fielding's second, dialogic, seventy-two-page critical pamphlet, *A Comparison* (1750), is designed to defend another literary friend and subscriber,⁵⁹ William Whitehead (1715—85). Fielding's admiration for Whitehead is shown in her letter to their mutual friend, James Harris, in whose home Whitehead's play *Creusa, Queen of Athens* (1754) was given an amateur performance. Fielding writes: 'I am glad you think so well of [Whitehead's] "The School for Lovers", I

⁵⁸ Ibid. 56.

⁵⁹ Whitehead subscribed to Fielding's *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* and *Memoirs of Socrates*.

love its Author, he is a good natur'd Man, and has a simplicity of Heart peculiar at this time'.⁶⁰ Whitehead's play, a tragedy entitled *The Roman Father*, opened at Drury Lane on 24th February 1750. Like Pierre Corneille's *Horace* (1640), it is based on the account of Rome's successful subsuming of its neighbouring country Alba in *Annales*, written by the historian Titus Livius (Livy) (59 B.C.—A.D. 17),⁶¹ when three Roman Horatii fought three Alban Curiatii to avoid all-out war.

In *A Comparison* Fielding deploys descriptive criticism to offer extensive critical comments covering each Act, Scene, and characters in the two tragedies before concluding that Whitehead is the better dramatist. Fielding creates two 'Gentlemen of allow'd Taste, and distinguished Judgment', Mr. Bromley and Mr. Freeman, who attend a performance of Whitehead's play. Later, they debate which is best, *Horace* or *The Roman Father*, but decide to defer judgment until they have reread the playtexts, lest they are 'swayed by the fine acting' they have just witnessed. They continue their discussion through an exchange of letters, as do Miss Gibson and Bellario in *Remarks*. Through fictional masculine discourse relayed in first-person narration, Fielding again steps beyond her allotted sphere to pose as two 'gentlemen of letters' while displaying her unorthodox classical erudition.

Corneille mixes fiction with Livy's historical sources to make his play more complex, allotting Horatius an Alban wife named Sabina, and Horace's sister, Camilla, an Alban fiancé, Curiatius, who is Sabina's brother. Before she learns the names of the combatants, an oracle foretells Camilla that she and Curiatius will soon be united forever. Overjoyed at this news, the betrothed couple plan to marry next day, but that night, Camilla is deeply troubled by dreams of 'blood' and 'corpses'. After the combat, Horace returns victorious, the lone survivor. When his distraught

⁶⁰ Fielding to Harris, 1762, in Battestin and Probyn, 173-75. Whitehead regularly visited Bath, where Fielding likely spent the last fourteen years of her life. He also had work published in the *Bath Journal*.

⁶¹ Fielding cites chapter xxvi of Livy's *Annales* (142 Books). For Livy's full account see I: xxiii—xxvi.

sister accuses him of sacrificing her fiancée for Roman 'Love of Glory', Horatius angrily accuses her of treason for mourning an enemy, and kills her. Camilla's horrified Roman admirer, Valerius, denounces Horatius as a murderer. Horatius's patriotic father, however, who has more jurisdiction than his king in family affairs, sides with his son. Consequently Horatius goes unpunished and retains his glory.

In Whitehead's play, Camilla is renamed Horatia and Sabina is replaced by Valeria, friend of Horatia and sister to Valerius. Before the battle, Horatia sends Curiatis a scarf (Fielding points out that in Livy it is a paludamentum (military robe)), as a token of her devotion. 'Every word' Horatia utters as she gives the scarf to her messenger, Fielding writes, 'is tender enough to melt our Hearts' (56). When her brother appears after the battle wearing the bloodied scarf as a trophy, it symbolically demonstrates why Horatia's grief would instantly turn to fury. Bromley (Fielding) criticizes Corneille for omitting the 'scarf' detail: 'as it is spoken of in *Livy*, I cannot help wondering how the ingenious *French* Writer came to leave it out' (62).

It is interesting that, Bromley, who defends Whitehead's play, seems to answer Richardson's objections to it in his letter dated March, 1750, to Frances Grainger. Richardson accuses Whitehead of 'dispensing golden laws when he has none but leaden ones' and 'bringing down taste'.⁶² He further argues that he 'might have made a better play over this very story' if he'd had 'more leisure':

I would tell you how . . . to set all the women in the boxes, pit, and galleries a sympathising with . . . a young woman, when her country is in the utmost danger, running about complaining that her man may have his crown cracked, that she is in love up to the ears and cannot *bear it*; deafening the ears of her *father* as well as *brothers* . . . how unnaturally shocking!⁶³

⁶² Richardson's letter to Frances Grainger, 29th March 1750, in Carroll, 150-57.

⁶³ Ibid.

This passage reveals Richardson's lack of patience with sensitive women who sympathize with the fictional fiancée whose dreams of happiness in marriage are suddenly, cruelly, snatched away. His remarks, which are restrictively masculine, can even be described as misogynistic.

Richardson fails to comprehend that women in the audience can identify with the young heroine because they, like her, must endure the daily tensions concomitant with their existence in a patriarchal subculture. Powerless to control their own destinies, they, like Horatia, are forced to live with the consequences of men's decisions. One can speculate from Richardson's commentary, that while watching the lachrymose heroine onstage, women in the audience appear to experience a catharsis, their tears acting as a release valve allowing the daily build-up of pressures to escape. There is a sense of kinship, a literary intimacy experienced by female characters in the play (and Fielding), that Richardson cannot share. Despite his implied feminist sentiments in *Pamela*, Richardson, is, after all, a patriarch — the father-figure and upholder of patriarchal customs with the 'right' to *control* the women in his family.

Whether Fielding had seen Richardson's letter to Grainger prior to posting is unknown.⁶⁴ However, it is known that Richardson voiced his opinions freely, so it is possible that he voiced his objections in front of Fielding. Subversively assuming male identity through Bromley, Fielding can evaluate her response to Richardson coherently, without any bombastic interruptions that would likely take place in a meeting. It is plausible, therefore, that Fielding's Freeman, Corneille's supporter, is meant to represent Richardson and Bromley to represent Fielding, who is asking Richardson to reconsider the play with more 'Impartiality' (13). Fielding had more knowledge of the classics than Richardson, so was in a better position to judge the

⁶⁴ *A Comparison* came out on 15th March, Grainger's letter is dated 29th.

plays fairly. Note also Bromley (Fielding's) surprise at Freeman's (Richardson's) bias towards Corneille and the reference to their previous differences of opinion:

Your breaking forth into a sort of Rapture on the very Name and Memory of your favourite Author, has (give me leave to say) an Appearance of less Impartiality, than I have generally found in your Mind. But you know, my Friend, it is our constant Custom, when any Difference of Opinion arises between us, freely to tell each other . . . When I had read Mr. *Whitehead's* Play, I still continued of Opinion, that in all the principal Characteristicks of a good Tragedy, the *English Roman Father* excells *Corneille's Horace*, and what is much stronger, even after having read your Letter . . . (17-18).
. . . I have not here attempted to say any thing that may have the least Appearance of regular Criticism. I know my own Incapacity of executing such an Attempt. You desired, when I had read the *English* Play, I would give you my Thoughts . . . (71).

As with *Remarks*, Fielding seems to prefer *writing* her literary criticism rather than risk a vocal exchange of views. When Fielding disagreed with Richardson about specifying Mrs. Teachum's methods of punishment in *The Governess*, she avoided confrontation by having Jane Collier intercede on her behalf with a letter to Richardson (discussed earlier).

Through Bromley, Fielding points out that if Horatia's distress and death were excluded from the play, except for Whitehead's allotting the Roman father tender feelings for his son, whose allegiance to Rome must take precedence over his love for his sister and the friend he must kill, the play would be 'a Tragedy without any Distress at all' (19). Corneille's character Horace, she writes, is too 'Brutal', his fierceness resembles that of a wild animal, a 'Lyon' or 'Tyger'; his 'brutal Fierceness' 'robs him of all our Compassion'. Bromley concludes that 'Brutality is the Characteristic' of Corneille's hero whereas 'Humanity' is the dominating theme in Whitehead's play (29-30).

In defending Whitehead's portrayal of Horatia, Fielding's feminine voice resonates through her critique as she offers observations on the female character from

her own perspective as a woman. Through Bromley she explains that since Horatia is a Roman virgin, she would be taught to exhibit patriotic pride and passion, so the depth of Horatia's distress is doubly increased when she learns that her betrothed must fight her brother. Considering the emotional turmoil Horatia experiences going from ecstatic joy at the anticipated marriage, to dreading the combat, to witnessing her brother wearing her betrothed's bloodied scarf, as Fielding points out, one can expect her to exhibit 'Violence of Passion' for 'it would be difficult to place such a woman in a Situation much more dreadful' (35).

Fielding's explanation turns Richardson's objection to Horatia's 'running about complaining that her man may have his crown cracked' into a pithy remark that underscores his ignorance of Roman culture. Fielding is trying to make Whitehead's critics understand that Corneille's Camille lacks the Roman 'Violence of Passion' that would 'make us expect from her such daring behaviour to her Brother'; nor is Camille sufficiently interesting to raise the 'proper Compassion' one would expect of a Roman woman, 'tho' we detest her Brother for the Action' (37). One can sense Fielding's frustration at Richardson's impatience at Whitehead's characterization of Horatia.

Summing up Corneille's portrayal of Sabina and Camilla, Fielding, through Bromley, concludes that Corneille has 'drawn only a faint Sketch' of Camilla, reducing her to a passionless shadow until she 'suddenly breaks forth into that amazing Fury, in the fifth Scene of the fourth Act'. Obviously having studied the plays intently, Fielding, through Bromley, undermines Freeman's (Richardson's) observations: 'And give me leave to say that in this respect, you are more Partial to your favourite *Corneille*, than he is to himself' (37-8). Compared to 'useless' Sabina, Whitehead's Valeria is 'A [true] FRIEND' because "*She has Tears for others Woes*,

and *Patience for her own*".⁶⁵ Here, Fielding's words convey the impression that while discussing the two plays she is thinking of her position as Richardson's friend and regular guest in his home, and sees in Valeria's position similarities with her own situation: 'The Mists of Passion blind her not . . . she only feels her Friend's Misfortunes. She is impartial in her Judgment, cool in her Actions, tho' warm in her Affections; she has no wish but what centers in the Happiness of the Family in which she is then a Guest' (38).

Fielding, the sentimental writer, imagines the pain endured by the women in the plays. Her sympathy also extends to Whitehead's Roman father, sensing his emotional distress as he wrestles with his patriotism, his pride in his son and compassion for his distracted daughter. In her final judgement she applauds the moral worth of her friend Whitehead and his play as candidly (fairly) as she does with Richardson and his novel in *Remarks on Clarissa*.

Part III: Subverting the Theorists

Subversively, under the guise of fiction, Fielding radically participates in the century's debate concerning laughter, ridicule, and the grotesque, that emanated from Hobbes and came to involve several 'men of letters'.⁶⁶ In his essay, *Human Nature* (1640), Hobbes describes laughter as the physical eruption of the 'risible' muscles motivated by a psychological impulse resulting from a sudden overpowering, self-advantageous feeling of 'sudden glory'— a feeling of superiority when comparing oneself with another person or thing:

Sudden glory, is the passion which maketh those *grimaces* called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by

⁶⁵ Fielding footnotes that this quotation is from 'Mrs. Leoper's Poems'.

