

**Becoming Gentlemen:
Women Writers, Masculinity, and War, 1778-1818.**

Submitted by Megan Woodworth, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, October 2008.

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Abstract

In *Letters to a Young Man* (1801) Jane West states that “no character is so difficult to invent or support as that of a gentleman” (74). The invention of that character, determining what qualities, qualifications, and behaviour befits a gentleman, preoccupied writers and thinkers throughout the eighteenth century. This thesis traces the evolution of the masculine ideals – chivalry, republican virtue, professional merit – that informed what it meant to be a gentleman. Because gentlemanliness had implications for citizenship and political rights, Defoe, Richardson, Rousseau, and the other men who sought to define gentlemanliness increasingly connected it and citizenship to gendered virtue rather than socio-economic status. Women writers were equally concerned with the developing gentlemanly ideal and, as I will show, its political implications. This thesis brings together masculinity studies and feminist literary history, but also combines the gendered social history that often frames studies of women’s writing with the political and military history traditionally associated with men. Doody (1988) suggests that novels are influenced by three separate histories: “the life of the individual, the cultural life of the surrounding society, and the tradition of the chosen art.”¹ With the feminocentric novel, however, the historical context is often circumscribed by a concern for what is ‘feminine’ and what polite lady novelists might be responding to. With the exception of women’s participation in the 1790s debates, eighteenth-century women writers have been seen as shying away from divisive political topics, including war. However, I will show that masculinity is central to re-evaluating the ways in which women writers engaged with politics through the courtship plot, because, as McCormack (2005) stresses, “politics and the family were inseparable in Georgian England.”² Furthermore, as Russell (1995) observes, war is a cultural event that affects and alters “the textures of thought, feeling, and behaviour.”³ Focusing on late-eighteenth-century

¹ *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (1988). p. 9.

² *The Independent Man* (2005) p. 13.

³ *The Theatres of War* (1995) p. 2-3.

wars, this thesis will explore how political and military events influenced masculine ideals – particularly independence – and how these changes were negotiated in women's novels.

Beginning with Frances Burney, this thesis explores the ways in which women writers offered solutions to the problem of masculinity while promoting a (proto)feminist project of equality. By rejecting chivalry and creating a model of manliness that builds on republican virtue and adopts the emerging professional ethic, women writers created heroes defined by personal merit, not accidents of birth. Burney begins this process in *Evelina* (1778) before problematising the lack of manly independence in *Cecilia* (1782). Charlotte Smith and Jane West take the problems Burney's work exposes and offer alternatives to chivalric masculinity amidst the heightened concerns about liberty and citizenship surrounding the French revolution. Finally, Maria Edgeworth's and Jane Austen's Napoleonic-era novels promote professionalism as a path to gentility but also as a meritocratic alternative to landed and aristocratic social models. Though the solutions offered by these writers differ, in their opposition to chivalric masculinity they demonstrate that liberating men from the shackles of feudal dependence is essential to freeing women from patriarchal tyranny.

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**Introduction:
 “He is just what a young man ought to be”?
 Being Or Becoming Gentlemen.**

1
 I want a hero: an uncommon want,
 When every year and month sends forth a new one,
 Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
 The age discovers he is not the true one;
 Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
 I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan –
 We all have seen him, in the pantomime,
 Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

2
 Vernon, the butcher Cumberland, Wolfe, Hawke,
 Prince Ferdinand, Granby, Burgoyne, Keppel, Howe,
 Evil and good, have had their tithe of talk,
 And fill'd their sign posts then, like Wellesley now;
 Each in their turn like Banquo's monarchs stalk,
 Followers of fame, "nine farrow" of that sow:
 France, too, had Buonaparté and Dumourier
 Recorded in the Moniteur and Courier.

3
 Barnave, Brissot, Condorcet, Mirabeau,
 Petion, Cloutz, Danton, Marat, La Fayette,
 Were French, and famous people, as we know:
 And there were others, scarce forgotten yet,
 Joubert, Hoche, Marceau, Lannes, Desaix, Moreau,
 With many of the military set,
 Exceedingly remarkable at times,
 But not at all adapted to my rhymes.

4
 Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,
 And still should be so, but the tide is turn'd;
 There's no more to be said of Trafalgar,
 'T is with our hero quietly inurn'd;
 Because the army's grown more popular,
 At which the naval people are concern'd;
 Besides, the prince is all for the land-service,
 Forgetting Duncan, Nelson, Howe, and Jervis.

5
 Brave men were living before Agamemnon
 And since, exceeding valorous and sage,
 A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
 But then they shone not on the poet's page,
 And so have been forgotten: – I condemn none,
 But can't find any in the present age
 Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);
 So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

(Byron, *Don Juan*, 1819, Canto I)

Despite Byron's assertion that the want of a hero is an "uncommon want," his difficulty in finding a suitable hero echoes the eighteenth-century quest to find a suitable gentleman, a suitable model of masculinity calculated to promote the national interest and national identity. While the hero and

the gentleman are not necessarily synonymous, in the context of the eighteenth century the gentleman increasingly becomes the hero – not simply the romantic hero of fiction, but the hero of the nation. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the gentleman is defined and redefined to reflect English society's movement from its feudal roots into the modern era. Samuel Johnson defines the gentleman as “a man of birth, not noble,” and the adjective ‘gentlemanlike’ as that which is “becoming a gentleman.”

However, over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the grammar of gentility began to shift as it gradually became accepted that a ‘gentleman’ is not born, but something that a man becomes. In this thesis I will explore how Frances Burney, Charlotte Smith, Jane West, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen marshalled this state of masculine and gentlemanly becoming in order to challenge and ultimately posit an alternative to patriarchal domestic and political structures.

Byron suggests, with some degree of exaggeration, that “every year and month sends forth a new” hero who acts as a temporary solution until he has outlived his usefulness (stanza 1). Interestingly, Byron identifies military icons as well as French revolutionaries among those moving through the revolving door of heroism. Though I will return to the military's role in the development of the gentleman, for now I want to focus on the public and political nature of Byron's concerns about heroes. Byron's cheeky Dedication to “Bob Southey,” the Tory poet laureate, highlights the public importance of masculinity and the ideological power of literature in forming ideas of heroism and masculinity. Focusing on the inconsistency of the Lake school, who in his estimation “loathe[d] the Sire to laud the Son” rather than following Milton who “closed the tyrant-hater he begun” (stanza 10), Byron contextualises his search for a hero in relation to a political reaction that embraced the chivalric feudalism championed by Burke in the early years of the revolution. Furthermore, he takes aim at Castlereagh as the architect of the Congress of Vienna, which secured for Europe a, to Byron, disappointing status quo *ante-bellum* of “manacles for all mankind” (stanza 14). Slavery also

has special implications for masculinity:

If we may judge of matter by the mind,
Emasculated to the marrow *It*
Hath but two objects, how to serve and bind,
Deeming the chain it wears even men may fit,
Eutropius of its many masters, – blind
To worth as freedom, wisdom as to wit,
Fearless – because no feeling dwells in ice,
Its very courage stagnates to a vice. (stanza 15)

The kind of man who can be bound by the reactionary political agenda of the tyrant is not truly a man and can never be independent while “blind to worth as freedom, wisdom as to wit.”

While Byron places his “buff and blue” Whig self in opposition to the Tory Lake poets, (stanza 17), a highly partisan political exploration of masculinity and heroism, which recurs in the writings of men throughout the century, is not the only way, or indeed the most important way, of deconstructing and constructing the ideal man. And it is not only men who are interested in the importance of masculinity, heroism, and gentility to social, political, and cultural life. As I intend to demonstrate in this thesis, throughout the eighteenth century women novelists were concerned with these questions, and furthermore, they were concerned with the implications of different theories of masculinity, heroism, and gentlemanliness for the family, society in miniature, and for women, man’s domestic subjects.

Much has been made of male writers’ attempts to fashion a feminine ideal, to define woman as an ‘other’ as a means of maintaining their political power.⁴ Judith Lowder Newton notes that in the 1970s feminist scholars “shifted focus”: “We had relinquished ‘woman as victim’ for ‘women as agents

⁴ This critique began with early feminists, including Wollstonecraft who takes aim at Rousseau and Dr. Gregory for encouraging women to be fine ladies instead of rational creatures. This exclusion from power is explored from the perspective of (literary) authority in Gilbert and Gubar’s *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Vivien Jones’s investigation of how conduct literature was read and received also explores the implications of conduct literature for gendered power. See “The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature.” *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts, eds. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996. 108-132.

of change,' and our previous examination of women's 'debilitating limitations' had given way to an exploration of their 'persisting power.'⁵ For some time this meant focusing on how women writers were reacting to, engaging with, and attempting to change attitudes towards and perceptions of femininity.⁶ As part of this, male characters were frequently overlooked, dismissed as fantasy figures, the products of wish-fulfilment, didactic tools, or sometimes as artistic failures. This idea of poorly or incompletely drawn male characters was raised recently in an interview with Andrew Davies, adaptor of the 2008 BBC production of *Sense and Sensibility*. Davies explains that he sought to make the male characters worthy of the heroines, and views the heroes' lack of development as a "weakness of the novel."⁷ This statement, while it points up the centrality of romance in a film adaptation, seems to suggest that there is something wrong with Austen's characterisations, that she just could not write believable romantic male leads. Rather than questioning what Austen might be using her hero to say about the state of the world, Edward Ferrars, along with Colonel Brandon, is dismissed as an artistic failure who must be rehabilitated in order to meet the demands of a twenty-first century television adaptation.

What Davies apparently fails to realise, however, is that Edward is a symbol of the gentleman in flux. While we recognise John Willoughby as the rakish libertine, Colonel Brandon as the man of feeling, Sir John Middleton as the country booby, and Robert Ferrars as the fop, we do not recognise in Edward any stock characters of the eighteenth-century novel. He is a lacklustre hero, possibly unworthy of Elinor, but not because Austen could not write a suitably dashing hero. Austen had patterns for dashing heroes readily available: her favourite novel, Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*

⁵ *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860*. London: Methuen, 1985. p. xiii.

⁶ This is more or less the aim of Gilbert and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), for example, and can be identified as a strategy in most scholarly monographs produced under the aegis of feminist literary history since the 1980s. Some notable examples that I will return to in my discussion of specific authors and texts include Spencer's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986; Doody's *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*. Cambridge: CUP, 1988; Claudia L. Johnson's *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1988.

⁷ "Interview Featurette" *Sense and Sensibility*. BBC, 2008.

(1752), features a man who is practically perfect in every way. Edward is problematic by design and, as I will demonstrate, is a symbol of both contested gentility and evolving expectations for masculinity.

Though the courtship plot is usually seen as a novel of female development, Edward's off-stage struggle to establish his identity is ideologically significant. Austen provides clues throughout that establish and problematise Edward's social standing. Edward is introduced as a "gentlemanlike and pleasing young man" who "was the eldest son of a man who had *died* very rich" (12; emphasis mine). His mother's control of the family fortune and the small Norfolk estate worth £1000 suggests that the Ferrars family is not an 'old' family. The newness of their money and status is also indicated by the snobbery and social-climbing ambitions of his mother and sister. Edward's uncertain, or unstable, social identity, while a common affliction in times of social change, is tied to larger political concerns. The evil attending Edward's situation is partly in his being dependent on his mother, but also because his mother wields her power with tyrannical panache:

his mother neither behaved to him so as to make his home comfortable at present, nor to give him any assurance that he might form a home for himself, without strictly attending to her views for his aggrandizement. (17-8)

But while Edward's foppish brother Robert enslaves himself in his own pursuit of fashion and consequence, Edward's shyness and dislike of public life make acceding to his family's ambitions impossible. Consequently, Edward himself becomes a battleground for the opposing forces of fashion and merit, of slavery and independence, of gentility and vulgarity. His fear that his awkwardness means that he "must have been intended by nature to be fond of low company" because he is "so little at . . . ease among strangers of gentility" raises the question of what truly constitutes gentility or low company (71). While his mother, sister, and brother would certainly rank themselves as genteel and class Elinor and her family as low, Austen ridicules such a hierarchy by drawing its chief advocates – John and Fanny Dashwood, Robert

and Mrs. Ferrars – as selfish, avaricious, and susceptible to flattery, all characteristics of the tyrant. In opposition to this fashionable mode of arranging society, Edward's quest for identity puts him in conflict with his family's tastes and expectations and places education, employment, and ennui centre stage.

While visiting Barton Cottage, Edward's "want of spirits, of openness, and of consistency" are attributed to his "want of independence" (77). Mrs. Dashwood suggests that Edward would be "a happier man" if he had "any profession to engage [his] time and give an interest to [his] plans and actions" (77). Edward agrees:

It has been, and is, and probably will always be a heavy misfortune to me, that I have had no necessary business to engage me, no profession to give me employment, or afford me anything like independence. But unfortunately my own nicety, and the nicety of my friends, have made me what I am, an idle, helpless being. We never could agree in our choice of a profession. I always preferred the church, as I still do. But that was not smart enough for my family. They recommended the army. That was a great deal too smart for me. The law was allowed to be genteel enough; many young men, who had chambers in the Temple, made a very good appearance in the first circles, and drove about town in very knowing gigs. But I had no inclination for the law, even in this less abstruse study of it, which my family approved. As for the navy, it had fashion on its side, but I was too old when the subject was first started to enter it – and, at length, as there was no necessity for my having any profession at all, as I might be as dashing and expensive without a red coat on my back as with one, idleness was pronounced on the whole to be most advantageous and honourable, and a

young man of eighteen is not in general so earnestly bent on being busy as to resist the solicitations of his friends to do nothing. I was therefore entered at Oxford and have been properly idle ever since. (77-8)

In his profession dilemma, Edward confronts the tyranny of fashion and exposes its public significance. Professions are judged on a scale of fashionableness rather than true gentility, and, at 18 Edward is sentenced to idleness, slavery to his mother's whims, to make a figure, and is robbed of "anything like independence."

But because Edward recognises the evils of his situation there is hope for him, and this hope is in his courtship of Elinor. As in the traditional novel of female development, Edward's *bildungsroman* has marriage as its most important event. The centrality of marriage in his quest for identity highlights the family structure that has tried to turn him into the fashionable automaton that is the fine gentleman. As Fanny makes clear, Mrs. Ferrars has resolved that "both her sons should marry well" (18), but her idea of "well" is Miss Morton and her £30 000. In her introduction to the novel, Margaret Anne Doody observes that Miss Morton's "is a name with death (*mort*) in it," a fact that draws attention to the cold, calculated nature of the proposed union.⁸ Furthermore, she is a nonentity, desirable only for her fortune and connections (she is Lord Morton's daughter), and she is easily transferable from one Ferrars heir to the next (224). Mrs. Ferrars's children are pawns in a social game and when they disobey she disinherits at whim:

Her family had of late been exceedingly fluctuating. For many years of her life she had had two sons; but the crime and annihilation of Edward a few weeks ago, had robbed her of one; the similar annihilation of Robert had left her for a fortnight without any; and now, by the resuscitation of Edward, she had one again. (283)

While this hyperbolic expression of Mrs. Ferrars's folly amuses, it also hints at

⁸ "Introduction" (1990) p. xxxix.

the necessity of a radical shift in family structure. But rather than killing off the future generation – surely social suicide – the thing that would liberate Edward from his shackles would be the death of the mother who will not cut the apron strings. Edward is ultimately liberated by his figurative death, which kills his mother's influence. Thus, Edward's marriage to Elinor explicitly separates him from his family and his family's fashionable values, signalling that he is actually in possession of the merit that Elinor attributed to him all along.

Edward's situation in *Sense and Sensibility* introduces the social and political stakes of competing models of masculinity and gentility that I will explore in this thesis. His gradual transformation from dependant under his mother's thumb, forced to be idle because it was the most fashionable occupation that could be agreed upon, to an independent country clergyman, sharing his domestic duties with a wife who is interested in his merit not his wallet, is part of a larger transition from a paternalistic, patriarchal model of society and government towards a modern system of equality, fraternity, and personal agency.⁹ Behind Edward's evolution is a century's worth of change influenced by civic humanist ideals, a growing empire, prosperous trade, the rising professions, and the exigencies of international warfare, all working together to create a kind of family romance militating against the confining forces of feudalism and chivalry. By investigating the complex interactions of these various discourses and developments, and drawing attention to their presence in novels written by women, I hope to demonstrate not only women novelists' specific engagement with contemporary issues, but also their manner of expressing political, social, and ultimately feminist ideas through male characters.

⁹ While Edward is independent in that he is the head of the household and no longer under his mother's control, the clergyman's dependence on preferment was regarded as potentially corrupting, as it is in Maria Edgeworth's novel *Patronage* (1814). Austen's position on patronage is more complex and takes into consideration the motivations of the patron for offering the living as well as the qualifications of the man who accepts it. Colonel Brandon, for example, offers Edward the living because he is convinced that he is an honourable man, while Edward's acceptance is expressed in terms of surprise at disinterested kindness. Another example of a man who takes his duties as patron seriously is Darcy, who refuses to allow the unprincipled Wickham to take up the Kympton living that had been intended for him by Mr. Darcy's father.

Methodology

In *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (1988), Margaret Anne Doody suggests that “[t]he work of any artist represents the meeting of three histories: the life of the individual, the cultural life of the surrounding society, and the tradition of the chosen art” (9). While I agree with this statement, I have observed that when it comes to the feminocentric novel, the scope of the cultural life of the surrounding society is circumscribed by the tradition of the critic’s art. The project of feminist literary history has done much to excavate forgotten women writers, excluded from the canon because the romantic interest of the feminocentric novel has been read as unproblematically conservative and therefore incompatible with the modernising power expected of important literature, and highlight the ways in which women writers provide a record of female experience and a perspective on their individual historical realities that often differ in significant and important ways from official history.¹⁰ However, the sometimes narrow scope of this project has limited our ability to understand the full implications of the works we study. Nearly twenty years ago, Janet Todd observed that “many studies assume a separation of male public and civic history and female private herstory, with the result that the ‘politics, religion and economics’ which form male history quickly become men’s domain alone.”¹¹ To some extent, particularly in eighteenth-century studies,

¹⁰ In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), for example, Elaine Showalter writes that “Feminine, feminist, or female, the woman’s novel has always had to struggle against the cultural and historical forces that relegated women’s experience to the second rank” (36). Hilda L. Smith, writing on seventeenth-century feminists suggests that “by linking their [seventeenth-century feminists] personal experiences to those of women generally and by speaking of women’s past and present relationships with men in terms of one sex’s treatment of the other” allowed these women to establish the “feminist construct which became the model for later feminist theorists” (*Reason’s Disciples* [1982] 9). Such a “group-centered understanding of women is especially important for an initial expression of feminist thought” (6). Jane Spencer, who notes that women writers in patriarchal society are judged and defined “according to its notion of femininity,” also observes the complex relationship between women’s writing and patriarchal society: it is “not simply one of opposition” (ix, xi).

¹¹ *The Sign of Angellica : Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660-1800*. London: Virago, 1989. p. 97.

this remains true. An exception is the 1790s: the political allegiances of women writers of this period have become the subject of a lively scholarly debate. The overtly radical political writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, Mary Hays, and Charlotte Smith, among others, make wider political issues impossible to ignore.¹² Moreover, their insistent political engagement has led to the excavation of subtextual political engagement on the part of writers publishing in the wake of ideological backlash and political instability resulting from the wars with France. This, however, is an exception, one that I believe must be remedied by applying the same level of detailed historical and political contextualisation to the works of earlier writers and those traditionally identified as conservative or apolitical.¹³

My intervention in feminist literary history is threefold. First, I want to demonstrate that women writers are very much engaged in contemporary political debates, even when this political investment is not polemically expressed. The focus on masculinity is central to re-evaluating the ways in which women writers engage with political material through the courtship plot, because, as Matthew McCormack stresses, “politics and the family were inseparable in Georgian England.”¹⁴ Furthermore, as manly independence and citizenship became increasingly dependent on a man’s status as householder, husband, and father, the courtship plot has important implications for male characters, despite the traditional devaluing of marriage as quest in the male *bildungsroman*.¹⁵

¹² See for example, Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), Eleanor Ty, *Unsex’d Revolutionaries* (Toronto: U of TP, 1993), Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s* (Cambridge: CUP2000).

¹³ This kind of work has begun, for example in Claudia Johnson’s argument for a radical Austen in *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (1988) and also more broadly in *Equivocal Beings* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995). Eleanor Ty explores the potentially feminist tendencies of conservative writers in *Empowering the Feminine* (Toronto: U of T P, 1998).

¹⁴ *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England*. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005). p. 13.

¹⁵ In *Tradition Counter-Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction*. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988.), Joseph Allen Boone notes that most love stories are bildungsromans that follow a protagonist’s development from youthful innocence to adulthood. While marriage is the climactic even in the novel of female development – “the growth of the female protagonist has come to be seen as synonymous with the action of courtship: until very recently the only female bildungsroman has been a love-plot.” – the male protagonist’s plot uses courtship as a “narrative scaffolding upon which to hang the various independent concerns, the ‘innumerable events’, of the hero’s growth to adulthood and social integration” (74).

Second, I propose to widen the historico-cultural context. In order to argue for the political significance of male characters it is necessary to bring in those traditionally ‘male’ aspects of history, particularly politics, economics, and empire. I have been particularly influenced by those historians whose work explores these elements in order to understand the workings of eighteenth-century British culture, including Penelope Corfield, whose work on class structure, social change, and the professions has been invaluable, and Matthew McCormack, whose exploration of independence in the long eighteenth century crucially highlights the ways in which the political is not only personal but masculine. It is also necessary to incorporate the last real ‘old boys’ club – military history. In *The Theatres of War* (1995), Gillian Russell observes and sets out to remedy the isolation of military history – perceived as “the (predominantly male) preserve of militarists” – arguing that “war is as much a cultural event as it is a matter of government policy or the grand strategy of generals and admirals” as it affects and alters “the textures of feeling, thought, and behaviour” (2-3). Novels, which investigate feeling, thought, and behaviour, are ideal for examining how war manifests itself in culture as well as the implications of war for gender politics. The incorporation of military history also constitutes a departure from eighteenth-century masculinity studies, which have tended to be sweeping social histories, charting a shift from the rakes, courtiers, and boobies of the Restoration to a bourgeois citizen.¹⁶ Military men are considered in relation to duelling, but otherwise get little attention.¹⁷ In a work that goes some way to redressing the isolation of masculinity and military studies, Leo

¹⁶ The state of masculinity studies will be discussed in more depth below - see pp. 20-24.

¹⁷ For example, military men as a category are briefly mentioned in Robert Shoemaker’s article “The Taming of the Duel” *The Historical Journal* 45 (2002): 525-45. This elision may be due to the fact that officers, apart from their duelling propensities, functioned in society as ‘fine gentlemen’ and because of the social focus of accounts of the civilising function of politeness does not deal with larger questions of professions or political identities. Whether or not this explains the failure to engage with the military, Karen Harvey views the neglect of the army and navy as problematic (see “The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-1800” *JBS* 44 (2005)). Matthew McCormack’s study of the independent man, which seeks to place eighteenth-century shifts in masculinity in relation to political developments, also briefly explores the application of the independent ideal to common British soldiers in order to distinguish them from their slavish French counterparts, see pp. 150-2. McCormack also highlights the periods of masculinity-related cultural panic that coincides with military failures, which I will return to later.

Braudy's *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (2003) uses a variety of literary texts to investigate the pressures on masculine identity in wartime and emphasises both the performativity of the chivalric ideal and the necessity of the female spectator to validate the performance of manliness; however, by focusing my research on women writers, I hope to demonstrate how women writers challenge their passive role in the creation of male identity and become active participants.

Finally, I want to suggest that in addition to commenting on events and anxieties that have traditionally been regarded as beyond the scope of women's concerns, women, much like men at the time, are commenting on the condition of men themselves. The protest against or bolstering of patriarchy posited as taking place in women's writing often relies on a shadowy monolith of the ruling class male;¹⁸ however, the reality of men in the eighteenth century, as I shall demonstrate, is far more complicated and contested. Moreover, the anxieties regarding proper masculinity are connected to wider social concerns over power and authority, prosperity and luxury, empire and the state of the military. Matthew McCormack has provided an excellent account of the concurrent developments of masculinity and political practice, and posits that independence and political virtue were increasingly and self-consciously gendered male throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. Though this led to a gradual expansion of the franchise to new groups of men, the prospect of women's participation in the political process was still viewed as the "*reductio ad absurdam*" of the

¹⁸ The monolith is patriarchy. I am not trying to label earlier scholarship as critically reductive. This strategy makes sense: the 'women as oppressed group' foundations of feminist theory nearly requires it, as regardless of how male power was constituted, it excluded and controlled women. But feminist literary history has progressed to a point in its development that requires a dismantling of patriarchy into its messy constituent parts in order to gain a greater understanding of how women novelists are engaging with and understood their political and social oppressors on an individual basis in order to understand how they are responding to oppression.

equality of man.¹⁹ Though McCormack suggests that independence is increasingly predicated on private virtue and a man's status as householder, husband, and father, his account of public independence neglects the domestic implications of the family romance. Because of the centrality of the family metaphor to eighteenth-century politics, the courtship plots of women novelists take on political significance, while male characters, particularly suitors, become a site for expressing political concerns and registering dissatisfaction with the status quo, both in its public and private incarnations.

My study is chronological and seeks to chart the small-scale evolutionary movements that propel longer-term change. While the 1778-1818 scope of my survey partly reflects publication dates, the three wars that this period encompasses – the American Revolutionary, French Revolutionary, and Napoleonic wars – are important influences on the novels under investigation and in the ways these novelists – Burney, Smith, West, Edgeworth, and Austen – are writing about men. While women writers earlier in the century expressed concerns about masculinity in their novels, I have chosen to begin with Frances Burney because in many ways she is the first in an influential female tradition of the novel culminating most notably in Jane Austen.²⁰ The selection of Charlotte Smith and Jane West requires more explanation. The 1790s offers a plethora of women writers exploring questions of gender and citizenship, particularly Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, and Elizabeth Inchbald, on the 'radical' side of the question and more

¹⁹ McCormack, p. 123. In a speech to parliament, Charles James Fox elaborates on his ideas about the universality of universal suffrage, highlighting the centrality of gender and obligation: "I hope gentlemen will not smile if I endeavour to illustrate my position by referring to the example of the other sex. In all the theories and projects of the most absurd speculation, it has never been suggested that it would be advisable to extend the elective franchise to the female sex . . . Why! but because by the law of nations, and perhaps also by the law of nature, that sex is dependent upon ours; and because, therefore, their voices would be governed by the relation in which they stand in society" (Commons, 26 May 1797, qtd. McCormack p. 123).

²⁰ Mary Davys explores the subject in *The Accomplish'd Rake; or, The Modern Fine Gentleman* (1727), while Eliza Haywood's eponymous heroine, Betsy Thoughtless (1751), must extricate herself from Mr. Munden before finding happiness with Truworth. This literary tradition, however, was overshadowed by the more influential writings of male novelists including Fielding, Richardson, and Sterne, whose influence is much more palpable, particularly that of Richardson, in the works of later women writers. For this reason, I will explore the contributions of male writers in detail in chapter 1.

cautious writers, like Amelia Opie and Elizabeth Hamilton. Indeed, in an early stage of the project I had intended to include Inchbald. However, the pairing of Smith, usually viewed as a ‘Jacobin’ novelist, and West, who is rarely considered to be anything but a committed anti-Jacobin, calls into question the validity of that critical division: by examining quite conventional (and less overtly political) novels written by these very popular novelists from a fresh perspective it is possible to bridge the perceived ideological gap and chart a moderately progressive course that has little to do with the pessimistically tragic feminism of the radicals or the problematic submission of the reactionaries. Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, who are often positioned in relation to the debates of the 1790s, complete my survey, reconsidered in relation to the evolving concerns of the early nineteenth century. By exploring the works of these novelists I propose to investigate how political and military events influence masculine ideals, with particular attention to independence, and how these changing thoughts and feelings were negotiated in novels written by women. Furthermore, I will suggest that while men were securing political participation exclusively to certain types of men, these women novelists were attempting to revolutionise the family through fratriarchal equality.

Women, masculinity, and civilisation.

What! shall a scribbling, senseless woman dare
 To your refinement offer such coarse fare?
 Is Douglas, or is Percy fir'd with passion?
 Ready for love or glory, death to dash on,
 Fit company for modern still-life men of fashion?

(David Garrick, Epilogue to Hannah More's *Percy*, 1778)

Garrick's epilogue to More's tragic play *Percy* suggests both the problem of the refined men of fashionable society and the role that women have to play

in their reformation, or as the epilogue implies, their re-masculinisation.²¹ Women writers come to the question of masculinity with a necessarily different agenda, and in expressing what they want, and in terms of husbands (the new romantic heroes), perhaps their deepest desires, their deepest political desires are also expressed. Susan Moller Okin has criticised the sentimental family as providing a new rationale for the subordination of women:

Just as the freedom, individuality, and rationality of men was beginning to be recognized as the foundation of their political and legal equality, a change was taking place in the sphere of family life that had catastrophic implications for the future of women's rights and freedoms.²²

While Moller Okin is quite right to recognise the political implications of the family, I want to suggest that women writers were challenging patriarchal authority by renegotiating the terms of marriage and imagining new kinds of men to marry.

Women also had an important, if paradoxical, role in the civilising process. Enlightenment stadial theory, which attempted to account for the progress of societies from savagery to civilisation, considered women to be both bearers of culture and civility (as will be seen in chapter one) and as indicators of a given society's level of civilisation (as will be discussed in chapters two and three). Women writers' intervention in the discourse of masculinity can be seen as a more active manifestation of women's role as civilising agents; by drawing attention to the evils of women's lot, women writers are questioning Britain's level of civilisation, while their nuanced explorations of masculine models attempt to nudge society in the right direction. Critics have dismissed Burney's *Lord Orville* as a kind of wish

²¹ Garrick's prologue playfully investigates the female side of gender inversions. For a full discussion of the prologue and its place in longer trends about gender divisions see Dror Wahrman's article "*Percy's Prologue: From Gender Play to Gender Panic in Eighteenth-Century England.*" *Past and Present*. 159 (1998): 113-160.

²² "Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11 (1982) p. 72.

fulfilment, a young girl's fantasy of the perfect romantic hero.²³ But *why* is he a fantasy? What does that fantasy signify? I hope to demonstrate that the men women create in their fictions constitute powerful political statements that must be unlocked in order to truly understand the political ideals of the writers in question, as well as the advancement of feminist consciousness.

In *Letters to a Young Man* (1801), a conduct book that began as letters to her eldest son, Jane West reflects on the art of drawing a character:

Our best authors have acknowledged, that no character is so difficult to invent and support as that of a gentleman. It is, beside, subject to some variations. Sir Charles Grandison is drawn at full length, and I suppose in the *costume* of his time. His morals are so excellent, that I know of no work of fiction which I would more strongly recommend to the *study* of a young man. But the nature of morals is unchangeable. . . Manners allowably vary; and, in spite of my admiration of Sir Charles, I would not advise you to adopt his habit of making fine speeches, or to enter upon those long declamations which would now be deemed unreasonably tiresome. (74-6)

But creation is not the only art: "Though it is exceedingly difficult to make a gentleman," notes West, "it is easy to inform you how to unmake him; and the surest way of doing so is, by awkward partial imitation" (77). West demonstrates a keen awareness of the problems facing masculinity at the end of the long eighteenth century. Her statement that the gentleman is the hardest character to "invent and support" suggests her awareness of the constructed nature of male identity, her awareness of maleness as a brand, a symbol, something that must be cultivated and is as difficult to get right on the page as it is in an individual. When she presents "awkward partial imitation" as the surest way to unmake the gentleman, she is no longer

²³ See Gerard Barker, *Grandison's Heirs: The Paragon's Progress in the Late Eighteenth-Century English Novel*. (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1985), for example. This will be discussed in more depth in chapter 2.

referring to art. Acting the part of the gentleman requires education, dedication, and the desire to live up to the ideal. But the truly vexing issue in all of this is the ideal.

In *The Compleat English Gentleman*, Defoe writes:

It may serve in the schools for a good *Thesis*, and long learned Dissertations may be made upon it, that the Word *Gentleman* being instituted and legitimated in our Language, as signifying a Man of generous Principles, of a great generous Soul, intimates a kind of an Obligation upon those who assum'd the Name to distinguish themselves from the rest of the World by generous and virtuous Actions. (12)

The last twenty years or so have seen the fulfilment of Defoe's prophecy regarding the rich potential of masculinity studies. In 1975, Natalie Zemon Davis suggested to a feminist audience that

we should be interested in women and men, that we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than an historian of class can focus entirely on peasants. Our goal is to understand the significance of the *sexes*, of gender groups in the historical past.²⁴

Masculinity studies has increasingly found its way into the studies of history and literature. In terms of eighteenth-century cultural studies, treatments of masculinity frequently explore and emphasise contemporary anxieties about the practice of masculinity – the prescriptions of the campaigns to reform manners, codes of chivalry and honour, the gendering of virtues, distinguishing the manly from the effeminate – in relation to larger developments in British society.

The most influential, or at least the area that has received the most

²⁴ Quoted in John Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity?" p. 179, "'Women's History' in Transition: the European Case" *Feminist Studies* 2 (1975) p. 90.

attention, has been the discourse of politeness;²⁵ however, as Karen Harvey suggests, the reformation of manners is one small part of the picture:

Administratively, culturally, and militarily, Britain was forged during this period, yet there is little work on the period's relationship between war and masculinity. It is clear, however, that military and naval campaigns had considerable impact on discussions of masculinity and politeness in particular . . . Rarely explored by gender historians, the naval and military context in which some men's masculinity was forged suggests limits to the hegemony of politeness. (308)

Similarly offering a check to the 'hegemony of politeness' is McCormack's work on the independent man, in which he seeks to open a "new narrative in English political history, where gendered subjectivity is at the centre of the political historian's enquiry" (9). Studies of masculinity in the literature of the eighteenth century has largely fallen into the identification of types – the libertine, the booby, the man of feeling – and tropes – chivalry – in relation to the narrative of politeness and progressive refinement, or to feminisation. An exception is Claudia Johnson's *Equivocal Beings* (1995) which begins by unpacking Wollstonecraft's engagement with the question of masculinity in the *Vindications of the Rights of Men* (1790) and explores how other women writers built on the feminist implications of her critique of chivalric masculinity. Considerations of gender and politics necessarily raise questions of class. In "Jane Austen and the Gentrification of Commerce" Jason

²⁵ See for example, Lawrence Klein "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century" in *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Ed. Michael Worton and Judith Still. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993. 100-115) and "Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England" (*Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29.1 (1996) 97-109); Michèle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830" (*JBS* 44 (2005): 312-329); Philip Carter's *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (Harlow: Longman, 2001) and "Polite 'Persons': Character, Biography, and the Gentleman" (*Transactions of the RHS* 12 (2002): 333-54). The theme of politeness has been so important that it serves as one of the organising themes of the volume of the Oxford History of England for the period, Paul Langford's *A Polite and Commercial People* (1989). Also, see G. J Barker-Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), which follows politeness into sensibility, and E. J. Clery's *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2004).

Solinger's Marxist bias leads him to question how

a genre whose rise has been routinely linked with the rise of the middle class . . . exhibits little interest in the kinds of men that historians single out as representative of the middle class, namely, merchants, traders and manufacturers. (274)

I want to suggest that the answer to this question is to be found in an exploration of eighteenth-century masculinity that is at once broader and more specific, that draws on military and political, as well as social, contexts.

Imagining the Patriarch's Death: Independence and the Family Romance

Beginning with Ian Watt, the rise of the novel has been linked, either implicitly or explicitly, with the emergence of the middle class; but I am less interested in structural definition than in self definition.²⁶ This kind of interior, individual-level change is difficult to map because it leaves the structure seemingly untouched though the substance of it is radically altered. Penelope Corfield posits this kind of "radicalising" potential in the professions, a concept that I will explore in more detail in chapter 7.²⁷

McCormack identifies a similar phenomenon involved in the reshaping of the citizen as independent man over the course of the century: "it was the content and the significance of this notion [i.e. of independence] that changed."²⁸ The evolution of 'independence' encompasses a movement away from "a concern with public reputation and hierarchical relationships in the eighteenth century" towards a "concern with 'inner' virtue in the nineteenth," a trend with decidedly egalitarian implications.²⁹ McCormack is careful to contextualise the cultural meanings of independence and to point out that, while independence gradually moved to a gendered virtue rather than a

²⁶ Watt connects the rise of the novel to the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, market forces, the increasingly widening reading public, and the power of the middle class in influencing taste. See also chapter 2 "The Reading Public and the Rise of the Novel" 38-65. Watt also observes a similar trend in France after the Revolution (342). This middle class bias thesis persists, as can be seen in Solinger's work.

²⁷ *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London: Routledge, 1995). p. 209.

²⁸ *The Independent Man* (2005). p. 10.

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 17.

virtue of condition or place, independence necessarily requires dependants:

Men who were younger, poorer, non-English or homosexual were similarly disadvantaged by the cult of the independent man. Understandings of who was capable of independence were constantly being renegotiated, but arguments for empowerment based upon ‘independence’ always required an ‘other’ in the form of a disempowered dependent. *In-dependence* is a negative term – the condition of *non-obligation* – so to argue that only *non-obligated* people should participate in politics is to imply that supposedly *obliged* persons should not.³⁰

The issue of the dependence of disenfranchised men, and groups of men, as in the thirteen colonies, is at issue in the debates surrounding the major wars at the end of the eighteenth century: so is the familial model of obligation that informs notions of independence. *Virtus*, which connotes both virility and political virtue, connects sex and citizenship in republican theory.³¹ Only an independent householder, usually a father and husband, can be considered to possess such manly virtue while his dependants are “fundamentally unfree” and subject to “his arbitrary will”: “They are thus in a degrading position analogous to slavery and are not free to pursue the public good, which is the object of citizenship in a free republic.”³² While McCormack notes that this “familial model of obligation came to be profoundly influential in anglophone political theory,” there is little concern with how the struggle between independence and dependence affected families.³³

The public incarnation of sons chaffing at continued parental obligation is present in both contemporary accounts and historiographical treatments of the American and French revolutions. The family romance, a term borrowed from Freud, has been used to describe the process of subjects emancipating

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 5.

³¹ *ibid.* p. 20. J.G.A. Pocock elaborates on the idea of virtue and *virtus* in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1975/2003) see esp. p. 37-9.

³² *ibid.* p. 20.

³³ *ibid.* p. 20.

themselves from their father/kings.³⁴ This patriarchal construction of political authority – literally the father as ruler – has unexplored implications for the family considering the regicidal tendencies of revolutionary republicanism. Winthrop Jordan explores the figurative death of George III in 1776 through Thomas Paine’s republican arguments in *Common Sense*.³⁵ The French opted for literal regicide and patricide in 1793, but, as Lynn Hunt (1992) observes, they were careful to distinguish between public and private fatherlessness.³⁶ The execution of Louis XVI in 1793 raised the spectre of the death of George, which, as John Barrell demonstrates, became particularly potent in relation to reformers and the definition of treason.³⁷ While the issue of how literally to interpret Edward III’s statute identifying treason as “imagining the king’s death” occupied legal scholars, I want to suggest that the petty treason of imagining the domestic patriarch’s death occupied women writers.

Independence operated within a paradigm of virtue and corruption. Independence, however constituted, guaranteed civic virtue, while dependence, particularly in terms of government patronage but also more broadly, led to corruption. The gentleman, then, at least insofar as he is a political animal, must be independent. While McCormack is rather vague on the private practicalities of obtaining independence for young men in the liminal state of attaining their majority, John Tosh suggests that “setting up a new household is the essential qualification for manhood”:

The man who speaks for familial dependants and who can transmit his name and his assets to future generations is

³⁴ In Freud’s formulation, the family romance is a domestic drama in which children seek to replace their inadequate parents with better ones. This concept has been used as a metaphor for political revolution in relation to the French Revolution by Lynn Hunt in *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992) and by Kathleen Wilson in *The Sense of the People* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) and *The Island Race* (London: Routledge, 2003) and others in relation to the American Revolution.

³⁵ “Familial Politics: Thomas Paine and the Killing of the King, 1776” *Journal of American History* 50 (1973): 294-308.

³⁶ In discussing the elaborate vilification of Marie Antoinette as, among other things, an unnatural and bad mother, Hunt notes that the “relative silence about Louis [as father] among the revolutionaries perhaps reflects an underlying sense that, after all, he represented the masculinity of power and sovereignty. The aim was to kill the paternal source of power and yet retain its virility in its republican replacement” (122).

³⁷ see *Imagining the King’s Death* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), especially introduction.

fully masculine. The break is all the clearer when it is recognized that marriage requires setting up a new household, not forming a sub-unit within the parental home.³⁸

This simple seeming formula for young gentlemen to become independent, however, is fraught with problems, not the least of which is the pesky issue of inheritance. In part, imagining the king's death involves envisioning a world largely free from the constraints of heredity in which citizens are freed for self-determination.³⁹ While the evolution of 'independence' also constitutes a rejection of inheritance and hierarchies in favour of inner virtue, as McCormack demonstrates, this is on a theoretical political level that does not deal with the practicalities of individual men waiting for their inheritances. Frances Burney encounters this problem in *Cecilia* in which her hero, Mortimer Delvile, is enslaved by his status as heir and the expectations that come with it. He will not truly be free until his father's death, either literal or figurative. This is where the professions become of prime importance.

The professions provide an alternative route to manly independence.⁴⁰ As McCormack notes,

independence through work resonated with the Protestant work ethic and freed men from the ignominy of patrician patronage. Occupation became more important to male identities, as economic activity became increasingly identified with the political and civil public domain. Work became a sphere in which men could prove their manhood.⁴¹

If an inherited estate becomes a kind of place, an enslaving form of patrician patronage, then the professions allow heirs and spares an alternative route to gentlemanly independence by providing them with the income necessary to

³⁸ "What Should Historians do with Masculinity" (1994) p. 158.

³⁹ In *Common Sense* Paine argues that law is King in America and that it's symbolic crown (also the crown of the "Royal Brute of Great Britain") should be "demolished, and scattered among the People, whose right it is" (p. 28).

⁴⁰ Corfield, *Power and the Professions* (1995) p. 174.

⁴¹ p. 17.

secure dependants of their own by enabling them to marry. This is where women writers intervened. Imagining the patriarch's death does not simply remove one tyrant to make way for another: rather, the independent, professionalised husband represents the meritocratic potential for marriage. To return to the example of Austen's Edward Ferrars, when Edward is liberated from parental and familial tyranny, he is freed from the enslaving influence of a family who wanted the stagnation of Miss *Mortimer* and her £30, 000 to be part of his life's ambition. His attachment to Lucy Steele illustrates the pernicious effects of this kind of slavery, as his period of enforced idleness impairs his taste and judgement. Edward only truly begins to yearn for independence after meeting Elinor Dashwood, a woman whose intellect, good sense, and kindness make her worthy of being pleased. Edward and Elinor's marriage comes after a decisive break with the Ferrars family – Edward is dead to his mother – which is, I want to suggest, Austen's way of highlighting that their marriage constitutes the emergence of a new kind of society, a society that has been sought and developed in the work of earlier women novelists (Burney, Smith, West), and a society that, in Edgeworth and Austen's hands, demonstrates the potential for female equality in a fraternal society.

In the introduction to *Novel Relations* (2005) Ruth Perry observes that literary critics “often claim to see evidence of cultural change in the texts they read – but they do not always compare what they see to the current state of historical knowledge” (5). However, there is a difference between literature exploring existing social, kinship, and political structures and literature anticipating or trying to direct the course of future social change. In this thesis I seek to identify how women novelists were responding to and attempting to direct changes in masculinity, in the family, and in the state, and suggest that women writers increasingly identified independent men (and women) forming a fraternal meritocracy as the way forward.

According to Perry, in literature and in history consanguinal bonds were de-emphasised in favour of conjugal ties (107). This shift disinherits

and subordinates daughters and sisters as the “equality between brothers and sisters that derived from shared lineage and class began to weaken in the second half of the seventeenth century as the material expectations of the individual began to outweigh the importance of blood, honor, social identity and tradition” (110). But the “sister-right” and “brotherly love” that Perry refers to are not the same as the contractual equality of political fratriarchy.⁴² As Carole Pateman notes, liberals from the nineteenth century onwards have attempted to develop a more inclusive idea of the individual through fraternity – even Simone de Beauvoir suggests “it is necessary, . . . that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.” Pateman, however, highlights the ways in which fraternity is exactly what it says it is: “the brotherhood of *men*.”⁴³ “Civil fraternity,” Pateman notes, “refers not to a blood relation, to the sons of a father, but to men bound by a recognized common bond, such as that between male citizens of the *polis*” (80). In terms of the sexual contract, when patriarchal sex-right ceases to be the exclusive purview of one man (the patriarch) it “becomes a ‘universal’ right. The law of male sex-right extends to all men, to all members of the fraternity” (109-10). In this formulation, women are as much excluded in a fratriarchy as they had been under the patriarch.

The retention of private patriarchal tyranny in the face of wider political freedom is a feature of John Locke’s political philosophy criticised by Mary Astell.⁴⁴ Essentially, as Astell points out, post-Lockean family relationships still operate under a model of tyranny, a tyranny that is analogous to an absolute monarchy. Perry observes that brothers in literature were often bad and neglected their dependent sisters. This neglect is analogous to the neglect of the bad landowner. The ideology of patriarchal government assumes a benevolent paternalism in its practitioners in order to

⁴² For more on sibling solidarity and rivalry, see chapters 3 and 4 of *Novel Relations* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004).

⁴³ *The Sexual Contract*. (Cambridge: Polity, 1988) p. 78. *The Second Sex*. (1953).

⁴⁴ The gendered implications of Locke’s political philosophies and Astell’s critique of them will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

make their dependants' slavery more palatable; however, as both literature and history reveal, this spirit of benevolence is corrupted by the lure of absolute power. By focusing on the family and on the sexual contract that forms families, women novelists expose and offer correctives to this private inequality through the feminocentric courtship plot. By transforming the traditionally and fundamentally unequal sexual contract into a truly companionate and spiritually equal partnership based on mutual respect, not obligation, these novelists propose to change society from the inside out.

Chapter Breakdown

In Part I, I set the groundwork for my study of male characters written by women novelists by examining the evolution of the gentlemanly ideal in the works of Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who investigate and interrogate the basic male types that dominate the eighteenth century – the booby, the libertine, the Christian hero, the natural man, and the man of feeling – while exploring anxieties relating to the evolving concept of gentility and what constitutes a gentleman. The concern to define the gentleman is part of larger political anxieties about virtue, commerce, and power. On the one hand is the pull of the civic humanist ideal of independence in arms and land, which posits this stake in the state as the virtue required for enfranchisement. On the other is the modernising influence of commerce which promotes specialisation (emblematised in the standing army) and produces luxury, which allow for advancement in the arts and sciences, as well as imperialism. The anxiety over masculinity is fundamentally about virtue and corruption, and how to define the virtue required for citizenship in a rapidly modernising world. Using these writers to set the stage for my subsequent investigation of the ways in which masculinity is represented by women, whose own virtue is politicised, I will

go on to explore the ways in which women depart from the male tradition and promote a variety of gentlemanliness consonant with emergent feminist concerns.

In Part II, I examine the works of Frances Burney in relation to questions of empire and war. *Evelina* provides a bridge between the chivalric heroes of the past and the new heroes being devised by women writers. Lord Orville, a character whose civic humanist values are betrayed by others of his rank (Sir John Belmont, Sir Clement Willoughby, Lord Merton) while his virtue is subtly informed by the merit of Captain Cook and the innate dignity of the Tahitian Omai, represents an alternative to the masculine empire that begins to crumble as the war with the American colonies and the debates surrounding it progress. The American revolutionary debate over civic virtue and corrupting imperialism provides an essential backdrop to the crisis of masculine identity that plagues Mortimer Delvile in *Cecilia*. Delvile struggles to achieve manly independence from the enslaving force of the patriarchal family, a struggle that allows Burney to suggest that neither civic humanist virtue nor the chivalric code are sufficient models of power or male behaviour. Things as they are, both public and private, are laid bare in the tortured courtship of Cecilia and Delvile and require a redefinition of virtue in order to be improved. Furthermore, challenging the civic humanist basis of virtue constitutes a challenge to the sentimental family.

In Part III, I will investigate the complex and competing discourses of masculinity at work during the 1790s and the war with Revolutionary France. Complicating the pull between civic humanist virtue and modernity is the addition of a pre-republican neo-feudalism to the 'war of ideas.' Edmund Burke's desire to recapture the 'unbought grace of nations,' the virtue of arms and land enshrined in feudal chivalry, is an attempt to forestall the redefinition of virtue begun during the American revolution and continuing in the debate surrounding the French revolution. After exploring the debate in the works of Burke, Wollstonecraft, and Godwin, I will explore how these tensions are resolved in the novels of Charlotte Smith and Jane West. In

charting the evolution of the hero in the works of these two novelists, each ostensibly representing one side of the war of ideas - Smith the Jacobin, and West the anti-Jacobin - I intend to complicate the strict divisions by exploring these novelists' different strategies for solving the crisis of masculinity.

Finally, in Part IV, I will explore the new definitions of masculine virtue offered in the works of Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. These two authors take up the challenge of redefining masculinity in the context of the world at war with Napoleon Bonaparte (the citizen-soldier run amok), pitting land and arms against a commercial empire. In the novels of Edgeworth and Austen professional skill and personal merit are offered as the new virtue, the new qualification for a stake in society. By professionalising the gentleman, placing gentlemen in professions, and infusing commerce with gentlemanliness, Edgeworth and Austen participate in a redefinition of gentility and virtue that not only opens up social and political possibilities to previously disenfranchised men, but also raises a real possibility of female agency.

Part I
In Whose Image? Fashioning Men in the Eighteenth Century.

Chapter 1
Creating “the MAN”:
Re(de)fining Masculinity, 1660-1775.

What a Gentleman is, 'tis hard with us to define, in other countries he is known by his Priviledges; in Westminster Hall he is one that is reputed one; in the Court of Honour, he that hath Arms. The King cannot make a Gentleman of Blood . . . nor God Almighty, but he can make a Gentleman by Creation. If you ask which is the better of these two, Civilly, the Gentleman of Blood, Morally the Gentleman of Creation may be the better; for the other may be a Debauch'd man, this a Person of worth.

John Selden, *Table Talk*, 1689.

What, my dear grandmamma, is the boasted character of most of those who are called HEROES, to the un-ostentatious merit of a TRULY GOOD MAN? In what a variety of amiable lights does such a one appear? In how many ways is he a blessing and a joy to his fellow creatures?

The History of Sir Charles Grandison, Letter LXI, Volume VII

Far from being a commonplace, Harriet Byron's preference of a good man over a hero marks a new trend in fiction, echoing wider social and political changes taking place in the aftermath of the Restoration, Glorious Revolution, and Hanoverian succession. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how these social and political developments are examined in contemporary literature, and how Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in particular, sought to change the terms of ideal masculinity and delimit women's role in forming masculine identity in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) and *Émile* (1762). The changing expectations for masculinity are bound up in changing ideas of masculine virtue. While the period between 1660 and 1775 is marked by a shift from honour – the defining characteristic of the hero – to virtue – the mark of the good man and the citizen – the fundamental structure the gentleman inhabits – the family and the parliamentary system that is secured in 1689 – remains seemingly unchanged, but the new independent gentleman-citizen is equally under siege from the independence-sapping effects of commerce – luxury and specialisation. Fears of effeminacy and national decline are further

complicated by anxieties regarding women's influence over and interaction with men. In addressing the challenges presented by 'civilization' (advanced societies of commerce, culture, prosperity, and luxury), fictional prescriptions for gentlemanliness and definitions of masculine virtue focus on the private, rather than public setting, thereby containing the female threat while either reinforcing an idealised status quo (Richardson) or trying to recapture an uncorrupted stage of human development (Rousseau).

While there is general consensus that the eighteenth century saw Britain's evolution from *ancien régime* to modern state, there is still little consensus about how this transformation was achieved.⁴⁵ Because I am interested in the social, political, and cultural significance of masculinities, throughout the thesis I will be focusing particularly on civic humanism, chivalry, and professionalism. While professionalisation will come into play in later chapters, chivalry, the holdover of a corrupt feudal *ancien régime*, and civic humanism, the virtuous republican political alternative, are arguably the most influential discourses of masculinity and social organisation at mid-century. The question of who and what the gentleman is is complicated by competing claims of inheritance (birth and wealth) and behaviour (education, manners, and morals) in a society moving from a feudal/absolutist monarchy under Charles II to the world's premiere commercial and imperial power. The importance of civic humanist theory to this transition has been explored by many historians and political theorists, most notably by J. G. A. Pocock,⁴⁶ and most recently by Matthew McCormack, whose work on the independent man complements nicely the evidence I have uncovered in the novels here under consideration. While some have viewed civic humanism in relation to the roughly contemporary campaign to reform

⁴⁵ For a concise overview of the historiographical move from Whig progress narratives, to Namierite high political history, to E. P. Thompson's emphasis on social factors (especially class), to exploring ties to earlier religious and political traditions see Frank O'Gorman's Introduction to *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832*. (London: Arnold, 1997).

⁴⁶ J.G.A Pocock's influential study, *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), explores not only the Greek origins of republican theory (Part I), but also the complex medieval and theological contexts in which it was revived by humanist thinkers in Renaissance Florence (esp. in the writings of Machiavelli) (Part II), before moving on to consider the republican tradition in England and the American colonies (Part III).

manners and promote politeness, such as Emma Clery, who posits a feminising trend occurring throughout the century, others, such as Claudia L. Johnson, argue rather for a trend of “masculinization,” an observation that supports McCormack’s suggestion that civic virtue was increasingly identified “with maleness itself” rather than with the “trappings of elite masculinity – landed property and rank.”⁴⁷

The beginnings of this shift from elite masculinity to masculinity plain and simple can be seen in Sir Richard Steele’s play *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), which presents three contemporary versions of ‘the gentleman.’ The first negative example comes from the servants Humphrey and the young Tom, described by Humphrey as the “Prince of Coxcombs” with “Follies and Vices enough for a Man of Ten thousand a Year” (I. i). To this indictment Tom retorts that things have changed since Humphrey first came to Town:

Why now, Sir, the Lacquies are the Men of Pleasure of the Age; the Top-Gamesters; and many a lac’d Coat about Town have had their Education in our Party-colour’d Regiment, – We are false Lovers; have a Taste of Musick, Poetry, Billet-doux, Dress, Politicks, ruin Damsels, and when we are weary of this lewd Town, and have a mind to take up, whip into our Masters Wigs and Linnen, and marry Fortunes. (I. i.)

The variety of gentleman described in Tom’s catalogue, whose questionable behaviour has corrupted his servants, is the courtier rake, the hero of Restoration drama whom Steele, his partner in the *Spectator* Joseph Addison,

⁴⁷ Clery, *The Feminisation Debate* (2004); Johnson, *Equivocal Beings* (1995) p. 14.; McCormack, *The Independent Man* (2005) p. 18.

and Samuel Richardson, among others, were hoping to reform.⁴⁸ The second unflattering portrait of a gentleman comes from the heroine's maiden aunt, Isabella, who takes a decidedly pessimistic view of men as "base Dissembler[s]":

There are, among the Destroyers of Women, the Gentle, the Generous, the Mild, the Affable, the Humble, who all, soon after their Success in their Designs, turn to the contrary of those Characters. I will own to you, Mr. *Bevil* carries his Hypocrisie the best of any Man living, but still he is a Man, and therefore a Hypocrite. They have usurp'd an Exemption from Shame, for any Baseness, any Cruelty towards us. They embrace without Love; they make Vows, without Conscience of Obligation; they are Partners, nay, Seducers to the Crime, wherein they pretend to be less guilty. (II. ii)

Isabella examines the dark side of the hero who employs the language and gestures of chivalry in order to satisfy his desires. In Isabella's experience, the hero as lover is a hypocrite playing the role of the good man in order to impose on virtuous young women. Despite Isabella's concerns, however, Mr. Bevil is ultimately vindicated as a gentleman and a good man according to the terms established by Mr. Sealand.

The third account of the gentleman comes from a conversation between Sir John Bevil and Mr. Sealand, a merchant whose daughter is contracted to marry Sir John's son. While Sir John is concerned about descent and ancient

⁴⁸ The rake, one of the many stock characters populating the Restoration stage, and reflecting the antics of court figures like John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, is a well-dressed, badly-behaved man of culture and wit, who, despite moral deficiencies and sexual indiscretions, is rewarded with a good woman and, usually, a good fortune. For example, Mirabell in Congreve's *The Way of the World*, despite his predilection for mistresses and mischief, is rewarded with marriage to the beautiful Millamont and is apparently reformed by love. While in *Pamela*, Richardson allows the rakish Mr. B to be reformed into marrying rather than ruining his servant, Pamela, the sequel questions the permanence of his transformation. Richardson finally rejects the idea that the rake can be reformed in *Clarissa* in which the disastrous events that befall the heroine – rape and death – illustrate the consequences of ill-placed love. His plan backfired, however, when readers fell in love with his rakish villain, Robert Lovelace, pleading for his reform and a happy ending. In response, Richardson created Sir Charles Grandison as an attractive good man to replace the dashing rake-heroes that had captured the popular imagination.

houses, Mr. Sealand is far more concerned with decency, and with Mr. Bevil's personal merit and morals. Furthermore, Sealand offers a challenge to Sir John's definition of gentlemanly honour:

Sir, as much a Cit as you take me for – I know the Town, and the World – and give me leave to say, that we Merchants are a Species of Gentry, that have grown into the World this last Century, and are as honourable, and almost as useful, as you landed Folks, that have always thought your selves so much above us; For your trading, forsooth! is extended no farther, than a Load of Hay, or a fat Ox – You are pleasant People, indeed; because you are generally bred up to be lazy, therefore, I warrant you, Industry is dishonourable. (IV. ii)

While the first two examples suggest what gentlemen have been – sad rakes trading on their birth to compensate for defects in education and morals – Sealand offers a corrective to land-bound gentility with egalitarian implications. Steele's contemporary Daniel Defoe was grappling with this very issue in *The Complete English Gentleman*, an unpublished manuscript composed in the late 1720s, which identifies the born gentleman as the original gentleman but makes the case for what he calls the bred gentleman – a man who rises to gentility through his merit and industry. Both Steele and Defoe conclude that the ideal gentleman must combine birth and breeding, as is revealed in Mr. Bevil who proves to be a sincere friend and a true lover while belonging to an ancient house. Samuel Richardson comes to a similar conclusion in *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) as his idealised eponymous hero manages to rehabilitate both his family name and the role of romantic hero from the taint of gently born but badly bred forefathers. It is not until Rousseau that land and inheritance are de-emphasised.

The emphasis on land is connected to neo-classical notions of citizenship. Though Defoe's ironic treatment of the born gentleman – he is depicted as a boorish booby in contrast to the “wealth, wit, sense, courage, virtue, and good

humour” (4) of the educated bred gentleman – suggests that the property qualification should be dropped, the born gentleman, according to civic humanist theory, is naturally endowed with the independence, land, and arms (both military and heraldic), that confers a right to citizenship. David Kuchta asserts that modern English masculinity is a “conspicuously political and conspicuously public creation” and the political nature of masculinity and gentility can be nowhere more clearly seen than in the civic humanist thought that dominates eighteenth-century politics.⁴⁹ Civic humanism, with its emphasis on *virtus* and the *vita activa*, first entered the English political consciousness during the upheaval of the seventeenth century and its paradigm of virtue and corruption is of paramount importance to the development of eighteenth-century masculine identity.⁵⁰ Civic humanists essentially advocate an active political life over one of philosophic contemplation. The prerequisite of the *vita activa* is *virtus*, which is, first, the power by which an individual or group acted effectively in a civic context; next, the essential property which made a personality or element what it was; third, the moral goodness which made a man, in city or cosmos, what he ought to be.⁵¹

It is also no accident that the root of *virtus*, *vir*, suggests virility, further identifying civic humanist virtue as male.⁵² Leaving power aside for the moment, I want to explore the second and third senses of civic humanist virtue in more detail.

Though the essential property required to make up the political personality could be interpreted as some intangible quality, Machiavelli posited the use of arms as “the crucial act in asserting both power and virtue” on the condition that the man who bears arms must do so of his own volition.

⁴⁹ *Three Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England 1550-1850* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002). p. 3.

⁵⁰ While many scholars have downplayed the role of civic humanist thought, virtue, and corruption after the rise of liberal individualism, Matthew McCormack suggests that this paradigm continues to be influential into the 1830s (see *Independent Man* p. 57).

⁵¹ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment* (1975) p. 37.

⁵² McCormack p. 20.

James Harrington, the “pioneer of civic humanist thought in England” also believed arms to be necessary to virtue and, as in Machiavelli’s formulation, independence is of prime importance. In order to ensure this independence, Harrington stressed the distinction “between vassalage and freehold” which “determined whether a man’s sword was his lord’s or his own and the commonwealth’s.”⁵³ Freehold land became the precondition for the right kind of arms and therein the guarantee of independence, creating the personality required for participation in the public realm. The third aspect of civic virtue is that it makes men what they ought to be, which, according to Aristotle, is a political animal engaged in the affairs of the *polis*. This constitutes a turning away from the medieval model of accepting custom as the proper model for rule simply because it has endured over the centuries (a model to which Edmund Burke will advocate a return⁵⁴) to an active intervention in civic life to effect change for the greater good. But men must become what they ought to be in order to be interested in promoting the greater good, and possession of land and arms, that essential property, as the writers of the eighteenth-century well knew, did not guarantee that a man possessed the more intangible properties that secured a useful kind of independence interested in the greater good. And without this integral aspect of virtue, power becomes tyranny and corruption.

English civic humanism, which, as Emma Clery observes, is fundamentally a historical mode of thought that posits “a growth of commerce and the consequent corruption of the social body as part of an inevitable cyclical decline into effeminacy,” found itself at odds with the realities of a growing commercial empire.⁵⁵ Pocock suggests that from 1675, “parliamentary patronage, a professional army, and a rentier class maintaining the two foregoing for its own profit” threatened “the balance

⁵³ Pocock, 386.

⁵⁴ Pocock identifies Burke as an heir of John Fortescue’s presumptive or prescriptive reasoning, which Pocock explains thus: “Because a custom or a particular institution had a ‘prescriptive’ claim – i.e. , was already established – there was a ‘presumption’ in its favour; we presumed that it had been found to work well” (15). For a more detailed discussion of the results of Burke’s presumptive reasoning see chapters 5 and 6 below.

⁵⁵ *The Feminization Debate* (2004) p. 6.

between estates or powers of which the ancient constitution was now held to consist” and pervaded it with “new social types whose economic substance if not property – pensions, offices, credit, funds – defined them as dependent on the executive power and hence incapable of virtue.” These developments were directly connected to the exigencies of empire, which, for better or worse, made England a “war-making power, requiring long-service soldiers and long-term debts.”⁵⁶

Though commerce is the primary source of corruption, it is, as Montesquieu observes in his *Lettres Persanes*, the force that “makes men cultured;” however, commerce also “entails luxury, which makes them corrupt.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, though luxury is the oft-paraded scapegoat, the real problem is not material excess but the effect of the specialisation that it allows: the wealthy need no longer defend themselves because they can pay someone else to do it, and so falls arms, one of the pillars of civic virtue and independence, leaving only property. The question of what kind of property – whether inherited or gained through commerce – can guarantee civic virtue preoccupies Defoe as he attempts to distinguish between the born gentleman and the bred gentleman.

The born gentleman, declares Defoe, is valuable if properly educated, a concession he makes to avoid a “clamour from the numerous party of old women (whether male or female), idolators who worship escutcheons and trophies, and rate men and families by the *blazonry* of their houses, exclusive of learning or virtue, and of all personall merit.”⁵⁸ The active bearing of arms for defence posited by Machiavelli as the prerequisite for civic virtue has been replaced by armourial bearings and heraldic ensignia, the blazonry that blinds idolators in Defoe’s phrasing: action has been replaced by the symbol of the actions of ancestors, a distinction that, to Defoe’s mind, is sufficient grounds for questioning a hereditary right to the virtue that carries civic power. Without “vertue, learning, a liberal educacion and acquir’d

⁵⁶ Pocock p. 450.

⁵⁷ qtd. and trans. Pocock p. 492.

⁵⁸ *The Compleat English Gentleman* (London: David Nutt, 1891) p. 3.

knowledge,” states Defoe, the “entitl’d heir will be but the shadow of a gentleman” (5). In contrast Defoe offers the bred gentleman:

the son of a mean person furnish’d from Heaven with an originall fund of wealth, wit, sence, courage, virtue, and good humour, and set apart by a liberall education for the service of his country; that distinguishes himself by the greatest and best actions; is made acceptable and agreeable to all men by a life of glory and true fame; that hath the naturall beauties of his mind embellish’d and set off with a vast fund of learning and acquired knowledge; that has a clear head, a generous heart, a polite behaviour, and, in a word, shews himself to be an accomplish’d gentleman in every requisite article, that of birth and blood excepted. (4)

Defoe declares that his purpose is to reconcile birth and breeding; however, his emphasis on the insubstantiality of the born gentleman suggests that blood is nothing without breeding and that true gentility requires proper education and behaviour. Though this manuscript was not published at the time, his concerns with the state of the born gentleman resonate with the campaign for the reformation of manners being waged in the writings of Addison, Steele and others. His attempt to reclassify non-landed but essentially virtuous men as gentleman – a trend hinted at by Mr. Sealand in Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* – will have to wait for Rousseau for a fuller articulation. In the meantime, Samuel Richardson provides a model for an idealised, Christian civic humanist gentleman in his third novel, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*.

In *Sir Charles*, Richardson unites the man of birth with the man of breeding in order to offer a model of ideal masculinity, a project that shifts expectations for men in fiction and reflects the values espoused by the

campaign to reform manners.⁵⁹ Richardson also helps to solidify women's role in refining male manners, but more importantly, Richardson makes women complicit in their own disenfranchisement as his ideal man's civic humanist perfections give way to a domestic absolutism disguised by the seeming desirability of the sentimental family.

In order to reinvigorate republican values that were supplanted at the Restoration by the return of (absolutist) monarchy and the excesses of the Stuart court, and provide a model of citizenship, those writers interested in reforming manners, like Addison and Steele, Defoe, and various clergymen and conduct writers, turned to humanist and Christian ideas in order to transform country booby squires and aristocratic rakes – both men of birth – into virtuous citizens. The country booby was Defoe's degraded born gentleman who, like Fielding's Squire Western in *Tom Jones*, believed that

to be a good sportsman is the perfection of education, and to speak good dog language and good horse language is far above Greek and Latin; and that a little damming and swearing among it makes all the rest polite and fashionable.⁶⁰

The aristocratic rake, who has strong ties to fiction and to the theatre, reflects an older model of both government and masculinity based on feudal notions of honour. The trouble confronting social reformers was the same one confronting Richardson in fiction: what are the attributes of the truly good gentleman? What constitutes a “Man of Religion and Virtue; of Liveliness and Spirit; accomplished and agreeable; happy in himself, and a Blessing to others” (Preface 1:4)?

Reformers tasked with refining the well-born into gentlemen able to fulfil their civic duties turned to the philosophical side of humanism. As Pocock observes, the Athenian *polis* was a

⁵⁹ G. J. Barker-Benfield suggests that Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* was an important influence for Grandison. Shaftesbury, an early proponent of “good breeding” that would create a masculine middle ground between unsocial brutes and effeminate fops, seeks to reconcile “manly liberty” with the “goodly order of the universe” (qtd. Barker-Benfield 113). The campaign to reform male manners will be discussed in further detail below.

⁶⁰ Defoe, *The Compleat Gentleman*, p. 38.

community of culture as well as of decision-making, and words like ‘polite,’ ‘civil,’ ‘urbane’ seem to have acquired from the contemplative style of humanism the connotation, which they bear in contrast to their cognate terms ‘political,’ ‘civic,’ ‘urban,’ of social life which consists in civilized conversation rather than in political discussion and action. (64)

Politeness, civility, and urbanity were just what Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele promoted in their periodicals,⁶¹ and conversation, indeed socialisation, was regarded by many as the way to achieve them. What distinguishes the English model from the Athenian is the inclusion of women in the civilising process, a trend that Clery identifies as part of a wider promotion of female-associated traits, including “sociability, civility, compassion, domesticity,” or feminisation. The ‘feminized’ man is a “model of politeness, shaped by his contact with the female sex and ably fitted to undertake his heterosexual duties.”⁶² The promotion of these more sentimental female characteristics – like the “dynamic exercise of the passions”⁶³ – was not an uncontested practice. While most reformers believed that conversation with women would curb men’s natural predilection for rude behaviour and speech, the Earl of Shaftesbury disagreed, fearing that the “scrupulous nicety” required in conversation with women would endanger “those masculine helps of learning and sound reason” to the point that “whatever politeness we may pretend to” would be a “disfigurement”

⁶¹ In *The Spectator*, the two extremes in masculinity are embodied in the fictional Sir Roger de Coverly, whose stints as man of fashion and country booby squire are separated by disappointed love:

Before this Disappointment, Sir ROGER was what you call a fine gentlemen, had often supped with my Lord *Rochester* and Sir *George Etheridge*, fought a duel upon his first coming to Town, and kick’d Bully Dawson in a publick coffee-house for calling him Youngster. But being ill used by the Widow, he was very serious for a year and a half . . . he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself and never dressed afterwards (No. 2).

Sir Roger then becomes a champion of fox-hunting Country Squires (No. 34). In associating with two of the most celebrated Restoration rakes and then hob-nobbing with hunting, drinking, wenching squires, Sir Roger demonstrates both the refined but disruptive and the rough and rustic masculinity that proponents of politeness badly wanted to reform.

⁶² Clery, *The Feminization Debate* (2004) p. 10.

⁶³ Clery p. 10.

rather than any “real refinement of discourse.”⁶⁴ What Clery characterises as feminisation shares many traits in common with the urbanity, civility, and politeness of the contemplative side of civic humanism; however, it differs in its private, sentimental emphasis. Whereas the civic humanist Shaftesbury was wary of the role of women, writers promoting sentiment-based reform highlighted women’s role.⁶⁵

There is a similar interpretive division in criticism on the subject with other writers emphasising a more masculine interpretation of the process of refinement. McCormack problematises the role of politeness and sentimentality as dominant discourses of masculinity in his emphasis on independence. Claudia Johnson’s work also suggests a more complicated model of male refinement as she posits a “‘masculinization’ of formerly feminine gender traits” that valued “affective practices . . . *not* because they are understood as feminine, but precisely and only insofar as they have been re-coded as masculine.”⁶⁶ While the reformation of male manners certainly involves women as civilising influences and examples, the goal is not to recreate man in woman’s image, but to redefine what it means to be a man and, crucially, a citizen. I want to suggest that this is as much the goal of Richardson and Rousseau at mid-century as Burney, Smith, West, Edgeworth, and Austen at the end of the century.

Shaftesbury highlights the difficulty in balancing the philosophic and active aspects of humanism, how to be polite and refined without falling into effeminacy, a concern echoed in Richard Allestree’s conduct book, *The Gentleman’s Calling* (1705). Insisting that gentlemen are not meant to live lives of idle “LUXURY,” just one of the symptoms of effeminacy, Allestree outlines the duties that accompany the privileged birth of the citizen. Luxury is tied to trade, which produces corruption through excess, idleness through specialisation, and, ultimately, dependence. In order to ward off the corrupting effects of wealth – and the weakness, cowardice, and immorality of

⁶⁴ *Characteristics of Men, Morals, Opinions, Times* (1711) vol. 2 p. 6.