⁶⁶ Brewer notes that the appellation meant 'that they were entitled to be seen as leading critics', 470.

the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves.⁶⁷

Fascinated with the physiognomics of laughter, Samuel Butler (1613-80) observed that human laughter involves the same baring of the upper teeth as when animals snarl at each other: 'Men cannot laugh heartily without showing their teeth'.⁶⁸ He, like Hobbes, makes laughter a derisive tool. Addison used his *Spectator* essays (1711) to condemn the 'talent of turning men into laughter'. He proposes two branches of ridicule, comedy and burlesque. In comedy a person pretends to be a fool in order to evoke laughter. Burlesque is what Henry Fielding laughingly does with Richardson's *Pamela* using bawdy Shamela Andrews to ridicule what he sees as Pamela Andrews's over zealous protection of her 'virtue' (chastity).⁶⁹

Francis Hutcheson (1694—1746) in his 'Letters to Hibernicus' (1725)⁷⁰ highlights the existence of victimless laughter. He quotes from *Hudibras* to illustrate how genial laughter is evoked by the comic mishap that occurs when Butler's knight tries to shoot Talgol but finds that 'Pallas' in 'the Shape of Rust' has her shield wedged firmly between the 'Spring and Hammer' (*Hudibras*, 7: 101-4). Hutcheson's key word is 'Contrast'. He contrasts the above example with a situation in which an affected fop evokes derisory laughter from passers-by due to his show of 'great Gravity'. Henry Fielding enters the debate in his preface to *Joseph Andrews* to explain that ugliness, infirmity, or poverty, does not deserve ridicule; rather, it is the fop 'with the affectation of riches' who descends from a 'coach and six' and inadvertently slips in the mud that warrants spontaneous laughter. We laugh at his

⁶⁷ *Human Nature* (1640) appears in *Leviathan* (1651); see *Leviathan*, 38-40.

⁶⁸ See Richard Terry (2005), *Mock-Heroic from Butler to Cowper: An English Genre and Discourse*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 172-3.

⁶⁹ See Elledge, op. cit.

⁷⁰ Francis Hutcheson, Letters to Hibernicus, no. 11, June 1725, republished in *A Collection of Letters and Essays on Several Subjects, Lately Publish'd in the Dublin Journal*, 2 vols. London, 1729, 1: 90.

downfall because his affected airs and over-abundance of pride collapses with him.⁷¹ Mark Akenside (1721—70) points out in ‘Pleasures of (the) Imagination’ (1744, 1747) that a man of sense and merit who falls in the mud is not a ridiculous a figure, and though he may laugh at himself, he does not evoke *derisory* laughter from others.

Hobbes’s concerns were with war, relations within the community, human survival and the empowerment of one individual over another, with ‘malign’ laughter (ridicule) used as a tool of empowerment. In *The Cry*, Fielding, through Portia, disdainfully reject Hobbes’s theory, at the same time feminising it using the same method as she does in *Remarks*, by shifting the spotlight from war and the survival of the state to a domestic setting:

There is no one who can more thoroughly dislike *Hobbes’s* assertion, that all laughter arises from malignity, than myself . . . Children’s laughing at the sight of a candle, or at any other object in which they take a delight, is a contradiction to mr. *Hobbes*, and a proof that laughter is caused by a certain degree of pleasure, for which we cannot give the reason why . . . (I: 191-2).

Thus a specifically female critical voice comes through the text as Fielding’s picture of a child laughing from harmless innocence contradicts Hobbes’s claim that all laughter stems from malevolence. This is underscored when Portia later recounts, ‘Innocent mirth and real good-humour are the joy and delight of my soul’ (II: 49).

In *The Cry* Fielding links several scattered references to *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, texts written by ‘an ingenious author’, into the laughter and ridicule debate. Responding to critics who claim that ‘heroic’ characters like Don Quixote and Parson Adams⁷² are ‘ridiculous’ figures, she writes: ‘To travel through a whole work only to laugh at the chief companion allotted us, is an insupportable burthen’.

⁷¹ See Dent, op. cit.

⁷² Appearing on the title-page of *Joseph Andrews* is Henry Fielding’s statement: ‘Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes, Author of *Don Quixote*’. Hence the linking of Don Quixote with Adams.

Fielding points out that these characters are not ridiculous; they have depth, which the ‘discerning’ reader would see if he (or she) would examine them closely, otherwise ‘the reading of that incomparable piece of humour left us by *Cervantes*, can give but little pleasure’ (III: 121). Cynical readers, Fielding advises, instead of ridiculing Don Quixote, should observe the strong representation of human nature exhibited at one time in his ‘madness’ and ‘extraordinary good sense’ ‘in every other’ (III: 122).

Fielding continues:

Nor less understood is the character of parson *Adams* in *Joseph Andrews* by those persons, who, fixing their thoughts on the hounds trailing the bacon in his pocket (with some oddnesses in his behaviour, and peculiarities in his dress) think proper to overlook the noble simplicity of his mind, with the other innumerable beauties in his character; which, to those who can understand *the word to the wise*, are placed in the most conspicuous view.

That the ridiculers of parson *Adams* are designed to be the proper objects of ridicule (and not that innocent man himself) is a truth which the author hath in many places set in the most glaring light (III: 122).

Fielding points out that even great men ‘may have some oddnesses and peculiarities, which are indeed food for mirth and pleasantry’, but while with ‘candor’ they may laugh at themselves along with others for their ‘excusable’ oddities, this is but ‘the charm of universal cheerfulness and innocent mirth’ (III: 124). Adams is not a ridiculous figure. He has moral worth, he is innocent, basically good, is true to his religious beliefs and there is no affectation in his behaviour. Critics who desire to see ‘nothing but the grotesque’, claims Fielding, ‘injure writers’ when they turn authors’ characters into ‘risible figures’ and the whole work into farce. Fielding’s indignation at the ‘malicious rather than ignorant absurdities’ ‘vented on honest parson *Adams*’ is a clear defence of her brother’s acumen as a novelist.

Fielding underscores her point with a picture of ‘buffoons’ bedaubing with mud the statue of Venus de Milo, turning something beautiful into a ‘grotesque’ image:

What would become of all the most beautiful works of art, if they were to fall into the hands of buffoons? Should any person who had no taste for real beauty, but delighted rather in preposterous deformity, clap on upon the head of the famous *Venus de Medicis* a fool's cap with a pair of ass's ears, bedaub the beautiful face with mud . . . how soon might that exquisite model of symmetry and beauty become to the vulgar the highest object of ridicule? (II: 297-8).

With her reference to the mud-bedaubed statue Fielding picks up on the various references to mud — such as the fop falling in the mud — made by her brother Henry, Akenside and others in the laughter and ridicule debate.

In the above passage Fielding's reference to the 'distortion' of 'good' characters into grotesque figures evidences her participation in another of the century's (male) debates that concerns the grotesque as a literary concept. Fielding links it, as Clark Lawlor notes, to the 'Horatian grotesque mode'.⁷³ Horace's image of the grotesque in the *Ars Poetica* is that of 'A handsome Woman with a Fishes Tail, / Or a Man's Head upon a Horses Neck'. Horace, then, sees the grotesque as an incongruous assemblage of human and animal parts: to him, it is 'the defining boundary between true and false representations' of nature in 'both literary and social domains'.⁷⁴

Lawlor observes that in a passage from *The Hind and the Panther*⁷⁵ Dryden compares the 'representation of human life in inferior persons' to paintings of clowns in art, concluding that such pictures were 'out of nature', which is 'farce'.⁷⁶ Dryden, then, equates farce to the grotesque because characters and actions in farce are unnatural; their manners are false and their characters are inconsistent with mankind. For Dryden, farce is to poetry what the grotesque is in Horace's unnatural picture of a being part human, part animal. Farce, like Horace's image of the grotesque, misrepresents nature and flouts the principles of classical aesthetics. Fielding links

⁷³ Lawlor (1999), 188.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ This passage is contained in Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755).

⁷⁶ Ibid. 192.

these theories to Don Quixote and Parson Adams, who are neither ridiculous nor grotesque figures: they are accurate representations of mankind.

Fielding, as Lawlor accurately points out, shows in *The Cry* a ‘positive commitment to accurate representation’ (the opposite of the grotesque). She clearly intends to offer her readers ‘a true and natural representation’ of mankind, to copy ‘human countenances’ and ‘human minds’, taking care to ‘preserve’ in her characters what is true to real life (III: 119).⁷⁷ Fielding, here, is re-stating a commitment she makes earlier in the text, where she quotes Horace’s ‘rules for poetic composition’. Horace asserts that ‘a poet (author) is a ‘mental painter’ who should join ‘things congruous together, so as to form a resemblance according to nature’ (II: 7). Fielding is adhering to Horace’s ‘*ut pictura poesis*’ — (‘as a painting, so a poem’) which, according to Hagstrum, ‘had by the eighteenth century become a critical proverb’.⁷⁸ She is saying that although she gives her characters allegorical names (to emphasize character traits), they are true to nature: they think and act like human beings.

In *The Cry*, as Fielding continues her debate about laughter and ridicule, she turns to assail Shaftesbury’s theory in *An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (1709),⁷⁹ where he claims that ridicule stands as the test of truth. According to him:

Truth, ’tis supposed, may bear *all* lights, and one of those principal lights, or natural mediums, by which things are to be viewed, in order to a thorough recognition, is ridicule itself, or that manner of proof by which we discern whatever is liable to just raillery . . .⁸⁰

This claim, however, begs the recessive question of *who* is qualified to distinguish between ‘true’ and ‘false’ ridicule and whether it has justly or unjustly been applied.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 196.

⁷⁸ Hagstrum, 3.

⁷⁹ Shaftesbury’s essay is in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711, 1713).

⁸⁰ Lawrence E. Klein ed. (1999), *Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury: Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, see 30; 45; 51; 42. ‘Raillery’ used in this context carries an admonitory meaning.

Shaftesbury realized that the person who can discern what is ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ raillery must have amazing intuition. He is forced to admit the improbability of finding such a person, concluding that it ‘would be as hard a matter’ for a human being to judge the test of truth as it is ‘to define good breeding’.⁸¹ Shaftesbury’s admission that human reason is inadequate to test his theory, that only God can judge whether or not reason can stand as the test of truth, renders his hypothesis flawed.

Fielding highlights this as she begins her critique of Shaftesbury’s theory with a quotation from Whitehead’s *Essay on Ridicule*: ‘Shafts’bry tells us mirth’s the test of sense / . . . Not so fair Truth’ (II: 275). Positing her character, Cylinda, as a naïve young woman who develops the ‘highest admiration’ for ‘that freedom of thought and enquiry’ advocated by Shaftesbury, Fielding writes that being ‘led by him’ she gave, ‘An unbounded vent to every whimsical piece of pleasantry which presented itself’. Making ‘RIDICULE THE TEST OF TRUTH’, Cylinda says: ‘I joined with my author in boasting my security, that however I might be *frightened* out of my wits, I never could be *ridiculed* out of them’ (II: 276-7).