⁶⁵ See Barker-Benfield pp 37-153.

⁶⁶ *Equivocal Beings* p. 14.

dependence – Allestree promotes proper education to complete the gentleman’s civic virtue, temperance (“he that has all the fuel for Luxury and yet permits it not to kindle, he approves his Sobriety to be indeed his Choice, not his fate” [66]), and active civic engagement, including using his wealth, education, and position for the betterment of society.⁶⁷ Allestree also combines civic virtue with Christian principles, which Steele offered as a corrective to the corruption of the civilised public life of the post-lapsarian world:

the increasing World, for their Defence against
Themselves, and other Animals, were obliged to go into
Contracts and Policies, so that human Life (by Long
Gradation) ascended into an Art: The tongue was now to
Utter one thing, and the Bosom to Conceal another.⁶⁸

Christian virtue provided another defence against corruption. Richardson combines all of these things – the influence of women, civic humanist virtue, and Christian morality – in order, not to educate a youth into manhood or reform a booby or rake, but to present his vision of the good man fully constituted.⁶⁹

Though Sir Charles is not the first good man in fiction, or even the first attempt at a good hero, he is the first attempt to make the good man

⁶⁷ See especially part VII on Authority in which Allestree discusses the ways in which the good man can influence his friends and dependants.

⁶⁸ *The Christian Hero* (1701) p. 28.

⁶⁹ While Richardson’s writing does not feature an anti-luxury strain typical of contemporary civic humanist discourse, his promotion of virtue – his emphasis on the ‘good’ man – has much in common with Allestree’s Christian civic humanism, as does the emphasis on the duty of man rather than his entitlement.

desirable.⁷⁰ In both the fictional world and the world of fiction, Sir Charles is descended from rakes.⁷¹ His father, Sir Thomas, was a man of spirit in the tradition of Lovelace, while the romantic heroes who preceded him range from the rakes of the restoration stage, to Richardson's wenching Mr. B. and the aforementioned tormentor of Clarissa, to the well-intentioned rogue that is Tom Jones. Until Sir Charles enters the scene, moral, virtuous men are disenfranchised and powerless, portrayed as simple, easily led, weak, and effeminate, or simply ridiculous, and stand in contrast to their more interesting and manly rogue-cousins. Unsurprisingly, women readers were quick to prefer the rakes, though Richardson found it remarkable that the despicable Lovelace could engage the sympathies of so many. John Mullan observes that while on some level Richardson's project is to define the good man, it has also "become a question about the representation of masculinity as much as one about 'goodness.'"⁷² The novel's project is also about changing the dynamic of gender relations.

Gerard Barker refers to *Grandison* as the "first commissioned novel."

Richardson wrote to J. B. de Freval that he was "teazed by a dozen ladies of

⁷⁰ Sir Richard Steele's Mr. Bevil (*The Conscious Lovers*) is certainly one of Sir Charles's forbears as he proves himself a good friend and master, honourable lover, and obedient son. His goodness was apparently tiresome as it was "Bevil and his maxims that finally buried *The Conscious Lovers*, because audiences began to find the whole thing a bore" (Kenny, 286). The examples of virtuous, morally upright men are few and far between. Henry Fielding's Joseph Andrews was not meant to be an example, but a reflection on the absurdities of Richardson's *Pamela*. Joseph follows his sister's example to the letter – including chastity – and he too attracts the amorous attention of his employer, the lady of a country booby squire. Fielding presents young "Joey" as an example of the "good man" who will be a "standing lesson to all his acquaintance" and believes that the written account will extend influence beyond his small circle (59). Fielding's project is in some measure to mock the feminisation of the male character, a danger of the *Spectator's* politeness project, that he resists in *Tom Jones*. Sarah Fielding's David Simple, a man of feeling crippled by his own goodness and duped into poverty by unscrupulous advisors, also reveals anxiety over the potentially effeminising effects of feminine politeness and feeling. And of course the much-abused Charles Hickman in *Clarissa*, as John Mullan observes, "has been unable to effect action or consequence, unable to aspire to public virtue because powerless to govern the conduct of others" (82). Early women novelists were also exploring the possibilities for good men. Gerard Barker observes that there were idealised, even virtuous heroes in fiction written by women in the 1710s and 20s; however, they appear in the idealised context of romance and are not subjected to the rigours of realist fiction (19, 48). Eliza Haywood (1751) also finally rewards Betsy Thoughtless with Truworth after having suffered through Mr. Munden.

⁷¹ In terms of his charisma, dress sense, and power of attracting the opposite sex, Sir Charles has much more in common with rakes than with his contemporary powerless, pathetic, or wooden virtuous men of theatre and fiction.

⁷² *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) p. 81.

note and virtue . . . to give them a good man, as they say I have been partial to their sex, and unkind to my own.”⁷³ Richardson’s correspondence regarding the creation of Sir Charles rehearses contemporary anxieties about and problems with masculine identity. Lady Bradshaigh, probably his most enthusiastic and prolific correspondent on the subject, urged Richardson to let Grandison be a “moderate rake.” Richardson is extremely resistant, citing the rake’s inherent effeminacy: “[the rake] must flatter, lie, laugh, sing, caper, be a monkey, and not a man. And can a good man put on these appearances?”⁷⁴ His courtly flattering and mindless frivolity suggest that the good civic humanist could not bear to “put on” such an appearance. In response, Lady Bradshaigh, who declares that she has seen rakes behave in polite company, defends and explains her position:

The dress and address of such a man, without his vices, is what I would recommend to the sober men, who are too often formal, and disagreeable in their manners . . . But would a good man be the worse for carrying the outside of such a one as I mean?⁷⁵

Lady Bradshaigh argues that the “hero” will require “personal qualifications, as well as moral,” but she wishes to have the rake’s style of address imitated “not because it is that of a rake, but because it is that of a man who has seen the world, and has had opportunities of improving himself.”⁷⁶ This catalogue of desirable attributes reflects the contemporary concern for the complete gentleman, a gentleman who has birth, the kind of cosmopolitan, polite education that goes with wealth and birth, and the personality to convey his

⁷³ *Grandison’s Heirs* (1985) p. 13; qtd. p. 13-14.

⁷⁴ Carroll *Selected Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) p.170. While ‘monkey’ might suggest a kind of beastliness rather than effeminacy, the figure of the monkey, as it is used in eighteenth-century novels to describe rakes (Lovelace, Sir Hargrave) and fops (Burney’s Lovell) alike, seems to suggest behaviour that is imitative and inauthentic and therefore beneath a good man. Anna Howe, for example declares Lovelace to be an “ever-active, ever-mischievous monkey of a man” (letter 100, p. 404), a description that suggests degraded masculinity rather than degraded humanity, effeminacy rather than beastliness.

⁷⁵ Barbauld, *Correspondence* (New York: AMS, 1966) 6:90-2.

⁷⁶ *ibid.* 6:92-3.

breeding and engage his companions.⁷⁷ Others among his correspondents were also worried about Sir Charles's perfections. Mrs. Donnellan found his apparent perfection problematic: "he has no fault, no passions; indeed, Sir, you have a charming hand at drawing angels."⁷⁸ Sarah Chapone, in a critique that recalls Astell, disliked Sir Charles's "views on the authority of the family in marital arrangements and on the inferiority of women. She declared that if she had been Charlotte "he should have lower'd his top-sails."⁷⁹ And while Richardson's agenda is in some measure the same – creating an ideal who reconciles family and fortune with manners, morals, and merit – he is careful to do so in a way that preserves independence, civic virtue, and political power.

In order to prepare the way for the arrival of a new model of both gentleman and hero, Richardson first surveys the field of contemporary masculinity through the heroine's suitors. Most of Harriet Byron's letters from London are devoted to exposing the inadequacy of available males and speculating on desirable qualities and characteristics, a sort of recapitulation of part of Sir Charles's genesis. Because of the epistolary nature of the novel, however, the suitors are also allowed to speak for themselves. Mr. Greville, the principal man of fashion near Harriet's retired country home, writes to a friend of his frustrated attempts to win Miss Byron's hand. He is at a loss to understand why he is rejected when he is

⁷⁷ A preliminary ECCO database title search of "gentleman" produced over 40 titles dedicated to promoting gentlemanliness, ranging from religiously-motivated conduct manuals (*The Young Gentleman instructed in the grounds of the Christian religion*, 1735; *Sermons to Young Men*, 1771; *The Candid Disputant; or, the Dissenting Gentleman's monthly instructor*, 1751), to more courtly approaches – Chesterfield's letters were repackaged as *The Accomplished Gentleman* in 1782 and were "versified" by "a Lady" in *The Fine Gentleman's Etiquette* (1776). Other writers engaged with the idea of the "fine" or "polite" gentleman (*An Essay on Politeness*, 1775; *Serino: or, the Character of a Fine Gentleman*, c.1721; *The Modern Fine Gentleman*, 1746), sometimes satirically (*The Pretty Gentleman: or, Softness of Manners Vindicated from the False Ridicule Exhibited Under the Character of William Fribble, Esq.*, 1747; *Grobianus; or, the Compleat Gentleman. An Ironical Poem*, 1739). Courtier manuals, such as Castiglione's *The Courtier* was also available in translation, as was Cassanova's *Galateo of Manners* (1703). Many of these texts focus on the importance of education, particularly University education, for example, Francis Brokesby's *A Letter of Advice to a Young Gentleman at the University* (1751) and John Burton's *University-Politicks* (1760), among others.

⁷⁸ Letter 9 November 1752, qtd. Eaves and Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1971) p. 354.

⁷⁹ Mrs. Chapone to Richardson 10 December 1753, 21 May 1754. qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel p. 354.

not contemptible in person; an air free and easy, *at least*;
 having a good estate in possession; fine expectations
 besides; dressing well, singing well, dancing well, and
 blest with a moderate share of confidence; which makes
other women think me a clever fellow. (1:11)

But in addition to having social graces and good connections, he is an unapologetic libertine and Miss Byron is the first lady to hold it against him. Unfortunately for Greville, Harriet is a woman for whom “fortune without merit” – a merit that includes morals in addition to social graces – simply will not do (1:25). The emphasis on merit suggests a moral grounding that renders politeness and social graces something more than a mask that can be put on for company and abandoned in the pursuit of pleasure. Furthermore, Greville’s perception of himself and others’ attitudes towards him suggests a concern with pleasing that places him in the category of courtier, signalling his dependence, and allies him with a tyrannical form of government antithetical to the civic humanist virtue that Richardson hopes to promote.

Not content with one rake, Richardson provides Harriet with another, at once more dangerous and more ridiculous than Mr. Greville. Sir Hargrave Pollexfen is described by Harriet as, among other things, a monkey (1:46), emphasising the absurdity of his rakish aspirations. A rake, however, is a rake, and though Lovelace slays with his devastating charm, Sir Hargrave is Richardson’s ruthless, civic humanist exposé of the hero-villain, whose foolishness does little to abate his fundamental dangerousness.⁸⁰ When, following the advice of numerous conduct books, Harriet inquires into Sir

⁸⁰ In *Clarissa*, Anna Howe’s description of the manliness of Lovelace: “So little of the fop, yet so elegant and rich in his dress! His person so specious, his air so intrepid! So much meaning and penetration in his face! So much gaiety, yet so little of the monkey! Though a travelled gentleman, yet no affectation! No mere toupee-man, but all manly! And his courage and wit – the one so known the other so dreaded!” (letter 367, p. 1137). On the other hand, Harriet Byron exposes Sir Hargrave’s foibles: In appearance, though he is “handsome and genteel, he is fair and pale, while his “bold eyes” (which might be called “goggling”) are used to give “himself airs . . . as if he wish’d to have them thought rakish”. He is also “very voluble in speech; but seems to owe his volubility more to his want o doubt, than to the extraordinary merit of what he says.” While, like Lovelace, Sir Hargrave has travelled, “he must have carried abroad with him a great number of follies, and a great deal of affectation, if he has left any of them behind him” (1:45-6).

Hargrave's character⁸¹ she consults Sir John Allestree who reveals that though Sir Hargrave is "laughing and light" in company, in private he is "malicious, ill-natured, and designing; and sticks at nothing to carry a point on which he has once set his heart" (1:63). Further sinking Sir Hargrave in Harriet's eyes, he has ruined three young women "under vows of marriage" and though he is lavish in pursuit of pleasure, he is "narrow" with his neighbours and tenants (1:63). That he is exposed by an Allestree simply highlights his neglect of the gentleman's calling. When Harriet bases her refusal of his hand on these objections, his astonishment is unconcealed:

no man breathing ever loved a woman as I love you. My
person, my fortune, my morals, my descent, my temper ...
 all unexceptionable; let me die if I can account for your –
 your – your refusal of me in so peremptory, in so
 unceremonious a manner, slap-dash, as I may say, and
 not one objection to make, or which you will condescend to
 make! (1:113)

In challenging Harriet to find fault with him, Sir Hargrave shows a concern for his reputation that is fundamentally misdirected. Whatever his birth, wealth, or appearance, Sir Hargrave's claim to unexceptionable morals and temper is absurd. Harriet's observation that he behaves "with the politeness of a man accustomed to public places" (1:117) after he is refused, suggests that while the rake may desire to please in public – even to the point of rendering himself ridiculous – his merely public politeness renders him problematic in the context of a society, which as Philip Carter phrases it, is increasingly "dedicated to the bonding of manners and moral virtue."⁸² Sir Hargrave's concern with his public character ties him to the feudal model of

⁸¹ Women were encouraged to investigate their suitors and to consider more than fortune and worldly eligibility in a prospective suitor. For example, Wetenhall Wilkes's *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to A Young Lady*, which had reached its sixth edition by 1763, advises that the "chief Things to be regarded in the Choice of a Husband, are virtuous Disposition, a good Understanding, an even Temper, an easy Fortune, and an agreeable Person" (168). Anyone who expects or accepts less is "a Fool, or a Mad-woman . . . yet how many of the Fair Sex throw themselves away, upon what the speculative World calls *pretty Fellows*, who want Courage, Honour, Sincerity, and every amiable Virtue?" (168-9).

⁸² "Polite 'Persons'" (2002) p. 345.

manhood in which honour “was the essence of [a man’s] reputation in the eyes of his social equals.”⁸³ Because Sir Hargrave’s peers are largely rakes, he can protest his honour as a man of spirit. Sir Hargrave’s subsequent actions – abducting Harriet, attempting a forced marriage with a Fleet parson, and demanding satisfaction for the wounds to his honour inflicted by Sir Charles on Hounslow Heath – show that he is hardly master of his resentment, passions, or temper. His servant, William Wilson, corroborates this assessment, declaring him to be “mad in love... mad with anger to be refused” and “one of the proudest men in England” (1:173). Once Harriet recovers from the shock of her ordeal, she reflects on “modern men” who “pay their court by the exterior appearance, rather than by interior worth,” lamenting that she and her contemporaries in the marriage mart “have our lots cast in an age of Petits Maitres, and Insignificants” (1:180). The profusion of rakes vying for Harriet’s hand reflects the ascendancy of rakes in those romances that Richardson deplores who, despite their unsuitableness, are inescapable, leaving Harriet with a choice between misery or celibacy.

Just when the reader despairs of saving Harriet from the machinations of Sir Hargrave, disaster is spectacularly averted by the timely entrance of the eponymous hero. Though he deplored the “pomp and parade” of romances with their “improbability” and “marvellous” incidents, Richardson was not above borrowing a little fanfare to introduce his secret weapon:

But who is the good man that you think you see at a little distance? – In truth he has not peeped out yet. He must not appear till, as a royal cavalcade, the drums, trumpets, fifes and tabrets, and many a fine fellow, have preceded him, and set the spectators agog, as I may call it. Then must he be seen to enter with an éclat; while the mob shall be ready to cry out huzza, boys!⁸⁴

Sir Charles reconciles the born and bred gentleman in a way that embraces refinement without falling into effeminacy. He has been educated both by his

⁸³ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995) p. 126.

⁸⁴ Letter to Lady Bradshaigh, 24 March, 1750. Barbauld, *Correspondence* vol. 6 p. 85-6.

cavalier father, Sir Thomas, and his angelic mother, encouraged in the manly arts of self-defence and field sports by a “man of spirit,” while simultaneously under the civilising influences of a pious woman “continually reading lectures . . . upon *true* magnanimity, and upon the law of kindness, benevolence, and forgiveness of injuries” (2:260). The combination of manly arts and Christian virtue are necessary to create the “Man of TRUE HONOUR” (1:4) to temper the excessive passions that have degraded past heroes. Sir Charles describes himself as “naturally passionate” but rather than glorying in it as his father and other rakes have done, he regards passion as something “so ugly, so deforming” that he endeavours to shield those he loves from its effects (6:49). The consequences of unchecked passion in the family are illustrated by Sir Thomas’s tyrannical behaviour towards his daughters, suggesting that the “man of spirit” is perhaps not the best model for a man on whom the happiness of others is dependent.⁸⁵ Sir Charles’s belief in controlling and ability to curb his passions in the interests of social order and civilisation are symbolised in his anti-duelling stance: “the man, who can subdue his passion, and forgive a *real* injury, is an hero” (2:256). Wars of conquest and standing armies also earn Sir Charles’s censure, a strong indication of his civic humanist allegiances. The soldier in a “marching army,” he observes, is “the least master of himself, or of his own life of any man in the community,” dependent on the whim of the Prince who has hired him (2:262-3). Sir Charles would, however, take up arms in order to defend his country, a defence of independence that is one of the pillars of republican virtue. Jean Hagstrum observes that in *Grandison* “‘hero’ is obsessively applied to a new kind of man, the pacifist Sir Charles, who has disciplined his naturally violent passions into a religiously and rationally controlled order.”⁸⁶ Sir Charles is an attempt to make virtue rather than honour the basis for

⁸⁵ Sir Thomas Grandison preferred to play the man of spirit to the detriment of his family’s happiness. His injury in a duel caused his wife’s decline and death, while his tyrannical inflexibility and inflated ideas of his (and his family’s) consequence led him to refuse his eldest daughter’s hand to a worthy man. Furthermore, as a slave to his desires, he installed his mistress in his home forcing his daughters to find alternative accommodation. Finally, at his death, he left everyone but his heir unprovided- for in order to ensure that the next generation might live in suitable splendour.

⁸⁶ *Sex and Sensibility* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980) p. 214.

heroism, a move that is consonant with larger shifts in political power and what Tassie Gwilliam characterises as the novel's denial of distinctions "between public and private, personal and social."⁸⁷ Placing passion under the control of reason is essential to refining the gentleman for his roles in both public and private life.

Suggesting that in *Grandison* Richardson is engaged in a redefinition of masculinity is not a new claim. Hagstrum posits *Grandison* as the "climax in the domestication of heroism," while Barker presents Sir Charles as "the prototype for the gentle, sensitive, but manly hero who abounds in the feminine novel of the latter half of the century."⁸⁸ Gwilliam, who observes that Sir Charles is an attempt on Richardson's part to atone for Lovelace, highlights the problems of redefining masculine virtue – Sir Charles is famously chaste – when virility is in some measure tied to a nearly predatory sexual prowess. Clery posits *Grandison* as the "apotheosis" of a good man "under the influence of virtuous women, cherishing and admiring them, and even sharing some of their feminine attributes."⁸⁹ All of these examinations of the novel, along with many others, highlight the connection between definitions of masculinity, heroism, virtue, and women. Throughout my own discussion of Sir Charles as a man who unites birth and breeding, wealth and merit, and reflects both a civic humanist ideal and the goals of the campaign to reform manners, I have frequently referred to how women – both real and fictional – are responding to and thinking about men. Indeed it is nearly impossible to discuss Sir Charles or any of the other male characters in the novel without reference to how they are perceived by women and by Harriet Byron in particular. The female critique of masculinity that frames the novel is not only part of Richardson's plan, it recapitulates the novel's genesis. Although he eventually resigned himself to the fact "that the fine man would not have the young ladies' suffrages in his favour, if he had not more of Lovelace than of Hickman in him," Richardson believed that "it is more in the

⁸⁷ *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993) p. 140.

⁸⁸ *Sex and Sensibility* p. 214; *Grandison's Heirs* (1985) p. 47.

⁸⁹ *The Feminization Debate* (2004) p. 97.

power of young ladies than they imagine, to make fine men.”⁹⁰ In asking his correspondents to reveal their innermost desires, Clery argues that Richardson also engaged them in “a social intervention . . . He was asking his female correspondents to *perform* the process of feminization as an act of imagination; to literally *make* the man they would have as a mate” (154). But while female desire is undoubtedly part of Sir Charles’s genesis, Sir Charles is also meant to refine and direct female desire towards a more domestically and politically responsible man. Sir Charles is more appealing to virtuous women as a husband and father than Sir Thomas, and renders their subject status less onerous; however, the sentimental family that he builds makes women complicit in their own subjection.⁹¹

One need not look far for those scenes in which Sir Charles is portrayed as manly and desirable. Harriet’s letters are filled with descriptions of his “fine figure”:

He is tall; rather slender than full: His face in shape is a fine oval: He seems to have a florid health; health confirmed by exercise.

His complexion seems to have been naturally too fine for a man: But as if he were above being regardful of it, his face is overspread with a manly sunniness [I want a word] that shews he has been in warmer climates than England...

I wonder what business a *man* has for such fine teeth, and so fine a mouth, as Sir Charles Grandison might boast of, were he vain.

In his aspect there is something great and noble, that shews him to be of rank. Were kings to be chosen for beauty and majesty of person, Sir Charles Grandison would have few competitors. His eye . . . shews . . .

⁹⁰ Carroll, *Selected Letters*, p. 164.

⁹¹ for a discussion of the antifeminist evils of the sentimental family and its relationship to political theory from Hobbes and Locke through to Kant and Hegel, see Susan Moller Okin’s article “Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family.”

sparkling intelligence. (1:181)

His ‘hotness’ (I want a word) is rendered all the more agreeable and accessible by his “ease and freedom of manners” and “manly politeness,” all of which serve to “engage one’s love with one’s reverence” (1:181). While Sir Charles is an exemplar of civic humanist virtue, he also embodies the personal charisma that made the Stuart rakes so attractive. It is this charisma that allows Sir Charles to transcend the impotently good Charles Hickman and permits him to combine virtue with power. And while monarchs are not perhaps chosen for their physical beauty, husbands, as kings of the heart, frequently are, making the appropriation of female desire in *Grandison* problematic.

Sir Charles presents a new model of the hero designed to rescue sensible young women from the clutches of Lovelace and the other irresistible rakes (and (un)reasonable facsimiles) that populated fiction and captured the fancy of impressionable young readers. His values are those of a more republican form of government, which eschews the tyranny of absolutist monarchy and promotes a virtue that transcends the public/private divide.⁹² However, as Mary Astell recognised in response to Locke’s political theory, while men are freed from the chains of political tyranny, women remain the thralls of domestic absolutism.⁹³ In “Richardson’s Girls” Jerry Beasley argues that *Grandison* clarifies “the traditional social and political structure in which its narrative is grounded, surely hoping to fortify that structure against change.”⁹⁴ While this statement might seem to be in conflict with what I have

⁹² I am using republican here not in the sense of a democratic republic, but as a system of government that promotes virtuous citizenship rather than a courtly *ancien régime*.

⁹³ In *Some Reflections on Matrimony* (1700), Astell asks if “Absolute Sovereignty be not necessary in a State, how comes it to be so in a Family” (76). Astell observes that any defence of or challenge to absolutism in the state is equally applicable to families: “If the Authority of the Husband so far as it extends, is sacred and inalienable, why not that of the Prince? The Domestic Sovereign is without Dispute Elected, and the Stipulations and Contract are mutual, is it not then partial in Men to the last degree, to contend for, and practise that Arbitrary Dominion in their Families, which they abhor and exclaim against in the State?” (76). She also charges those who cannot see that 100,000 tyrannical fathers are worse than one tyrant ruler with flawed logic, revealing that though other standards for political legitimacy existed in the eighteenth century, domestic government remained the purview of the paterfamilias.

⁹⁴ qtd in Jeremy W. Webster, “Sentimentalizing Patriarchy: Patriarchal Anxiety and Filial Obligation in *Sir Charles Grandison*.” *ECF* 17 (2005): 425-442. p. 427.

established in relation to political change, it is the social and political model of domestic patriarchy that rules the family which Richardson seeks to fortify: he seeks to bolster an idealised domestic status quo threatened by the rakish libertine whose inability to curb his licentious and riotous tendencies have created a need for female agency. Susan Moller Okin observes that though “the freedom, individuality, and rationality of men was beginning to be recognised as the foundation for their political and legal equality,” the changes taking place in “the sphere of family life” would have “catastrophic implications for the future of women’s rights and freedoms.” This catastrophic change is the rise and idealisation of the sentimental family, which separates women from public agency through an emphasis on their affective attributes and a belief that a man representing a family bound by love is the proper political agent.⁹⁵

What neither Richardson nor his contemporaries took into consideration were the implications of continuing the absolutist gender model under the guise of sentiment and companionship. While having dependants raised a man to independence, it also placed him in the position of domestic tyrant, a tyranny that had the power to corrupt the *virtus* that his independent status supposedly accorded him.⁹⁶ Sir Charles’s complex, almost feudal, exchange of favours and services enables him to serve his friends and family while earning himself dedicated admirers, indeed vassals, for life. After having been rescued from the clutches of Sir Hargrave, Miss Byron places Grandison on a pedestal: “I seem sometimes to feel as if my gratitude had raised a throne for him in my heart” (1:209). However, Harriet is

⁹⁵ “Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family.” pp. 72, 74.

⁹⁶ McCormack suggests this when he notes that household dependants (including sons and male servants) “are fundamentally unfree because they depend on his [i.e. the father/ male householder] arbitrary will. They are thus in a degrading position analogous to slavery and are not free to pursue the public good, which is the object of citizenship in a free republic” (22). McCormack goes on to note that this “familial model of obligation” became “profoundly influential in anglophone political theory.” The implications of this tension between fathers and sons produced by dependance and obligation is explored in Burney’s *Cecilia* and will be discussed in chapter 3.

hardly singular in being obliged to Sir Charles.⁹⁷ Nearly every character in the novel, good or bad, is rescued by that Anglican knight or has the way smoothed by his aid and attention. Additionally, as Harriet notes, everyone is eager to acknowledge the obligation and to declare him or herself to be the great man's inferior (1:211). Furthermore, he is declared to be "the best of brothers, friends, landlords, masters, and the bravest and best of men" (2:303). That he is an improvement on his father is indisputable; however, this amelioration is tempered by the need for continuity. In other words, though Sir Charles rights the wrongs created by his father's abdication of responsibility (Sir Thomas's tyrannical treatment of his daughters, failure to provide for them etc.) he must also maintain the principle of filial obedience in order to have his own benevolent rule validated by the patriarchal order. Once in power, Sir Charles assumes the absolute authority he inherits from his father, but by opting for a benevolent dictatorship instead of despotism, Sir Charles fulfils the gentleman's calling and earns everyone's gratitude, love, and obedience. Barker observes that Sir Charles's beneficiaries are "overwhelmed by his generosity at the same time as they are made uneasy by the obligations he imposes upon them."⁹⁸ Perhaps this uneasiness – particularly among the male characters – signals Richardson's own uneasiness with the reach of his paragon's influence and a realisation of the links between obligation, dependence, corruption, and tyranny.

Obligation is particularly important when considering Harriet, the woman who chooses to become his subject. Harriet's gratitude, an emotion fuelled by obligation, quickly turns to love. While love should palliate the oppressive nature of obligation, by Letter XXVI of volume 3 Harriet is lamenting the tyranny of Sir Charles over her heart and declaring that he has ruined her peace and sparked her ambition through her desire to be his.

⁹⁷ As McCormack notes, obligation is a politically-loaded state: "Men who were younger, poorer, non-English or homosexual" – or, in Richardson's case do not live up to Sir Charles's improbable perfections – were "disadvantaged by the cult of the independent man" because independence "always required an 'other' in the form of a disempowered dependent. *Independence* is a negative term – the condition of *non-obligation*" and *obliged* persons were excluded from political virtue (5).

⁹⁸ *Grandison's Heirs* p. 32-3.

The power dynamic that this relationship takes on is troubling, as Sir Charles's charisma has drawn Harriet in and leaves her at his mercy. Though he is "uniformly well-meaning and well-behaved," as Mary Yates observes, Sir Charles has "all of Mr. B's or Lovelace's craftiness and erotic appeal . . . Charlotte Grandison says it all: 'Had he been a wicked man, he would have been a *very* wicked one!'"⁹⁹ The suspense that his delayed declaration of love produces is akin to the agony suffered by the ruined heroine and the power that it gives him – the power to alleviate misery through marriage or exacerbate it through abandonment – is equally absolute. The persistence of rakish attributes is meant to be mitigated by Sir Charles's moral integrity: Barker observes that "their means are similar, only their ends differ."¹⁰⁰ Yet Harriet's disturbing image of Sir Charles as Adam suggests the monstrous potential of his perfections and highlights the thin line between benevolent absolutism and malignant tyranny.

Wondering if Sir Charles had been the first man "he would have been so complaisant to his Eve" and tasted "the forbidden fruit because he would not be separated from her," Harriet ultimately decides that, though he would "regret her lapse" he would have "done *his own duty*" for the sake of future generations "and left it to the Almighty . . . to have annihilated his first Eve and given him a second" (5:609).¹⁰¹ While Harriet's musings clearly separate the fallen man driven by his passions from the paragon devoted to duty, and indicate that this new man has the power to change history, they also make the nightmarish potential of that power abundantly clear. Though Sir Charles's pleasant manners and person render his rule less distasteful than it otherwise might be, the question remains: if a tyrant does not act like a tyrant is he still a tyrant? Does the enlightened despot or benevolent dictator lose any power by being enlightened or benevolent, or is his power increased

⁹⁹ Mary Yates, "The Christian Rake in *Sir Charles Grandison*." *SEL* 24 (1984): 545-61. 546.

¹⁰⁰ Gerard Barker, "The Complacent Paragon: Exemplary Characterization in Richardson." *SEL* 9 (1969): 503-519. p. 519.

¹⁰¹ There is an interesting parallel in the events of the novel, as the conversion of the Protestant Grandison to Catholicism in order to secure marriage with Clementina (which presumably he would have done had he been sufficiently attracted/devoted/in love) would have constituted a fall. Instead, his inflexibility obliterates her sense and he moves on to a more suitable and, ultimately, submissive wife.

because obedience is cheerfully given in exchange for mild treatment and the appearance of free will? In Sir Charles's patriarchal model the end still justifies the means; however, rather than using fear to ensure obedience, Richardson demonstrates that for patriarchy to survive in the new sentimental family, it is better to be loved than feared.

In *Grandison*, Richardson offers politeness underpinned by virtue as the ultimate in manly perfection; however, other writers were beginning to focus on the potential for corruption contained within polite society. Concern that politeness, like courtly gallantry, could be used to conceal self-interest was explored in the metaphor of the masquerade. Setting out to expose the disruptive effects of "Hypocrisy; the Bane of all Virtue," Fielding posits the masquerade as the means by which "the crafty and designing Part of Mankind, consulting only their own separate Advantage, endeavour to maintain one constant imposition on others," from behind their "false Vizors and Habits."¹⁰² While Fielding was deploring inconsistency between public morality and private behaviour, Lord Chesterfield had already begun writing letters advising his son on how to work the system.¹⁰³ Because politeness, rather than solving the problem of inconsistency, was shown to be as susceptible to corruption as court culture, as Philip Carter notes, "an alternative system of social refinement . . . better equipped to re-establish and maintain the Lockean synthesis of manners with moral virtue" was required.¹⁰⁴ Sensibility was promoted as a way to achieve the virtue required of the citizen by appealing to feeling and it is with this further refinement on Richardson's project that Rousseau attempts to save man from the cycle of

¹⁰² "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" in *Miscellanies* (1743) 1: iv. vol. 1, p. 185.

¹⁰³ Chesterfield endeavoured to impress upon his son the importance, not only of education, the social graces, and good breeding, but also urged him to always apply his attention to the task at hand, be it a book or a conversation. "A man of sense sees, hears, and retains, every thing that passes where he is" observes Chesterfield in 1746: "Mind not only what people say, but how they say it . . . their looks frequently discover what their words are calculated to conceal" (29). Chesterfield later builds on this as he advises young Philip to "Search everyone for [his] ruling passion" and advises him that when he has found it out never to trust him where it is concerned: "Work upon him by it, if you please; but be on your guard yourself against it" (44). Chesterfield's advice indicates that, not only are most men part of Fielding's social masquerade, but that there are various levels of "crafty and designing" individuals intent on using the situation to their own advantage.

¹⁰⁴ "Polite Persons" (2002) p. 345.

social corruption in *Émile* (1762).

Though my decision to include a French writer in my account of British masculinity may seem puzzling, Rousseau was highly influential, his works appearing in numerous English translations. Furthermore, his (perceived) role as a formative influence on the French revolutionaries, and consequently a dangerous influence for young impressionable Britons, made him controversial. His status as cultural bogeyman (at least from the 1790s onwards) make his ideas about masculinity relevant, as these ideas, or distortions of them, are present in the discourse of masculinity, both implicitly and explicitly.

For Rousseau, the main problem with *ancien régime* masculinity was the conflict between the public duties and private desires of man.¹⁰⁵ To be a citizen in a corrupt society, like that of absolutist France, required man to fight his nature, while being a man required him to rebel against society.¹⁰⁶ In order to solve this fundamentally civic humanist quandary, Rousseau proposes a radical programme of education, which, by instilling independence in the young *Émile*, allows him to be a man, first and foremost, and then a virtuous and manly citizen.¹⁰⁷ However, in making the family the fundamental political unit, and placing some of the responsibility of forming

¹⁰⁵ In *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998), Robert Nye provides a history of ruling class masculinity as defined by the evolving concepts of honour and virtue that included *prouesse*, *layouté*, *largesse*, *courtoisie*, and *franchise*. The rise of a permanent court culture in the sixteenth century is arguably the final ingredient that moves medieval masculinity towards the eighteenth-century *ancien régime* manifestation of the manly ideal. This new court culture, which also meant a centralisation of political power in the person of the king, resulted in a new emphasis on manners “that would enable noblemen to get on in a highly refined atmosphere where every act was saturated with political meaning” (21).

¹⁰⁶ In Book I of *Émile*, Rousseau presents the roles of man and citizen as potentially antithetical: “Forcé de combattre la nature ou les institutions sociales, il faut opter entre faire un homme ou on citoyen: car on ne peut faire à la fois l’un et l’autre” (1:9). Rousseau’s critique focuses on the fact that man’s natural equality and independence are destroyed in corrupted civil societies. As a dependent, the male of the species is neither properly a man nor a citizen: “Celui qui dans l’ordre civil, veut conserver la primauté des sentiments de la nature ne sait ce qu’il veut. Toujours en contradiction avec lui-même, toujours flottant entre ses penchants et ses devoirs, il ne serai jamais ni homme ni citoyen; il ne sera bon ni pour lui ni pour les autres. Ce sera un de ces hommes de nos jours, un Français, un Anglais, un bourgeois; ce ne sera rien” (1:10).

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau suggests that a ‘natural’ education, one that is not based in social prejudices, is the only way to overcome the incompatibility of masculinity and citizenship and to create “ce qu’on croit incompatible, et ce que presque tous les grands hommes on reuni, la force du corps et celle de l’âme, la raison d’un sage et la vigueur d’un athlète” (3:120).

masculine character in the hands of women, beings who are simultaneously responsible for refinement and social corruption, Rousseau's version of masculine virtue, like Richardson's, is sabotaged by the inequality and dependence enshrined in the sentimental family.

In an article about the representation of men in eighteenth-century French fiction, Malcolm Cook observes that "*fausseté*," duplicity or falseness, is a dominant theme and that this inauthenticity is proof of a decadent, troubled, and moribund society.¹⁰⁸ Rousseau responds by couching his educational programme in a radical civic humanist critique. While stressing virtue and independence, as English civic humanists did, Rousseau also interrogates social structures. His goal is emphatically not to create a gentleman associated with hereditary wealth and status, but an independent, virtuous, self-reliant man. In removing *Émile* from society to educate him, Rousseau hopes to break the cycle of corruption and refinement posited by the civic humanist model of history:

Man invests himself in the social order, forgetting that it is fundamentally unstable, subject to revolutions that are impossible to predict and from which it is impossible to shield one's children. The great are laid low, the rich made poor, the monarch becomes a subject: are you willing to bet that you will be exempt? We are approaching a crisis, an age of revolution . . . Everything that man has made, man can destroy: The only permanent characteristics are those given by nature, and nature has not created princes, or riches, or gentlemen. What will you do with the demi-tyrant that you have educated exclusively for luxury who is suddenly reduced to poverty? . . . Happy is the man who, deprived of his

¹⁰⁸ Malcolm Cook, "La représentation du mâle dans la fiction de la fin du XVIIIe siècle: quelques axes de réflexion." in *Le mâle en France, 1715-1830* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004) p. 239.

rank, remains a man nevertheless!¹⁰⁹

The trappings of social order, wealth, and power and the dependence they produce prevent men from realising their manly potential. Educating a child for one level of society is first to enslave him and then to create a tyrant. This strategy also serves to create a singularly useless citizen, who cannot adapt should the sphere to which he was born and bred suddenly collapse. To be defined by one's rank is both imprisoning and enslaving; to be defined as a man, however, allows the citizen to evolve with society. Rousseau believes that the surest way to raise his pupil above the prejudices of society (*les préjugés*) is to make the student imagine himself to be isolated like Robinson Crusoe and force him to judge for himself based on utility (3:211). Rousseau disapproves of and discourages prejudicing children with social mores before they can understand for themselves how to value individuals (3:215). To parents who eagerly cling to ephemeral rank, Rousseau declares that he will give their son "a rank he can never lose, that is always honourable; I will raise him into a man" (3:226; my translation).

Once independence and manhood have been achieved, the man must be integrated into society. And as in the English model, women have a role to play. However, Rousseau, who posits a natural politeness that arises from natural manliness, deplores the idea of men conversing with women and

¹⁰⁹ My translation; 3:224-5. The original reads: Vous vous fiez à l'ordre actuel de la société sans songer que cet ordre est sujet à des revolutions inévitables, et qu'il vous est impossible de prévoir ni de prévenir celle qui puit regarder vos enfants. Le grand devient petit, le riche devient pauvre, le monarque devient sujet: les coups du sort sont-ils si rares que vous puissiez compter d'en être exempt? Nous approchons de l'état de crise et du siècle des revolutions . . . Tout ce qu'ont fait les hommes, les hommes peuvent le détruire: il n'y a de caractères ineffaçable que ceux qu'inprime la nature, et la nature ne fait ni princes, ni riches, ni grands seignnuers. Que fera donc dans la bassesse ce satrape que vous n'avez élevé que pour la grandeur? Que fera, dans la pauvreté ce publicain qui ne sait vivre que d'or? Que fera, depourvu de tout, fastueux imbécile qui ne sait point user de lui même, et ne met son être que dans ce qui est étranger a lui? Heureux celui qui sait quitter alors l'état qui le quitte, et rester homme en dépit du sort! (3:224-5)

being taught to chatter in an effeminate manner.¹¹⁰ “Émile est homme, et Sophie est femme; voilà toute leur gloire” declares Rousseau, who believes this no small feat considering the gender confusion that abounds (5:498). The separation of the sexes, both in their gendered attributes and their spheres of influence, is extremely important to Rousseau’s project of social reformation. Paul Thomas characterises woman’s role as empowering men to “transcend their tendencies to self-absorption and to acquire those sentiments of sociability that are essential to political participation and moral being alike,” a role that is accomplished by “fortify[ing] the male ego” (203) in order to overcome their divided (public/private) selves.¹¹¹

Rousseau envisions woman as book-ending the formation of the man: she gives him life as mother, while as a lover she gives the final impetus for him to take on the responsibilities of manhood and citizenship. Thus the family, the personal, is political and women are important agents in the proper ordering of the state through their contribution to the formation of masculinity. However, there is a sense of ambivalence towards the role of women and, as with English opponents of polite conversation, there is a sense of the double-edged nature of women’s intervention – woman can both create

¹¹⁰ Rousseau elaborates on his ideas of true politeness in quoting M. Duclos who believes that “le plus malheureux effet de la politesse d’usage est d’enseigner l’art de se passer des vertus qu’elle imite” and that if education inspired humanity, politeness (in the Rousseau/Duclos rehabilitated sense rather than social falseness/exterior appearance) would be automatic and one would not need to stress ‘politeness’ – the concept need no longer exist as it would be natural. Duclos elaborates: “si nous n’avons pas celle qui s’annonce par les grâces, nous aurons celle qui annonce l’honnête homme et le citoyen; nous n’aurons pas besoin de recourir à la fausseté Au lieu d’être artificieux pour plaire, il suffira d’être faux pour flatter les faiblesse des autres, il suffira d’être indulgent” (422). Rousseau believes his natural education will produce a Duclosian politeness, a natural politeness more consistent with a natural manliness.

¹¹¹ Paul Thomas “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sexist?” *Feminist Studies* 17 (1991): 195-217. Thomas presents Rousseau’s confinement of women to the home as an evil necessary to combat “beleaguered selfhood,” a “moral emergency” which threatened the greater good. Woman’s private role is ultimately political, however passive it may be. This resonates with the idea that dependants are needed to create independence.

masculinity and destroy it.¹¹² But equally, the man may encourage proper femininity or destroy it through the proper performance of his masculine role.

Part of the proper ordering of gender relations is bound up in the art of pleasing. Rousseau suggests that while women must please men, men must make themselves worthy of being pleased – they must be sufficiently manly and must prove themselves worthy of their positions of power and authority.¹¹³ Marriage is the way to ensure the proper functioning of this complementarity, and so a kind of socio-economic equality in marriage is necessary because “as equality decreases, natural sentiments alter; as the gap between rich and poor grows, conjugal ties relax; the more there are rich and poor, the fewer fathers and husbands. The master and the slave destroys the family, as each only thinks of his own condition.”¹¹⁴ Essentially, unequal marriages emphasise (and reproduce) arbitrary social divisions and distinctions. Furthermore, the problems that plague society as a whole have their genesis in families, as these internal divisions make it impossible for a man to focus on the greater good as a citizen should.

Once Émile has reached an important stage in his development – about 20 years of age – it is time to finish the process of making him a man. At this point, his tutor introduces him to Sophie, the woman he has selected as a suitable wife, and the text becomes more recognisably a novel. Using the traditional vehicle of romance, Rousseau explores the nature of *l'amour*

¹¹² While Jean Elshtain has stated that in Rousseau's view “women spoiled civilization,” Thomas observes that women have a peculiar role to play in the civilization which Rousseau saw as “a sustained exercise in the spoilation of all of us” (212). In the “matrix of (accomplished) alienation and (potential) ‘perfectibility’” that is society, women are the bearers of culture and civilization. Like civilization, they are corruptible, but they also have the power to rescue others from corruption (212). The refining power of women is referred to in the *Second Discourse* in which Rousseau, addressing Genevan citoyennes, asks, “What barbarous man could resist the voice of honour and reason in the mouth of a tender wife?” (qtd Thomas 213).

¹¹³ Mais quoique toute femme veuille plaire aux hommes et droive le vouloir il y a bien de la différence entre vouloir plaire à l'homme vraiment aimable, et vouloir plaire à ces petits agréables qui déshonorent leur sexe et celui qu'ils imitent. Ni la nature ni la raisonne ne peuvent proter la femme à aimer dans les hommes ce qui lui ressemble, et ce n'est pas non plus en prenant leurs manières qu'elle doit chercher à s'en faire aimer. (5:456)

¹¹⁴ My translation: “. . . plus on s'éloigne de l'égalité, plus les sentiments naturels s'altèrent; plus l'intervalle des grands aux petits s'accroît, plus le lien conjugal se relâche; plus il y a de riches et de pauvres, moins il y a de pères et de maris. Le maître ni l'esclave n'ont plus le famille, chacun des deux ne voit que son état.” p. 5:515.

véritable, the habitual affection that binds a couple, not to be confused with the more destructive passionate ardour of a love founded on illusory attraction and vanity (5:548). Esteem is a much more socially responsible emotion; indeed, love without esteem cannot exist in the “*coeur honnête*” because such a heart can only love where there are qualities it can esteem (5:548).¹¹⁵ Moderation is essential: while sentiment is necessary to ensure sincerity and prevent tyranny, passion must be firmly under the control of reason to avoid slavery. Thus, while Rousseau rejects the tyranny of monarchy and court, he similarly deplores the lover/slave dynamic of a passionate, courtly love. In Rousseau’s estimation, *l’homme vertueux* is the man who can conquer his passions in favour of reason, conscience, and duty (5:567). He is a man whose self-possession allows him to benefit from civilisation and the refining influence of women without being corrupted. In his dealings with Sophie, Émile must establish himself as just such a virtuous man, one who does not allow his reason to be overwhelmed by passion, one who knows his duty and does it despite his personal inclinations.

Overcoming passion in the interests of virtue, however, is, as Émile’s experience illustrates, easier said than done. Noting that Émile’s passion for Sophie has exceeded the bounds of a healthy and affectionate esteem, the tutor asks Émile what he would do if Sophie was to die. Émile’s unreasonable and passionate reaction provides his tutor with an opportunity to caution him about his precarious position, telling Émile that at the moment he only appears to be free, that he has the precarious freedom of a slave who has hitherto been permitted to sit idle, waiting for commands (5:567). Émile’s relationship with Sophie is the proving ground for his manliness. If he can prove his masculinity through being in control of his desires and passions – essentially being sufficiently master of himself to avoid effeminate excess – he will prove himself truly free and independent, the essence of masculinity for

¹¹⁵ *Honnêteté* is more complicated than simply honour. Connected to politeness and social refinement, Michèle Cohen states that *honnêteté* is “about developing an *art de plaire* as part of an aesthetic of the self” (*Fashioning Masculinity*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 14). While it is about the virtues of heart, mind and manners, it is also what Foucault calls a “technology of the self” that allows a man to create himself according to his ideal (“a technique of life . . . to govern one’s own life in order to give it the most beautiful possible form”) (qtd. Cohen 15).

Rousseau. Urging him to be free by staying in command of his heart, Rousseau tells Émile that this independence will make him virtuous (5:567).

The crisis with Sophie is also a catalyst for the final part of Émile's civic education. In order to make Émile a free man by refining his dangerous passion for Sophie into a more responsible esteem, his tutor suggests a trip that sounds remarkably like the grand tour. However, instead of being a cultural trip, Émile's voyage is all about politics. In exploring the political, Rousseau also connects the state to the family:

In aspiring to become both a husband and a father, have you considered your duties? In becoming the head of a family, you also become a citizen . . . Before taking your place in society, study that order and the place in it to which you are most suited.¹¹⁶

Travel allows the young man to become acquainted with new laws, customs, and governments. Without being aware of what else is available, the citizen is transformed into a slave who blindly submits to the social contract into which he was born. In order to test and assert his liberty, he must see and understand what else is available to him and make a rational choice. When, and if, a young man returns home, he signals his acceptance of the social contract. Thus having become a citizen, and proved his virtue by conquering a youthful and unproductive passion, Émile is finally able to be a man and a citizen.

Women clearly have a vexed and vexing role in the creation of masculinity in Rousseau's estimation. While they are integral, as in Richardson's formulation women must embrace their own subjection in order to fashion the type of masculinity Rousseau advocates. Linda Kerber characterises *Émile* and *Julie* as 'women's' books,¹¹⁷ making *Émile* almost more of

¹¹⁶ My translation: "En aspirant à l'état d'époux et de père, en avez-vous bien médité les devoirs? En devenant chef de famille, vous allez devenir membre de l'État . . . Avant de prendre un place dans l'ordre civil, apprenez à connaître et à savoir quel rang vous y convient" (5:571).

¹¹⁷ Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: Norton, 1986), qtd. in Thomas. Rousseau's political/philosophical works, then, are directed at men.

an education for women, outlining what sort of a man they need to produce and how they should go about shaping him. Though Rousseau's ideal man-citizen, characterised first and foremost by reason and liberty, will always require women to help form him and give him the proper motivation to fulfil his social/political role, this also guarantees that women will be confined to the home in perpetuity. However, as is the case with *Grandison*, Rousseau's ideal man is the creation of a man and is part of a man's political agenda, a fact that did not sit well with many women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Rousseau's vision of femininity has long been controversial and was famously attacked by Mary Wollstonecraft who holds him, along with Dr. Gregory and others, accountable for educational works designed to make women "useless members of society."¹¹⁸ But what is interesting is that this dim view of women, which seeks to make them polite ornaments for pleasing men, makes his ideal of masculinity ultimately unattainable. Of the unpublished sequel, in which Sophie proves unfaithful and Émile falls prey to his passions, Mary Nichols notes that, "Rousseau is finally unable to reconcile the radical individualism he seeks for Émile with the connection to others that he tries to give him through his family."¹¹⁹ Both the Rousseauvian and Richardsonian models of gender and social power contain within them the seeds of their own destruction, a destructive potential that is made explicit in Burney's *Cecilia*. The sentimental family that they promote gives the illusion of equality within the family because patriarchal authority is tempered by affection. However, the absolutist model of authority that remains firmly in place beneath the companionate façade provides an opening for private tyranny that could undermine social virtue by jeopardising the equality meant to exist between independent men (citizens) in civil society. The family romance in *Cecilia* makes the connection between private and public tyranny manifest: civic humanist virtue cannot flourish if apparently independent

¹¹⁸ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A vindication of the rights of woman: with strictures on political and moral subjects*. London, 1792. p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Mary P. Nichols, "Rousseau's Novel Education in the *Émile*" *Political Theory* 13 (1985): 535-558. p. 553.

men continue to keep woman in chains.

In *Grandison* the most intriguing and sympathetic challenge to Sir Charles's rule comes from his sister Charlotte, who resists his attempts to marry her off to the lacklustre Lord G., whose best feature seems to be that he "spells pretty well, for a lord" (4:419). Through patience, cajoling, and persistence, Sir Charles manages to get Charlotte to the altar, despite her ambivalence about the match and the power politics of the married state. Sir Charles is depicted as the long-suffering and benevolent brother with only her best interests at heart, while Charlotte is presented as flippant and unfeminine in her resistance to taking up her natural place in the home of a respectable (if slightly ridiculous) man. But it is a resistance, I hope to demonstrate, that subsequent women writers sympathised with and promoted in their own novels. Even the famously timid Fanny Price, who steadfastly refuses Henry Crawford despite similar family coercion, declares that "it ought not to be set down as certain, that a man must be acceptable to every woman he may happen to like himself" (*Mansfield Park* 277), regardless of whether or not that suitor is approved of by her male relations. Insisting on the right to refuse, and the right to have such a refusal respected, is an important step advocated by women novelists in avoiding domestic tyranny.

In novels written by women, agency rests entirely with the woman and though her male creations may draw on models offered by earlier male writers, they are refashioned to reflect the desires and political aims of women. The connection between masculinity and the status of women is noted by Charlotte: "The men, in short, are sunk, my dear; and the Women but barely swim" (2:230). Burney, Smith, West, Edgeworth, and Austen all take on the suitably feminine role of rescuing men from themselves, but they do so with a difference: in taking on this task, women authors also assume creative and political control. Saving drowning man allows them to raise the fortunes of woman. In changing men, they can change society.

Part II
Frances Burney, the American Revolutionary War, and the Cultural
Revolution, 1778-1782.

Chapter 2
“Un Jeune Homme comme il y en a peu”:
Evelina and the Masculine Empire.

In the first chapter, I established that the terms of the eighteenth-century masculinity debate are fundamentally political and concerned with virtue, corruption, and independence. Virtue must replace honour as the prerequisite for participation in the state, a participation that is refigured as responsible and independent citizenship rather than as a feudal system of service and obligation between vassals and lords of various descriptions. In its rejection of customary forms of both masculinity and government, virtue and its associated civic humanist republicanism also faced threats from Britain’s status as a commercial and imperial power, which brought with it wealth, luxury, and specialisation. Richardson and Rousseau, using different cleansing methods, both attempt to purify republican man from the taint of acquisitive self-interest and reinvigorate masculine citizenship in ways that avoid questions of commercial expansion and empire. In this chapter I turn my focus to women writers’ foray into the ‘masculine empire.’ In the Preface to *Evelina* Burney positions herself in relation to the achievements of Richardson and Rousseau, among others, but also suggests that she has something new to offer to the “republic of letters” (9). Lord Orville, Burney’s most conventional-seeming hero, I will demonstrate, engages directly with the anxieties plaguing the masculine empire – the conflict between the reality of Britain as a trading power and the ideal of Britain as a classical republic that continues to inform the debate regarding the man and the citizen – and begins to unpack the ways in which the chivalry-tainted solutions offered by Richardson and Rousseau are both unpalatable to women and ultimately dangerous to the stability of the masculine empire that they seek to bolster.

Both Sir Charles Grandison and Émile were designed as refining examples meant to inspire a love of virtue and independence in the male reader and an admiration for virtuous and independent men in the female

reader. Lord Orville can similarly be seen as another such example, “*un jeune homme comme il y en a peu*” as Mrs. Beaumont describes him.¹²⁰ Approved of by both Mrs. Beaumont, the “*Court Calendar bigot*” who believes that “*birth and virtue* are one and the same thing” (284), and the caustic country gentlewoman Mrs Selwyn, who is somewhat bemused to find that “he really is polite” (283), Lord Orville is more than simply the fantasy-man of Burney’s girlish imagination, as has been asserted by Gerard Barker and Walter Allen:¹²¹ he is the fulfilment of a social wish, the fantasy of the virtuous and polite gentleman. In having the suffrage of both Mrs. Beaumont, who seems to belong to Defoe’s clamorous “party of old women” blinded by blazonry,¹²² and Mrs. Selwyn, who has no patience for affectation or rank for rank’s sake,¹²³ Lord Orville is marked out as the embodiment of a social ideal and stands in stark contrast, not only to other men of similar rank, but to all of the other men in the novel: he is the embodiment of virtue in the face of their various vices.

So far, this does not seem all that different from other readings of Orville as a slightly bland heir of Grandison, to borrow Barker’s phrase.¹²⁴ Like Grandison, Orville is often discussed in terms of feminisation. Barker suggests that “the characteristic masculine qualities of assertiveness and boldness” are “deliberately depreciated” by Burney in preference to “delicacy and propriety,” female-associated qualities (74). Orville’s relation to the heroine has also been considered, particularly his role as lover-mentor or guardian husband or as “the man who is to ‘own’ her,” to use Amy J. Pawl’s formulation.¹²⁵ Most critical explorations of *Evelina* focus on Evelina’s

¹²⁰ *Evelina* (1778) p. 284.

¹²¹ Gerard A. Barker. *Grandison’s Heirs* (1985). p. 71. Also, Eleanor Wikibourg, in *The Lover as Father Figure in Eighteenth-Century Women’s Fiction* (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2002), characterises *Evelina* as a Cinderella tale with Lord Orville as Prince Charming.

¹²² *The Compleat English Gentleman* (1890), 3.

¹²³ it is Mrs. Selwyn who characterises Mrs. Beaumont as a Court Calendar Bigot before going on to depict Mrs. Beaumont’s attentions to her not as politeness, but as self-conscious payment for services rendered by one whom she has discovered to be her social inferior (283).

¹²⁴ Barker characterises Orville as “the refined Grandisonian hero adapted to the needs of the genteel world of the feminine novel” (*Grandison’s Heirs* 70).

¹²⁵ “And What Other Name May I Claim?” Names and Their Owners in Frances Burney’s *Evelina*” *ECF* 3 (1991): 283-299. p. 295.

negotiation of her fraught relationship with the patriarchal world and her place in it, while leaving the world of the patriarchs as a vague arena of power existing outside the concerns of the novel. Jane Spencer suggests that Orville is the perfect hero because of his “devoted trust,” a characteristic that other, more dashing heroes, have to learn.¹²⁶ This trust is connected to what Pawl also observes as Orville’s “ability to fully recognise” Evelina’s intrinsic worth despite her unknown origins and status (295). Trust and recognition distinguish Orville from the other male characters in the novel, who, as Susan C. Greenfield has argued, assume that because Evelina lacks a patriarchal identity, “she is public property and should be at their disposal.”¹²⁷ Thus Orville’s significance rests in his ability to palliate for the heroine what Newton refers to as a world “dominated by the imposition of men upon women, a world in which male control takes the form of assault, and a world in which male assault is the most central expression of power.”¹²⁸ Newton goes on to suggest that an “awareness of male oppression did not necessarily go hand in hand with objection to a patriarchal order” and argues that *Evelina* celebrates the rule of landed men “by implying that only ruling-class men (never women themselves) have the power to give courtly fiction the potency of ideology” (34). This argument, broadly representative of how the (proto)feminist implications of *Evelina* have been viewed, relies on patriarchy and ruling class men as a monolith, as an oppressive, potentially violent aggregate; indeed, as I suggest in the introduction, it is similar to how feminist criticism has depicted women writers’ engagement with the masculine empire. However, the reality of masculinity in the eighteenth century was, as I demonstrate in chapter 1, far more complex and the subject of widespread debate. This thesis is about exploring the feminist implications of male characters: in this chapter I begin this project by reassessing Lord Orville in relation to contemporary debates about the state of masculinity, of empire, of debates about commerce and corruption, and luxury and

¹²⁶ *Rise of the Woman Novelist*, (1986) p. 156-7.

¹²⁷ “‘Oh Dear Resemblance of Thy Murdered Mother:’ Female Authorship in *Evelina*” *ECF* 3 (1991): 301-320. p. 306.

¹²⁸ *Women, Power, and Subversion* (1981) p. 23.

specialisation. Through this investigation, and throughout the rest of the thesis, I intend to demonstrate that Burney – paving the way for Smith, West, Edgeworth, and Austen after her – is making a quite radical intervention in the masculine empire: Burney, a woman, gives fiction the potency of ideology as her depiction of Orville deems a certain kind of man, displaying a certain kind of virtue, to be worthy of her heroine and worthy of rule.

By placing Lord Orville in the context of the contemporary debate about masculinity, empire, commerce, power, and corruption, I will demonstrate that this character is more than simply a reproduction of Grandison and more complex than his polite and slightly dull Prince Charming surface suggests. In the “Preface,” Burney indicates that her plan in writing the novel was “to draw characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the times” (9). Though she only comments specifically on her heroine I will demonstrate that this declaration is equally applicable to her hero. Furthermore, Burney states that imitation among authors “cannot be shunned too sedulously; for the very perfection of a model which is frequently seen, serves but more forcibly to mark the inferiority of the copy” (10). Were he a copy, Orville would indeed be inferior, as Barker suggests; however, Orville is not an imitation Grandison, but a reworking of the hero negotiated with an eye to contemporary anxieties about masculinity and their implications for women.

While Orville can still be viewed as a kind of fantasy, it is a public rather than a personal fantasy, because the republican ideal of the independent, virtuous, and polite citizen can only be a fantasy in a Britain for which the exigencies of the Seven Years War and the new pressures of an expanded Atlantic empire have rendered a pure republican masculine ideal impracticable and impossible. But Orville is more complicated than his Grandisonian virtue and fairy tale blandness suggest. Subtle clues within the text correspond to opinions expressed in Burney’s journals, suggesting that a competing model of masculine virtue, exemplified by Captain Cook and the Tahitian Omai – a model that separates virtue from noble or gentle birth or

indeed ‘civil’ society – and not Grandison provides the basis for this character. This shift in influence brings with it a different model for domestic government, as Cook’s voyages of discovery in the South Pacific emphasised friendship, non-violence, and discovery, rather than a more aggressive imperial approach marked by paternalism, conquest, and exploitation. This shift also has implications for the aesthetics of power as established by Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757). Considerations of empire, exploration, and aesthetics may seem as though they have little to do with Evelina’s suitor; however, central to my interpretation of the kind of masculinity that Orville embodies is the contention that Burney is, like the society of which she is a part, immersed in these larger political, imperial, and social concerns, and that her interest in these questions leaves its mark on her characters. Using evidence from her journals and letters, I will show that Burney was much more closely engaged in contemporary political debates than she has been thought to be, and that this engagement is given public and political, as well as decidedly (proto)feminist, expression in her novels.

. . . there must have been some mistake in the birth of that young man; he was, undoubtedly, designed for the last age for, if you observed, he really is polite. (243)

Beyond suggestions that *Evelina*’s exploration of identity had particular resonances for a reading public in the throws of the American Revolution-induced identity crisis, no attempt has been made to examine Burney’s first novel in relation to the public and political context in which it was

composed.¹²⁹ The politeness that is so frequently observed in Orville's character is inextricably linked to political anxieties;¹³⁰ moreover, rather than connecting him to "the last age," presumably an age of chivalry and courtesy, Orville's particular kind of politeness, I will argue, marks him as a new kind of hero, one that rejects the false gallantry of chivalry and brings an authenticity to social interactions thought to be lacking in the wake of Chesterfield's *Letters*. In order to uncover the political significance of Lord Orville and his politeness, thereby potentially changing the terms and implications of the novel's social critique, it is necessary to examine in some detail the state of Britain and her empire in the years between the end of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the American Revolutionary War (1776-1783).

P. J. Marshall observes that the Seven Years War, in which Britain and France fought for imperial supremacy in the North American and Atlantic colonies, brought great victories and greater insecurities.¹³¹ In the early years of the war, John Brown expressed concerns about the effects of the unchecked expansion of commerce and wealth (a phenomenon itself connected to imperial expansion) on Britain's ability to defend itself. Noting that the "ruling Maxim of the Age and Nation" maintains "that if our Trade and Wealth are but increased, we are powerful, happy, and secure" (150), Brown argues that the increased wealth resulting from increased trade produced industry among the commercial classes, but corrupted the landed ruling

¹²⁹ In "Beyond *Evelina*," Margaret Anne Doody draws parallels between the novel and the American Revolution: "The novel was written, or at least completed and published, during a war -- the English war with the colonies (better known as the American Revolution). In that political conflict (long a-brewing), a daughter defied identification with a Father (George III), a metaphorical parent who could be presented as either paternally concerned (a Villars) or harshly obdurate, unheeding and rejecting (a Belmont). One of the reasons for *Evelina*'s immediate popularity may have rested in the fact that the novel was not just an escape from present troubles, but was also (if obscurely) an interpretation and investigation of those troubles. It offered its Fable of Identity (while representing that identity as problematic) during a crisis in which, challenged by colonists who refused to accept the definitions laid upon them, the English had to question their own identity, and to face the fact that the future would not be the same as the past" (*ECF* 3 [1991]: 358-371. 362-3). In *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), Stephen Conway also connects *Evelina* to the war, but focuses on the threat of French involvement and invasion fears (p. 125-6).

¹³⁰ Of the approximately 49 times the word polite or its derivatives (politely, politeness) are used in the novel, 27 of them refer to Orville.

¹³¹ *Making and Unmaking Empires: Britain, India, and America*. (Oxford: OUP, 2005) p. 7.

classes as higher incomes allowed them to buy their way out of their civic responsibilities and indulge in lives of idle luxury.¹³² Those in the merchant community, however, saw themselves not as spreading corruption, but as bringing civilisation, as “improvers” leading the advance “from barbarism towards civility.”¹³³ This more positive vision of the effects of trade seems to accord with Kathleen Wilson’s suggestion that empire was regarded as “the territorial and mental space where an austere, forceful, disciplined and martial manliness could restore national spirit and power.”¹³⁴ This idea was reinforced by the voyages of exploration led by Captain Cook to the South Pacific. Cook, who rose from humble beginnings as the son of a Yorkshire farm foreman to become one of the most skilled and sought-after hydrographers in the Royal Navy, combined “expertise, humanitarianism and compassion” in performing his mission, creating a “new inquiring masculinity.”¹³⁵ Given the favourable result of the war for Britain, and its seeming vindication of British masculinity, not only through General Wolfe’s victory on the Plains of Abraham but also through the example of Captain Cook and his reinvigorated variety of Enlightened English manliness born in “civility”¹³⁶ and fostered by active service, optimism about the benefits of commercial empire seemed vindicated; however, Brown’s fears regarding corruption and effeminacy were not eradicated.

Brown’s civic humanism and Cook’s humanitarianism are connected to

¹³² Brown, John. *An estimate of the manners and principles of the times*. (London, 1757). Brown blames the corruption of manners and principles evident in British society on the effects of excessive wealth. Selfishness has replaced the social cohesion promoted by principles like religion, honour (here used interchangeably with virtue), and public spirit (see especially pp. 53-63). His fears regarding a landed abdication of power find expression in his concerns about the military strength of the nation, and this is a problem that no amount of wealth can solve. Gentleman, suggests Brown, are willing to pay but not to fight, but the question remains as to who will actually do the fighting (92). The professional standing army that takes his place is similarly problematic as Brown notes that these “*Defenders by Profession*” are “all chosen, without prior Culture or Preparation” and from among a population in whom “the Spirit of Defence is lost” (96-7).

¹³³ Hancock, *Citizens of the World* (1995) qtd. Marshall p. 46.

¹³⁴ *The Island Race* (2003) p. 19.

¹³⁵ Wilson (2003) p. 19. Cook began his career as an apprentice in the North Sea coal trade. In 1755 he enlisted in the Royal Navy as an able seaman and was quickly rated master’s mate. After passing his sailing master’s examination in 1757, making him responsible for navigating and handling ships, Cook became interested in hydrographic surveying. He built his reputation surveying the coast and waters of Eastern and Atlantic Canada (Andrew C. F. David, ‘Cook, James (1728–1779)’, *DNB*, 2004)

¹³⁶ Wilson (2003) p. 171.

very different aesthetics of power. In the *Philosophical Enquiry*, Burke posits “those virtues which cause admiration . . . such as fortitude, justice, wisdom” as sublime and more able to inspire “terror rather than love.”¹³⁷ The austerity of civic humanist virtue, while not precisely producing pain rather than pleasure – Shaftesbury suggests that the greatest pleasure available to a man is knowing he has done his duty – sets itself up in opposition to the kind of pleasure provided by the luxury of empire. Cook, on the other hand, “engages our hearts” with softer virtues including “easiness of temper, compassion, kindness, and liberality.”¹³⁸ While Burke depreciates these virtues, noting that they “are of less immediate and momentous concern to society, and of less dignity” (101), the “great virtues” are not without their drawbacks as they “turn principally on dangers, punishments, and troubles” (101). To overcome the seemingly irreconcilable divisions between civic humanism and empire without reverting to the tyrannical model of feudalism requires a reworking of the categories of virtue. Burke argues that virtue cannot be characterised as beautiful and that the “loose and inaccurate manner” of connecting the two confuses both “the theory of taste and of morals” and causes us to “remove the science of our duties from their proper bases, (our reason, our relations, and our necessities,) to rest it upon foundations altogether visionary and unsubstantial” (102). The roots of Burke’s 1790s conservatism can be clearly seen in such a statement – redefining virtue as beautiful and as social has quite radical implications. Burke suggests that beauty is “no creature of our reason, since it strikes us without any reference to use, and even where no use at all can be discerned, since the order and method of nature is generally very different from our measures and proportions” (102). Thus championing nature, the natural influence of beauty, as opposed to the sublime power of kings and commanders, has the power to overturn the artificial measures and proportions that mark eighteenth-century social and political organisation.

¹³⁷ *Philosophical Enquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. 1757. (Oxford: OUP, 1998) p. 100.

¹³⁸ Burke p. 101.

The same concerns about the state of British civilisation that Burke explores in relation to aesthetics featured in wider Enlightenment interest in the course of human civilisation. Influential Scottish thinkers, like Lord Kames, John Millar, William Robertson, and Adam Ferguson, historians and theorists of society, sought to categorise and explain material, social, and economic progress.¹³⁹ These stadial histories attempted to reconcile the tension between an austere republican tradition of arms and virtue and modern ideas of politeness and civilization, an attempt that as Fania Oz-Salzberger observes, took two forms:

Delicacy, sensibility, even luxury, were aspects of an advanced civil life which in some crucial ways surpasses the classical models. The traditional republican discourse had no answers for the new respectability of wealth and social refinement, which eighteenth-century Scots came to associate with the modern age. A choice had to be made: the civic values had to be radically adjusted to the new ethics of sociability, commerce and freedom under the law; or else new proof was required for their relevance to the modern state.¹⁴⁰

What Hume and Smith needed to achieve was to purify politeness and refinement, even material luxury, by making it compatible with the independence of conscience and action, the rejection of patronage and courtly intrigue (corruption) advocated by republican virtue.¹⁴¹ But this reconciliation, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, does not come quickly or easily. As Brown suggests, “NECESSITY . . . and *Necessity* alone” must “be the Parent of Reformation. So long as degenerate and unprincipled Manners can support themselves, they will be deaf to Reason, blind to Consequences, and obstinate in the *long* established pursuit of *Gain* and *Pleasure*” (220).

¹³⁹ Oz-Salzberger “Introduction.” Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1996) p. xiii.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. xvi. Oz-Salzberger goes on to observe that David Hume and Adam Smith chose the former, while Ferguson, characterised by Pocock as the most Machiavellian of the Scottish philosophers, chose the latter.

¹⁴¹ I will be discussing this in more detail in part IV in my discussion of professionalisation.

Ultimately, necessity comes through a crisis of empire.

The tension between the polished behaviour expected of man in civil society and the independence and virtue expected of him in civic society becomes the central conflict in the Atlantic empire from the late 1760s. Though the American colonies had traditionally been viewed as an extension of “a free and prosperous” Britain,¹⁴² the financial burden of the Seven Years War began to change this dynamic as officials in London tried to recoup losses through new forms of taxation.¹⁴³ The rhetoric surrounding Atlantic empire began to shift from acknowledgements of fraternal equality to paternalism, but more on this family romance in the next chapter. Here I want to focus on the ideological tension brewing between Britain and the colonies due to the colonies’ commitment to republican virtue. Michal Rozbicki suggests that

The modern English could be shown to have degenerated through luxury and the corruption of political life from the virtue of their ancestors. The Virginia gentry, for instance, were inclined to believe that they embodied the true qualities of the independence and public spirit of the English gentry of yore, qualities lost in the present generation at home: In short, increasing identification with British values instilled loyalty to Britain, but it was a strictly conditional loyalty to a Britain appropriate to colonial people’s own imagining.¹⁴⁴

In some ways, then, the empire provided a model for greater austerity, not simply a sphere in which to enact and refine republican virtue. However, as the trade it promoted produced excessive wealth at home, it also served to corrupt.

The complicated paradox of empire as both civilising and corrupting is similar to the way women’s role in the civilising process was theorised. As discussed in the previous chapter, Richardson and Rousseau, among others,

¹⁴² Wilson (2003) p. 19.

¹⁴³ These new taxes included the Townshend Acts and the Stamp and Revenue Act. They will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁴ *The Complete Colonial Gentleman* (1998); qtd. Marshall (2005) p. 50.

believed that women had the power to refine rough male manners and that men had to avoid taking their example to excess and becoming effeminate. But women were not just bearers of civilisation: the status of women in a given society was seen as an indication of the level of its social sophistication, of civilisation. William Alexander, in his *History of Women* (1779), suggests that “the rank . . . and condition, in which we find women in any country, mark out to us with the greatest precision, the exact point in the scale of civil society, to which the people of such country have arrived.”¹⁴⁵ Similarly, in *The History of America* (1777) William Robertson states that “women are indebted to the refinements of polished manners for a happy change in their state . . . [t]o despise and to degrade the female sex, is the characteristic of the savage state.”¹⁴⁶ However, the level of social refinement and the degree to which women regarded their state as a “happy” one is something that I will be exploring throughout this thesis based on the evidence provided in the novels of Burney and her contemporaries.