In the *Characteristics* Shaftesbury also asserts that God, being good-natured, is all-forgiving. Cylinda translates this as Shaftesbury’s claim, that ‘religion and morals’ were ‘imposed’ on us ‘by our governors’ to ‘make men frightened out of their wits’.⁸² Influenced by her interpretation of Shaftesbury’s philosophy, Cylinda finds herself at odds with the Church: religion is ‘all policy and priestcraft’ to ‘awe the vulgar and illiterate’ (II: 284). Cylinda decides that she can, with impunity, act according to her natural passions, take lovers and commit adultery.

With Cylinda’s story, Fielding highlights the power that theorists can wield over young minds. Making her feminist point, she ensures her reader understands that

⁸¹ Ibid. 31.

⁸² Ibid. 42.

Cylinda's interpretation of works she barely understands is due to her poor education. In order to subvert Shaftesbury's theory further, Fielding creates a wise 'old gentleman' who persuades Cylinda to re-examine Shaftesbury's *Essay*. He points out that if ridicule's being the test of truth has not 'some other test to be tried by, the chatterings or burlesque distortions of monkeys may have a power to overthrow all things that are serious' (II: 288). He acknowledges that there is 'some ingenuity' in what Shaftesbury says about God's good-nature, but poses the question: 'Would any man, if his children were continually to run retrograde to his commands, and set up their own judgments in opposition to his, think it a sufficient excuse for them to say, that they did it upon the confidence they had of his good-nature?' (II: 290). This makes Cylinda reconsider her immoral behaviour and Shaftesbury's theory.

Fielding is arguing that when we excuse our 'faults' by reasoning that God is such a forgiving parent that he cannot possibly be angry with us, we delude ourselves. Completely overturning the 'test of truth' theory, she writes:

How many pages of the *Characteristics* are employed, in proving that our reason can investigate all things, and by the beauties of nature lead us to the discovery of a deity; yet when the author is on the very point of converting his sceptic . . . how easily doth his champion give up the cause, by saying that it would be hard to put him upon the proof of such an hypothesis, since nothing less than an infinite mind can see infinite connexions! (II: 288-292).

After her 'impartial' examination, Cylinda turns against Shaftesbury's 'fallacious pretences to argument'. She admits that 'the florid style and specious reasonings of the *Characteristicks*' had 'bubbled' her out of her own 'understanding' (II: 292-3).

Fielding makes her radical condemnation of this theory abundantly obvious:

Of all the inventions in which mankind have delighted, this favourite one of making ridicule the test of truth, stands foremost in the rank for doing mischief . . . it hath the appearance of undoubted truth . . . But if ridicule be not rightly

understood, so far is it from being the test of truth, . . . it is the grandest prop of fallacy that the human imagination could ever have formed (II: 296-7).

Fielding, through Portia, concludes her criticism of Shaftesbury's theory by asserting that his 'reasonings are confused': he 'heaps one absurdity upon another' (II: 302-3).

Therefore, as shown, Fielding's contribution to the debate concerning laughter, ridicule and the grotesque is further evidence of how freely she indulges in 'masculine' subjects as she radically operates as a literary critic on a par with men of letters, whose works she had obviously studied. Clearly familiar with the mimetic aesthetic of Horace and Dryden, Fielding, as Lawlor observes, draws on the growing interest in human psychology that she terms 'the labyrinths of the mind' (I: 14).⁸³ Fielding's defence of Parson Adams shows that she admired and understood what her brother was trying to do with his work. Moreover, as she confidently subverts Hobbes' and Shaftesbury's philosophical theories, as her rebellious voice resonates through *The Cry*, she subverts the notion that a woman is an inferior being and, through misguided Cylinda, calls for female equality in education.

Part IV: 'Softer Passions' and 'Sweetest Numbers'

In 1992 Dale Spender was lamenting the absence of texts containing an 'accessible history of women's literary criticism' that would 'change fundamentally some of the received wisdom about the literary tradition and the process of its construction'.⁸⁴ Since then, a group of scholars calling themselves the 'Folger Collective' have produced a text listing almost one hundred female critics.⁸⁵ However, the Folger

⁸³ Ibid. 197.

⁸⁴ Spender, 10.

⁸⁵ Folger Collective, consisting of: Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Matthew Bray, Susan Green, Susan Snaider Lanser, Katherine Larsen, Judith Pascoe, Katherine M. Rogers, Ruth Salvaggio, Amy Cohen Simowitz, Tara Ghoshal Wallace, (1995), *Women Critics 1660-1820: An Anthology*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Collective mention only seven British women besides Fielding whose literary criticism was *published during Fielding's literary career*: they are, Elizabeth Elstob (1683—1756), Eliza Haywood (c.1693—1756), Catherine Trotter Cockburn (1679—1749), Elizabeth Cooper (c.1700—c.1740), Elizabeth Robinson Montagu (1720—1800) and Charlotte Lennox (1729—1804). In order to assess Fielding's placement in the genre, the contributions from these eighteenth-century female literary critics will be discussed below in chronological order.⁸⁶

Elstob's two translations from the Anglo-Saxon language into plain English, *An English-Saxon Homily on the Birthday of St. Gregory* (1709), written ostensibly for the benefit of a young female student, and *The Rudiments of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue* (1715), earned her the name, 'the Saxon Nymph'.⁸⁷ *Rudiments*⁸⁸ contains a preface that is actually an interesting feminist tract. Elstob seeks no apology for attacking critical 'Pedagogues' who 'buff and swagger', or the 'ingenious Person' (Swift), who 'occasion'd an unkind Prejudice' towards Northern languages, saying that they were 'made up of nothing else but Monosyllables' (preface, x). In his *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712), Swift calls for an English Academy similar to French establishments, where (male) scholars could elevate the English language above the use of monosyllabic words.

In *Rudiments*, Elstob responds to Swift's condemnation of monosyllabic language by pointing out that monosyllables appear in the works of Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, Milton, Dryden, and Waller. Without the use of monosyllables, she avers,

⁸⁶ Considering brevity, for some authors other than Fielding I will follow the Folger Collective.

⁸⁷ *An English-Saxon Homily on the Birthday of St. Gregory* (1709) is printed in facing columns with the Old English text on the left and Elstob's modern English translation on the right. The illuminated capital letter G, which heads both columns, matches a portrait of St. Gregory with Elstob's self-portrait.

⁸⁸ An incidental introduction to this work is a special Old English alphabet in a font called the Elstob Type, which remains a standard for Old English texts.

‘we must have been deprived of some of the best Lines, and finest Flowers, that are to be met with in the beautiful Garden of our English Posie’ (preface xxviii). However, in comparison with the amount of literary criticism furnished by Fielding, Elstob quotes only two or three lines of verse from a few writers to illustrate her point.

Haywood’s satirical novella entitled *Anti-Pamela; or, Feign’d Innocence Detected, in a Series of Syrena’s Adventures* (1741), details the machinations of unlucky Syrena Trickisy whose ‘tricks’ are publicly exposed by ‘an outraged Gentleman’.⁸⁹ It is a satirical, critical barb at Richardson’s heroine Pamela Andrews and a sceptical view of the novel concomitant with Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* (1741).⁹⁰ Haywood was the first woman to publish a monthly periodical for women, *The Female Spectator* (1744-46), which consists of letters written mostly by herself.

Here, Haywood criticizes authors of romances who ‘dress their Cupid up in roses’ to ‘make every woe that Love occasions, appear a Charm’.⁹¹ In ‘Letter From Philo-Naturae urging the Study of Nature’, she criticizes the works of ‘Aldrovandus’, ‘Malbranche’ [*sic*] and ‘Newton’ as ‘tedious’ texts which require ‘a depth of learning’, and too long a time ‘to be . . . either pleasing or beneficial’.⁹²

Quoting lines from an unnamed ‘celebrated’ poet, Haywood criticizes the way love is generally portrayed in texts: ‘Of all the passions given us from above, / The noblest, softest, and the best, is love’. Haywood states: ‘I readily agree that love in itself, when under the direction of reason, harmonizes the soul, and gives it a gentle, generous turn; but I can by no means approve of such definitions of that passion as we

⁸⁹ Haywood, a prolific writer with over sixty novels to her name, translated foreign romances in a style she herself terms ‘paraphrase’, indicating, according to Mary Anne Schofield, ‘the liberties she took with the actual text’, see Schofield ed. (1985), *Eliza Haywood*. Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne, 36.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 62 n. 26. Although they had disagreements, Haywood was an active member of Henry Fielding’s Little Theatre Company, performing as Mrs Screen in *The Historical Register* (1737).

⁹¹ See extract from Eliza Haywood (1775) *The Female Spectator. In Four Volumes*. London: A. Miller, W Law, and R. Cater, cited in Folger Collective, 70.

⁹² Mary Priestley ed. (1929), *The Female Spectator, Being Selections from Mrs. Eliza Heywood’s [sic] Periodical (1744-1746)*. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 28-30. (Intro., J. B. Priestley).

find in plays, novels, and romances'.⁹³ Haywood produced nearly eighty works, including plays, periodicals, conduct books, and political pamphlets⁹⁴ which included literary criticism. Since Haywood died in 1756, however, and Fielding's literary career is believed to have begun in 1742, it is unlikely that in the corresponding twelve years she published as much literary criticism as Fielding.

Cockburn, an accomplished playwright, philosopher, and theologian, who won professional respect from William Congreve during her fifty-two-year career as a writer,⁹⁵ was drawn to the philosophical and educational works of John Locke (1632-1704).⁹⁶ In 1702 she published a critical pamphlet entitled, *A Defence of Mr Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. This was followed by a second 'Defence' of Locke in 1726 criticizing Dr. Winch Holdsworth's condemnation of what he thought were Locke's views on Christ's resurrection. In his *Essay* (1690), Locke rejects the doctrine of 'innate ideas', insisting that all knowledge is based on experience. His proposing that humanity cannot determine the relationship between material or spiritual substance brought him into conflict with other religious divines such as Bishop Burnet. Cockburn's pamphlets support Locke's empiricist views and argue against the charges of materialism levelled at him by Burnet and Holdsworth. Locke reciprocated with an effusive letter thanking Cockburn for her cogently argued treatises, along with a gift of books.⁹⁷

Cockburn's style of writing criticism can be seen in her Dedication to the Right Honourable Charles Lord Halifax, in *The Unhappy Penitent, A Tragedy* (1701), where she praises Dryden's 'Elevation of Thought . . . which transports the Soul'. Dryden's

⁹³ Folger Collective, 70.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 67.

⁹⁵ Cockburn's eleven-year career as a playwright began in 1695, with her tragedies *Agnes de Castro* (performed at the Theatre Royal), *The Fatal Friendship* (1698), *The Unhappy Penitent* (1701), and *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706). Her comedy, *Love at a Loss; or the most votes carry it* appeared in 1701.

⁹⁶ Fielding's interest in Locke is discussed earlier in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁹⁷ See Folger Collective, 54.