Burney’s letters and journals reveal an interest in ruling class men – their manners, their behaviour, their virtues, and their follies. For example, following an evening party at which many ministry figures were present, Burney records her impressions of Lord Barrington, then Secretary at War:

To *look* at this Nobleman, you would swear he was a tradesman, – & by no means superior to stand behind a counter. He has by no means *the Air Noble*, nor would you Dream that he almost Lives at Court, & has a private conference with the King every other Day. But, I suppose, he has ‘that within that passeth *shew!*’¹⁴⁷

Her comic observation belies a more serious one. Barrington’s sober, even unfashionable, appearance is juxtaposed to his position as a court figure and confidante of the king. By adding the quotation from *Hamlet*, taken from a

¹⁴⁵ qtd. Wilson (2003) p. 23.

¹⁴⁶ qtd. Wilson (2003) p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ *Early Letters and Journals* (Oxford: OUP, 1990) vol. II. p. 189.

scene in which Hamlet distinguishes between seeming and being,¹⁴⁸ Burney wonders what his appearance says about Barrington's performance of his duties. In Barrington's case he is what he appears – not a tradesman but a minister who takes his business just as seriously as any merchant takes his trade.¹⁴⁹ Burney's concern with masculine virtue is also apparent in her admiration of Captain Cook. Burney's elder brother James was a part of Cook's second and third expeditions and Burney expressed a fascination with the endeavour. Following Cook's violent and untimely death in Hawaii, Burney reflected:

how hard, after so many dangers, so much toil, – to Die in
so shocking a Manner – in an Island he had himself
discovered, – among savages he had himself, in his first
visit to them, civilised & rendered kind & hospitable, & in
pursuit of obtaining Justice in a Cause in which he had
himself no interest but zeal for his other Captain!

He was, besides, the most moderate, humane & gentle
circum-navigator who ever went out upon Discoveries,
agreed the best with all the Indians, & till this fateful
Time, never failed, however hostilly they *met*, to *leave*
them his Friends. Dr. Hunter, who called here lately, said
that he doubted not but Capt. Cooke had trusted them too

¹⁴⁸ Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not 'seems.'
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (1.2. 76-86)

¹⁴⁹ Barrington was highly regarded within government for his efficiency and integrity. While at the war office he gained the respect of officers and soldiers alike. Captain Alexander Mackintosh noted that 'such officers as have not interest at court, and nothing to plead but merit, or long services, have found in your Lordship an asserter of their rights' (A. Mackintosh to Lord Barrington, 7 Dec 1775, Suffolk RO, HA 174/1026/6a/4). George III held a good opinion of him, and trusted him to such an extent that he used him to sound out Lord North on his willingness to head the government (Dylan E. Jones, 'Barrington, William Wildman, second Viscount Barrington (1717–1793)', *DNB*, 2004).

unguardedly, for as he always declared his opinion that savages never committed murder without provocation, he boldly went among them without precautions for safety & paid for his incautious intrepidity with his very valuable life.¹⁵⁰

Doing one's duty is important, as is doing it in a humane and civilised (beautiful and social) manner. However, Burney, like other discerning critics of the time, was as much concerned with authenticity as civility, as can be seen in a discussion she records about the relative merits of Philip Stanhope, the natural son of Lord Chesterfield and recipient of the sometimes dubious advice contained within his recently published (1774) letters, and the Tahitian Omai, who accompanied the second Cook expedition back to England in 1774. Omai, whose natural civility "seems to shame Education,"¹⁵¹ is contrasted with a man educated by letters that tarnish surface polish by "inculcating immorality; countenancing all *Gentlemanlike* vices, *advising* deceit; & *exhorting* to Inconstancy."¹⁵² Echoing Johnson's scathing observation that Chesterfield's letters taught the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master, Burney's censure highlights the ways in which such a deception is particularly harmful to women. Furthermore, in comparing Mr. Stanhope and Omai, she complicates the assumption of civilisation in the former and savagery in the latter. Characterising Omai as "a perfectly rational & intelligent man, with an understanding far superior to the common race of *us cultivated gentry*: he could not else have borne so well the way of Life into which he is thrown,"¹⁵³ Burney seems to be siding with Rousseau on the issue of rank-specific education being detrimental to the progress of humanity:¹⁵⁴

The Conversation of our House has turned ever since upon
Mr. *Stanhope & Omai* – the 1st with all the advantage of

¹⁵⁰ *EJL* iv. p. 11. Letter to Samuel Crisp, 22 January 1780.

¹⁵¹ *EJL* ii. p. 60.

¹⁵² *EJL* ii. p. 33.

¹⁵³ *EJL* ii. p. 62.

¹⁵⁴ see chapter 1 pp. 62-64, 66.

Lord Chesterfield's Instructions, brought up at a great school, Introduced at 15 to a court, taught all possible accomplishments from an Infant, & having all the care, experience, labour & benefit of the best Education that any man can receive, – proved after it all a meer *pedantic Booby*. – the 2nd with no Tutor but Nature, changes after he is grown up, his Dress, his way of Life, his Diet, his Country & his friends; – & appears in a *new world* like a man [who] had all his life studied *the Graces*, & attended with [unre]mitting application & diligence to form his manners, [to] render his appearance & behaviour *politely easy, & thoroughly well bred*; I think this shews how much more *Nature* can do without *art*, than *art* with all her refinement, unassisted by *Nature*.¹⁵⁵

Burney suggests, like Rousseau and M. Duclos, that true politeness should be a natural attribute, not something that must be taught in order to refine a corrupt civilisation.¹⁵⁶ If politeness has become merely a public face, a mask to hide private self-interest and ambition, how does this affect the treatment of women, who are courted in public but become subject to men in their private domains?

As Burney's comparison of Omai and Philip Stanhope illustrates, she was aware of the anxieties related to the authenticity of masculine manners and indeed anxious herself, particularly about the potential impact on social and sexual relations. Two letters written in reply to Burney on the subject of men serve to further elucidate the nature of her concerns. The first, from her mentor and surrogate father Samuel "Daddy" Crisp suggests that Burney's expectations are too high and contrary to the fundamental nature of men:

Now, you are young, artless, open, sincere,
unexperienced, *unhackney'd* in the Ways of Men;
consequently you have high notions of Generosity,

¹⁵⁵ EJL ii. p. 62-3.

¹⁵⁶ see chapter 1 pp. 64.

Fidelity, disinterestedness, Constancy and all the sublime train of Sentimental Visions, that get into girls' heads, and are so apt to turn them inside out – No wonder therefore, that you rail at men, and pull the poor devils to pieces at such a rate – Now I must endeavour to set you right, and persuade you to see things as they really are, in Truth and in Nature; then you will be more favorable, and no longer think them monsters, wretches, etc. – be assured, my Fanny, they are just what they were design'd to be –
Animals of Prey –.¹⁵⁷

Crisp suggests that Burney's "sentimental visions" cause her to judge real men unfairly as a certain roughness and virility is natural to their character. There is an implicit tension between the socialised and civilised – and clearly feminised in Crisp's estimation – man and the man who "in Truth and in Nature" is properly identified with the sublime and cannot be, and indeed should not be, so easily tamed out of his predatorial instincts. The second letter is from Burney's cousin Maria Allen, who, like Burney, is not comfortable being prey:

I like your Plan immensely of Extirpating that vile race of beings call'd man but I (who you know am clever (vèrrée) clever) have thought of an improvement in the sistim suppose we were to Cut of [sic] their *prominent members* and by that means render them Harmless innoferive Little Creatures; We might have such charming *vocal Music*. Every house might be Qualified to get up an opera and Piccinis Music would be still more in vogue than it is & we might make such usefull Animals of them in other Respects Consider Well this scheme.¹⁵⁸

The details of the plan to which Maria Allen refers to are unknown, though

¹⁵⁷ 1773; qtd. Barker (1985) p. 72.

¹⁵⁸ 1768; qtd. Bilger, *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen*. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1998) p. 111.

Allen's addition would make the eighteenth-century process of feminization quite literal. The process of transforming men from Crisp's sublime and terror-inspiring "animals of prey" to the socially (and musically) "usefull Animals" of Allen's formulation is more complicated than metaphorical castration. In *Evelina* Burney's treatment of men constitutes an exposé of the masculine empire. The gambling and carousing of Lord Merton, the dangerous gallantry of Sir Clement Willoughby, and the foppish petulance of Mr. Lovel lays bare the vices and follies, the luxurious effeminacy of fashionable society. Contrasted to these supposed natural leaders, whose excesses constitute an abdication of their civic responsibilities, is the blunt and brutal Captain Mirvan. While these gentlemen, who should naturally bear arms in order to defend the nation, are able to pay their way out of the responsibility of arms, the level of civilisation of those who accept cash to take their place is somewhat dubious. While Captain Mirvan's abuse of Mme Duval – particularly the terrifying staged robbery in the coach – is comically exaggerated and suggests in some degree national antipathies, subjecting his mother-in-law, wife, and daughter to navy discipline suggests a level of savagery at odds with Britain's supposed level of civilisation. The consequences for the family of gentlemanly failure is made manifest in the histories of *Evelina*'s grandfather, Mr. Evelyn, and her father, Sir John Belmont.

Mr. Evelyn is a somewhat shocking case of masculine failure. Ensnared by the pretty face of a serving wench whom he marries "contrary to the advice and entreaties of his friends" (15), his "shame and repentance" come too late and instead of bearing his burden with the manly stoicism of a civic humanist, his sensibility gets the better of him and he dies shortly thereafter, abandoning his young daughter. Significantly, the shamed Evelyn absconds to France, a country regarded as the home of politeness and refinement, but also as the seat of effeminacy and license. Instead of using the tools of conversation and the possibility of anonymity to attempt to refine his underbred wife, Evelyn goes into a decline and dies. His ill-considered choice

of wife continues to embarrass his family long after his death. While the terms of his daughter's guardianship and inheritance lead directly to her disastrous runaway marriage with Sir John Belmont.¹⁵⁹

Caroline Evelyn's private marriage and subsequent betrayal at the hands of the rakish Belmont is the classic sentimental plot of female victimisation. But in burning the original manuscript, Burney signals her intention to write a different kind of novel, one in which the heroine triumphs and violent masculinity is exposed and punished. Furthermore, the society they created is also compromised through their own actions as illustrated by Sir John's subsequent history. After abandoning his wife, an alien child (that of a servant, no less) is foisted upon him by a deceiving woman in a realisation of patriarchy's worst nightmare. But it has been allowed by his own misbehaviour, by denying his lawful wife: the threat to the Belmont name and estate, to the patriarchal status quo itself, is caused by the misbehaviour of its own rulers.

Another innovation to mark *Evelina* is the successful shift in moral authority from the clergyman and surrogate father, Villars, to the heroine herself. Villars shares many of John Brown's sentiments regarding the decline of manners and morals in society. More problematically, his experience of the world is very much grounded in the tragedies of the

¹⁵⁹ Mr. Evelyn provides for his daughter's education with Mr. Villars but leaves her fortune under the control of a woman who has only her beauty to recommend her – nature, though “lavish” in this regard, was “a niggard to her in every other boon” (15) – and while separating her from her child during Caroline's formative years, recommends his daughter to her estranged mother's tenderness (16). The consequences of this ill-conceived plan are as much due to the excess of sensibility residing in one parent as its utter lack in the other: “unhappily, it never occurred to him that the mother, on her part, could fail in affection or justice” (16).

Yet fail she does. In a reversal of the Cinderella story, a wicked stepfather makes young Caroline Evelyn's life miserable. At M. Duval's behest Madame Duval “tyrannically” attempts to force her daughter into a marriage with one of his nephews. The subsequent attempts to force compliance on one who had no experience of “wrath and violence” – a clever reference to the love of liberty inherent in the English and evidence of the degradations wrought on the French by their absolutist regime – results in Caroline's disastrous private marriage to Sir John Belmont.

For most of the narrative, Belmont is the archetypal rake, seducing and ruining women with the facility of a Lovelace. Belmont is conveniently stigmatised as such by Mr. Villars in order to justify his policy of keeping Evelina in seclusion. Sir John is described as “a profligate young man” (17), and to his no doubt “wicked” behaviour, “lost to virtue and decency” (Johnson), he adds the characteristic of rashness. His hot temper prompts him to burn his marriage certificate when the Duvals refuse to hand over Caroline's dowry, suggesting an unmanly inability to rule his passion with reason.

previous two generations. From his retired position at Berry Hill he is hardly an effective guardian for a young woman entering society, and, unlike his apparently naïve charge, is unable to distinguish between a veneer of gallantry and true disinterested civility. Furthermore, his rejection of the *vita activa* in favour of solitary contemplation, threatens to harm Evelina by putting her on a tragic trajectory of continued marginalisation and victimisation. Evelina's clearer vision, indeed her intuition, in recognising Lord Orville's sincerity propels her story in another, happier direction.

Failed fathers and unsuitable suitors abound in *Evelina*, mirroring the concerns of a society grappling with complex questions regarding the effect of national prosperity on masculinity, on political power, and on military might. While Brown put his hope for reformation in "the Wisdom, the Integrity, and unshaken Courage, of SOME GREAT MINISTER" (202) – perhaps Pitt the Elder – Burney puts hers in a young woman and a genuinely noble man, a hero who embodies not simply a young girl's fantasy but redefines what that fantasy should be – a truly polite and, as will become increasingly crucial, independent partner. Lord Orville is a hero with a difference: his seeming conventionality, his status as 'prince charming' in a love story, itself a politically potent aesthetic statement, covers a more radical attempt to reform British masculinity through the examples of Cook and Omai, neither traditional social leaders, in order that the civilisation exemplified in British masculinity might truly benefit women.

She spoke in terms of the highest esteem of Lord Orville,
calling him, in Marmontel's words, *Un jeune homme*
comme il y en a peu. (284)

This phrase, which as Vivian Jones notes is adapted from Marmontel's moral tale, "La Femme comme il y en a peu," recalls the fact that a good wife

is hard to find.¹⁶⁰ But in Burney's tale of a young lady's entrance into the world, a good husband is the object of the quest. While Mrs. Beaumont agrees that there are few men as polite as his lordship in response to Mrs. Selwyn's association of Orville's politeness with the customs of an earlier age (283), there is more to Orville's singularity than the simple fact of his being polite. Orville is singular in that his politeness is genuine, and in this and his treatment of women he demonstrates that he is truly civilised.

Evelina's correspondence regarding her entrance into society is constantly engaged in a process of demystification, of distinguishing between the appearances men present in social situations and the reality of their motivations. In distinguishing between Orville's manners and those of his companions, Evelina notes that "with a politeness which knows no intermission, and makes no distinction," Orville is "as unassuming and modest, as if he had never mixed with the great, and was totally ignorant of every qualification he possesses" (114). Evelina's description of an unspoiled goodness, similar to that which Burney attributes to Omai, is what politeness and civility should be. Though politeness and civility are terms that only work in the context of civilisation and society, they have been corrupted by the development of distinctions based on rank and sex that cause specialisation of manners and education. The "other Lord" – later identified as Lord Merton – "though lavish of compliments and fine speeches, seems to me an entire stranger to real good-breeding":

whoever strikes his fancy, engrosses his whole attention. He is forward and bold, has an air of haughtiness towards men, and a look of libertinism towards women, and his conscious quality seems to have given him a freedom in his way of speaking to either sex, that is very little short of rudeness. (155)

¹⁶⁰ Marmontel's moral tale tells the story of Acelia who takes upon herself the management of her husband's finances and estates when his profligacy threatens them. After a program of retrenchment and debt payment ensures their financial security, she sets about refining his tastes in order to ensure that the improvement will become permanent (Jean-François Marmontel, "La Femme comme il y ena peu." *Contes moraux*. Vol. 3. Liege [i.e. Paris], 1780. 108-157.

This “other Lord” is only identified by his title because it is his identity: his social position defines his education, his manners, and his interactions with other people in the manner that Rousseau deplures in *Émile*. Real civility is impossible with this kind of ‘civilised’ man – he treats men as his subjects and women as his playthings. In contrast, Lord Orville never trades on his rank. As Evelina notes, his “politeness . . . knows no intermission,” nor does it distinguish according to rank (114), an observation corroborated by Young Branghton who finds that Orville “was as civil as if I’d been a lord myself” (249). Earlier Evelina had attributed Orville’s politeness to herself, particularly his assertions that she honours him through dancing with him or allowing him to serve her (49), to the conventional forms and language of polite society. Writing of their first dance, Evelina records that he asked if she would honour him with her hand and she ponders the expression:

So he was pleased to say to me, though I am sure I know not what honour he could receive from me; but these sort of expressions, I find, are used as words of course, without any distinction of persons, or study of propriety. (31)

Later, Evelina reduces Orville’s attention to her to an accepted, even expected, public performance of masculinity: “gallantry, I believe, is common to all men, whatever other qualities they may have in particular” (73). However, Evelina gradually realises that his politeness is sincere, his ‘gallantry’ is no mere social form, and he is indeed *un jeune homme comme il y en a peu*.

Orville is introduced at Evelina’s first ball as a “gentleman . . . about six-and-twenty years old, gayly, but not foppishly dressed, and indeed extremely handsome, with an air of mixed politeness and gallantry” (31). However, he shows himself to be much more. After a few more meetings, Evelina writes to Mr. Villars about the delightfulness of Orville’s conversation and his other qualities:

His manners are so elegant, so gentle, so unassuming, that they at once engage esteem and diffuse complacence. Far

from being indolently satisfied with his own accomplishments, as I have already observed many men here are, tho' without any pretensions to his merit, he is most assiduously attentive to please and to serve all who are in his company; and, though his success is invariable, he never manifests the smallest degree of consciousness. (74).

This description suggests a man who has not been corrupted by luxury, while his attention to social duty, to serving people regardless of rank, suggests the disinterestedness expected of those who wield civic power. Evelina's subsequent comments reinforce this reading of Orville as good ruler material, despite his lack of sublime qualities. She suggests that his "present sweetness, politeness, and diffidence, seem to promise in future the same benevolence, dignity, and goodness" that she (mistakenly) attributes to Mr. Villars (74). While I would suggest that Evelina is wrong in seeing her guardian as a good ruler, as his retirement from the public sphere constitutes an abdication of public responsibility that exacerbates Evelina's difficulties, Orville's presence and active benevolence fills the void. Furthermore, these descriptions separate him from the generality of men of his rank. The emphasis on merit as well as benevolence, dignity, and goodness in the performance of social and political duties recalls the professionalism and fraternal approach of Captain Cook in his South Seas expeditions. And though Mr. Villars cautions Evelina that appearances can be deceiving – Orville "had the appearance of infinite worthiness, and you supposed his character accorded with his appearance" (268) – in Orville's case he has 'that within which passeth shew', making him, like Lord Barrington, just the kind of leader, or husband, that Britain, and Evelina, needs.

Continuing with this idea of the differences between appearance and reality, throughout the narrative there are several instances in which nature and art are compared. The artfulness of society is emphasised through Evelina's difficulties in adjusting to it, as Mr. Lovel sneeringly points out that

“every thing must be novel” to her: “Our customs, our manners, and *les etiquettes de nous autres*, can have little resemblance to those you have been used to” (80). Like Omai, Evelina is launched headlong into a society that she does not yet understand, one that is entirely alien in its artificiality. But Orville proves that he appreciates, in both senses, the differences between nature and art in a comment that is ostensibly about female beauty:

the difference of natural and artificial colour, seems to me very easily discerned; that of Nature is mottled and varying; that of art, *set*, and *too* smooth; it wants animation, that glow, that *indescribable something* which, even now that I see it, wholly surpasses all my powers of expression. (81)

Politeness could easily be substituted for colour in order to reveal Orville’s social philosophy. The too smooth gallantry of Sir Clement Willoughby is an example of an artificial politeness adopted only when circumstances warrant it – his behaviour to Evelina differs markedly depending on the setting and her apparent circumstances. His public gallantry gives way to private seduction. Orville’s brand of politeness, however, is based on respect, that indescribable something that is lacking in Sir Clement. Much later, Evelina reflects on Orville and declares that

I could have entrusted him with every secret of my heart, had he deigned to wish for my confidence, so steady did I think his honour, so *feminine* his delicacy, and so amiable his nature! I have a thousand times imagined that the whole study of his life, and the whole purport of his reflections, tended solely to the good and happiness of others. (262)

While this might seem like evidence for the feminisation of eighteenth-century culture, I want to suggest that this, coupled with his preference for nature, identifies Orville with the aesthetics of the beautiful. Burke characterises beauty as that female-identified quality which inspires the love

necessary to build human societies (38-9), but also problematically associates Caesar, the Roman emperor who ended the republic and introduced the tyranny of empire, with the beautiful, while the Republican Cato is associated with virtue and the sublime. Burney, then, is engaged in attempting to recreate political virtue as beautiful, as social and as separate from the terror and tyranny of the sublime. The preference of the beautiful, the social, over the sublime of the absolutist rule implied by the insidious gallantry of the other men of marriageable age in the novel is part of Burney's subtle revisioning of the ruling class man, a reformulation that is further highlighted in Orville's proposal of marriage.

After Lord Orville goes through several trials of his sincerity, he finally proves himself to Evelina by dropping on one knee and declaring his intentions:

I esteem and I admire you above all human beings!– you are the friend to whom my soul is attached as if to its better half! you are the most amiable, the most perfect of women! and you are dearer to me than language has the power of telling! (351)

Lord Orville does not simply deign to wish for her confidence: he offers his own in exchange for “the most sacred secret of [Evelina's] heart” (352). Their marriage is formed as a partnership, and as Orville has throughout lived up to his word there is no reason to suspect that this proposal is merely empty rhetoric or the flattering gallantry of courtly love calculated to ensnare the unsuspecting female in order to enslave her. The proposal significantly takes place before Evelina has been acknowledged by Sir John, and in the immediate aftermath it does not look like her father will own her. In response to Evelina's understandable distress, Orville expresses a desire to “participate in [her] sorrows” (367) rather than repudiate her in the face of her uncertain heritage – “my heart is yours, and I swear to you an attachment eternal” (368). Orville's true love, based on Evelina's mental beauty as much as her pretty face, is contrasted throughout to Sir Clement's dangerous, disruptive

lust. Lust, in Burke's scale of social aesthetics, is simply an animal impulse necessary for generation. Love, however, is necessary to build society and in the resolution of Evelina and Orville's love story is the model of a society built on companionship rather than the dominance of the larger, rougher (more sublime) man. Moreover, this model is presented as more natural than the alternative that exists in a society corrupted by artificial interactions and arbitrary customs (Burke's measures and proportions) which require a manual in order to navigate (84). It is no coincidence that the men who preside over the betting books and assemblies are frequently described as monkeys: Jack Coverly's assertion that Orville is an old woman exposes his own animalistic lack of sophistication that makes him unable to recognise a (paradoxically) naturally civilised form of manliness.

Orville is also unique in being the only independent man in the novel. This is not to say that the other gentleman – Lord Merton, Sir Clement, Mr. Lovel, Sir John etc. – are controlled by a parent, as Mr. Bevil was and as Mortimer Delville and Edward Ferrars will be, but that they are the slaves of their desires. This is the luxurious slavery of tyrants, a connection that is highlighted through Sir Clement's public chivalric gestures and private seduction plots. Orville on the other hand exhibits both virtue and *virtus*, combines civility and civic duty and as such he is an oddity but he is also ideal husband material because his public actions and behaviour secure him from turning a private tyrant.

Though Orville seems to embody a kind of natural masculinity he also answers social demands – he is polite and independent, he is well-born and well-bred, he fulfils his civic responsibilities – and as such he is not only a paradox but also a fantasy, and Burney acknowledges him as such. In a letter to Maria Mirvan reflecting on her London experiences, Evelina writes,

I think I rather recollect a dream, or some visionary fancy, than a reality. – That I should ever have been known to Lord Orville, – that I should have spoken to – have danced with him, – seems now a romantic illusion:

and that elegant politeness, that flattering attention, that high-bred delicacy, which so much distinguished him above all other men, and which struck us with such admiration, I now re-trace the remembrance of, rather as belonging to an object of ideal perfection, formed by my own imagination, than to a being of the same race and nature as those to whom I at present converse. (174)

While he can exist in the world of fiction the ‘nature’ of those who populate society in reality, their prejudices and their tenacious adherence to inequality in order to preserve their own power, relegates Orville to a dream or a visionary fancy. Mrs Selwyn was wrong: Orville should not have been born in “the last age” but in an age yet to come.

In this early stage of her career, Burney’s quarrel is not so much with the structures in place to govern society and family life, but the abuses which sully that structure. While there may be Captain Mirvans bullying and mistreating women and Sir Clement Willoughbys attempting to seduce young ladies, Lord Orville’s love has the power to stop the cycle of violence at least for Evelina. His identification with the aesthetic of the beautiful is part of a larger redefinition of virtue that rejects a sublime power model of public and private tyranny and terror in favour of friendship and equality, thereby providing a way of recasting the patriarchal inheritance.

While *Evelina* can end on a positive note and, by creating a better kind of man, make the existing social structure liveable, this is not possible in *Cecilia*. There is a dramatic shift in tone between Burney’s first and second novels due not only to anxieties about the progress of the war and the effects of that war on the English economy and English masculinity, but to a change in her own circumstances. The journals and letters reveal a Burney aware of and deeply concerned with the progress of the war and surrounded by anxious

pessimists (Samuel Crisp and Hester Thrale) prognosticating the ruin of England, and suffering from the interference of her father and 'Daddy' Crisp in her literary career. A daughter taxed beyond the point of endurance and a country on the brink of bankruptcy from pursuing a fruitless war combine in a novel that explores issues of dependence and independence, identity, rights and freedoms, and property. At stake are issues of autonomy, identity, and citizenship figured through the experience of a marriageable young woman, a position rather of commodity than personhood. And the only way to address these concerns and redress inequalities is to undress the myth of man and expose his failures.

Chapter 3
“If a man dared act for himself”:
***Cecilia* and the Family Romance of the American revolution.**

Margaret Anne Doody has suggested that *Evelina* is Burney’s “declaration of independence.”¹⁶¹ In terms of the act of authorship, the claiming of authority, this is certainly the case; however, thematically, *Evelina* can be seen as Burney’s last attempt at reconciliation. In Lord Orville, Burney subtly reworks the Grandisonian ideal of English masculinity by changing the definitions of the born gentleman and the bred gentlemen. The true gentleman is naturally genteel, his politeness is innate, but it is not a function of his noble blood. The bred gentleman, on the other hand, is the man of fashion who has been educated in fashionable vices and negligent manners. Behind the picture of Grandisonian perfection, then, is a Rousseauvian naturalism that deplores the corrupting influence of society. That Lord Orville happens to be well-born and naturally good is the crucial coincidence that masks Burney’s revised model of gentlemanly perfection. In *Cecilia*, however, the corrupting influence of society is not so easily overcome. Burney presents the bleak reality of men as they are with a pessimism that echoes the anxiety of contemporary Britain over the impending loss of their American empire.¹⁶² The American Revolution debate, in which civic humanist republican ideals were pitted against the autocratic tendencies of an increasingly corrupt imperial power, is reproduced in the contemporary crisis of masculine virtue. In *Cecilia* Mortimer Delvile internalises the struggle between civic humanist virtue and chivalric honour as the central figure in an exploration of the true state of male independence, or rather dependence as it turns out, in Britain.

Exploring *Cecilia* in the context of political and military history is a departure from traditional Burney scholarship. As I suggested in chapter one,

¹⁶¹ *Frances Burney* (1988) p. 39.

¹⁶² British fears and anxieties, both in the general public as well as those expressed by individuals within Burney’s circle, will be explored in more detail below. The work of Kathleen Wilson (1995, 2003), Eliga Gould (2000), Conway (2000) and H. T. Dickinson et. al. (1989) has been particularly helpful in establishing British attitudes to the American conflict.

Burney is usually evaluated to determine her relationship to emergent proto-feminism: whether she is pushing the boundaries of traditional femininity or endorsing the status quo. Terry Castle observes that the feminist “subterranean will to power” implied by the use of the masquerade motif is never realised, forcing the novel to end with a “standard if reactionary reinscription of gender roles.”¹⁶³ Julia Epstein depicts Burney heroines as liminal figures who must marry in order to “finally become integrated into recognized social hierarchies” but also observes that Burney is ambiguous about whether this integration is compatible with personal happiness.¹⁶⁴ Kristina Straub suggests that “romance, real and imagined, continually edges out any other possibility for Cecilia’s empowerment.”¹⁶⁵ Burney’s steps towards female liberation, then, are thwarted by marriage endings that reinscribe patriarchal models of power and gender relations. Doody, however, advocates a more subversive reading of the novels. Suggesting that *Cecilia* “can proleptically be termed the first of the ‘Jacobin’ novels,” Doody hints at a much closer connection between Burney’s writing and the wider social and political concerns that engaged her society: it “raises the issues of that new era.”¹⁶⁶ But, as I intend to demonstrate, the new era, with its concerns about independence, virtue, gender difference, and political corruption, begins with the American Revolution, not the French Revolution. The French Revolution has proven an excellent case study for probing the ways in which war is a cultural event that, in the words of Gillian Russell, affects and alters “the textures of feeling, thought, and behaviour,”¹⁶⁷ as I will be exploring at length in the next part of the thesis. However, part of my purpose in this chapter is to show how the American Revolution and its attendant debates affected and altered society as evidenced in *Cecilia* as an account of feelings, thoughts, and behaviour.

¹⁶³ *Masquerade and Civilization: the Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986) p. 258.

¹⁶⁴ “Marginality in Frances Burney’s Novels.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996). p. 200.

¹⁶⁵ *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy*. (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1988) p. 131.

¹⁶⁶ *Frances Burney* (1988) p. 147; p. 112.

¹⁶⁷ *Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) p. 3.

Though Burney rarely discusses politics overtly in her novels the way radical authors of the 1790s do, this does not mean that politics have no place in her writing or that she was not aware of or responding to current events.

In a September 1778 letter to her sister Susannah, Burney writes,

though I *affect not* writing upon politics, which I am sure you would be the last person who would wish to read, I must own I am made very soberly melancholy whenever I think upon this subject. – & no other occurs so often. (*EJL* iii 128)

Johnson defines the verb affect as “to influence the passions; to make a shew of something.” Thus Burney suggests that she does not “make a shew” of writing about politics, not that her writing does not touch upon politics. And indeed, if her melancholy reflections on the current situation are the thoughts which occur most often, it is difficult to see how her writing could avoid being influenced by her political views. In order to uncover just how Burney engages with the American war, it is necessary to establish the wider context in which the novel was written: the debates regarding the American colonists’ grievances about taxation and representation, their declaration of independence, the anxiety about virtue, corruption, and imperialism bubbling just below the surface of these more specific concerns. Once the themes and language of these debates have been explored through representative samples from the pamphlet debate I will demonstrate that the same themes and language are present in Burney’s private and public writing.

The debates sparked by Britain’s imperial endeavours are also of prime importance in discussions of masculinity. As I discussed in the last chapter, Enlightenment stadial histories considered women as indicators of the level of civilization: essentially how well men treat women is an index of their level of social sophistication. The war further complicated questions of civilization and empire as the losses sustained by British forces seemed to confirm fears of the corruption of both society and masculine virtue. *Cecilia* overflows with

male characters of various recognisable types and descriptions – indeed far more men populate the novel than women. This multiplicity of men and their universal failure to live up to contemporary ideals of masculinity or the ideals of the hero in romantic fiction, suggest that Burney is using art to investigate the politically-charged crisis of masculinity and through it the war and the political debates about sovereignty, independence, and equality. By placing these men in a specifically social and domestic setting, rather than the more overtly political setting of the political world or the battle field, Burney highlights the ways in which men and their behaviour affect women and the political stakes of the private. The ending of *Cecilia* is disheartening: the marriage resolution makes plain the fact that women must give up their autonomy rather than dressing it in the trappings of happily ever after. But I want to suggest a very different reason for the unsatisfying tinge that mars the denouement. The key to the novel's politics is contained in a discussion between Mr. Belfield and Mr. Monckton, the novel's representatives of idealism and corruption respectively, of which the opening quotation forms a part. This dialogue, when read in context with the contemporary debates about the war in America, the imperial project, and the state of the nation and its (male) citizens, takes on a new significance and serves as a measuring stick for the actions, or lack thereof, of men within the novel. While the discussion emerges from a possibility of female autonomy, it quickly becomes a question of male autonomy - "If a *man* dared act for himself." While 'things as they are' ultimately triumph at novel's end, the cost of this victory is carefully calculated and the subdued ending, in marked contrast to the unalloyed happiness of *Evelina*, suggests how unsatisfactory Burney finds the symbolic order to be. Furthermore, the state of women's subjection is directly attributable to the state of masculinity: the message is clear, until men liberate themselves, until they dare to act and declare their independence, women cannot hope to do so.

In order to investigate how Burney is engaging with the war and its

surrounding debates, it is necessary to examine the course of the war along with its origins and the way the public responded to it. As discussed in the previous chapter, prior to the Seven Years War fears were expressed regarding the effects of empire, trade, and wealth on British society in general and masculinity in particular. Fears about decline, like those expressed by John Brown during the Seven Years War, seemed to subside after Britain successfully defeated the French and consolidated their North American empire. However, as *The Making and Unmaking of Empires* (2003), P. J. Marshall's study of Britain's shifting imperial fortunes, demonstrates, victory against the French initiated the decline of Britain's Atlantic empire. Bishop Porteus informed the House of Lords in 1779 that the successes of the Seven Years War were "too great for our feeble virtue to bear" and that war-gotten gain "produced a scene of wanton extravagance and wild excess, which called loudly for some signal check": Porteus interpreted the current war with the colonies as "that check."¹⁶⁸ The nation's preoccupation with virtue and corruption is connected to concerns about masculinity and effeminacy, as demonstrated in the work of Kathleen Wilson, Eliga Gould, and McCormack. As Gould explains, "discussing matters of national importance in terms of a generalized crisis of masculinity was no less capable of constraining the conduct of men."¹⁶⁹ Wilson illustrates the thrust of masculinist rhetoric with a quotation from a critic of the war from Norwich who complained that

[o]ur men of rank and fortune have exchanged sexes with the soft and fair. They are fribbles and maccaronis [sic], and not soldiers or heroes. A year or two of encampments and rigid discipline, may restore them to virility and heroic hardiness; but alas! the constitution and power of

¹⁶⁸ qtd. Conway *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (2000) p. 318. Conway notes that "it was far from uncommon for peace and commerce to be seen as threats to liberty, and war as its preservative. The wealth, or 'luxury,' created by commerce was held by some to have made the nation soft and effeminate and concerned only with self-gratification, making many of the people unable and unwilling to exert themselves to defend their liberties against foreign and domestic oppressors" (319).

¹⁶⁹ p. 81

England . . . may in the meantime be extinct.¹⁷⁰

Failures of masculinity were inextricably linked to political corruption and imperial failure.

In his introduction to *Britain and the American Revolution* (1989) H. T. Dickinson discusses Britain's policy of "salutary neglect" in relation to colonial affairs, noting that the mother country's seeming indifference allowed colonists to develop their own political institutions and regard their legislative assemblies as the "principle guarantor of their rights, liberties, and property."¹⁷¹ While pursuing this laissez-faire approach to imperial management, political elites became increasingly enchanted with the idea of parliamentary supremacy and the "constitutional doctrine that ultimate sovereignty lay with the king-in-parliament."¹⁷² Relaxed attitudes and decades of ministerial neglect were reversed with the introduction of the Stamp Act (1765) and the Townshend Revenue Act (1767). Parliament, and indeed many in Britain, as Gould observes in *The Persistence of Empire* (2000), assumed that because America and its inhabitants formed integral parts of a greater British nation, they could be taxed in the same manner as inhabitants of Great Britain.¹⁷³ The colonists, while willing to pay duties on imported goods, were not prepared to submit to direct taxation. But, as these studies make plain, the conflict was about more than refusing to be compelled to pay taxes without explicitly consenting to them: the issue of representation was about independence and citizenship, as can be seen from the published accounts of the debate.

As Gould demonstrates, the civil war of letters between those who supported the colonists' refusal to submit to taxation without representation and those who supported the right of Parliament to tax all of its citizens raised

¹⁷⁰ *Norwich Chronicle*, July 18, 1778. qtd. *Sense of the People*, p. 254. Lord Kames expressed a similar idea about the purifying power of warfare for masculinity, describing it as "a school for improving every manly virtue." Perpetual peace would, in Kames's estimation, promote selfishness and turn men into "beasts of burden" (*Sketches of the History of Man*, qtd. Conway p. 319.).

¹⁷¹ *Britain and the American Revolution* (London: Longman, 1989). p. 6.

¹⁷² *ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁷³ *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of Empire*. (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000). pp. xxii, xxiv.

questions regarding the nature of British citizenship.¹⁷⁴ Wilson's cultural history of empire, *The Sense of the People* (1995), suggests that the importance of print culture lay not in the dissemination of information but in providing "ideological perspectives which proffered particular and often divergent interpretations of the state, nation and polity."¹⁷⁵ James Bradley's contribution to *Britain and the American Revolution* explores the diverging interpretations of the conflict put forward by loyal addressers (those in favour of the government's bid to retain its colonies on its own terms) and petitioners (those sympathetic to the American cause): "[t]he loyal addressers consistently viewed the conflict as an 'unnatural rebellion,' while the petitioners thought of it as an 'unnatural civil war.'"¹⁷⁶ This seemingly semantic difference belies a fundamental ideological disagreement about the nature of political authority. While both sides conceded that the conflict was unnatural, the disagreement over whether to call it a rebellion or a civil war reveals that the government regarded the colonists as unruly children, subjects in need of strong government, while those who characterised the conflict as a civil war were implicitly making claims of citizenship.

Samuel Johnson's pamphlet *Taxation No Tyranny* (1775) lays out the case for taxation and Parliamentary prerogative while characterising those proponents of liberty as tainted by "antipatriotic prejudices" whose aims he characterises as "the abortions of Folly impregnated by Faction" (174). Bound up in the disagreement over taxation and representation is a discussion of rights and what rights can properly be claimed. Johnson observes that the colonists claimed to be "*entitled to Life, Liberty, and Property,*" natural rights which they have "*never ceded to any sovereign power whatever*" (207), rights that they are entitled to through their English ancestors, who were, "*at the time of their emigration from the Mother-country, entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural-born subjects within the realm of England*" (208). Johnson's rebuttal distinguishes between 'natural' rights

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. xxiv.

¹⁷⁵ p. 29.

¹⁷⁶ "The British Public and the American Revolution: Ideology, Interest and Opinion." in Dickinson (1989): 124-154. p. 139.

and the rights of Englishmen, by observing that “they are no longer in a State of Nature” but rather “sink down to Colonists, governed by a Charter” (208). Through this self-identification of the colonists with their English ancestors’ privileges, Johnson argues that they have “ceded to the King and Parliament, whether the right or not, at least the power of disposing, *without their consent, of their lives, liberties, and properties*” (208). As for their rights to representation, that is a right that was given up by the original colonists who chose property in a new land over participation in the political process, thus consigning themselves to the disenfranchised masses.

The distinction that Johnson draws between natural rights and those guaranteed to the citizen through the constitution give some indication of the complex political questions the American conflict raised. In the preface to *Two Treatises on Government* (1690), John Locke, the great proponent of liberalism and natural rights, identifies his purpose as establishing

the Throne of our great Restorer, our present King William; to make good his Title, in the Consent of the People, which being the only one of all lawful Governments, he has more fully and clearly, than any prince in Christendom; and to justifie to the World the People of England, whose love of their just and natural rights, with their Resolution to preserve them, saved the Nation when it was on the very brink of Slavery and Ruin.

(A2-A2v)

According to Locke, natural rights and the rights of Englishmen and citizens seem to be one in the same, and the preservation of those rights trumps the claims of a political authority, in this case a monarch who threatens them with “Slavery and Ruin.” Appeals to Locke were side-stepped by invoking the model of authority enshrined in the family, an institution that Locke left

largely untouched.¹⁷⁷

Mocking the idea that authority rests in the people, the virulent *The Duty of the King and subject, on the Principles of Civil Liberty* (1776) represents in some ways a return to Filmer's justification of absolutism, substituting oligarchy for the divine right of kings.¹⁷⁸ The anonymous writer uses the allegory of the family, the original and traditional political model, to appeal to an (as yet largely) uncontested model of authority which has remained intact through dynastic and political shifts. Comparing the “co-alized” relationship of England and America to the relationship between husband and wife, the pamphleteer declares that as in that relationship, if the colonies and the husband kingdom are parted, their “sympathy of interest . . . turns into voluptuous prostitution and degeneracy, which terminates in mutual ruin, anxiety and distress” (34). Corruption is not the product of dependence, then, but the result of a disruptive independence. Conciliation is likened to a monstrous birth, “the illegitimate offspring of combined progenitorship” (14), threatening to disrupt the happy family that is Britannia and her colonial offspring: though “Britania, like a benevolent parent, has long stretched out her fond arms with such blessings to her American children,” the demand for independence constitutes rejecting the proffered blessings and repaying them with “the blackest ingratitude” (36). Answering these profoundly traditional, even feudal, justifications of government prerogative were

¹⁷⁷ In his *Second Treatise on Government* (1690), Locke argues that the state and the family are regulated by distinct principles, the state by contractual and the family by customary ones. Though children must obey both parents and marriage is described as a voluntary compact between the individuals involved, Lockean marriage is not an idealised, egalitarian union. Though both husband and wife have rights, including that of separation initiated by either party, the man rules in all disagreements as he is “the abler and the stronger” (41). The customary principles that govern families are ‘natural’ and related to a degree of gender essentialism that Locke does not see existing in the contractual state. Mary Astell, however, would not let this equivocating stand. In *Some Reflections on Matrimony* (1700), Astell asks if “Absolute Sovereignty be not necessary in a State, how comes it to be so in a Family” (76). Astell observes that any defence of or challenge to absolutism in the state is equally applicable to families: “If the Authority of the Husband so far as it extends, is sacred and inalienable, why not that of the Prince? The Domestic Sovereign is without Dispute Elected, and the Stipulations and Contract are mutual, is it not then partial in Men to the last degree, to contend for, and practise that Arbitrary Dominion in their Families, which they abhor and exclaim against in the State?” (76).

¹⁷⁸ Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (1680) represents a last gasp at justifying absolutist monarchy through patriarchy. Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) reject Filmer's patriarchal model for politics, but as I have suggested above, he had no objection to patriarchal authority at home.

thinkers, including Dr. Richard Price and Edmund Burke, influenced not only by Locke, but by Enlightenment philosophy and the English republican tradition.

Price's *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776) presents an argument in favour of the colonists grounded in both civic humanist and liberal ideals. Beginning from the premise that one cannot decide on the American conflict without having correct ideas about liberty, Price outlines the four categories of liberty. The first, physical liberty, is defined as "self-determination" or the ability to act, rather than be acted upon (3, 5), while moral liberty suggests the triumph of reason over passion and "the power of following, in all circumstances, our sense of right and wrong . . . without being controlled by any contrary principles" (5, 3-4). Religious liberty is just that, and civil liberty is "the power of a *civil Society* or *State* to govern itself by its own discretion; or by laws of its own making, without being subject to any foreign discretion, or to the impositions of any extraneous will or power" (4). Unifying these ideas is a theme of "self-direction" or "self-government" (4), integral to a civil government that originates with the people (8). In each case, the impetus for liberty is found in the individual and depends on a certain amount of independence, an independence traditionally guaranteed by virtue (arms and land). However, Price modifies traditional civic humanist discourse by changing some of the terms of citizenship, particularly as he refers to the disenfranchised position of many at home.¹⁷⁹

Ultimately, Price speculates that the conflict is not really over taxes or honour, two frequently given reasons for attempting to subdue the recalcitrant colonists, but power: "Indeed, I am persuaded, that, were pride and the lust of dominion exterminated from every heart amongst us, and the humility of Christians infused in their room, the quarrel would be soon

¹⁷⁹ In the general introduction to the 1778 edition of *Observations*, Price writes, "I have repeatedly declared my admiration of such a constitution of government as our own would be, were the House of Commons a fair representation of the kingdom, and under no undue influence – The sum of all I have meant to maintain is, 'that LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT, as opposed to OPPRESSION and TYRANNY, consists in the dominion of equal laws made with common consent, or of men over *themselves*; are not in the dominion of communities over communities, or of any men over other men" (vii).

ended” (68). The corruption of the people succumbing to luxury through the wealth of empire has allowed them to sink into dependence and has allowed the British government, which once had the potential to be an exemplary constitutional monarchy, to lapse into an oligarchy helmed by an absolutist parliament.

Writing to his constituents in 1777, Burke raises the stakes of the pamphlet war by explicitly making American independence a question to be considered by citizens rather than subjects, a distinction underscored by Burke’s invocation of “our detestation” of an “unnatural civil war” and disapproval of “legislative regulations which subvert the liberties of our brethren, or which undermine our own.”¹⁸⁰ While the letter responds to the partial suspension of *habeus corpus*, the issue at stake is that of liberty as a natural right. While government propaganda asserted that England is at war for “*our own* dignity against our rebellious children,” Burke’s account stresses the subjectivity of all Britons, whether at home or abroad. The partial suspension is worse than a universal suspension, as “Liberty . . . is a *general* principle and the clear right of all the subjects within the realm, or of none. Partial freedom seems to me a most invidious form of slavery” (10). Particularly problematic for Burke is that this partial suspension “destroys *equality*, which is the essence of community” (11) with disastrous consequences. “War,” notes Burke, “suspends the rules of moral obligation . . . Civil wars strike deepest of all into the manners of a people. They vitiate their politics; they corrupt their morals; they pervert even the natural taste and relish of equity and justice” (14).

While Burke bases his critique of Parliament’s conflict with the colonies on an ideal of citizenship, he also discusses it in terms of the family rhetoric invoked in *Duty*. This language of family romance is particularly important to my exploration of the connections between the debates and Burney’s novel. While Samuel Johnson and Richard Price wrote in terms of rights and

¹⁸⁰ *A letter from Edmund Burke, Esq; one of the representatives in Parliament for the city of Bristol, to John Farr and John Harris, Esqrs. sheriffs of that city, on the affairs of America.* (Dublin, 1777) p. B, 46, 2.

freedoms, underlying Johnson's vision of limited citizenship and Price's pairing of independence and civil liberty is a disagreement about the relevance of the model of authority based in the family. Setting aside the issue of the colonial charters, which set out the original political relationship between Britain and its various colonies, Burke observes that the conditions informing the original documents no longer exist. To think of enforcing them again would be ludicrous: "we may as well think of rocking a grown man in the cradle of an infant" (43). The fact is, whether through neglect or the natural course of events, Britannia's baby has grown up and grown away. Attempting to enforce obedience to measures not hitherto expected (i.e. taxation to support the civil and military establishment) is foolhardy, to say the least, when dealing with an erstwhile dependent who has grown "too proud to submit, too strong to be forced" and "too enlightened not to see all the consequences which must arise from such a system" (44). Burke transforms the image of madonna and unnatural child to one of a young adult, naturally chaffing at the stifling authority of an overprotective, interfering mama. The political development of the colonies, and by extension that of Britain, is presented as an organic and natural process – children do, and must, grow up, subjects will evolve into citizens. To hold them back is what is unnatural – "Bodies tied together by so unnatural a bond of union, as mutual hatred, are only connected to their ruin" (47).

The debate illustrates what Kathleen Wilson refers to as the "family romance" of the American revolution. The resonances in the American conflict are clear, and the desire for independence, and to choose one's own representatives, is just one of the themes that the war and its debates share with Burney's *Cecilia*, as I will demonstrate. Tied to this struggle to define oneself, to direct one's own existence, is a larger concern over national character, a debate that has important implications for masculine ideals.

For Burke, more alarming than the prospect of losing the colonies or the interruption to trade was the potential erosion of the national character:

Liberty is in danger of being made unpopular to

Englishmen. Contending for an imaginary power, we begin to acquire the spirit of domination, and to lose the relish of honest equality. The principles of our forefathers become suspected to us, because we see them animating the present opposition of our children.¹⁸¹

More than simply becoming unfashionable, however, the principles of English liberty as laid out by Locke have been blackened:

We are taught to believe, that a desire of domineering over our countrymen, is love to our country; that those who hate civil war abet rebellion; and that the amiable and conciliatory virtues of lenity, moderation, and tenderness to the privileges of those who depend on this kingdom, are a sort of treason to the state. (54)

Burke feared that the situation would produce an unfavourable shift in the national character, a concern shared by Price whose analysis of the situation reveals how anxiety about the state of civil society in Britain boils down to anxiety over the state of English masculinity. Price contrasted the behaviour of the Americans, who were “FASTING and PRAYING,” with the British, who, while “ridiculing them as *Fanatics*, and scoffing at religion,” were:

running wild after pleasure, and forgetting everything serious and decent at *Masquerades* . . . gambling at gaming houses; trafficking for Boroughs; perjuring ourselves at Elections; and selling ourselves for places.

(128)

While this is meant as a general reflection on the corruption of English society, the only members of this society who can do all of these things are men.

In order to establish just what the stakes were in this anxiety over ‘manliness’ it is necessary to review the progress of the war. By late 1778 there had been a dramatic shift in Britain’s military situation. After early

¹⁸¹ *A letter* . . . p. 53.

victories and optimism on the part of the war's supporters, the American forces gained momentum through a series of stunning victories. In October 1777, General Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga after a disastrous loss to the American General Gates and was sent home in disgrace. This was followed in February 1778 by the French *Treaty of Amity and Commerce*, in which France declared that there would be no peace until Britain recognised American independence. Using their support of the Americans to regain some of their former colonial possessions, the French fleet left Toulon in April under the command of the Comte d'Estaing whose ships provided support to the Americans along the coast and captured several valuable West Indies sugar islands. With the entrance of France, the conflict widened to encompass all British imperial possessions, as became clear when France recruited Spain with the promise of helping them to regain Gibraltar and Minorca.

As the fortune of the English army turned, the conflict was derided as a "macaroni war," English soldiers condemned as "fribbles."¹⁸² Unexpected military defeats caused many to wonder about the state of British manliness including Vicesimus Knox, who questioned whether "miscarriages in the naval and military departments" might have been due to the "selection of fine gentlemen, of agreeable triflers; of men of levity in appearance, levity in conversation, and levity of principles to command armaments."¹⁸³ The contagion of effeminacy had evidently spread from idle, fashionable beaux frittering away their time at the fashionable haunts of London, to those responsible for defending Britain and the empire: John Brown's fears about the influence of luxury on martial prowess and national virility seemed to have come true. Criticisms of the armies stationed in North America, especially the senior officers, suggest that luxury and the other evils of a wealthy society contributed to Britain's losses in the colonies. One anonymous critic accused General Howe of losing the war by being "indolent and slow, when [he] should have been active and rapid; dissipated and licentious, when [he]

¹⁸² Wilson, *Island Race* p. 125.

¹⁸³ *Liberal education: or, a Practical Treatise on the Methods of Acquiring Useful and Polite Learning*. (London, 1781). p. 354.

should have been sedate and collected.”¹⁸⁴ The “indolent and languid” corruption of the commanding officer appears to have impaired the soldiers, rendering the “minds of our men . . . as frivolous and effeminate as their dress and manners. Their conduct is not determined by reason, but by caprice and imitation” (15). Though Lord Kames believed that war was “necessary for man, being a school for improving every manly virtue,”¹⁸⁵ war was unable to reclaim a masculinity so degraded by luxurious English society.

The evidence provided in the studies of Wilson and Gould, among others, as well as that from the contemporary republic of letters suggests that Britons were concerned about the state of the war and about the men tasked with fighting it. But why are masculinity and the American war important to a discussion of a novel written by a woman in which a young heiress attempts to take her place in the world? The deplorable state of masculinity does not exist in isolation, as the link between social anxiety and gender anxiety makes clear. Furthermore, the state of society and masculinity are connected to the status of women, and consequently to emergent feminist concerns, through what Wilson calls the “self-congratulatory trope of Enlightenment social theory.”¹⁸⁶ Stadial histories suggest that civilization can be gauged by how women are treated and valued in society. In *The History of Women* (1779) William Alexander observes that “there is in the fate of women something exceedingly singular; they have at all periods, and almost in all countries, been, by our sex, constantly oppressed and adored”(i. 102). In making this observation, Alexander declares that what is “still more extraordinary” about this fact is that this oppression was not born out of hatred, but of love. European men rule “only to save [women] the trouble of thought and of labour and to enable them to live in ease and elegance” (i. 102). Women in savage states have not been so “complimented and chained,” but instead consigned to savage equality. “The rank, therefore, and the condition in which we find women in any country,” concludes Alexander,

¹⁸⁴ Agricola, *Two letters from Agricola to Sir William Howe* (London, 1779). p. 14-5.

¹⁸⁵ *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh, 1774) vol. i. p. 438.

¹⁸⁶ Wilson (2003) p. 23.

“mark[s] . . . the exact point in the scale of civil society to which the people of such country have arrived” (i. 103). The key to civilised manliness lies in spending just the right amount of time in the company of women:

If perpetually confined to their company, they infallibly stamp upon us effeminacy, and some other of the signatures of their nature; if constantly excluded from it, we contract a roughness of behaviour and slovenliness of person, sufficient to point out to us the loss we have sustained. (i. 314)

Striking the right balance is essential in order to “imbibe a proper share of the softness of the female, and at the same time retain the firmness and constancy of the male” (i. 314). This will allow sufficient manliness to protect the womenfolk, while smoothing man’s “rugged nature” (i. 314).

Similarly, William Robertson, noting that philosophers had begun to debate “whether man has been improved by the progress of arts and civilization in society,” argues that “women are indebted to the refinements of polished manners for a happy change in their state” and that it is a point “which can admit of no doubt.”¹⁸⁷ Only the savage would despise a female, as can be observed in the attitudes of the savages in America. Referring to them only as “Americans,” Robertson reveals that there is a marked “inattention” among men “proud of excelling in strength and in courage” towards women and that marriage itself, “instead of being an union of affection and interest between equals, becomes, among them, the unnatural conjunction of a master with his slave” (i. 319). The English woman, enjoying the benefits of polished society, it is supposed, avoids such a degrading slavery. However, in exploring the masculinity of a society in crisis, in which the very foundations of government and the family are being challenged through war, Burney’s *Cecilia* suggests that perhaps the state of English women is not so advantageous as Robertson and others assert. Moreover, the uncomfortable position of women is directly attributable to men through formulas of their

¹⁸⁷ *The History of America* (London, 1777) vol. i. p. 318-9.

own devising: if the situation of women indicates the level of civilization attained and maintained by men, then what Burney identifies as the untenable position of women must be due to the failures of men.

The state of the war and related anxieties about masculinity were not simply public or masculine preoccupations, as becomes abundantly clear from a perusal of Burney's journals and letters from the period. Burney's familiarity with the rhetoric that Bradley identifies as saturating contemporary newspapers and pamphlets is clear from a letter she wrote to her sister Susannah in 1777. In describing her daily activities, she borrows the language of the American conflict:

We Walk: the brightness of the sun, invites us abroad, – the tranquility of the scene, promises all the pleasures of philosophic contemplation, which, *ever studious of rural amusement*, I eagerly pursue, mais, *helas!* scarce have I wandered over half a meadow, ere the *bleak winds whistle round my Head*, off flies my faithless Hat, – my perfidious Cloak endeavours to follow, – even though it clings, with well acted fondness, to my Neck; – my Apron, my Gown, – all my habiliments, with rebellious emotion, wage a civil war with the *mother country* – though there is not an Individual among them but has been indebted to me for the very existence by which they treacherously betray me! My shoes, too, though they cannot, like the rest, brave me to my Teeth, are equally false & worthless; for, far from aiding me by springing forward with the generous zeal they owe me for having rescued them from the dark & dusty Warehouse in which they were pent, – they fail me in the very moment I require assistance, –

sink me in Bogs – pop me into the mud, – & attaching themselves rather to the mire, than to the Feet which guide them, threaten me perpetually with desertion: & I shall not be much surprised, if, some Day when I least think of it, they should give me the slip, & settle themselves by the Way.¹⁸⁸

More than playfully cataloguing the quotidian difficulties of dealing with female finery, Burney describes the trappings of femininity in the language of the American revolution debates. Burney's effortless weaving of highly-charged political language – civil war, rebellion, mother country – into her private letters suggests just how immersed she must have been in this conflict. There is also a suggestion of ambivalence towards the war as she uses the rhetoric of both sides, invoking both civil war and a rebellion against the mother country. Making clothing the rebelling party suggests a scepticism about the chances of victory for the ragtag colonists, a supposition that would seem to be borne out by a string of British victories in New York in mid- to late-1776. But the hapless wearer of the clothing could still be undone, perhaps due to the luxury and profusion of clothing.

The Burney family had by this time become intimately involved in the war. Burney's sailor brother, James, had returned from the Cook expedition and was appointed 2nd lieutenant of *Cerberus*, a ship ordered to transport Generals Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne to Boston. Burney was “not at all pleased . . . though I thank Heaven there is no prospect of any Naval Engagement” (*EJL* ii 80). And though James did not remain long on the

¹⁸⁸ *EJL* vol. ii. p. 221.

North American station,¹⁸⁹ Burney's brother-in-law Molesworth Phillips, a Captain of the Royal Marines, was constantly on the brink of being assigned to an America-bound ship. Letters exchanged between Burney and Susannah indicate that they kept abreast of the latest naval intelligence in order to assess the probability of Phillips being sent to war.¹⁹⁰

Though Burney refrains from explicitly articulating her own political views, she was certainly very aware of the political allegiances and prejudices of those around her. Samuel Johnson, whose Tory political views have been explored in relation to his pamphlet on the taxation debate, was a consistent supporter of the government. His strong opinions are illustrated in relation to the visit of Sir Philip Jennings Clerke, "a professed *minority* man" – "Men of such different principles as Dr. Johnson & Sir Philip," writes Burney to her sister, "*you* may imagine, cannot have much sympathy or cordiality in their political debates." However, Sir Philip manages to avoid the inevitable fight by appealing to the ladies: he hopes that Mrs. Thrale "would not suffer the *Tories* to warp *her* Judgement" and trusts that Dr. Burney "had not tainted

¹⁸⁹ By the time *Cerberus* arrived in Boston, the situation with the colonies had disintegrated considerably. However, after a few months of cruising the Massachusetts coastline for American privateers, James was transferred to Cook's command. Lord Sandwich contacted Admiral Graves, James's commander-in-chief, with orders to allow Lt. Burney to return to England should he prefer sailing on the third Cook expedition to remaining on a North American station. Of his return, Burney writes on 30 December,

My Brother James, to our great Joy & satisfaction, is returned Home safe from America, which he has left in a most terrible disorder. He . . . has undergone great hardships, which he has, however, gained both credit & friends by. (*EJL* ii 197-8)

Yet despite acknowledging the advantages James has gained by serving in the war, which would have included the likelihood of prize money from captured enemy vessels and an increased chance of promotion, Lt. Burney, through Lord Sandwich's intercession (which one supposes must have been in some way initiated by Dr. Burney), chooses to go to the other side of the world. Later in life, Dr. Burney would lament that his son's republican politics had hindered his ability to rise through the ranks of the Navy: it is possible that James's republican sympathies motivated his decision to explore the South Pacific instead of pursuing professional advancement at the expense of his principles.

¹⁹⁰ For example, in a letter to Susannah dated 14 December 1781, Burney writes that "I don't feel much hope he *can* escape this summons, as I see by the Papers, a general order to all officers to repair to Quarters. However, he will go *no where for long*, that I think we may be sure, as a Peace *must* be speedy, though, & indeed for that very reason, all warlike preparations must be carried on with more vigour than ever, that our terms may be less humiliating" (*EJL* iv 529-30).

my [Burney's] principles" (*EJL* iii 241).¹⁹¹ Mr. Thrale, an MP who "regularly voted with the administration" (DNB), was not so much a party man as to disdain supporting Sir Philip's bill against bribery and corruption. Also not one to be partisan at the expense of her interests, Hester Thrale brought both Sir Philip and Mr. Devaynes, a Tory, when she campaigned on her ailing husband's behalf in 1780.¹⁹²

Mrs. Thrale and Samuel Crisp held similarly pessimistic views on the war with the colonies: Burney notes to Samuel Crisp that "her *political Doctrine* is so exactly like yours" (256). The two share a "sympathy of *horrible foresight*" and a sense of foreboding about the likely outcome of the widening war. In her journal entry for 7 March 1778, Mrs. Thrale complains of the "ineptness of the King":

See him now . . . Despised at home, ridiculed abroad;
insulted by the French, uncertain of Protection or
Assistance from the English; his Colonies revolted &
declared Independent by Foreign Powers; his own Subjects
at the point of Rebellion even in his Capital, his Navy out
of Repair, his Army in Disgrace, Public Credit a Jest, and a
National Bankruptcy talked on as necessary, & expected as
irresistible.¹⁹³

Burney characterises Mrs. Thrale as "a croaking Prophetess" and 'Daddy' Crisp as a "*croaking* Prophet" (224). Crisp was frightened of the prospect of Franco-Spanish invasion throughout 1778-9 and he seems to have related his

¹⁹¹ Dr. Burney's political ideas are difficult to pin down. Burney never refers to what these might be either. Sir Philip's comment marks him as a Tory, and he is undoubtedly a supporter of his various acquaintances in the ministry and through them the administration. However, he may have had other opinions, suppressed in favour of interest (something that would be in keeping with his sometimes obsequious behaviour). In a letter to Thomas Twining in 1775 regarding his MS, he states "In matters of blunder & ignorance I submit implicitly -- in matters of opinion I am now & then a patriot, & for Wilks [sic.] & Liberty" (188). While he is talking about his *History of Greek Music*, his suggestion that he does not necessarily toe a party line where he feels himself to be an expert is interesting. He also dined with Wilkes in 1776. While this does not necessarily prove anything, it might suggest that Dr. Burney's political convictions, whatever they might have been, were sacrificed in his quest to rise in the world and eclipse his humble beginnings.

¹⁹² Of Mrs. Thrale's political acumen, Burney writes: "Her management, during the Canvass, was even *ridiculously* clever, -- for whenever they stopt with a Government Man, she turned him over to Mr. Devaynes, & when with a *Liberty Boy*, to sir Philip Clerke" (*EJL* iv 109).

¹⁹³ *Thraliana* vol. i. p. 241 qtd. *EJL* vol. iv p. 256 note.

fears to Burney: “All you say of *the Times* made me shudder,” writes Burney 30 July 1779,

yet I was sure such would be your sentiments, for all that has happened you actually fore saw, & represented to me in strong colours last spring: I mean in relation to the general decline of all Trade, opulence & prosperity. (*EJL* iii. 341)

Yet as seriously as she felt these fears, she was still able to find amusement in Rose Fuller’s assessment of the situation, who declared the news and England’s prospects to be “very bad indeed!”:

quite what we call poor old England! – I was told, in Town, – Fact! – Fact, I assure you! – that these Dons intend us an Invasion this month – they & the Monsieurs intends us the respectable salute this very month, – the powder system, in this sort of way. Give me leave to tell you, Miss Burney, this is what we call a disagreeable visit, in that sort of way! (*EJL* iii. 362)¹⁹⁴

Accounts of invasion fears and general pessimism are interspersed with progress reports on the state of the war, either noting good news from the colonies or reflecting on reverses.¹⁹⁵

Burney’s response to the war was largely loyal – she lamented British losses, worried about soldiers and sailors, was anxious about the increasingly belligerent role played by the French – however, her position on the ideological component of the conflict is more complicated. Though she disliked the war, and was perhaps ambivalent on the subject of who was to blame for it, Burney’s writing betrays a non-partisan interest in individual, personal independence. Accounts of the Burneys’ family life reveal a strong

¹⁹⁴ Conversation related in a letter date 12 October 1779

¹⁹⁵ Under Clinton and Cornwallis, the British made advances into the South, taking Savannah, Georgia (Dec 1778), and Augusta (Jan 1779). Following these gains they were pushed out of New York, but rallied again with a series of victories in the Carolinas – Charleston (May 1780), Camden and Fishing Creek (Aug. 1780). In addition to lost land battles, the French and Spanish fleets were successful in harassing and interrupting English trade and also in relieving the British of some of their West Indian sugar islands.

undercurrent of rebellion among younger members of the Burney household, fuelled both by a dislike of the stepmother, Elizabeth Allen, and the stifling, if well-meant, tyranny of their father. Burney's journals reveal an undercurrent of "treason" in the household, the private complaints and jokes shared by the Burney children and their allies,¹⁹⁶ while Doody's biography highlights the importance of "permission" and Charles Burney's desire to have his children "safely within the boundaries of the permissible."¹⁹⁷ Dr. Burney's benevolent dictatorship was challenged by elopements and insubordination; however, while her siblings acted out their rebellions, Frances Burney explored independence through her pen.¹⁹⁸

While Britain was enacting a family romance with its American colonies, Burney was experiencing one of her own. Returning to Burney's description of her activities, and my observation that she uses the rhetoric of both sides of the conflict referring to "a civil war with the mother country," it is striking that whichever interpretation one favours, whether civil war or petulantly rebellious colony, the victim is a woman. Of the personified clothing that attacks her, Burney notes: "there is not an Individual among them but has been indebted to me for the very existence by which they treacherously betray me!" (*EJL* ii 221). Her clothing, the sign of both her femininity and the consumer culture that corrupts society, confines, betrays, and leaves her, shoeless, powerless to act. This expression of powerlessness

¹⁹⁶ Doody notes that the childrens' hostility was exacerbated by the need to keep it hidden from their father: "The Burney childrens' hatred of their 'mama' was one of their secrets. Not quarrelsome, or capable of quarelling, they took evasive action, ganging up in secret to make fun of the stepparent behind her back, writing about her in unkind code as 'the *Lady*,' 'Precious,' 'Madam'" (27). Samuel Crisp was included in the secret (Doody 27) and Molesworth Philips (Susanna's husband) found favour by "talking treason" (*EJL* IV. 511).

¹⁹⁷ *The Life in the Works*, p. 16. Doody notes that "Charles was to inculcate in his children the pervasive dread of offending someone whose permission should be asked, and he indicates some unwitting enjoyment of being the person who had power to give or withhold permission from his children, the only group to whom he could give it and to whom he need not apply for it" (16). The resonances with the family romance of the American revolution – children chafing against absolute parental authority – are unmistakable.

¹⁹⁸ Betty Rizzo observes that the boys' behaviour was particularly troubling: "While [Dr. Burney's] elder four daughters adored, aided, and protected him and the family reputation, the two elder sons acted out destructively to abort the projects their father conceived for their successful establishment, and even to disgrace the family" (xii). Besides James's problems with authority bringing a premature end to his naval career, he also ran off with his half-sister Sarah Harriet Burney. Charles Jr. was expelled from Cambridge for stealing books and ultimately disappointed the family's plan to see him ordained. The youngest Burney child, Richard, an "over-indulged favourite," was ultimately disowned.

suggests an underlying sympathy with rebellion in response to an untenable situation as well as an underlying inability to act on the impulse to rebel. This sense of entrapment and betrayal is another theme explored in *Cecilia* and one that Burney herself experienced while writing it.

While writing *Cecilia*, the influence of her daddies (her father Dr. Burney and her mentor Samuel “Daddy” Crisp) became increasingly oppressive after her authorial debut/declaration of independence. Though Burney had been her own creative director while writing *Evelina* in secret, her subsequent literary productions – including her ultimately suppressed play, *The Witlings* – were subject to the scrutiny of her father and Crisp. As Betty Rizzo observes: “Being an obedient daughter was part of the enactment of the role of acceptable woman author.”¹⁹⁹ After the play debacle, Crisp decided the new project should be a novel and her father mandated the breakneck timetable (he wanted his daughter’s new novel to coincide with his latest volume of the history of music). Burney had little choice but to comply, despite the fact that her frenetic work pace caused two serious illnesses in 1781.²⁰⁰ While her only freedom, the freedom to express herself, was being policed, Burney’s literary endeavours were paradoxically being billed as her ticket to independence. Crisp, who had earlier urged her to marry in order to avoid the ignominy of the poor old maid, had new advice:

I now proceed to assume the Daddy, & Consequently the
Privilege of giving Counsel – Your kind & judicious Friends
are certainly in the right, in wishing You to make your
Talents turn to some thing more solid than empty Praise –
When You come to know the World half so well as I do, &
what Yahoos Mankind are –, you will then be convinc’d,
that a State of Independence is the only Basis on which to
rest your future Ease & Comfort. (*EJL* iii 179)

¹⁹⁹ “Introduction”, (2003) *EJL* vol. iv p. xi. Dr. Burney and Samuel Crisp were worried that the play’s biting satire would ruffle the feathers of the literary ladies Burney’s play mocked. Their response was a “Hissing, groaning, catcalling Epistle” and a refusal to suggest revisions – they were determined that the play should not be staged (“Introduction” *The Witlings & the Woman Hater* . ed. Peter Sabor and Geoffrey Sill. (2002) p. 12-3.

²⁰⁰ Rizzo, p. xi.

Urging her to take advantage of the notice *Evelina* has brought her, Crisp advises Burney to “act vigorously a distinguish’d part” on the present stage before there is a “disagreeable . . . Change of the Scene” (179). Crisp’s invocation of the “State of Independence” is a curious one, considering his fears about the American war and the turmoil caused by American independence. That he commands Burney to turn her ambitions to independence while he is clearly unwilling to abdicate any measure of his influence (indeed, he does not even seem to see the irony of dictating independence because the idea of a truly independent female does not occur to him), suggests that he thinks only of her financial security, rather than any real autonomy.

The dream of independence, rendered impossible by the necessity of obedience to proper authority, is explored in *Cecilia* where even the financial independence promoted by Crisp is problematised, simply raising the heiress into a more privileged plane of slavery. The problem of independence is deconstructed by exposing the problems with those who enforce dependence: ‘proper authority’ is questioned through an exploration of the different models of masculinity embodied in Cecilia’s guardian figures – Belfield and Monckton, who vie for the role of conductor in London, Messrs Harrel, Delvile and Briggs, her triumvirate of guardians, and Mortimer Delvile her eventual husband. While the novel does end with the traditional marriage ending, the disruptive, indeed destructive, masculinity evidenced in the male characters, heroes, villains, and guardians alike, problematises male dominance in the sentimental family and suggests that men must liberate themselves in order that essential female independence can be won.

In a chapter entitled “An Argument,” a discussion of central importance to the themes of independence, virtue, and liberty and their relationship to gendered ideals takes place between Monckton and Belfield.

Ostensibly regarding Cecilia's project of living quietly in London, the conversation, which I will quote at length, features the opposing ideological forces of oligarchy and democracy that can be seen in the Revolution debates:

'You intend then, madam' said Mr. Belfield, "in defiance of these maxims of the world, to be guided by the light of your own understanding.'

'And such,' returned Mr. Monckton, 'at first setting out in life, is the intention of every one. The closet reasoner is always refined in his sentiments, and always confident in his virtue; but when he mixes with the world, when he thinks less and acts more, he soon finds the necessity of accommodating himself to such customs as are already received, and of pursuing quietly the track that is already marked out.'

'But not,' exclaimed Mr. Belfield, 'if he has the least grain of spirit! the beaten track will be the last that a man of parts will deign to tread,

For common rules were ne'er design'd
Directors of a noble mind.' . . .

'Deviations from common rules,' said Mr. Monckton . . . 'when they proceed from genius, are not merely pardonable, but admirable; . . . but so little genius as there is in the world, you must surely grant that pleas of this sort are very rarely to be urged.'