‘Genius’, she writes, ‘seems not turn’d to work upon the softer Passions, tho’ some of his last Translations are excellent in that kind, nothing more lively, more tender, or more moving . . . and dispos’d into the sweetest Numbers’.⁹⁸ For Cockburn, like Fielding, Shakespeare is the ‘inimitable’ poet who studied ‘Nature’ thoroughly, ‘and boldly copy’d all her various Features, for tho’ he has chiefly exerted himself on the more Masculine *Passions*, ‘tis as the choice of his Judgment not the restraint of his Genius, and he seems to have design’d those few tender moving Scenes he has giv’n us, as a proof [sic] he cou’d be every way equally Admirable’.⁹⁹

Cockburn’s comments about Shakespeare and Dryden are, however, confined to a few lines, whereas Fielding refers to both authors throughout her oeuvre. *The Cry*, for instance, is studded with references to Shakespeare (fifteen occurring in the first volume between pages 3-168 alone), while Dryden appears in III: 284. Fielding views Shakespeare as ‘That grand master of human nature’, the composer of ‘inimitably beautiful chorus’s in Harry the fifth’. He is a writer whose ‘sublime imagination’ ‘warm[s]’ the ‘morosest critic into a taste of pleasure’ as he transports his readers over the ‘expanded ocean’ to different countries (I: 3). Fielding pays a further tribute to Shakespeare by modelling *The Cry*’s protagonist, Portia, on his character from *The Merchant of Venice*. Although Fielding’s Portia does not cross-dress as a man, as Shakespeare’s Portia does, she expresses critical views that a contemporary reader would expect from a male critic.

Cooper, a playwright and compiler of one of the first anthologies of English poetry, was influenced by the critical writings of Sidney, Francis Bacon, and Shaftesbury. She undertook the task of illustrating the progression and development of English poetry from the ‘Dawning of polite Literature in England’ through to the

⁹⁸ Ibid. 55. ‘Numbers’ refers to measured rhythm in verse.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 55-6.

‘highest Perfection’ of it, acknowledging a particular debt to the ‘generous Assistance of the Candid Mr. [William] Oldys’ in her preface (xiv).¹⁰⁰ Cooper places her work in the context of other scholars who had undertaken ‘Lives of the Poets’ such as Edward Phillips, William Winstanley, and Giles Jacob, bravely claiming to have corrected some of their mistakes, to have added new material, and ultimately to have completed ‘a serious examination’ of poets’ works that she proudly states, constitutes ‘one of the most valuable Collections, that ever was made publick’ (xv).

However, like Elstob’s contribution to the genre, Cooper’s literary criticism that is minimal for each poet mentioned, is mostly contained in the preface, making it much less than Fielding’s contribution to the genre. For instance, ‘Donne, and Corbet’, Cooper states, ‘added Wit to Satire, and restor’d the almost forgotten Way of making Reproof it self entertaining’, while ‘Carew and Waller taught panegyrick to be delicate’. ‘D’Avenant blended Address and Politeness with the severest Lessons of Temperance, and Morality, and added a Strength, Solidity, and Majesty of his own, that None can equal, Few can imitate, and All admire’ (xii).

Elizabeth Robinson Montagu (1720—1800), dubbed ‘Queen of the Bluestockings’ for her scholarly interests, wrote three (relatively short) *Dialogues of the Dead*¹⁰¹ which originally appeared in George Lyttleton’s anonymously published *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760). Montagu particularly emphasizes the merits of the Greek historian Plutarch, to whom she allots superior status in the Underworld. When the newly arrived pompous bookseller discovers Plutarch’s status, he appeals to Charon,¹⁰² ‘Am I got into a world so absolutely the reverse of that I left? . . . let me go back, and I will pay any price for my passage’.

¹⁰⁰ My thanks to Susan E. Moore for allowing me to copy from her 1737 edition of *The Muses Library*.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Eger (1999), ‘Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800)’, *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785*. London: Pickering & Chatto, gen. ed. Gary Kelly, 6 vols. 1:119-131.

¹⁰² Charon is the ferryboatman in the underworld who takes the departed across the river Styx.

A conversation follows in which Plutarch and the Bookseller discuss literature. Plutarch, concerned that romances lead the 'Fair' from virtue to vice, argues that classical literature is best. The bookseller points out that after an evening at the ball, a fatigued reader lolling in an armchair does not want to read 'Caesar's Commentaries', or 'Xenophon's Expedition', or 'climb the Alps with Hannibal'. They continue:

BOOKSELLER

In the supposed character of Clarissa . . . one finds the dignity of heroism tempered by the meekness and humility of religion, a perfect purity of mind and sanctity of manners: in Sir Charles Grandison, a noble pattern of every private virtue, with sentiments so exalted as to render him equal to every public duty.

PLUTARCH

Are there no other authors who write in this manner?

BOOKSELLER

Yes, we have another writer of imaginary histories . . . [Henry] Fielding; and his works, as I have heard the best judges say, have a true spirit of Comedy, and an exact representation of Nature, with fine moral touches. He has not indeed given lessons of pure and consummate virtue; but he has exposed vice and meanness with all the powers of ridicule . . . Monsieur de Marivaux, and some other French writers, have also proceeded much upon the same plan . . .¹⁰³

Montagu obviously favours Henry Fielding's literary style. Her literary criticism addresses the contemporary debate concerning the merits of ancient classical literature versus the modern romantic culture.¹⁰⁴ However, once again, it must be said that Fielding's contribution to the genre is greater than Montagu's.

Unlike Fielding, Lennox, in her three-volume comparative study of Shakespeare's sources, *Shakespear Illustrated* (1753-4), seldom finds anything good

¹⁰³ See Folger Collective, 97-102.

¹⁰⁴ Montagu's critical *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* (1769) was published one year after Fielding's death.

to say about his greatest plays.¹⁰⁵ In order to compare Shakespeare's plays with original sources Lennox translated seven plays from the Italian and one from a French translation of Plautus, finally adding her 'critical remarks'.¹⁰⁶ Lennox's criticism, Runge observes, 'reflects the mid-century shift toward a more subjective foundation for critical judgment, drawing on her individual perception as a woman to validate her conclusions'¹⁰⁷ (which can also be said of Fielding). Lennox finds Viola's reasons for cross-dressing in *Twelfth Night* perplexing, since in Bandello's original, Viola's reasons for cross-dressing are to rekindle the affections of a former lover. She states:

A very natural scheme this for a beautiful and virtuous young lady to throw off all at once the modesty and reservedness of her sex, mix among men, herself disguised like one, and, prest by no necessity, influenced by no passion, expose herself to all the dangerous consequences of so unworthy and shameful a situation.'¹⁰⁸

Lennox's use of sarcasm and hyperbole, Runge notes, 'indicate her frustration with Shakespeare's failure to represent the human nature she abides by, namely the mid-eighteenth-century ideology of separately gendered spheres of behavior'.¹⁰⁹

Lennox criticizes Shakespeare for dressing Viola as a man, 'shamelessly' mixing her with men for no good reason whereas Bandello's heroine, motivated by her 'noble' passion, risks danger. Lennox criticizes Shakespeare's 'Design' of allowing Viola to possess a distinctly unfeminine taste for adventure as the duke's page: 'His person she had never seen; his affections she was informed were engaged; what then were her views and designs by submitting to be his attendant?'¹¹⁰ Lennox

¹⁰⁵ Brian Vickers ed. (1976), *A Short View of Tragedy in Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, II: 25-59.

¹⁰⁶ Charlotte Lennox (1753, 1754), *Shakespear Illustrated: or the Novels and Histories, On Which the Plays of Shakespear are Founded, Collected and Translated from the Original Authors*. London, vols. 1-II, vol. III. Samuel Johnson supplied the dedication.

¹⁰⁷ Runge, 137.

¹⁰⁸ Lennox, 244.

¹⁰⁹ Runge, 146.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 244-245.

persistently questions Shakespeare's representations. Although she praises his knowledge of sources, she finds his characterizations 'often incomprehensible'.

Margaret Anne Doody accords Lennox's text 'a pioneer of its kind, an original and scholarly Shakespeare study' that differs from Thomas Rymer's,¹¹¹ which was 'not concerned with producing new contextual material'. Doody notes that Lennox's remarks have customarily been believed to lack 'literary insight', and her judgment dismissed as 'mistaken', even 'embarrassing' by her biographer, Miriam Rossiter Small.¹¹² Yet contemporary reviews of the text in the *Gentleman's Monthly* were 'favourable'.¹¹³ Arthur Sherbo, who records ten instances in Johnson's later edition of Shakespeare where he uses Lennox's opinions, states: 'Johnson's debt to Mrs. Lennox was greater than has been realized'.¹¹⁴ Lennox, as a defender of romances and novels, at the time regarded as 'inferior, *paltry* works', felt that Shakespeare read the stories 'wrongly' without 'full comprehension' then bungled them as he tried to rewrite them.¹¹⁵ Lennox's text is a significant work in the history of literary criticism.

Therefore, as shown, when comparing the amount of female literary criticism published during Fielding's literary career, from Elstob to Lennox, taking into account Fielding's critical pamphlets and the copious amount of literary criticism embedded within her novelistic fiction, Fielding appears to have published more literary criticism during her literary career than her female contemporaries. Moreover, unlike most of them, Fielding engages at length specifically with the *merits* of writers, their works and characters as opposed to others who quote one or two

¹¹¹ Thomas Rymer (1641-1713), author of 'Tragedies of the Last Age Considered' (1698) and 'A Short View of Tragedy' (1692) in which he condemns Shakespeare's characterization of Othello.

¹¹² Margaret Anne Doody, 'Shakespeare's Novels: Charlotte Lennox Illustrated', *Studies in the Novel*, 1987, vol. 19, Fall, 296-310, 297.

¹¹³ Doody (1987) refers to the *Gentleman's Monthly* given as 23 (1753; 256, 250); (1754: 31, 91, 233).

¹¹⁴ Arthur Sherbo (1956), *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare with an Essay on "The Adventurer"*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 91.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 303.

lines. All the female writers mentioned here transmit their works in plain English. Fielding, however, is not averse to showing off her classical erudition with the odd Latin phrase and quotations from ancient scholars, such as Aristotle, Homer, or Virgil.

Part V: Conclusion

Fielding's use of the dialogue form used by her male counterparts does not feminize her work. It is how she uses it that does, such as tailoring Dryden's format to suit her purpose along with her eagerness to include her feminist interests, seen in *Remarks* and *A Comparison*. Fielding's literary criticism, as shown, has a specifically female critical voice, detected, for instance, in her critical pamphlets and *The Cry*. Fielding daringly subverts male authority, evidenced in her critique of Hobbesian and Shaftesburian theories and is proficient in theoretical, descriptive, and legislative literary criticism.

In the preface to *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759) Fielding's legislative criticism has the didactic tone of Johnson as she delivers a recipe for teaching people how to read and write, again radically undercutting male authority. Fielding states: '[M]any Persons have endeavoured to teach Men to write; but none have taught them to read; as if Reading consisted only of distinguishing the Letters and Words from each other' (xxxiv). No other female eighteenth-century writer (as far as is known), has embarked on a work of this kind during Fielding's era. In the preface Fielding points out that 'readers all too often miss the 'valuable nuances' contained in a work, which only 'A curious Eye' would spot (xxxiv), which is intriguing considering the subversive feminist messages in her works.

Rejecting the notion of woman as an unintelligent being, Fielding proudly displays her erudition as she furnishes what Battestin and Probyn term ‘her most extensive essay in literary theory’ with examples taken from:

Ben Jonson’s *Every Man out of his Humour*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *Henry V* (from experience of both text and performance), Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Plutarch’s *Lives*, Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, Rochester, Le Bossu on Aristotle, Philip Francis’s popular verse translation of Horace’s works (4 vols., 1747), and another and lengthy passage from Le Bossu on the parallel between the poet and the philosopher, which she translates. La Bruyère is cited from memory.¹¹⁶

According to Battestin and Probyn, ‘If all this reminds us of her brother’s Preface to *Joseph Andrews*, then so does its primary purpose, which is to set the modern English novel of manners inside the continuum of classical forms and traditional literary discourse’.¹¹⁷ Throughout this eight-page critical essay, Fielding aptly applies aspects of ancient literature to promote her radical views on morality, virtue and friendship, yet again evidencing the fact that her study of the classics informs her writing. As usual, Fielding advises readers not to skip through texts without absorbing the value of the subject matter, condemns ‘unqualified’ critics, and articulates her concerns about characterization, moral values, the use of satire and the effects of texts on impressionable readers, who may imitate the characters they read about in books.

Drawing on the rules of classical mimetic aesthetics advocated by writers such as Aristotle and Horace, as she does in *The Cry*, Fielding insists that modern writers ought to draw ‘exemplary Pictures’ of ‘what ought to be imitated’ (vi-vii). To demonstrate this she cites Hamlet instructing the visiting players to adapt their play-within-the-play so as to draw out evidence of his father’s killer, advocating, like Hamlet, not to ‘o’er-step not the Modesty of Nature; for any thing so overdone is far

¹¹⁶ Battestin and Probyn, xlii.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

from the Purpose': a writer must 'hold, as it were, the Mirror to Nature' (viii). Character, technique and content must combine to create an 'Air of real Truth' (xi). 'True Fear', she advises, equates to numbed silence, so a good writer, to make the work realistic, should think carefully about how a terrified character should be portrayed. For example, an author wishing to show a person under the influence of fear may 'contrive' to place them 'in a house on Fire', which is 'very adequate to causing great consternation' (xi).

Moreover, the character must not walk into that situation 'will he, nill he'; rather the writer must combine 'Circumstances' with the character's 'humour' to deliver a realistic performance. For instance, a miser, though confined to his bed with gout, will 'break through all Obstacles to preserve his darling Treasure from danger', or the 'enamoured Swain will fly as if he had borrowed Wings, to bear his Fair-one, as Aeneas did Anchises his father, safe from the Terrors of devouring Flames' (xii).

In this critical essay, in which Fielding compares the work of biased historians to that of Plato, Aristotle, Homer, Horace, and Virgil, she goes far beyond her allotted female literary sphere. Like her brother Henry, she falls back on the ancients to justify her own moral philosophy.¹¹⁸ Fielding's authorial voice is masculine, authoritarian, as she dispenses with the dialogue mode of delivery. Unusually for a woman writer, Fielding addresses the subject of political propaganda, chastising 'historians' who, unlike Plutarch, distort characters they write about by enthusing them with 'Party Spirit', 'Prejudice or Partiality', 'lash[ing]' people with 'unreasonable Satire' or 'smooth[ing]' them over with 'glittering Varnish' so that the reader cannot know 'the real Features' of the person 'transmitted to Posterity' (xiv).

¹¹⁸ See Donald Serrell Thomas ed. (1993), *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*. London: J. M. Dent, xxii. Thomas, discussing Henry Fielding's 'justification for his fiction' states: 'If Joseph Andrews stood in the reflected glory of Homer and Virgil, the censors and philistines would sound extremely foolish when they objected to a vulgar expression here or a coarse description there'.

Taking 'Poet' as an umbrella term to mean all writers of fiction, Fielding describes them as 'Searchers into the inmost Labyrinths of the human Mind' (xvii). Like 'Rochefocault', she understands that 'It is difficult' for a writer 'to conquer the Passions', but, (bringing the essence of her own philosophy into public view), insists that if a writer shows a 'bad Man' actuated by 'Vice' he must also show that 'Virtue animates the Bosom of a good Character' (xvii).

To render any 'Writing useful to the Reader', Fielding insists, good must always triumph over evil to 'produce the Moral', which is 'necessary' in all good works (xvii). Late in her career she is still arguing that a writer must represent vice as a danger leading to catastrophe. In the new mood of sensibility, she points out that there is no room for pernicious satire that is intended to cause harm and quotes Horace's line, 'No honest Man shall by my Satire bleed'. Fielding then differentiates between the effects of vice and harmless jest, pointing out that the satirist must be careful since he has the 'Power to inflict the Stings of Serpents' spouting 'Venom' when he gives 'a loose to his 'enlarged Imagination' (xxvi).

In the last four pages of the preface Fielding attacks men who find 'unseasonable Mirth' in the texts of the finest sentimental writers. She also castigates writers who 'abuse' dead writers to 'plume themselves'— writers who say anything about other authors just to see their own names in print (xlii). A radical as much here as elsewhere, Fielding rebelliously declares that if anyone finds fault with what she has to say in this preface, and isolating her words on a separate line for emphasis, that she cares

'—Not a Jot' (xliii).

This shows how far Fielding has travelled from her apologetic stance in *David Simple*.

This chapter has shown that at a time when literary criticism, like the novel itself, was just developing as a genre, Fielding was playing an important part, which was obviously recognised by her brother Henry, Richardson, Harris, and Johnson, who likened her literary acumen to the ‘finer springs’ of a timepiece. It is clear that Fielding constantly examined social trends and channels of influence with a keen interest, affording special attention to the relationship between literature and the other arts (her reference to the sculpture of Venus de Milo, for example), before delivering an astute, critical analysis. When Fielding assumes the office of literary critic, as seen, she has great confidence in her own ability. Although her earlier critiques carry a modest, self-effacing tone, in the final line of her preface to *Dellwyn* she is clearly past caring what critics may say of her work.



Conclusion

It has been argued throughout this thesis that Fielding continually engaged in what is now known as feminist activity, that satirically and subversively, through the mouths of her rebellious characters, she challenges patriarchal traditions concerning education, employment and marriage. Her feminist activity in fiction, as shown, is underscored by her unorthodox performance in the male-designated literary domain.

That Fielding *can* be seen as a strong mid-century link between the recognised feminist writers, Astell and Wollstonecraft, is illustrated in her direct borrowings from Astell's polemics and Wollstonecraft's later protests. All three writers argue that there can be no significant improvement in the woman's situation while the patriarchal system prevails. Fielding, a 'true feminist', was concerned for all disadvantaged women, including the infirm and the friendless, as well as penurious gentlewomen like herself. Moreover, her fiction implies that it was better for a woman to suffer the indignities attached to spinsterhood than be 'shackled' in the 'irrevocable chains of marriage' to a man who wants her only for her money or to function as an unpaid upper-servant-cum-procreator-cum-nurse in his old age. Fielding constantly advises her female readers that marriage *per se* should not be viewed as the ultimate career prize, for in marriages arranged for reasons other than love they must 'prostitute' themselves.

Fielding wrote her life-experiences and sense of humiliation as a penurious genteel spinster into her work, pouring out her emotions onto paper as she criticizes her insensitive, corrupt society that is motivated by money. Factual evidence for this claim is provided here in the biographical chapter of this study. In her first novel she draws attention to the growth of shops catering for the fashionable élite while outlets

catering for the sick are diminishing, and how 'People in the polite World' are 'guided by Fashion rather than Reason'.¹ In *Dellwyn* Fielding notes how the poor are being sidelined to make way for the self-obsessed 'Fashion-mongers' who are analogous to a field of corn, 'where every single Ear bends the same Way, even as the Wind driveth' (II: 20-21). In her final novel, *Ophelia*, Fielding's eponymous heroine conveys her author's distress at the way the poor struggle to survive in unhealthy habitations.² *Ophelia* voices Fielding's disgust at the way people are segregated according to money and status even in death and how epitaphs on elaborate gravestones of the rich claim more 'worth' for the dead than was truly deserved.³

Fielding, as shown, uses her fiction to condemn patriarchal customs that offend against the principles of sentimentalism such as inheritance laws that cause friction in families and allow sons, with impunity, to turn widows and children onto the streets. Gaming, she states, 'brings about many bad Consequences' for families, while duelling contravenes God's law.⁴ She reveals that in her day, women who loved learning are derogatively labelled 'Wits', while the woman who performs the role of a lady's companion may find herself subjected to ignominy and forced to endure continual insults as a 'Toad-eater' or be rendered homeless. Little girls can be placed in boarding schools where they may be ignored for years by their parents or guardians while boys become inured to cruelty through corporal punishment. It is therefore unsurprising that Fielding uses her fiction to quest for social change.

Although over time Fielding has been forgotten while Gray, Sterne, and Mackenzie are generally accorded the leading figures in the sentimental novel tradition, she, like Richardson, was a pioneer in its development. Richardson focuses

¹ Sabor (1998), 148; 221.

² Sabor (2004), 69-74;

³ Ibid. 64-66.

⁴ Ibid. 222.

on the plight of vulnerable servants but Fielding uses sentimentalism to demonstrate that all women, including those of the upper classes, have problems too. Richardson resolves Pamela's dilemma by marrying her into the aristocracy as her 'reward' for resisting her master's attempts to rape her, proposing a 'happy-ever-after' ending; when Fielding elevates Charlotte Lucum into the aristocracy, as Lady Dellwyn she leads an increasingly miserable life thereafter. Fielding constantly warns her female readers that wealth and status do not equate with happiness.

When Gray concentrates in pre-Romantic fashion on the beauty of nature and the transience of human life, portraying children at play, oblivious to life's future pitfalls, his sentiments align with Fielding's in *The Governess*. While the reader may sympathise with poor distracted Maria of Moulines in *A Sentimental Journey*, through his use of bawdy humour and a devious Parson, Sterne mocks sentimentalism. *Tristram Shandy*, his 'cock-and-bull' story, is actually 'an exercise in learned satire'.⁵ Mackenzie's Harley is David Simple reborn: both characters are generous to a fault, both shed tears for the unfortunate, but Harley, unlike David, who constructs a 'Family of Love', pines away because he fears his love is unrequited. The nature of his demise effectively turns sentimentalism into meaning a wallowing of self-pity.

When Fielding assumes the office of literary critic, as shown in the last chapter of this study, she controversially enters into serious literary debates such as those which concern laughter, ridicule and the grotesque. She subverts Hobbesian and Shaftesburean theories as easily as she feminises Locke's *Some Thoughts for The Governess* and Dryden's *Essay on Dramatick Poesy* for her critical pamphlet, *Remarks*. She constantly and defiantly shows off her classical erudition. Fielding uses her fiction, as Carolyn Woodward observes, to challenge male authority,

⁵ Robert Francis Brissenden ed. (1977), *Henry Fielding: Joseph Andrews*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 9.

particularly ‘regarding the education of women’.⁶ When performing as a literary critic alongside the few female authors whose literary criticism was published during her literary career, Fielding’s contribution to the genre is, as shown, likely to be the largest for that period.

Adding to the list of Fielding’s literary innovations, Thrale claims that Fielding composed the eight-stanza poem entitled ‘To Miss Salusbury’, commending Thrale’s poem about a great Ash tree.⁷ It has been said that ‘the only major genre in which Fielding did not work was drama, but even that genre is approached in *The Cry*, with its act-and scene-like segments’.⁸ Fielding may have written a play, as yet unearthed, evidenced in her letter from David Garrick:

Dear Madm.,

I would have seen you on Saturday last, had not a Multiplicity of Business hinder’d Me—I have read over ye Papers with great Care & Candor: there are good things I confess, & apt for ye Times; but there wants a dramatic Spirit, & the Scenes are too long, but that is Easily remedied.