'And why rarely,' cried Belfield, 'but because your general rules, your appropriated customs, your settled forms, are but so many absurd arrangements to impede not merely the progress of genius, but the use of understanding? If a man dared act for himself, if neither worldly views, contracted prejudices, eternal precepts, nor compulsive examples swayed his better reason and

impelled his conduct, how noble indeed would he be! *how infinite in faculties! in apprehension how like a God!* (14-6)

Erik Bond (2003) is quite right to recognise in the above discussion “the two positions in the continuing argument between sovereignty and self-government that were so prevalent in Britain following the Glorious Revolution.”²⁰¹ However, as can be seen in the pamphlets engaged in dissecting the American Independence controversy, at the time of *Cecilia*’s composition and publication discussions of government have a new sense of currency and urgency.

Belfield’s desire for action and autonomy, his wish to liberate the ‘use of understanding’ from the constraints of ‘general rules,’ ‘appropriated customs,’ and ‘settled forms’ (or forms of settlement) is the desire to free himself, and all men, from an authority that has outlived its usefulness. Monckton, on the other hand, represents an oligarchic landed interest and a reactionary perception of self-government as a variety of anarchy – “would you wish to see the world peopled with defiers of order, and contemners of established forms? and not merely excuse the irregularities resulting from uncommon parts, but encourage those, also, to lead, who without blundering cannot even follow?” (16) he demands. In response, Belfield makes the case for independence:

I would have *all* men . . . whether philosophers or ideots, act for themselves. Every one would then appear what he is; enterprise would be encouraged, and imitation abolished; genius would feel its superiority, and folly its insignificance; and then, and then only, should we cease to be surfeited with that eternal sameness of manner and appearance which at present runs through the ranks of men. (16)

Belfield’s desire to liberate men from social tyranny is similar to Thomas Jefferson’s goal in the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) of delivering the

²⁰¹ “Farewell Mr. Villars” *Eighteenth-Century Novel* 3 (2003): 171-193. p. 175.

American people from political tyranny. Jefferson's invocation of the natural and inalienable rights scoffed at by Johnson underlies the fundamental equality of men that Belfield suggests in wishing all men to act for themselves. The claim that all are entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is precisely what Belfield is hinting at. Belfield, like Price and Jefferson, does not advocate anarchy, but a proper masculine self-assertion – the emphasis in his speech should almost be on men, instead of all. There is an underlying interrogation of what it means to be a man: whether men should pursue "quietly the track that is already marked out" – what Belfield characterises as the path of those spiritless machines – or act.

Belfield's concerns intersect with both the political debate and the eighteenth-century project to reform men from courtier rakes and country booby squires into polite and useful citizens. Central to the latter is a constant anxiety about performance and authenticity, a concern that self-fashioning will be abused by what Henry Fielding refers to as the "crafty and designing Part of Mankind."²⁰² Submitting to the status quo, a corrupt, oligarchic government, thus becomes a sort of mask or role to be adopted that conceals the true man beneath – that eternal sameness of manner and appearance suggests an army of automatons doing their master's bidding, instead of judging for themselves and behaving as men and citizens. Belfield's hope that if men conducted themselves according to their consciences "every one would then appear what he is," is realised at the Harrel's masquerade. As Fielding suggests, it is necessary to "masque the face/T'unmasque the mind," and the "Vizors and Habits" on display are particularly enlightening. Monckton's fiend costume exposes him as a man who has sold his soul in exchange for power. He marries the cantankerous Lady Margaret in exchange for the political power her land brings him, a calculated manoeuvre foiled by Lady Margaret's refusal to die on schedule and leave him free to enjoy his power and acquire Cecilia. Conversely, Belfield, who appears as the admirable but ridiculously idealistic Don Quixote, is the representative of independence;

²⁰² "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" *Miscellanies* vol. I. (London, 1743) p. 185.

however, Belfield's natural independence is just as problematic as Monckton's calculated submission to the way things are. While he rejects trade – the career marked out for him by his father – to dabble in the military and the law (perhaps a recapitulation of what the Americans had done – interrupted trade with Britain, taken up arms against her, and drawn up their own constitution) his insistence on man's natural independence is far too idealistic to form the basis of a functioning society. Thus the struggle between Monckton and Belfield highlights the need to find a balance between a corrupt masculinity in which the ends justify the means and a utopian vision of manly freedom.

All of this follows a woman's assertion of autonomy, adding an often overlooked dimension to the definition of citizenship and a gendered element to the family romance. While men were content to argue whether they should submit to authority or not, that women should submit was an uncontested fact – as McCormack observes, being independent requires dependants.²⁰³ However, as the novel progresses, the wisdom of this self-evident truth is questioned. Cecilia is placed in the position of a man of the ruling class – she has property, she has a name that she must bestow upon her spouse in order to protect her claim to that property, and when she comes of age, she will have the power of directing herself. But in this remaining nine months of childhood, she is subjected to such extremely faulty guardianship that Cecilia is denied self-government and stalled in her pursuit of happiness.

The themes of independence and corrupt government are explored in the tripartite guardianship to which Cecilia is subjected. Willed to Cecilia, along with her uncle's estate, the guardians constitute a trinity of qualities to be desired in a man – birth, wealth, and breeding. However, the three do not successfully operate as one: their specialisation breeds a self-interest that makes them not simply neglectful, but tyrannical. Compton Delvile, the man of family, represents the corrupt oligarchy that landed authority has

²⁰³*The Independent Man* p. 5, 20, 22. The bond between independence and dependants is part of the familial model of obligation.

become, while Mr. Briggs, the man of business, and Mr. Harrel, the man of fashion, represent opposing problems stemming from the power of money. These guardians demonstrate how the present state of power and wealth breeds dependence, even in those who wield them. Moreover, they trap their dependants in a cycle of corruption and tyranny.

The 'man of fashion,' Mr. Harrel serves as a fairly standard critique of those who aspire to the *haut ton* while gambling away the means to support their pretensions. Due to Mr. Harrel's inability to manage his finances, Cecilia describes his "disorderly" house as an abode "where terror, so continually awakened, was only to be lulled by the grossest imposition" (458). "Terror" is caused by the lack of funds, while imposition comes from Harrel extorting money from Cecilia through the worst sort of emotional blackmail. Harrel's constant scrounging for money, neglecting to pay the tradesmen who supply his lavish desires, and compulsive gambling illustrate the fears of Brown and Price, who attribute to the excess wealth of empire the moral degradation apparent in British society. The formula is simple: idleness plus wealth equals corruption, both in the social and political spheres. Mr. Briggs, on the other hand, demonstrates the opposite extreme of excessive wealth.

Mr. Briggs does not so much manage Cecilia's fortune as hoard it. The caricature Burney paints of the narrow-minded, illiberal businessman bears a striking resemblance to Brown's description of the wealthy trader:

the daily Increase of Wealth by Industry naturally increases the Love of Wealth. The Passion for Money, being founded, not in Sense, but Imagination, admits of no Satiety, like those which are called the natural Passions. Thus the Habit of saving Money beyond every other Habit, gathers Strength by continued Gratification. The Attention of the Whole Man is immediately turned upon it; and every other Pursuit held light when compared with the Increase of Wealth. Hence, the natural character

of the Trader, when his final Prospect is the Acquisition of Wealth, is that of *Industry* and *Avarice*. (154-5)

This money-mania prevents Briggs from properly performing the duties entrusted to him precisely because of the level of specialisation his role entails: his expertise blinds him to wider considerations of social responsibility and culture.

The masquerade provides a setting in which to assess the impact of these attitudes towards money. Fielding regarded the masquerade as a place where men's true selves were exposed ("masque the face/t'unmasque the mind"). A similar unveiling takes place on a social level in Burney's use of the masquerade. Terry Castle argues that for Burney the masquerade "has become almost exclusively an emblem of luxury and the improper use of riches" rather than as a site of sexual transgression.²⁰⁴ However, while Castle sees this focus as a failure to address feminist concerns, luxury and the proper use of wealth were highly charged subjects with wide-ranging political implications for society, masculinity, and the progress of the war. Excess, in the form of lavish decorations, decadent refreshments, and high play, is contrasted with an opposite excess marked by almost comical tightfistedness. When he arrives at the Harrel's masquerade smelling and covered in filth, Briggs appears very much as the Turk describes him: a "dirty dog" barking about extravagance and discomfort(118).

As the masquerade progresses, Burney's critique of wasteful extravagance gives way to a more serious exploration of the price of liberty and the cost of conquest. As the ballroom filled with masked figures "the general crowd gave general courage" and Cecilia is "attacked" in a manner both "pointed and singular" (107). The devil (Monckton in disguise) sets about protecting what he regards as his property. Though his guardianship annoys, Cecilia submits to captivity instead of offering resistance. When "An Hotspur" emerges from the crowd to rescue the fair prisoner, the masquerade is transformed into a tournament ground and the battle for Cecilia's liberty is

²⁰⁴ *Masquerade and Civilization* (1986) p. 260.

begun in earnest. After Hotspur “marche[s]” off in defeat, Mr. Arnott unsuccessfully enters the breach (he “retires in confusion” [108]), followed by Belfield’s Don Quixote. A “mock fight” ensues, creating the diversion that Cecilia needs to make herself a “free agent” (110). Cecilia’s respite is short lived; however, when “*Don Devil*” returns, she has new protectors in a Harlequin and a white domino. Shouting “*I’ll cross him though he blast me*” the white domino, concealing the hero Mortimer Delvile, launches himself at the devil, grasps one of the his horns, and calls on the Harlequin to join the advance. Monckton’s “rage” at the attack propels the mock battle from pantomime to all-out war, as he and Motimer engage in a “perepetual rotation of attack and retreat” (111). This final push succeeds in releasing Cecilia from a confinement in which her “mind seemed almost as little at liberty as [her] person” (112).

The chivalric nature of the battle at the Harrel’s masquerade raises concerns about rights and ownership as various knights enter the ring essentially to win custody of the lady from her captor. The real issue of liberty, the independence that Cecilia craves, is lost amidst what Briggs later describes as the “Stuffing, and piping, and hopping!” (453) of the masquerade. While Briggs’s verbs apparently refer to food, music, and dancing, they are also verbs of the battlefield: stuffing becomes the act of wadding and loading a gun; piping suggests the bosun’s pipe on a man of war, the pipes of a Highland regiment, or the piping that is the barrel of a gun; hopping is the limp of the wounded. Similarly, in the war abroad the values of English liberalism, of liberty and independence, are forgotten in a corrupt dispute over ownership, taxation rights, and power. Despite Briggs’s complaint that the masquerade (and by extension the war that it mimicks) is a “Pretty way to spend money,” Burney makes plain that the true cost of domination is the liberty of both dominated and dominator.

The abuse of financial power is marked by selfishness and a self-interest that prevents men from being citizens. While land was seen to be the guarantee of civic virtue, Cecilia’s third guardian, Mr. Delvile, demonstrates

the ways in which landed power has been corrupted into oligarchic tyranny. Furthermore, Mr. Delvile translates this public corruption into private disorder, highlighting the domestic family romance. Not only is he the hero's father and the future father-in-law of the heroine, he is the husband of an unhappy wife and a man whose castle has a lot to say both about him and his society. Delvile's relationship with his dependants does not only illustrate the straightforward family romance rejection of tiresome parents: Burney uses him to highlight the gendered implications of the family romance – the tyrannical figure as both generically a parent and specifically a patriarch. The romance of the courtship plot is meant to make the sentimental family, but in Burney's formulation the family romance becomes an attempt to elude the grasp of the tyrannical husband acting *in loco parentis*.

The portrait Burney paints of Mr. Delvile at his family pile is telling:

secure in his own castle, he looks around him with pride of power and of possession which softened while it swelled him. His superiority was undisputed, his will was without controul. He was not, as in the great capital of the kingdom, surrounded by competitors; no rivalry disturbed his peace, no equality mortified his greatness; all he saw were vassals of his power, or guests bending to his pleasure; he abated therefore, considerably, the stern gloom of his haughtiness, and soothed his proud mind by the courtesy of condescension. (458)

This passage contrasts Delvile's public and private relation to power in a way that emphasises the feudal structure he inhabits. Though his superiority and will are assumed undisputed at Delvile Castle, in London, Delvile must compete with his fellow courtiers for influence: all of them are dependent, essentially high level vassals paying fealty for favours. He pays for his domestic absolutism through public dependence on a more powerful tyrant. Delvile's pride of place and hereditary claim to authority are put into wider perspective by Briggs, who, reducing Delvile's inheritance to "clay and dirt!"

fine things to be proud of!” points out that Delvile has “no more of the ready than other folks” (454). While I have already suggested that money and power have a problematic relationship, such resources as secure independence are essential to proper political power. Instead of being the model landed gentleman, whose birth and property should secure his civic virtue, Delvile is, as Briggs suggests, a “Spanish Don” (454-5). It is interesting that Briggs identifies Delvile with the Spanish aristocracy and absolutist monarchy as it suggests just how far the ruling class has sunk from British ideals of liberty. Britain’s natural rulers are now allied to her enemies through their corruption. The impact of this national decline in civil liberty is reinforced in the image of Delvile Castle as a prison.

When Mr. Delvile’s impertinent niece Lady Honoria describes “some capital alterations” that simply must be made, she advises removing the windows and replacing them with “thick iron grates . . . and so turn the castle into a gaol for the county” (505). While Mortimer can laugh at this suggestion, it nearly sends his father into an apoplectic fit, as he declares such an action to be evidence of a family and an estate in decline. However flippant Lady Honoria’s suggestion, the equation of Delvile castle with a prison suggests the ways in which property, instead of guaranteeing virtue, has become a prison hampering the evolution of society and politics. Furthermore, the idea of being held against one’s will has implications for the family and resonances with the family romance rhetoric of the American war.

The Delvile marriage, like the castle, is built on name, blood, and honour, underscoring the political nature of the union and family formation more generally. This loveless model of marriage, which is meant to be perpetuated by the next generation through Mortimer’s projected dynastic merger, provides another level of meaning to Burke’s observation that, “[b]odies tied together by so unnatural a bond of union, as mutual hatred, are only connected to their ruin” (47). Though “[t]o love Mr. Delvile . . . was impossible” due to his being “proud without merit, and imperious without

capacity,” because “she respected his birth and his family, of which her own was a branch” Mrs. Delvile behaved to her husband “with the strictest propriety” in the face of misery (461). This respect for tradition, for family, for history is also evident on the part of the American colonists who claimed rights and regarded themselves as citizens based on their British heritage, and as they watched the corruption of their colonial masters grow, they were less and less content to behave to them with propriety or obedience. When Mrs. Delvile does finally break with her husband over the issue of Mortimer and Cecilia’s marriage, it is a version of the declaration of Independence, only with the wife rather than the child throwing off oppressive authority. Mrs. Delvile’s blessing and her husband’s “displeasure . . . at [her] declaration,” related in a letter from Delvile, results in mutual irritation so severe that “they agreed to meet no more” (815). Their irreconcilable differences centre on a conflict between duty and virtue: Mrs. Delvile refuses to allow inherited principles, or “low and mercenary selfishness” (815) masquerading as duty, to inhibit her son’s pursuit of happiness (here associated with independence and, consequently, political virtue), to ruin his life as it has ruined hers.

Yet the principles of honour and family inculcated in young Delvile are not the only inherited ideals complicating his life. The conflicting modes of masculinity and power presented by the guardians paint a bleak picture of the state of English masculinity as trapped by the corruption of power and money into tyranny and selfish acquisitiveness, a corruption that renders men the dependants of their self-interest. Unfortunately, the hero does little to restore the reader’s faith in men. The struggle to become a man, to act for himself, as Belfield would have it, and to know what kind of man to become is explored in Mortimer Delvile. Neither a philosopher nor an idiot, Mortimer is a confused boy who cannot appear to be what he is because he does not know what he is, an identity confusion that is highlighted by the fact that he makes his entrance at the Masquerade.

Initially, Mortimer Delvile’s entrance as the White Domino seems to live up to a Grandisonian ideal of heroism and masculinity; however, when Sir

Charles rescues Harriet Byron it takes place in the ‘real’ world that he will subsequently rehabilitate. Mortimer’s knight-errantry is exposed as play-acting (emphasised by his misquotation of Horatio from *Hamlet* 1.1) and his success in staving off the fiend Monckton at the masquerade is only temporary. His final capitulation to the role of man of honour – signalled by his duel with Monckton – reveals his inability to break the enslaving bonds of tradition and, as I will demonstrate, consigns Cecilia to slavery along with him.

Though Mortimer appears as the romantic hero-apparent dressed, as Castle observes, “in a chic (and morally impeccable) white domino,” his subsequent assertion that he will be found “as inoffensive as the hue of the domino [he] wear[s]” (116) immediately raises suspicion.²⁰⁵ The blankness of his white costume gestures towards the ways in which identity must be constructed through self-fashioning and suggests that Mortimer himself has the power to decide whether he joins the path of the spiritless machines or acts for himself. However, the infantilisation that Burke posits as the result of Britain trying to confine its colonies to a cradle also hampers Mortimer’s masculine development. Lady Honoria notes that “the poor child is made so much of by its papa and mama, that I wish they don’t half kill him by their ridiculous fondness. It is amazing to me he is so patient with them, for if they teized me half so much, I should be ready to jump up and shake them” (488). Later, when the attempt to separate Mortimer from his love produces a nervous illness, his parents propose a trip to Bristol in order to speed his recovery and Lady Honoria makes another satirically snide but politically charged observation: “A new scheme of politics!” she declares,

our great statesman intends to leave us: he can’t trust his baby out of his sight, so he is going to nurse him while upon the road himself. Poor pretty dear Mortimer! What a puppet do they make of him! I have a vast inclination to get a pap-boat myself, and make him a present of it. (515)

²⁰⁵ *Masquerade* p. 263.

She then proceeds to grab a napkin and proposes to send it to her cousin as a “*slabbering-bib*”:

she therefore made it up in a parcel, and wrote upon the inside of the paper with which she enveloped it, “A *pin-a-fore* for Master Mortimer Delvile, lest he should daub his pappy when he is feeding him.” (516)

His status as Master, as a boy not yet old enough for the dignity of Mister, prevents his being master of himself. Mortimer, as a dependent close to his mother (despite having actually attained his majority), is one of those “disadvantaged by the cult of the independent man,” and his dependence is made more unpalatable because his obligation is to a man who is himself dependent on the whims of the court. The effects of corruption run so deep that even a trip to Bristol, Burke’s pro-independence constituency, cannot resuscitate a masculine spirit strangled by apron stings.²⁰⁶

Doody suggests that, like Richardson before her, Burney offers Mortimer as a corrective to an earlier hero. However, rather than atoning for a dangerously attractive rake, Burney revises the “too perfect a gentleman” that is Lord Orville and retreats from the optimistic belief that “at some far-off point the system of class, primogeniture, male authority, and money might in a Grandisonian manner be made harmonious with benevolence and feminine development.”²⁰⁷ Doody also considers Mortimer as a riposte to Grandison, as a romantic hero “ruthlessly presented in his defects” (xxx). Because he is “burdened by the emblematic persona of his name,” Mortimer cannot take on an emblematic character, or indeed any true character at all: “the burden of impersonating an abstraction is sapping his vitality” (xxxi). Mortimer represents the failure of the ruling classes: their focus on birth and rank, and keeping the bloodlines and the name pure, has resulted in a weakling who cannot bear the burden of personal identity.

As he struggles to reconcile the opposing forces of civic humanist

²⁰⁶ I am using corruption here not to indicate the acceptance of bribes or the like, but a civic humanist notion of corruption that constitutes a deviation from virtue and independence, a departure from things as they should be.

²⁰⁷ “Introduction” (1988) p. xxx.

independence and feudal chivalry, Mortimer is crushed into the sameness that Belfield deplors. Initially he appears to be an Orvillian exemplar of politeness: his “noble openness of manners and address” his elegant education, the “liberality of his mind” (152) is complemented by his seeming to be “manly, generous, open-hearted, and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and spirited in his actions” (252).

However, his behaviour becomes rather more erratic as the novel progresses. He seems to be an ideal gentleman, combining the attributes of birth, and breeding, but he cannot translate this virtue into political agency, a disenfranchisement enacted in his embattled courtship of Cecilia. Though marriage should solidify his independent status, parental disapproval and interference thwart Mortimer’s bid for masculine citizenship.²⁰⁸ His parents, particularly his father, object to the union because the name clause would require Mortimer to symbolically renounce his blood in exchange for wealth. In struggling to adhere to his family’s narrow feudal-chivalric definition of masculinity, Mortimer is doomed to failure and to a dependence antithetical to masculinity because he cannot bring himself to declare his independence from family authority.

Mortimer’s mantle of masculinity is a debilitating burden rather than a natural attribute. The identity he must assume by virtue of his birth and the land he will inherit should, in a civic humanist analysis of the situation, guarantee his independence and render him fit for political power. However, it is this narrow definition of masculine virtue that is the problem:

Mortimer’s connection to land makes him dependent on the whims of his father and perpetuates a cycle of tyranny. Land, like money, is an inadequate basis of power. In making the novel’s lone sensible ruler a woman whose sex arbitrarily invalidates her for power, Burney suggests that truly

²⁰⁸ John Tosh notes that “setting up a new household is the essential qualification for manhood. The man who speaks for familial dependants and who can transmit his name and his assets to future generations is fully masculine. The break is all the clearer when it is recognized that marriage requires setting up a new household, not forming a sub-unit within the parental home” (“What Should Historians do with Masculinity” p. 185). This process is complicated in *Cecilia* in a number of ways, not least of which is in Cecilia’s ‘masculine’ status in having name and assets to transmit and also because the newly wedded couple continue to live with Mrs. Delvile.

just criterion for authority should be individual capacity rather than the social and economic structures by which individuals are identified and organised.

The failure of men to declare their independence from inherited prejudice, as Mortimer in particular illustrates, affects women in ways that speak to the status of British society and civilisation. In order for Cecilia to be successfully integrated into society – the end of the classic comic plot – she must lose, at least temporarily, her mind, her memory, and her money, surely a tragic end that emphasises the utterly dependent status of women. The desire to form a more perfect union – unlike his parents, Mortimer “would disdain an alliance in which [his] affections had no share” (500) – founded in independence and built on mutual affection is thwarted by a final capitulation to the unsatisfactory sentimental family, an institution which perpetuates both a dangerous chivalric masculinity and a tyrannical model of government. Keeping women locked in this sentimental cage suggests that the progress of men has also been stalled and that before women can be liberated, men must liberate themselves.

The novel’s tragicomic ending drew some criticism. Edmund Burke wished that the conclusion had either been happier or more tragic, “for”, as he observes, “in a work of imagination . . . there is no medium.”²⁰⁹ However, Burney defended her ending as more realistic, noting to Daddy Crisp, who also criticised the conclusion, that “if I am made to give up this point, my whole plan is rendered abortive, and the last page of any novel in Mr. Noble’s circulating library may serve for the last page of mine.”²¹⁰ Marriage, like the hero, is, to borrow Doody’s phrase, ruthlessly presented in its defects. This exposure, I suggest, marks a turning point, not just for Burney, but for the women writers who build on her investigation of masculinity and gendered power. In *Evelina* the heroine’s difficulties are solved by the intervention of a truly good man; however, in *Cecilia* this solution is exposed as too simplistic for a society crippled by its unwillingness to adapt.

²⁰⁹ *Diary and Letters* vol. ii. p. 159. qtd. Doody “Introduction,” p. xxxvii.

²¹⁰ qtd. Doody “Introduction” p. xxxviii.

Part III
Charlotte Smith, Jane West, and the War of Ideals,
1789-1802.

Chapter 4
“The best were only men of theory”:
Masculinity, Revolution, and Reform, 1789-1793.

In chapters two and three I establish that masculine virtue and gentility are being renegotiated in Burney’s response to contemporary concerns about masculinity. Lord Orville’s ‘good man’ credentials are enough to ensure Evelina’s happiness, but in *Cecilia* Burney shows that the fairy tale independent good man is hard to find. Mortimer Delvile’s struggles to throw off parental tyranny and gain independence and reform society through marriage are thwarted because he is too much a part of the chivalric feudalism he seeks to escape. As I move to consider the works of Charlotte Smith and Jane West written in the ideological upheaval of the French Revolution, I will explore how the continuing struggle between chivalric slavery and republican independence continues in the context of France’s wholesale rejection of feudal tyranny, hereditary government, and, in Edmund Burke’s estimation, chivalric masculinity.

In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke blasts the French both for mounting a political revolution and for attempting to export its disruptive values. In assessing the quality of many of the newly instated members of the French national assembly, Burke highlighted their dangerous enthusiasm and declared that “the best were only men of theory” (40). While Burke certainly lamented the revolutionaries’ lack of experience, he found their espousal of enlightenment philosophy, their confidence in the “personal self-sufficiency of their own ideas,” and their complete disregard for tradition – in essence their independence – particularly worrying. While the revolutionaries tested their theories in successive governments, in the literary public sphere a different variety of men of theory – or rather, theoretical men – was being cultivated and presented for the reading public’s consideration. Taking their cues from debates in the republic of letters, women novelists across the political spectrum examined the tensions between a rational enlightenment masculinity and the chivalric manliness enshrined

in Burkean conservatism. In the experimental space of the novel, Charlotte Smith and Jane West, two of the most prolific and political female novelists of the period, tested the viability of the dominant discourses of masculinity while providing insight into their real and imagined impact on women. But unlike Burke, who could reject the enlightened philosopher in favour of the traditional knight, women novelists recognised that both masculine types were theoretical, that the ideal man was as theoretical as the ideal woman. Throughout this chapter, as well as the next, I will argue that Smith and West deconstruct these theoretical masculinities in the virtual space of the novel and, drawing on the experience of women as subjects of the real creature man, form the foundations of a new model of masculinity.

Much has been written about the women novelists of the 1790s. Their novels have figured prominently in studies of Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin novels and the radicalism or conservatism of particular authors has been explored and debated.²¹¹ My engagement with the 1790s builds on the work of literary critics and historians, but also seeks to redress some of what I regard as problems in the existing scholarship. There are many things to be considered in a study of the French revolution and the wars it gave rise to: the intellectual upheaval produced by the revolution in France; the shock waves that reverberated throughout the English republic of letters; the political manoeuvrings of the Pitt administration; and whether or not the Revolutionary wars were in fact driven by ideology. All of these things contribute to what Marilyn Butler²¹² calls the “war of ideas,” which involved most, if not all, publications of the period. Butler’s claim that the literature of the 1790s is intrinsically ideological, containing “plain, communicable signs” marking “a polarized political alignment” (xv), constituted a radical shift in literary criticism and opened the way for subsequent investigations of

²¹¹ For discussions of the Jacobin novel see Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976); Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* (London: Longman, 1992) esp. chapter 2. For the Anti-Jacobin novel see M.O. Grenby, *The Anti-jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2001). Marilyn Butler considers both Jacobins and anti-Jacobins in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) as does Angela Keane in *Romantic Belongings* (2000).

²¹² *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975)

contemporary social and political debates in the literature of the period. Gary Kelly's *The English Jacobin Novel* (1976) provides an in-depth analysis of the Jacobin genre, including the intellectual provenance of the "complex values and beliefs" embodied in four central novelists (Godwin, Holcroft, Bage, and Inchbald).²¹³ M. O. Grenby's *The Anti-jacobin Novel* (2001) seeks to establish the novels of the conservative reaction as part of a cohesive ideological movement (11-12). While Butler suggests that the novel might not have been the best medium for the dissemination of English radical ideals, Kelly sees the innovations of the Jacobin novelists as providing a bridge between the novel's origins in Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson and its more recognisable nineteenth-century form. Grenby also explores the influence of the anti-jacobin form of the novel on later fiction, suggesting that the conventions established by the anti-jacobin novelists were "appropriated for the fundamentally non-political fictions of the ensuing, post-Revolutionary age" is evidence of a conservatism ingrained in the English popular imagination at the time (12).

These three studies are predicated on the idea that ideological fiction is necessarily, and obviously partisan,²¹⁴ and studies that consider gender – almost exclusively how novelists explore, subvert, and theorise expectations

²¹³ Kelly suggests that while the English Jacobins were actually politically Girondins, their radical beliefs were home-grown: "formed from the empirical psychology of Locke and Hartley, the republican politics of the eighteenth-century 'Commonwealthmen', the rational religion of the Scottish philosophers, and the historical optimism of the French Enlightenment. They too took the motto *écrase l'infâme*, often because they too had direct personal experience of social, moral or legal oppression. They opposed tyranny and oppression, be it domestic, national or international, spiritual or temporal; they were against all distinctions between men which were not based on moral qualities, or virtue; and they were utterly opposed to persecution of individuals, communities, or nations for their beliefs on any subject. Most important of all, they saw history, both past and present, as an account of the efforts of some men to establish the rule of reason against its enemies, which were not imagination and feeling, but error and prejudice" (7).

²¹⁴ Butler's exploration of the novels of the 1790s, both Jacobin and anti-Jacobin, are deployed in order to argue for the conservatism of Jane Austen's novels. Kelly's Jacobin survey is confined to the most obviously and consistently radical, polemical novelists. And though there have been suggestions that some novelists, particularly those labelled conservative, have more complicated ideologies, Grenby's attempt to establish the anti-Jacobins as a coherent group, even an "aggregate text" (11), seeks to keep the two camps firmly separated and free from ideological waffling.

and ideals of femininity – have largely reproduced this assumption.²¹⁵ However, as I shall demonstrate, masculinity is equally important in these novels: examining male characters problematises what earlier critics have concluded about ideological divisions and feminist expression. Furthermore, a closer attention to genre is particularly important. While the novel form has sometimes been seen as almost secondary to political considerations, underneath the ‘Jacobin’ and ‘anti-jacobin’ labels are novels featuring generic conventions inherited from sentimental, picaresque, gothic, *bildung*, and courtship novels. The Jacobin/anti-Jacobin distinction has hindered nuanced readings of many women’s novels by drawing attention away from the ways in which women novelists work with and rework various subgeneric conventions and respond to earlier novels. This separation of genre and ideology has begun to be addressed in relation to Smith,²¹⁶ and I intend to build on this work in order to demonstrate the ways in which the use of generic conventions – especially as regards the hero – is important to determining how the medium helps to fashion the message and how form might undercut stated ideological positions. For example, Jane West and her novels are continually held up as examples of unadulterated conservatism, an assessment I disagree with. If, as I intend to show, the exemplar of conservative reaction actually advocates reform, the distinction between Jacobin and anti-Jacobin, at least as far as women novelists are concerned, has lost its usefulness. By exploring the deployment and/or exposure of

²¹⁵ With the emergence of a radical feminism (as opposed to Mary Astell’s Tory feminist engagement with Locke in the 1680s) in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, most explorations of gender in the 1790s focus on the presence or absence of feminism in texts written by women. Claudia L. Johnson’s *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (1988) investigates the impact of political ideology on gender politics as she makes the case for a more radical Austen. Eleanor Ty examines both sides of the ideological debate, first in *Unsex’d Revolutionaries* (1995) to investigate those writers that she sees as particularly engaged in a feminist project, including Wollstonecraft, Hays, Inchbald, and Smith, and second in *Empowering the Feminine* (1998), a work that posits non-radical writers, Mary Robinson, Amelia Opie, and Jane West, as seeking to better the lot of women without seeming to either advocate a social revolution or ruffle any feathers. Gary Kelly also explores the feminist potential of the novels of this period in *Women, Writing and Revolution* (1993), a study that places the novels of the 1790s in the context of a larger cultural revolution, a concept that serves to complicate the ideological divisions of the 1790s and the reformist goals of novelists by exploring them as part of a longer, more established trend, rather than as simply the product of the French revolutionary moment.

²¹⁶ Smith’s use of Gothic and romance conventions is considered in relation to her political philosophy in the work of Janina Nordius, Elinor Wikbourg, and Angela Keane.

multiple generic conventions in single novels in specific relation to the question of masculinity, I will show that Smith's and West's political positions are far more complicated than their broad political categorisation can account for.

In order to undertake this task, the complex political, social, military, and literary contexts of the 1790s must be examined in relation to their impact on ideas about gender. Lynn Hunt's work demonstrates that in France, the Revolutionaries were faced with the challenge of de-paternalising government after Louis XVI's execution and moving forward with a government based on an (exclusively male) *fraternité* that preserved traditional patriarchal gender roles.²¹⁷ In England, as Claudia Johnson's research shows, France's move from paternal to fraternal models of authority sparked a debate over the nature of government and masculine citizenship. Burke's *Reflections* and Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), for example, explore anxieties about the natural behaviour of man and the effects of civilization expressed in the competing ideals of chivalric heroism, grounded in a traditional, if not precisely feudal, society, and rational manliness, predicated on the belief that republican virtue will release man from the bonds of tyranny.

The political upheaval of the Revolution translated into social and familial upheaval in France and opened up the possibility of female agency and citizenship (as demonstrated in the life and works of Olympe de Gouges

²¹⁷ *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (1992). p. 5, 67-71. Hunt explores the conflict between hierarchy in the state and in the family, state tyranny and family tyranny, and the challenges of redefining politics without redefining the family. Aristocratic (and other) families were split on whether to remain loyal to the king or join the Revolutionaries (though most remained loyal). Many loyalists emigrated, while those who remained faced the guillotine. Furthermore, by abolishing rank and titles, the French social structure was given a complete overhaul. Wollstonecraft's *Vindications of the Rights of Men* (1791) seems to support this idea, as does Claudia Johnson's analysis of that work. Furthermore, Lynn Hunt's analysis of the family romance in the French revolution and the revolutionaries' attempts to turn a patriarchy into fraternity also suggest the centrality of masculinity and masculine (republican) virtue to the Revolution (see esp. p. 67-71). For a thorough overview of the revolution and its international context, and particularly excellent bibliography with an examination of trends in the historiography of the French Revolution, see William Doyle's *Oxford History of the French Revolution*. 2nd Ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2002). See also Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*. 3rd Ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1999). For an examination of Britain's role in the Revolutionary wars, see Ian R. Christie, *Wars and Revolutions: Britain, 1760-1815* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982) especially chapters 9 and 10.

and Madame Rolande, for example).²¹⁸ In England, women writers were also concerned to explore the potential implications that man liberating himself would have for women. The contributions of women writers like Catherine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft to this debate raised concerns about the gendered nature of virtue – particularly relevant considering that the civic humanism dominating contemporary political discourse was predicated on ruling-class masculine virtue – and claimed ‘masculine’ virtue (the capacity for rational thought and reasoned argument) for themselves. The resulting backlash against their assertions, from radicals and conservatives alike, reveals anxieties about the state of the sexes. As Paul Keen (1999) notes,

At the heart of anxieties about what seemed to many to be the fact that, as a result of the privatizing effects of commercial culture, the manly virtue of previous eras had given way to a degrading effeminacy in manners and conduct, was the suspicion that men had ceased to behave as men ought to do.²¹⁹

Though these anxieties are projected onto the “manly women” (199) invading the public sphere and claiming masculine virtue, at root they are anxieties about men – if women become men, what will become of men?

While various men answered the question in ways that almost always reinscribed traditional femininity,²²⁰ I will argue that women novelists set out to solve the problem of what men should become in the experimental space of

²¹⁸ Olympe de Gouge’s most famous work is the *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (September 1791), which demanded for women the same rights claimed by men in 1789. Her criticism of the Jacobins led to her execution during the Terror (Sian Reynolds, “Gouges, Olympe de,” *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*. (1995). Madame Roland was an important political figure and salonnière during the early years of the Revolution. She, along with her husband, a former interior minister, was executed during the Terror (Peter France “Roland, Marie-Jeanne Phlipon, Madame” *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French* (1995).

²¹⁹ *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) p.198.