These might be made to do, provided they were connected with a little interesting plan, the necessity of Which we talk’d over before—it is impossible for Me to give an absolute Opinion till I see ye Whole— when I do—you may expect from Me Every thing that is in ye Power of Good will & regard . . .

Most Sincerely | Yr Friend | & Servant

David Garrick.⁹

Battestin and Probyn are convinced that this letter indicates Fielding’s having ‘sent Garrick an incomplete draft of a play for production during the forthcoming season’.¹⁰

Fielding’s novels seem to have had some influence on the work of Burney and Austen, who also deployed satire to mock affectation and pomposity in their criticism of customs biased against their sex. In scenes relating to dancing etiquette, as noted

⁶ Woodward (1987),153.

⁷ This poem is included in the attached list of Fielding’s works.

⁸ Carpenter, 13.

⁹ Battestin and Probyn, 126. Letter dated ‘May or June? 1754’.

¹⁰ Ibid.

here earlier, there are striking similarities in the work of all three novelists. Referring to Fielding's novel *Ophelia*, Sabor states that 'Frances Burney and Jane Austen both drew on it in their fiction'.¹¹ To substantiate his claim, Sabor refers to Clementina Black's essay of 1888, in which she notes that 'Ophelia's ignorance of dancing etiquette leads to a duel in Fielding's novel and much unpleasantness and embarrassment in Burney's'.¹² Sabor is referring to Fielding's Ophelia unwittingly causing a duel when she dances with Dorchester after refusing to dance with another man. Evelina, like Ophelia, is unwittingly guilty of the same 'offence'.

Sabor notes another incident in *Ophelia* that is almost replicated in *Evelina*. In Fielding's novel, 'well-intentioned Ophelia' causes embarrassment at the opera by applying 'salts' to a pretentious woman who is affecting a 'most languishing Condition', unwittingly causing her much discomfort.¹³ In *Evelina*, when insufferable Madame Duval is likewise 'transported' during the 'Coronation Anthem' at Cox's Museum, beating time, and 'uttering many expressions of delight', Captain Mirvan 'instantly' applies 'salts' to her nostrils, causing her to involuntarily snuff up such a quantity, 'that the pain and surprise made her scream aloud', causing mirth (I: XIX).¹⁴ Burney's Captain Mirvan has a 'love of tormenting' (II: II); in *David Simple* abusive patronesses are skilled in 'the art of tormenting' (89).

Sabor also defers to Moira Dearnley's observation that Austen's interest in the Welsh novel parallels Fielding's, particularly as descriptions of the Welsh topology in *Ophelia* are akin to Austen's in 'Love and Freindship' [*sic*] (1790). Like Ophelia, who is carried off by Lord Dorchester, Austen's heroine in 'Love and Friendship', is

¹¹ Sabor (2004), 28.

¹² Ibid. Clementina Black's essay is included in Sabor's edition of *Ophelia* as 'Appendix D'.

¹³ Sabor (2004), 117. Smelling-salts (carbonate of ammonia) used in faintness, were usually carried by ladies in small, often ornamental, phials.

¹⁴ Ibid. 117; Burney, *Evelina* (Letters XI and XIX).

‘swept off her feet’ by men who invade her countryside idyll.¹⁵ Sabor points to another instance of *Ophelia*’s ‘influence’ on Austen, namely, the latter’s description of Wilhelminus’s journey to a Welsh cottage in her two-page fragment, ‘A Tale’, which mirrors *Ophelia*’s while travelling to a remote Welsh cottage.¹⁶

Although the extent to which the claim that Burney and Austen were influenced by (or ‘drew on’) *Ophelia* can be proven depends, of course, upon one’s opinion formed after spending many hours analysing all the relevant texts, some pertinent facts immediately spring to mind. Burney, Austen and Fielding shared an affinity with Bath. Being avid readers, Burney and Austen likely read Fielding’s last novel, copies of which could be lying on the shelves of Leake’s bookshop in Bath or being passed around. Burney would know much about the Fielding family and their works through her close relationships with Mrs. Thrale and Samuel Johnson. In the preface to *Evelina* she actually compliments Henry Fielding on his ‘new species of writing’.

Like Henry and Sarah Fielding, Burney and Austen obviously recognized affectation as ‘the source of the true Ridiculous’. In Burney, as shown above, this is evident in her comic scenes where she exaggerates the pomposity and affectation of fops and poseurs like Madame Duval, who disguises her lowly English origins by pretending to be French, and Mr. Dubois, who is full of his own importance. In Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* it is illustrated in the antics of the inflated ass, Mr. Collins, and his imperious patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. When Burney writes of Madame Duval, who is awaiting partners at a dance, ‘the joke is, I don’t believe she’ll get ever a partner’ (I: XIX), the same could be said of Fielding’s ageing Mrs. Herner, who blushes like a schoolgirl when she expects a proposal of marriage from Mr. South, but becomes animated and vexed when she is sorely disappointed.

¹⁵ Moira Dearnley (2001), “‘Ye chaste Abodes of happiest Mortals’: *The History of Ophelia*.” *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, xiv.

¹⁶ Sabor (2004), 29.

Both Mrs. Herner and Madame Duval are ridiculed by their creators for their heavy application of ‘ointments’ to their faces, seen through Mrs. Herner’s blackened eyes when she is disturbed at an inn near midnight and in Madame Duval’s rouge-laden cheeks. Like Mrs. Herner, who incurs derision for her unsightly appearance and tattered nightdress from onlookers at the inn, Madame Duval incurs derision from people at an assembly because of her strange dress and dancing style (II: XIX).

Both Fielding’s Ophelia and Burney’s Evelina are naïve teenagers who arrive fresh from the country to be initiated into society. Their entrance into the fashionable world parallels Eve’s temptation in the Garden of Eden. They go from the idyllic to the near-tragic as the peace and innocence of country life — Ophelia’s Welsh seclusion and Evelina’s quietude at ‘Berry Hill’ — is contrasted with the corruption and excitement of London and the pump-rooms at Bath and Bristol. Evelina’s experiences, like Ophelia’s, although often painful, lead to self-discovery and moral growth. Both heroines are sensitive and generous to a fault: Ophelia is given money by Dorchester but she shares it among the poor, while Evelina, who has ‘the voice of compassion’, gives poor Mr. Macartney her purse (II: XVII).

Dorchester wants Ophelia for sexual favours but has no intention of marrying her; likewise Mr. Smith, in *Evelina*, tells the eponymous heroine: ‘marriage is all in all with the ladies, but with us gentlemen it’s quite another thing! . . . I’m quite particular in keeping ladies’ secrets’ (II: XIX). Despite her ‘trials’ Evelina, like Ophelia, remains incorruptible. In *Evelina* Burney equates marriage to ‘the loss of one’s liberty’, so a woman must be careful when choosing a partner for life (II: XIX). These are the same sentiments which constitute one of Fielding’s favourite themes.

Each instance of Evelina’s education in diverse social relationships, like Ophelia’s, enlarges her capacity to make moral choices. Like Fielding, Burney pays

special attention to the protection of a woman's reputation. In *Ophelia*, Dorchester protects Ophelia's reputation by passing her off as his ward. In *Evelina* Burney writes, 'nothing is so delicate as the reputation of a woman: it is at once, the most beautiful and most brittle of all human things' (II: VIII). Interestingly, in the same letter Burney continues: '[W]e are the slaves of custom, the dupes of prejudice, and dare not stem the torrent of an opposing world, even though our judgements condemn our compliance!' (II: VIII). These sentiments are not only evident in *Ophelia*, they permeate through Fielding's entire subversive fiction. Eventually, both Ophelia and Evelina marry for love, both respecting the sanctity of marriage. Like Fielding, Burney omits sexual details of courtship.

Like Fielding and Burney, throughout her oeuvre Austen satirically targets customs biased against women. Fielding's 'ironic views' on female education, employment and marriage as prostitution, Carpenter accurately observes, 'would not be out of place in Austen's pages'.¹⁷ In *Ophelia* Lady Palestine prostitutes herself by allowing herself to be used by Dorchester so that she can live in comfort; in *Pride and Prejudice* intelligent Charlotte Lucas prostitutes herself by marrying foolish Mr. Collins for the same reason. Moreover, through her portrayal of Mr. Collins and his right to inherit the Bennet estate, Austen, like Fielding, highlights problems for women caused by unfair inheritance laws that allow women to be rendered homeless following the death of a husband. All of Austen's heroines find happiness, but this is not always the case with Fielding's.

Therefore, to conclude this study of Fielding, which hopes to add more pieces to the 'jig-saw' picture of Fielding that currently exists, I submit that there can be no doubt that Fielding was an early feminist writer who believed that:

¹⁷ Carpenter, 17.

A woman of uncommon understanding, and a superiority of parts, ought not to be tied in fetters by the rules of honour or the forms of established custom . . . it is the mark of true spirit to break through such servile and ridiculous chains, fit to be imposed only on the vulgar and illiterate . . . who would imagine that nature, or the God of nature . . . would give laws to restrain those passions which were as natural to us as the feathered race? (*The Cry*, II: 266-8).

It is thanks to women like Fielding, who risked ignominy by daring to defy convention, that modern women can enjoy female equality in education, employment, and marriage. For her remarkable innovative contributions to British literature that includes the first British educational novel, the first British fictional autobiography and a translation from the Greek of Xenophon's *Memoirs of Socrates*, Fielding deserves to be brought back from obscurity and accorded her rightful place in the history of British literature as well as the history of feminism.

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INDEX

- Adams, Mrs, 74.
Addison, Joseph, 209, 232, 262.
Akenside, Mark, 233, 235.
Allen, Ralph, 68, 69, 70, 72, 112, 267.
Anger, Jane, 10, 11.
Aphra Behn, 4, 11, 268.
Arnold, Matthew, 206.
Arnold, Mrs, 74.
Astell, Mary, 2, 3, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15 —19, 76, 79, 100, 113, 114, 120—123, 127, 129, 132, 141, 150—159, 162, 163, 164, 165, 169, 171, 181, 190—195, 197—199, 202—205, 253, 262, 265, 267.
Austen, Jane, 2, 4, 6, 21, 178, 256—258, 260, 266, 268.
Baker, Samuel, 72.
Ballard, George, 81, 215.
Barbauld, Anna Laetitia, 32, 38, 59, 69, 73, 76, 78, 81, 146, 215, 262.
Barber, Frances, 46, 51, 106.
Barchas, Janine, 86, 262.
Baretti, Guiseppe, 171.
Bator, Robert, 134, 262.
Battestin, M. C., 2, 23, 30, 38, 39, 51, 52, 59, 62, 66, 68, 72, 73, 78, 79, 106, 107, 249, 256, 262.
Battestin, Ruthe, 2, 262.
Beaumont, Madame de, 151.
Bentham, Marie, 46, 51.
Black, Clementina, 257.
Blackstone, Sir William, 10, 14, 262.
Blake, William, 81.
Blount, Martha, 69, 70.
Bree, Linda, 6, 7, 28, 30, 32—35, 50, 55, 73, 76, 79, 80, 91, 163, 164, 168, 220, 237, 262.
Brewer, John, 2, 64, 83, 84, 97, 100, 231, 262.
Brontë, Charlotte, 6.
Bunyan, John, 23, 137, 142.
Burnet, Gilbert, 16, 242.
Burney, Frances, 21, 77, 81, 256—260, 263.
Butler, Samuel, 58, 232, 268.
Burrows, John Frederick, 57, 263.
Cadogan, Mary, 150, 264.
Carpenter, Lissette Ferlet, 6, 175, 182, 184, 256, 260, 263.
Carter, Elizabeth, 39, 63, 70, 79, 267.
Casler, Jeanine, 58, 263.
Centlivre, Susanna, 16.
Cervantes, Miguel de, 134, 233, 234.
Chapone, Hester (Mulso), 42, 59, 165, 166, 170, 266.
Chappelow, Leonard, 31, 32, 35, 55, 207.
Charke, Charlotte, 42.
Chesterfield, Lord, 101.
Cheyne, Dr. George, 69, 83, 84.
Chudleigh, Miss, 74.

Cockburn, Catherine Trotter, 240, 242, 243.
 Cogan, Dr. Thomas, 167.
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 93.
 Collier, Dr. Arthur (snr.), 55.
 Collier, Arthur (son), 31—33, 53, 55, 62.
 Collier, Jane, 14, 30, 32-39 *passim*, 51, 55, 59, 72, 73, 114, 146, 159, 166, 170, 178, 181, 182, 219, 220, 229, 263, 266.
 Collier, Margaret, 33, 52, 72—74, 181.
 Congreve, William, 242.
 Cooper, Anthony Ashley, third earl of Shaftesbury (see under Shaftesbury).
 Cooper, Elizabeth, 240, 243, 244, 264.
 Cooper, Lady Elizabeth Ashley, 52.
 Corneille, Pierre, 25, 226—230, 264.
 Cottington, Catherine, 43, 46, 47, 51, 54, 56.
 Cross, Wilbur L., 56, 60, 263.
 Cutts, Elizabeth, 74.
 Dacier, Anne Lefèvre, 150.
 Daniel, Elizabeth, 72.
 Dear(e), Anne, 49.
 Dearnley, Moira, 257, 258, 263.
 Defoe, Daniel, 2, 41, 42, 53, 101, 134, 142, 179, 263, 269.
 Delaborde, Anne, 46, 51.
 Delany, Mary (née Granville) Pendarves, 74, 76, 77, 266.
 Demers, Patricia, 142, 263.
 Dewes, Anne, 74, 76.
 Dickens, Charles, 151.
 Dodsley, James, 28.
 Dodsley, Robert, 28, 38, 39, 70, 215, 268.
 Doody, Margaret Anne, 41, 247, 263.
 Downs-Miers, Deborah, 4, 6, 29, 38, 84, 92, 97, 114, 263.
 Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, 68.
 Drabble, Margaret, 11, 89, 136, 264.
 Dryden, John, 21, 24, 30, 136, 206, 213, 217, 218, 235, 239—243, 255, 265, 266.
 Dudden, Frederick Homes, 37, 57, 179, 264.
 Duncombe, John, 81, 215, 268.
 Edgeworth, Maria, 151.
 Edgeworth, Richard Lovell, 164.
 Eliza, Haywood, 11, 26, 71, 156, 217, 240—242, 265, 268.
 Elledge, Scott, 209.
 Ellis, Markman, 84, 97, 128, 264.
 Elstob, Elizabeth, 74, 240, 241, 244, 247.
 Eward, Suzanne, 49, 50, 52.
 Fénelon, Abbé, 138.
 Fenn, Lady Eleanor, 151.
 Ferguson, Moira, 166, 264.
 Fiennes, Celia, 70.
 Fletcher, Anthony J., 5, 8, 9, 14, 265, 267.
 Folger Collective, 239—245 *passim*, 265.
 Fordyce, Dr. James, 67, 265.
 Freke, Thomas, 46.

Gamble, Sarah, 8, 9, 265, 268.
 Garrick, David, 69, 256.
 Gilbert, Sandra M., 18, 265.
 Gould, Sir Henry, 44, 45.
 Gould, Lady Sarah, 44, 46—51, 54, 55, 106.
 Fielding, Allen, 72, 73.
 Fielding, Anne, 46.
 Fielding, Anne (Blanchfield, Rapha), 47—49, 51, 54, 62.
 Fielding, Beatrice, 46, 51, 55, 61, 62.
 Fielding, Catherine, 44, 55, 56, 61, 62.
 Fielding, Charlotte (née Cradock(e)),
 Fielding, Edmund, 44—49 passim, 55, 81.
 Fielding, Edmund (son), 46, 49, 51, 55.
 Fielding, Eleanor (née Hill), 54.
 Fielding, Eleanor Harriote, 60, 79.
 Fielding, Elizabeth (née Sparrye), 54.
 Fielding, George, 56.
 Fielding, Henry, 1, 2, 4, 15, 19—23, 27, 33—35, 37, 41, 44, 45, 47, 49—73 passim, 78—81, 91, 95, 106, 107, 132, 135, 147, 149—151, 155, 167, 177, 179, 181, 187, 207, 210, 213, 215, 232, 235, 241, 245, 249, 250, 252, 258, 262, 263—265, 267, 268. *Love in Several Masques* (1728) 168. *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741) 20, 64, 65, 87, 232, 241, 250, 264. *The History of Joseph Andrews* (1742) 51, 56, 58, 65, 69, 71, 106, 131, 132, 149, 177, 210, 213, 232—234, 249, 250, 255, 264. *Miscellanies* (1743) 51, 54, 57, 71, 262. *The True Patriot* (1746) 57, 266. *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749) 1, 41, 51, 53, 64, 65, 69, 91, 106, 122, 147, 210, 233, 264. *Amelia* (1751) 45, 53, 62, 65, 264. *The Covent Garden Journal* (1752) 57, 62, 207. *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1754) 63, 71.
 Fielding, John, 2, 62, 63, 66, 68, 72, 73, 79, 100, 101.
 Fielding, Sarah (née Gould), 44, 45, 47.
 Fielding, Sarah, passim. *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), 1, 2, 4, 7, 12, 17—23, 25—27, 29, 30, 34, 36—38, 41, 43, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 60, 62, 63, 67, 81, 85—91, 95, 96—98, 101, 104, 108, 111, 114, 115, 119, 122, 128, 130—133, 148, 155, 168, 182, 185, 191, 197, 203—205, 207, 221, 255, 257, 264. *Familiar Letters Between the Principle Characters of David Simple and Some Others* (1747), 14, 21—24, 29, 34, 52, 58, 60, 70, 74, 109, 111, 158, 175, 177, 178, 179, 205, 264. *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy* (1749) 1, 4, 5, 12, 13, 17, 24, 29, 30, 32, 37, 41—43, 49, 60, 61—68, 76, 81, 90, 93, 110, 119, 123, 124, 132, 133, 136—169 passim, 181, 182, 190, 194, 204, 210, 214, 220, 229, 255, 262, 264. *Remarks on Clarissa Addressed to the Author* (1749), 1, 17, 24, 31, 65, 80, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 229, 231, 233, 248, 255, 262, 264. *A Comparison Between the Horace of Corneille and The Roman Father of Mr. Whitehead* (1750) 25, 31, 56, 61, 217, 225, 226, 228, 248, 264. *David Simple, Volume the Last* (1753) 1 n. 2, 7, 25, 62, 85, 88, 92, 111, 112, 115, 121, 129, 130, 172, 186, 264. *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* (1754) 7, 17, 76, 28, 29, 30—33, 35—40, 46, 55, 56, 68, 97, 110, 114, 117, 118, 125, 129, 130, 152, 153, 158, 159, 161, 162, 164, 179, 180, 195, 198, 199, 200, 204, 208, 211, 233, 236, 239, 243, 248, 249, 256, 261, 265, 269. *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757), 25, 26, 60, 70, 73, 80, 135, 225, 265. *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), 7, 17, 26, 27, 31, 35, 41, 43, 44, 63, 67, 73, 76, 77, 78, 82, 118, 127, 129, 184, 185, 198, 200, 201, 202, 204, 208, 248, 252, 254, 255,

265. *The History of Ophelia* (1760) 1, 7, 27, 43, 45, 47, 63, 73, 78, 80, 81, 109, 127, 128, 186, 187, 127, 128, 186, 187, 189, 190, 202, 203, 254, 257—260, 263, 265.
Memoirs of Socrates. With the Defence of Socrates before his Judges (1762) 5, 25, 27, 28, 35, 73, 78, 81, 225, 261, 265.
 Fielding, Ursula, 32, 33, 44, 45, 50, 55, 61, 62.
 Gilbert, Sandra. M., 18, 265.
 Grainger, Frances, 227, 228.
 Gray, Thomas, 21, 83, 89—98 passim, 164, 254, 255, 265.
 Grey, Jill Elizabeth, 42, 44, 57, 60, 63, 64, 66, 71—73, 75, 79, 81, 98, 133, 138, 146, 147, 150, 151, 155, 181, 186, 264.
 Grundy, Isobel, 50, 265.
 Gubar, Susan, 18, 265.
 Haggerty, George E., 104, 265.
 Hagstrum, Jean H., 21, 92, 212, 236, 265.
 Halifax, Right Honourable Lord Charles, 242.
 Hardwicke, Lord, 168.
 Hardy, Thomas, 170.
 Harris, Elizabeth (née Clarke), 59.
 Harris, James, 2, 23, 27, 33—38 passim, 52, 53, 59, 62—81 passim, 225, 226, 252, 265, 267.
 Hassall, Anthony John, 57, 263.
 Hawley, Judith, 181, 182, 263.
 Hawthorn, Jeremy, 41, 265.
 Hayden, Ruth, 74, 77.
 Hele, Dr. Henry, 50.
 Hester (Mulso) Chapone, 42, 59, 165, 166, 170, 266.
 Highmore, Joseph, 146.
 Hill, Aaron, 46, 265.
 Hill, Bridget, 5, 10, 12, 101, 165, 167, 168, 170, 179, 262, 263, 265.
 Hoadly, Reverend John, 68, 80, 81.
 Hobbes, Thomas, 25, 30, 112, 113, 190, 207, 231—233, 239, 248, 255, 265.
 Hodgson, John, 31.
 Hodgson-Wright, Stephanie, 8, 10, 11, 14, 265.
 Hogarth, William, 60, 100, 187, 200.
 Holdsworth, Dr. Winch, 242.
 Hollis, Karen, 217, 265.
 Hughes, Thomas, 151.
 Hutcheson, Francis, 232.
 Jimack, Peter, 133, 136, 137, 266.
 Johnson, Christopher, 265.
 Johnson, Richard, 135.
 Johnson, Samuel, 59, 86, 100, 109, 137, 177, 183, 20—220 passim, 235, 246—248, 252, 258, 262, 267, 268.
 Jonson, Ben, 24, 212, 213, 249.
 Kaye, Frederick Benjamin, 122, 266.
 Keach, Benjamin, 137.
 Kelsall, Malcolm, 1, 4, 7, 22, 26, 37, 54, 57, 96, 110, 122, 264.
 Keymer, Tom, 14, 30, 84, 90, 266, 219, 267.
 Kilner, Dorothy, 151.
 Klein, Lawrence, 236, 266.

Knight, Anne Robinson, 74
 Kristeva, Julia, 221, 266.
 Langley, Thomas, 135.
 Lawlor, Clark, 30, 31, 235, 236, 239, 266.
 Leake, James, 69, 77, 258.
 Lennox, Charlotte, 41, 81, 134, 240, 245—247, 263.
 Lewis, Esther, 74.
 Lillo, George, 34.
 Livy, Titus Livius, 226, 227.
 Locke, John, 2, 56, 138, 139—141, 143, 146, 148, 164, 242, 255, 262, 266.
 Lynch, Jack, 218.
 Lyttleton, George, 60, 61, 244.
 Macheski, Cecilia, 6, 156, 217, 263, 266.
 Mackenzie, Henry, 83, 89, 96, 97, 254, 255, 266.
 Malory, Sir Thomas, 136.
 Mancini, Hortense, Duchess of Mazarin, 190, 191.
 Mandeville, Bernard de, 122, 266.
 Manley, Mary de la Rivière, 26.
 Mather, Cotton, 136.
 McKeon, Michael, 65, 266.
 Middleton, Conyers, 74.
 Millar, Andrew, 39, 241.
 Milton, John, 24, 58, 85, 86, 158, 159, 212, 225, 240.
 Montagu, Elizabeth (Robinson) ‘Queen of the Bluestockings’, 59, 75, 79—81, 240, 244, 245, 262.
 Montagu, Lady Barbara, 75, 80.
 Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, 16, 19, 36, 53, 56, 113, 150, 169, 190, 222, 265, 262.
 Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de, 24, 211, 212, 249.
 More, Hannah, 151.
 Morris, Pam, 8, 9, 15, 221, 266.
 Moyles, Gordon, 142, 263.
 Murphy, Arthur, 22, 53, 63, 66, 78, 79.
 Nash, Richard ‘Beau’, 70, 111, 113.
 Newbery, John, 133, 135, 164, 267.
 Nickel, Terri, 51, 107, 142, 266.
 Nussbaum, Felicity, 92, 108, 109, 214, 266.
 Peach, Robert Edward Myhill, 68, 69, 267.
 Pearson, Jacqueline, 129, 217, 267.
 Peel, Robert, 66.
 Perrault, Charles, 135.
 Perry, Ruth, 3, 7, 12, 16, 19, 114, 123, 159, 165, 169, 171, 191, 222, 267.
 Phillips, Constantia, 42.
 Pilkington, Laetitia, 42.
 Pitt, William, 60.
 Pope, Alexander, 11, 20, 21, 40, 58, 61, 69—71, 186, 207, 213, 216, 265, 267—269.
 Porter, Roy, 100, 101, 267.
 Poyntz, Stephen, 154.
 Poyntz, the Honourable Mrs., 154.
 Price, Martin, 20, 22, 86, 92, 131, 267.

Probyn, Clive, 2, 23, 29, 30, 36, 38, 39, 52, 53, 59, 62, 66, 68, 72—74, 78, 79, 221, 226, 245, 249, 256, 262, 267.
 Richardson, Samuel (1689—1761) 2, 4, 14, 19, 24, 25, 32, 38, 39, 42, 52, 59, 64—66, 69, 73, 75—78, 83, 84, 87, 89, 90, 92, 97, 98, 131, 132, 146, 147, 156, 165, 166, 213, 215, 218—225 *passim*, 227, 228—232, 241, 252, 254, 262—264, 266, 267, 269.
 Richetti, John, 20, 267.
 Riggs, Margaret, 74.
 Rivaud, Margaret Mary, 74.
 Rizzo, Betty, 70, 74—76, 79, 80, 183, 184, 267.
 Rogers, Katherine, 169, 189, 239, 267.
 Rogers, Pat, 53.
 Rookes, Mary, 49, 50.
 Runge, Laura L., 208, 213, 215, 220, 222—224, 246, 268.
 Rymer, Thomas, 247.
 Sabor, Peter, 1, 4, 18, 19, 28, 36—38, 45, 47, 57, 58, 68, 70, 72, 76, 87, 112, 127, 131, 132, 173, 183, 202, 217, 219—224, 254, 257, 258, 264, 265,
 Samber, Robert, 135.
 Sanders, Andrew, 93, 95—97, 268.
 Sanders, Valerie, 9, 13, 268.
 Savile, George, Marquis of Halifax, 170, 171.
 Schellenberg, Betty A., 5, 157, 268.
 Schofield, Mary Anne, 6, 17, 38, 156, 216, 217, 241, 263, 265, 266, 268.
 Scott, George Lewis, 75.
 Scott, Mary, 81.
 Scott, Sarah (Robinson), 59, 74—76, 79—81, 263.
 Seward, Anna, 215.
 Seward, Thomas, 215.
 Shakespeare, William, 24, 26, 118, 153, 158, 162, 207, 210, 213, 225, 243, 245, 246, 247, 249, 263, 268.
 Shaftesbury, third earl of, 2, 30, 31, 52, 207, 217, 218, 236—239.
 Sherburn, George, 150, 268.
 Sheridan, Frances, 150, 268.
 Sim, Stuart, 112, 113, 268.
 Skinner, Gillian, 113, 174, 268.
 Small, Miriam Rossiter, 247.
 Smallwood, Angela, 56, 268.
 Spencer, Jane, 4, 19, 27, 37, 113, 166, 268.
 Spender, Dale, 5, 239, 268, 269.
 Springborg, Patricia, 7, 15, 16, 191—197, 203.
 Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, 156.
 Steele, Richard, 16, 170, 210, 211, 268.
 Sterne, Laurence, 83, 84, 89, 94—98, 254, 255, 268.
 Stone, Lawrence, 11, 50, 100, 129, 165—179 *passim*, 193.
 Stringer, Jenny, 64, 89, 264.
 Swift, Jonathan, 20, 76, 134, 216, 240.
 Talbot, Catherine, 39, 63, 81, 267.
 Terry, Richard, 86, 108, 121, 232, 268.
 Thomas, Donald Serrell, 45, 46, 54, 70, 71, 111, 250, 264, 269.
 Thomson, James, 93, 109.
 Thornton, Bonnell, 215, 216.

Thrale, Mrs. Hester (later Piozzi), 31, 32, 35, 53, 55, 69, 77, 94, 137, 171, 207, 256, 258.
Todd, Janet, 5, 23, 24, 55, 68, 75, 83, 87, 97, 153, 269.
Vane, Lady Frances, 42.
Vesey, Elizabeth, 59.
Vickers, Brian, 96, 97, 122, 246, 266.
Wakely, Alice, 84, 90, 267.
Walker, David, 112, 113, 268.
Walpole, Horace, 183, 187.
Walpole, Sir Robert, 14, 15, 56, 61.
Warburton, William, 69.
Ward, Candace, 1, 4, 5, 142, 151, 157, 264.
Warton, Joseph, 60, 213, 269.
Warton, Thomas, 60.
Welch, Saunders, 63.
Werner, Oscar, Herman, 36, 60, 36, 135, 179, 212, 269.
Whitehead, William, 25, 61, 70, 225—237 *passim*, 264.
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 2, 6, 12, 13, 15, 129, 166, 253, 263, 269.
Woodward, Carolyn Jane, 5, 6, 30, 33—39, 53, 91, 195, 255, 256, 269.
Woolf, Virginia, 6, 11, 269.
Wordsworth, William, 93.
Yonge, Charlotte, 151.
Young, Reverend William, 69.



APPENDIX

SARAH FIELDING'S KNOWN WORKS:

- 1:** 1st May, 1744, *The Adventures of David Simple in Search of a Faithful Friend*, 2 volumes, London: Printed for Andrew Millar in The Strand (publisher). Revised edition 13th July 1744, with Preface by Henry Fielding replacing Sarah's 'Advertisement to the Reader'. Dublin edition (1744); translated into German and published 1746, 1750 and French, 1749. Abridged children's edition (1775); illustrated edition with four engravings by Thomas Stothard, one by William Blake (1782).
- 2:** 10th April, 1747, *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters in David Simple and Some Others, to which is added a Vision*, 2 volumes, London: printed by subscription for the author (507 subscribers), with preface and five letters by Henry Fielding, two inclusions by James Harris and sold by A. Millar in The Strand. Dublin edition (1747); second edition (1752); translated into German (1759).
- 3:** 2nd January, 1749, *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy: Being the History of Mrs. Teachum and Her Nine Girls, by the Author of David Simple*, London: printed by Samuel Richardson for the author, sold by A. Millar, 1749; second edition (August, 1749); translated into German (1761); Swedish (1790); Philadelphia edition printed by Thomas Dobson (1791).
- 4:** 7th January, 1749, *Remarks on Clarissa, Addressed to the Author, Occasioned by some critical Conversations on the CHARACTERS and CONDUCT of that Work. WITH Some Reflections on the Character of PRIOR'S EMMA*. London. Published anonymously, printed by Mary Cooper for J. Robinson in Ludgate Street. [Price One Shilling].
- 5:** 15th March, 1750, *A Comparison Between the Horace of Corneille and The Roman Father of Mr. Whitehead*, printed by Mary Cooper, published anonymously [Price One Shilling].
- 6:** 8th February, 1753, *The Adventures of David Simple. Volume the Last, in which his History is Concluded*, London, A. Millar. Dublin edition (1753). Preface by Jane Collier [?].
- 7:** 2nd March, 1754, *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable*, 3 vols; London: J. & R. Dodsley; 2nd edn. Dublin 1754, printed by George Faulkner.
- 8:** 19th May, 1757, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, 2 vols; Bath: James Leake (published by subscription (440 subscribers) and printed for the author, sold through Leake, A. Millar in The Strand and R. and J. Dodsley, Pall Mall, London. Second edition, 24th May, 1758.
- 9:** 28th March, 1759, *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*, 2 vols; London: sold by subscription and printed for A. Millar, who paid Fielding sixty guineas for an edition of 1,000 copies. Dublin edition (1759); translated into German (1761).

10: 31st March, 1760, *The History of Ophelia*, 2 vols. Printed for R. Baldwin at The Rose in Paternoster Row, London. The title-page carries the message: 'PUBLISHED BY The Author of DAVID SIMPLE. Second edition (1763); translated into German (1763-4, 1767, 1772) and French (1763); illustrated with three engravings by Richard Corbould (1785).

11: 27th January, 1762, *Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates. With the Defence of Socrates Before His Judges*, printed by subscription for the author (611 subscribers), with notes and other contributions by James Harris, Bath: C. Pope. Second edition (1767). Linda Bree reports that Fielding's translation was included in the *Minor Works of Xenophon* (1813) and *The Whole Works of Xenophon* (New York, 1855) while The 'Defence of Socrates' was reprinted in *Socratic Discourses by Plato and Xenophon* (Dent, 1910), reprinted in 1913, 1915, 1918, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1933, 1937, and possibly later.

Fielding is also believed to have authored the letter from Leonora to Horatio included in Henry Fielding's novel, *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *The History of Anna Boleyn* in Henry's *A Journey From This World To The Next* in his *Miscellanies* (1743). Other anonymous works often attributed to Fielding although subject to confirmation are *The History of Betty Barnes* (1753) and *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalene House, as Supposed to be Related by Themselves* (1760).

According to Hester Thrale, Sarah Fielding sent her a poem entitled, 'To Miss Salisbury' in response to Thrale's poem, 'Verses on the Fall of the Great Ash Tree in Offley Park in the Year 1760' (Katherine C. Balderston ed. (1942, 1951) *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2 vols., I: 78-9).