²²⁰ This pattern is evident in the works of Richardson and Rousseau, as I discussed in chapter 1. Also, Richard Polwhele’s praise of “the incomparable” (vi) Hannah More’s masculine mind in *The Unsex’d Females* is qualified by her attention to feminine modesty. In a note, Polwhele declares that More is “diametrically opposite” to Wollstonecraft except in her “genius and literary attainments”: “To the great natural endowments of Miss W. Miss More has added the learning of lady Jane Gray without the pedantry, and the Christian graces of Mrs. Rowe, without her enthusiasm” (47). Polwhele goes on to praise her careful attention to the “distinction of the sexes in her various works.” Also, see Keen p. 181.

the novel in a way that provides a role for man while leaving room for a female virtue independent of chastity.

Furthermore, connections must also be drawn between the war of ideas in the public sphere and the physical war being fought by land and sea. As I discuss in chapter three, during the American War martial manliness had largely failed the empire, exacerbating existing anxieties about proper masculinity. The French Revolution, as Johnson in particular demonstrates, was yet another destabilising influence on a traditional English manliness. In the debates that take place between Price, Paine, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft on the radical side, and Burke and his supporters among the conservatives, rational masculinity and chivalric heroism are juxtaposed, however the stakes of this theoretical battle are raised by the physical battle being waged on the continent and the threat of French invasion. In order to understand the ways in which chivalry and republican masculinity are reconciled into the new brand of rational English heroism that is forged during the Napoleonic wars, it is essential to understand both military and philosophical man. Issues of political reform, citizenship and governance, and defence intersect with ideas of rank, gender, and the role of literature in an increasingly embattled print culture, where competing, masculine ideals are not merely rhetorical devices, but fundamental indicators of political allegiances. Endorsing a certain variety of masculinity, I will argue, is tantamount to declaring one's political allegiances.

Excuse me . . . if I have dwelt too long on the atrocious spectacle of the sixth of October, 1789, or have given too much scope to the reflections which have arisen in my mind on occasion of the most important of all revolutions, which may be dated from that day, I mean a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions.²²¹

The transformative power of the French revolution was not confined to

²²¹ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) p. 80.

government and political structures, but, as Edmund Burke recognised, the revolution constituted a fundamental challenge to traditional social structures, even civilization as it was then known.²²² As Hunt suggests, dismantling the French absolutist monarchy in favour of an enlightened republic also constituted a challenge to the system of chivalry that formed the basis of France's feudal society. The revolutionaries themselves soon realised the difficulties associated with taking the symbolic father, the paternal, out of patriarchal politics, in their tumultuous attempts to move the people of France out of their political adolescence to the rights of full citizenship. The interconnection between political and social structures is also investigated in the war of ideas that rages in the English republic of letters throughout the 1790s and, in its treatment of politics and chivalry, has important implications for the contemporary discussions of manly ideals and masculine identities.

The revolution in France coincided with a celebration of Britain's own Glorious Revolution and also rejuvenated the debates on citizenship and forms of government current during the American revolution. While responses to the revolution began as congratulatory statements, rejoicing, like Dr. Richard Price, that "THIRTY MILLIONS of people" were finally "spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty," Edmund Burke's articulation of concern at the implications of the revolution for the very fabric of civilization reoriented the debate.²²³

Price's *Discourse* articulates an ideal of an enlightened and *masculine* citizenship. Enlightenment, which involves spreading the "just ideas of civil government," has the power to elevate savages and barbarians. "Shew them

²²² For a discussion of the connection between civilisation and chivalry, see Frans De Bruyn "Edmund Burke and the Political Quixote" *ECF* 16 4 (2004): 695-733. For an analysis of feminist responses to chivalry and civilisation, see Laura Runge, "Beauty and Gallantry" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25 (2001): 43-63.

²²³ Price's *A Discourse on the love of our Country*, a sermon delivered 4 November 1789 to the Revolution Society to commemorate the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, was a call to complete the revolution by removing the Test Acts that disenfranchised Dissenters. Price also responds to the National Assembly's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a document that declared all men free and equal and the role of government to be the protection of the citizen's rights and freedoms (France. *La constitution française*. 1791).

they are *men*,” declares Price, “and they will act like *men*.”²²⁴ The masculinity of citizenship was not always explicit in Revolutionary discourse and feminists, assuming that ‘man’ was used in its universal rather than gender-specific form, saw in the revolution the promise of political and social emancipation.²²⁵ Citizenship is gendered male, while masculine identity is predicated on reason and virtue. Price demands consistency in his ideal of manly patriotism and a transparency in the individual’s public and private personas: “Oh! that I could see in men who oppose tyranny in the state, a disdain of the tyranny of low passions in themselves.”²²⁶

While Price embraced a new ideal of government and society, Burke clung tenaciously to tradition, and his defence of chivalry and traditional institutions was one of the main targets of critics of the *Reflections*. While Burke’s lament that “the age of chivalry is gone” caused Thomas Paine to demand “Is this the language of a rational man?”²²⁷ and stigmatise him as a defender of the rights of the dead, chivalry, as Claudia L. Johnson and Frans De Bruyn have shown, is integral to Burke’s reading of the Revolution.²²⁸

Though Burke’s “Quixotism” was often depicted as madness and a loss of reason,²²⁹ De Bruyn demonstrates that this quixotic character was part of Burke’s political self-fashioning, and as much a part of his style as his message. Indeed, David Duff observes, to dismiss Burke’s

chivalric idealization of the *ancien régime* was to run the

²²⁴ *Discourse* p. 12; my emphasis.

²²⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft discusses this potential in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but this definition of citizenship was also tested during the American Revolution. In 1776 New Jersey “adopted a constitution that ignored gender barriers in its suffrage clause” granting the right to vote to adult residents worth £50. This is in contrast to other states who confined suffrage to white male inhabitants. For more on this see Judith Apter Klinghoffer and Lois Elkis, “The Petticoat Electors” *Journal of the Early Republic* 12(1992): 159-193, p. 159. In France, though woman was the symbol of liberty (Marianne), Olympe de Gouges and Madame Roland were ultimately guillotined for their attempts to participate in politics and carve out a place for women in the public sphere. For more on women as political symbols see Marina Warner *Monuments and Maidens* (London: Weidenfeld, 1985).

²²⁶ *Discourse* p. 42-3.

²²⁷ *Rights of Man* Part I (1791) p. 62.

²²⁸ For Johnson’s discussion of Burke and gender see *Equivocal Beings*, especially the introduction.

²²⁹ As early as the 1780s in the aftermath of Rockingham’s death, Burke was seen as overly emotional and unstable. In response to Boswell reporting that the soundness of Burke’s mind was being questioned, Samuel Johnson famously retorted that “if a man will appear extravagant, as he does, and cry, can he wonder that he is represented as mad?” (qtd. F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke* (Oxford: OUP, 1998) p. 425)

risk of dismissing the chivalric ideals themselves, some of which (generosity and justice, for example) would clearly merit a place in any theory of private or public virtue.²³⁰

Chivalry's centrality in civilising feudal society was acknowledged by many theorists of civilisation, because it mitigated the "constant exercise of predatory incursions upon their neighbours" by "opulent proprietors of land" through a promotion of "valour, humanity, courtesy, justice, [and] honour."²³¹ Christianity further contributed, in Adam Ferguson's estimation, by uniting "the characters of the hero and the saint," characters that Burke translates into the foundation of European civilisation in "the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion."²³²

The revolution, in rejecting feudalism, challenged the basis of French civilisation. As Johnson suggests, Burke saw the Revolution as a crisis of sentiment and consequently of gender; therefore, a rejection of chivalry constitutes a rejection of gender norms. Throughout the *Reflections* Burke promotes the merits of the traditional, chivalric masculine character, noting specifically that "thanks to the cold sluggishness of our national character" the British "still bear the stamp of our forefathers . . . we have not subtilized ourselves into savages" (86). For Burke the choice is chivalric masculinity and civilization or savagery. For Paine and the proponents of the rights of man, however, the rejection of chivalry and feudalism constitutes graduating to a new level of civilization. Invoking natural man as a true estimate of man's nature, Paine argues that it is governments, and not the revolution, that "thrusting themselves between" men are "presumptuously working to *un-make* man."²³³ In this way, the revolution promises to be a "regeneration of man" (*RMI* 117).

The nature of chivalry, as an example of 'things as they are,' is

²³⁰ David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) 31. qtd. De Bruyn p. 708.

²³¹ Millar, John. *The origin of the distinction of ranks*. 3rd ed. (London, 1779), p. 86-7; Robertson, William. *The history of the reign of the Emperor Charles V*. (London, 1769). vol. I. p. 70.

²³² Ferguson, Adam. *An essay on the history of civil society*. (1767). p. 309; Burke, *Reflections*, p. 79.

²³³ *RMI* p. 76.

explored in William Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* (1794). Along with fellow radical Thomas Holcroft, Godwin "worked out a comprehensive political philosophy of anarchism and democracy based on reason and benevolence" thereby fusing "the major elements of Enlightenment and Sentimental ideas and values."²³⁴ While Holcroft immediately articulated these ideals in fiction (*Anna St. Ives* [1792], *Hugh Trevor* [1793-4]), Godwin published *Political Justice* (1793) before re-articulating his ideas in *Caleb Williams* (1793-4). The change in genre was influenced in part by the growing political crisis in Britain, and the result is an exposure of the "'unreason' of the chivalric culture celebrated by Burke in an attempt to rouse his countrymen to the truths of 'political justice' and thus to avoid a violent political confrontation such as had occurred in France."²³⁵ While Burke lauds chivalry as "the unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations," and "the nurse of manly sentiments and heroic entreprize"²³⁶ and Paine dismisses it as the effeminising mental bastille of aristocrats,²³⁷ Godwin's narrative suggests that chivalry must be destroyed in order to save truth and justice.

Godwin's chivalric hero/villain Ferdinando Falkland is modelled in part on two earlier chivalric ideals, Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison and Cervantes's Don Quixote.²³⁸ Through most of the first volume, Falkland is an admirable character and a credit to the institution Burke lauds as the guarantee of order, justice, and liberty. However, as Caleb begins to unravel the mystery surrounding the death of the querulous Mr. Tyrrel (he is murdered after publicly humiliating Falkland) and Falkland's subsequent

²³⁴ Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period* (1989) p. 28.

²³⁵ *ibid.* p. 33.

²³⁶ *Reflections* p. 76.

²³⁷ Paine connects chivalry and aristocracy before dismissing titles as "nicknames" – "The thing is perfectly harmless in itself, but it marks a sort of foppery in the human character which degrades it. . . It talks about its fine *riband* like a girl, and shows a *garter* like a child" (*RMI* 89). This effeminacy pollutes masculinity: "The genuine mind of man, thirsting for its native home, society, contemns the gewgaws that separate him from it. Titles are like circles drawn by the magician's wand to contract the sphere of man's felicity. He lives immured within a Bastille of a word, and surveys at a distance the envied life of man" (*RMI* 89).

²³⁸ For more on Godwin's literary influences and programme of reading during the composition of *Caleb Williams* see Kelly *The English Jacobin Novel*. (1977), chapter 4, especially pp. 191-2. Kelly also draws connections between Falkland and Viscount Falkland of the Civil War. See pp. 201-3. For the Don Quixote connection, see De Bruyn pp. 728-733.

change in behaviour, he looks past the outward manners and into the heart of the man. What he finds – an image-obsessed murderer – suggests the insufficiency of sentiment for preserving society. Yet even before Caleb uncovers Falkland’s infamy, the image of chivalry is tarnished by Tyrrel’s demonstration of the ways in which a system based on sentiment can be abused by those who do not feel properly.

Godwin’s critique of chivalry, though it demonstrates the damaging effect of that institution on civil society, its degrading influence on masculinity, and the ways in which it corrupts relations between men, says very little about the consequences for women. Women are simply pawns in an escalating chivalry-induced war of man against man. Emily Melvile, the closest thing the novel has to a heroine, is an amalgam of Richardson heroines who is ultimately the victim of a Clarissa-style persecution.²³⁹ At the close of the first volume, tyranny’s triumph would seem to be the death of a good woman. However, her sufferings dwindle into insignificant literary cliché when compared to the ‘true’ tyranny of chivalry and monarchy that poisons human relations.²⁴⁰

In another negative response to Burke’s *Reflections*, the gendered implications of chivalry are highlighted:

You have read how Don Quixote selected a *dame*
 How he languish’d, and lov’d, and resounded her fame!
 For he knew that *Knight Errantry* could not exist,
 Unless Beauty were plac’d at the head of the list;

The poem then goes on to note that “Don Edmund” takes his cue from Cervantes’s hero to “brandish his *pen*, in the room of a *lance*,/ In defence of the present Queen Consort of France!”²⁴¹ As Johnson notes, Burke’s sentimental

²³⁹ Kelly suggests that she is based on Emily Jervois, Grandison’s ward (*The English Jacobin Novel* 192)

²⁴⁰ Kelly notes that, as in *Political Justice*, the philosophical source text behind *Caleb Williams* is Montesquieu’s *Esprit des lois*. The connection between chivalry and monarchy is made clear here: “Montesquieu had argued that the spirit of monarchy was Honour, and Falkland is a kind of incarnation of the whole ideal of Honour” (*The English Jacobin Novel*, 200).

²⁴¹ This poem was originally published anonymously, but was the work of Ralph Broome. The poem is “Letter LXIII” (11 November 1790) in *The letters of Simkin the Second*. (1791). p 348.

portrait of the violated Marie Antoinette is secondary to “broader questions of how the manliness of political subjects is affectively constituted.”²⁴² Though this was not a problem for male radicals, it was a source of anxiety for their female counterparts. Laura Runge observes a trend, often overlooked in studies of civility, of female writers, like Mary Wollstonecraft, voicing “considerable dissent from the general opinion on gallantry” and notes that “[g]iven the centrality of women to England’s development as a polite nation, such concerns merit attention.”²⁴³ Wollstonecraft’s rejection of stadial theory is tied directly to a redefinition of masculine virtue in the context of the French revolution.

In a persuasive argument, Johnson characterises *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* as, at least in part, a “republican manifesto, addressed principally to men.”²⁴⁴ Republican reform is dependent upon removing those hereditary patriarchal structures, which destroy manliness and, critically for Wollstonecraft, vitiate women’s characters into the bargain. Johnson argues that Wollstonecraft is “preoccupied with championing a kind of masculinity into which women can be invited rather than with enlarging or inventing a positive discourse of femininity.”²⁴⁵ Virginia Sapiro argues that, for Wollstonecraft, “becoming better human beings and becoming true citizens is much the same thing.”²⁴⁶ Keeping Johnson’s reading in mind, I would like to take Sapiro’s observation a step further and argue that Wollstonecraft recognised that becoming a better man (i. e. rational, enlightened, virtuous, independent) is to *become* a citizen, rather than the subject of a tyrant. This transformation and rehabilitation of masculinity is a crucial first step that must be accomplished before domestic tyranny and the oppression of women under court(ly) culture can be abolished.

A key moment for the reformation of men in *Vindication of the Rights of Men* is Wollstonecraft’s description of Dr. Price. I see this as analogous to

²⁴² *Equivocal Beings* p. 4.

²⁴³ “Beauty and Gallantry” (2001) p. 43.

²⁴⁴ *Equivocal Beings* p. 24.

²⁴⁵ *Equivocal* p. 24.

²⁴⁶ *Vindication of Political Virtue* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) p. 185.

Burke's pathetic portrait of Marie Antoinette, but instead of an appeal to sentiment and chivalry through violated queenship, Wollstonecraft suggests that society's true problem is its disrespect for republican virtue.

Wollstonecraft's equally sentimental rebuttal imagines Price

in his pulpit, with hands clasped, and eyes devoutly fixed, praying with all the simple energy of unaffected piety; or, when more erect, inculcating the dignity of virtue, and enforcing the doctrines his life adorns; benevolence animated each feature, persuasion attuned his accents; the preacher grew eloquent, who only laboured to be clear; and the respect that he extorted, seemed only the respect due to personified virtue and matured wisdom. – Is this the man you brand with so many opprobrious epithets? he whose private life will stand the test of the strictest enquiry – away with such unmanly sarcasms, and puerile conceits.²⁴⁷

Burke's attempt to marshal chivalric sentiment in the aid of imperilled femininity, in the person of the French queen, is part of his goal of promoting 'right feeling' and reinforcing in England the chivalric masculinity that failed in France. Wollstonecraft's portrait of true virtue under attack, however, signals that chivalry is the destroyer of manly virtue rather than its guarantee. It is also significant that Marie Antoinette, whose actual claims to virtue were tenuous at best, and whose character as coquette (or worse) was constructed by the system of courtly chivalry that fails to protect her, is countered by an image of venerable rationality and republican virtue, an

²⁴⁷ *VRM* (1790) p. 34-6.

embodiment of what Wollstonecraft believes to be true virtue.²⁴⁸ Republican masculinity is thereby structurally substituted for court corruption, and presented as chivalric effeminacy's antidote.

In discussing what he considers the "feeble" conclusion of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Gary Kelly remarks that "leaving the liberation of women to men" seems to admit "that women do not have it in their own power to emancipate themselves from the 'mind-forg'd manacles' of oppression."²⁴⁹ However, he also notes that in some ways this is a "warning . . . that the revolution . . . will fail if it continues to harbour court culture in the form of courtly woman, in the guise of domestic woman and culture."²⁵⁰

Wollstonecraft is not so much leaving the liberation of women to men as highlighting, as she did in *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, that men must be liberated from chivalry, hereditary property, and the other trappings of court culture in order to make the liberation of women possible.

Furthermore, I would suggest that this state of affairs actually leaves room for female agency in effecting the transformation of men, as Wollstonecraft demonstrates in writing to vindicate the rights of men and promote a variety of masculinity conducive to a rational, rather than a merely polished society. I intend to demonstrate that Charlotte Smith and Jane West also committed to a programme of masculine reformation, having realised that constructing

²⁴⁸ Many respondents to Burke observed that not only was the French Queen a scandalous figure, but that Burke himself had "acknowledged and deplored elsewhere" her vices; however, the Queen as an individual is secondary to "the broader question of how the manliness of political subjects is affectively constituted (Johnson, *Equivocal Beings* 4). Lynn Hunt deals extensively with the image of the queen in France and particularly the political stakes of her virtue to the Revolution in chapter 4 of *Family Romance*. Marie-Antoinette, Olympe de Gouges, and Madame Roland were labelled unnatural women: "The former queen was denounced for being a 'bad mother, debauched wife'; Olympe de Gouges for 'wanting to be a man of state' and for having forgotten the virtues suitable to her sex'; and Madame Roland for 'having sacrificed nature by wishing to elevate herself above her station' and forgetting 'the virtues of her sex' (quoted from *Moniteur universel* 19 November 1793, 120). For the pornographic propaganda used to defame the Queen, see pp. 91-114. As Hunt explains, the need to strip the queen of any claim to virtue was connected to the revolutionaries' promotion of republican virtue and fraternity: "The republican ideal of virtue was based on a notion of fraternity between men in which women were relegated to the realm of domesticity. Public virtue required virility, which required in turn the violent rejection of aristocratic degeneracy and any intrusion of the feminine into the public. By attacking Marie-Antoinette and other publicly active women, republican men reinforced their bonds to each other" (122).

²⁴⁹ *Revolutionary Feminism* (1992) p. 135.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 135.

a better man is the key to liberating woman. However, in their novels each adopts a different aspect of Wollstonecraft's strategy: Smith advocates republican political reform, while West focuses on eradicating chivalric tendencies from individual men.

The optimism of the early years of the revolution is captured in Charlotte Smith's 1792 novel, *Desmond*. Though it is often described as her most overtly radical and polemical,²⁵¹ as Eleanor Wikborg observes, her radicalism is qualified as *Desmond* does not feature the rebellious heroines expected of 'Jacobin' novels:

None of her heroines rebel against the wrongs of women in the way that Wollstonecraft's Maria or Mary Hays's Emma Courtney do. Not a word is spoken against the institution of marriage in the spirit of Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives*, William Godwin's *Political Justice* or Robert Bage's *Hermesprong*. Indeed, in Smith's novels, female anger is deeply problematical and is never endorsed, a stance which they share with Frances Burney's fiction.²⁵²

While the heroine's plight has dominated most critical investigations of the text, I would argue that Geraldine is an ideological red-herring drawing attention away from the eponymous hero whose ideological position – indicated by his place in the spectrum of republican virtue and chivalric sentiment – helps both to elucidate Smith's politics and to explain the heroine's enforced submission.

Desmond's remarkably unenlightened uncle describes him thus:

He's as discontented as any Praise-God-bare-Bones of them all. – I can't imagine what possesses the puppy – he's not like any other young fellow of his age. Instead of sporting

²⁵¹ Blank and Todd "Introduction." *Desmond*. (Peterborough: Broadview, 2001). p. 19; Katherine Ellis "Charlotte Smith's Subversive Gothic." *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976): 51-55. p. 51.

²⁵² Eleanor Wikborg, "Political Discourse versus Sentimental Romance" *English Studies* 6 (1997): 522-531. p. 522.

his money like a man of spirit, on the turf, or with the bones, he goes piping about, and talks of unequal representation, and the weight of taxes, and the devil knows what; things, with which a young fellow of six-and-twenty has no concern at all. – And then, as for his amours; instead of keeping a brace or two of pretty wenches, he goes sneaking after a married woman – to be sued for damages, and, perhaps, run through the body. (D 348)

This passage is laden with images of and value judgements about various contemporary discourses of masculine identity. The country booby Major Danby characterises his nephew as both an effeminate and quixotic knight and a politically-minded puritan (republican) who forfeits his position as a man of spirit by eschewing manly pursuits like gambling and wenching.²⁵³ Danby's catalogue of masculine virtues and vices highlights the political nature (and political stakes) of masculinity; however, the Major betrays a troubling political disengagement that is more pernicious than either court intrigue or republican enthusiasm because it allows luxury (represented by gambling and wenching) to replace independence. Desmond's chivalry complicates the republican virtue required for citizenship. Discussing the role of chivalry in the novel, Wikborg observes that

There is no doubt that Geraldine's obsessive pursuit of the duty of submission to tyranny is called into question by Smith's decision to place it in a highly topical revolutionary context. However, Geraldine's self-denial and Desmond's rapturous admiration of it are also deeply implicated in a chivalrous ideology which is anti-

²⁵³ The Barebones parliament was the assembly summoned by Oliver Cromwell to replace the Rump Parliament in 1653. It was seen as overly radical in its attacks on Chancery and the Established church. The Barebones Parliament's dissolution was followed by the proclamation of Cromwell as Lord Protector ("Barebones Parliament" *A Dictionary of World History*. [2000]). The fanatical republicanism of the French revolutionaries would seem to have something in common with the radical round heads. This equation with revolutionaries and roundheads is also voiced by another reactionary character, Mrs. Rayland, in Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793).

Enlightenment insofar as it is religious, rather than secular, and romantic rather than rational . . . The Burkean code of chivalry idealizes and eroticizes the exchange of a woman's 'beautiful' submission for an ideal lover's protection of, and devotion to, her virtue. And yet, the revolutionary call for an end to tyranny, and an end to privilege also sets in motion a demystification of this code and implies an imperative to act.²⁵⁴

Desmond's political concerns, his engagement in, understanding of, and sympathy towards the French Revolution are laudable; however, his identification with chivalric patriarchy exposes the limits of the revolution in its current incarnation and the continuance of domestic tyranny. This cohesion of revolutionary republican theory for public purposes and Burkean sentimental chivalry for private traps normal women, like Geraldine (as opposed to the heroines of Jacobin fiction who present a feminist escape fantasy), and enforces their submission. This potentially self-destructive tendency in the Revolution is precisely what Wollstonecraft is exposing in the *Vindications*. Whether through the exigencies of generic constraints, financial need, or a deep-seated desire to be rescued from the wreck of her life, Smith is unable to break away from chivalric conventions in her novels, despite consistently advocating political reform. And as will be seen in *The Young Philosopher* (1798), which I will be discussing in the next chapter, this tension between republican independence and chivalric heroism ultimately makes revolutionary reform in Britain impossible.

Desmond, like Wollstonecraft's *Vindications*, is directly engaging Burke in the debate over the meaning and consequences of the French Revolution for British society. Burke's *Reflections* are discussed in letters exchanged between Desmond and his mentor alongside the progress of the revolution. Desmond's revolutionary sympathies become clear in his encounters with English and

²⁵⁴ "Political Discourse" p. 530.

French aristocrats.²⁵⁵ Indeed, in terms of being a proponent of the rights of man, equality, liberty and fraternity, Desmond's revolutionary pedigree is impeccable. Yet, when domestic politics are at stake, sentimental chivalry is the order of the day.

Geraldine as virtue in distress – a distress that is initially domestic but becomes increasingly complicated when she travels to France – is an irresistible object to Desmond and feeds the chivalric impulses that Burke suggests form a natural part of the Englishman's constitution, both political and metaphysical. Significantly, Desmond seeks the revolution as a *distraction* from the unattainable perfection of Geraldine, with her "mild grace" and her "ingenious and liberal mind" (*D* 48), while his pursuit and ultimate attainment of her is marked by an increasing identification with chivalric masculinity. In order to serve the fair Geraldine, Desmond takes on tasks that not only should be performed by her husband (who, busy squandering his fortune on women and cards, illustrates Major Danby's notion of a man of spirit), but require chivalric action. In accompanying her brother on a tour of France, Desmond is forced into a duel, the ultimate sign of the man of honour. Desmond also becomes Geraldine's shadow protector, saving her from pecuniary distresses and watching over her in France, disguising himself as a monk (a symbol of both Catholic superstition and sexual predation) in order to facilitate his surveillance. The philosopher, the rational supporter of the rights of man, gives way to knight-errantry and sentimental heroism, a re-identification that constitutes a rapprochement to the 'aristocratic' political and moral economy at odds with his political affiliations.

Mr. Verney's deathbed speech is an important moment in considering the effects of chivalrous aristocratic masculinity on women. Verney, who has been the worst sort of arbitrary, tyrannical husband, experiences a last-gasp enlightenment. After acknowledging that it is due to Desmond's friendship

²⁵⁵ In his discussion with the elderly Comte d'Hauteville, Desmond supports the idea that the rights of man are natural, equality in particular (see Letter XIII Vol. I). With Lord Fordingbridge, a young nobleman, Desmond again explores inequality, but this time in terms of property and political representation (see Letter X Vol. III, esp. pp. 206-11).

(and indeed love) for his wife that “death comes not with all the aggravated horrors of poverty and wretchedness” (*D* 407), Verney continues:

I know you to be a man of honour, and if Geraldine marries again, as there is certainly reason to believe she will, it is to you, rather than to any other man, that I wish to confide her and my children” (*D* 407).

Finally, he writes a will giving Geraldine and Desmond joint guardianship of his children in anticipation of their union, as well as indicating his wish that “if ever she took a second husband, it might be his friend Desmond” (*D* 407-8). Geraldine is essentially bequeathed to Desmond like any other piece of property. Hereditary domestic government is thus preserved, despite an endorsement of republican choice in public affairs. Desmond’s acceptance of the patriarchal ethos is solidified in a letter to Bethel in which he declares, “Geraldine will bear *my* name – will be the directress of *my* family – will be my friend – my mistress – my wife!” (*D* 414). Despite the report that circulates in England suggesting that “Mr. Verney . . . has been fallen upon by a party of the national troops, and killed” (*D* 411), the domestic tyranny that he embodied is not dead – his absolute rule and his possessions (wife and children) have been passed to a successor of his choosing.

Certainly, Geraldine’s second marriage will be happier than her union with Mr. Verney, yet Desmond’s emphasis on possession and his chivalric sentiments seems at odds with his avowed revolutionary sympathies. While Wollstonecraft advocates republican manliness as a corrective to the corrupting influences of aristocratic tyranny and chivalry, suggesting that the reformation of man is necessary to the liberation of woman, Smith seems content to rely, as Burney was in *Evelina*, on the benevolent rule of a good man, perhaps in deference to the expectations of the sentimental romance plot.

In the year following *Desmond*’s publication, Jane West entered the war of ideas ostensibly on the conservative side with *The Advantages of Education*. West is usually identified with the anti-jacobin novelists, a group “engaged in

attacking the cult of self in politics, psychology, and ethics.”²⁵⁶ Grenby concludes, “It cannot be doubted, after all, that Robert Bisset, Elizabeth Hamilton, Jane West or Henry James Pye . . . deliberately took up their pens so that they might contribute to the defeat of Jacobinism, however they individually conceived of it.”²⁵⁷ I am not so convinced. While critics have noted the distinct anti-sentimental trend in the conservative reaction post-Burke, I want to investigate this specifically in the effect it has on West’s male characters, rather than, as has been done, on her heroines.²⁵⁸ I want to suggest that West’s response to the revolution is more complex than has been believed, and that her male characters are part of the larger feminist discourse about masculinity.

Due to the fact that West has received such scant critical attention, an important investigation of her work and life has not been acknowledged as it should. Pamela Lloyd’s unpublished thesis, *Jane West: A Critical Biography* (Brandeis University, 1997), sheds light on West’s early career, including pro-Revolutionary poetry, that necessarily complicates West’s reactionary reputation. Lloyd notes that those who label West as unproblematically anti-jacobin tend to have founded their impressions on her nineteenth-century conduct literature (*Letters to a Young Man* [1802], *Letters to a Young Woman* [1805]), and impose those ideas onto her 1790s fiction retrospectively. Based on the evidence of her early 1790s poetry, however, Lloyd demonstrates that West was, like Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams, a supporter of the Revolution in France. Furthermore Lloyd suggests that West was committed

²⁵⁶ Butler (1975) p. 88. Butler goes on to note that “Scepticism about human claims to virtue, however specious, real pessimism about the validity of individual human insights, are the hallmarks of the conservative writer” (94). The anti-jacobins share their reliance on tradition and experience with Burke, though Butler notes that “while [Burke’s] name crops up in revolutionary plays and novels, one finds no direct reference to it at all in the anti-jacobin novel,” signalling a distancing of the “great spokesman of conservative ideology” from his purported disciples (94-5).

²⁵⁷ *The Anti-Jacobin Novel* p. 205.

²⁵⁸ Jane West has not received much scholarly attention. Johnson, Butler, and Grenby refer to her novels as representative anti-jacobin texts. Mary Anne Schofield has examined West’s use of the romance form (*Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind* [Newark: U of Delaware P, 1990]). April London discusses the politics of reading in West (“Jane West and the Politics of Reading” *Tradition in Transition* [Oxford: OUP, 1996]) . David Thame’s “Cooking Up a Story” *ECF* 16 (2004): 217-242, goes some way to complicating the usual reading of West as a tool of the conservative establishment in an analysis of her narrative persona, Prudentia Homespun.

to serious educational reform for women and used Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) "almost as a blueprint" for *The Advantages of Education* (101). Wollstonecraft admired West's novels, another clue that West's works were not received as strictly conservative. As late as 1797 Wollstonecraft sent Mary Hays a copy of *A Gossip's Story* with the suggestion that she review it for the *Analytical Review*.²⁵⁹

In West's *Miscellaneous Poems, and a Tragedy* (1791),²⁶⁰ two poems, "Ode III Independence" and "Ode IV 1789," are particularly significant to her position on the French Revolution. In "Independence" the speaker apostrophises the "Nymph" Independence who, "wakes the springs of latent worth" and protects the "native rights of man" (lines 11, 19). Independence, known to the "savage tribes" as well as to classical and European civilisation, is a natural human right: without it, "weak is Virtue's arm" and "Feeble is Wisdom's hope to charm" (lines 28, 29). Independence is presented as the cure to political corruption – "Degrading flattery does not foil" her "vot'ries" (lines 32, 31) – while the independent mind spurns "Fastidious tastes, capricious laws," and "The cant of censure and applause,/ Claim'd by the fashion of the day" (lines 45-6). Instead, the independent man burns "For merit, and for truth" (line 49).

Stanzas X and XI give an indication of the ways in which independence remains a part of West's philosophy through the general ideological realignment that occurs among British writers and intellectuals following the Terror and the execution of Louis XVI and influences her novels. In Stanza X, the speaker moves to address the natural leaders of society, the "sons of affluence and fame,/ To noble independence born" and commands them to fly from "lavish dissipation . . . / Nor let the sordid bribe your mean subservience buy" (lines 91-2; 99-100). Stanza XI attempts to give direction about the duties of the ruling class, suggesting that they have "The pow'r to succour, and to bless" and to "Lead slighted merit forth to view" (lines 103, 109).

²⁵⁹ see Wardle, *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Ithaca, U of Cornell P, 1979) letter 289. Wollstonecraft states that the "great merit of this work [i.e. *A Gossip's Story*] is, in my opinion, the display of the small causes which destroy matrimonial felicity & peace" (375).

²⁶⁰ West, Mrs. (Jane). *Miscellaneous poems, and a tragedy*. York, 1791.

Further, the speaker declares the “Admiring nations shall perceive,/ What minds unbias’d can atchieve,/ And bless benignant heav’n, which made you great and free” (lines 118-20). Mixed with faith in the power of merit and reason is a clear strain of loyalty to English values, which makes sense considering that in the early stages of the revolution the French were regarded as finally achieving the liberty that Englishmen had long enjoyed.²⁶¹ Liberty and independence are not incompatible with loyalty.

“Ode IV, 1789,” again discusses the importance of the “rights of man,/ Not built on variable laws,/ But at his first creation giv’n” and describes them as a “priviledge bestow’d by heaven” which is the source of man’s “generous love of independence” (lines 46-50). Stanza VII comments specifically, and optimistically, on the situation in France as the speaker describes how the French king and his people have been freed from their traditional tyranny. Louis now “deplores” the policy “Which hail’d him unrestricted Lord,/ And bade him with despotic sword/ To spread proud empire’s purple pall” (lines 54-7). The speaker further hopes that the enlightened influence on politics will alleviate the effects of the “luxury” and the “levity” which subdued and deceived the French populace into submitting to tyranny (lines 63-4). The poem goes on to express a heady hope that the liberty and independence gained by France will inspire the rest of the world still toiling, like Spain and Asia, in the bondage of mental and physical slavery, a situation in which “Mans’ inherent right from brother Man requires” (line 110). Again, loyalty to Britain is evident as British freedom is presented as a panacea to the ills of the world:

Britain, whose name oppressors fear,
 Whose aid the injur’d ever bless;
 When mighty nations all around,
 Sunk in servility profound,
 Or arm’d but in a despot’s cause;

²⁶¹ This is essentially what Dr. Price is saying in his *Discourse* (see above pp. 9), and was a fairly common sentiment prior to the Revolution’s violent turn, as Roy Porter notes in his chapter on the Revolutionary Era in *Enlightenment* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 446-8.

Impell'd by Freedom's magic charm,
 She bade her couchant lion arm,

And taught her Kings to fear the spirit of her laws. (lines 112-120)

West's pro-revolutionary and loyalist sentiments suggest a strain of thought that is easily overlooked in what will become a highly partisan and bitter war of ideas, an inflexible binary that is largely reproduced rather than deconstructed in critical treatments. These two odes suggest that West had ideas about independence and liberty that are not quite consonant with her reputation as a status quo-endorsing reactionary. Furthermore, McCormack notes that, while loyalists would eventually appropriate the language of independence in their anti-revolutionary propaganda, independence was central to 1790s radicalism.²⁶² Independence as a personal or social value "played little or no part" in early loyalist writings, further separating West from her supposed ideological allegiances.²⁶³ With this in mind, I will demonstrate how her novels continue to promote independence and liberty, ideals that are often overlooked in favour of her loyal sentiments. However, her poetry demonstrates that these political and nationalist agendas are not mutually exclusive.

In *The Advantages of Education*, as in her subsequent 'war of ideas' novels, West challenges the conventions of the sentimental novel and romantic fiction. In some ways, West's heroes are heirs of Grandison and she engages in Richardson's project of refining female preferences (really, female desire); however, their strategies in correcting this faulty taste are markedly different. While Richardson invokes a sanitised version of chivalry and a more honourable code of honour that dispenses with duelling and promiscuous gallantry, West rejects the whole pernicious system. In so doing, West exposes a fundamental flaw in men and prescribed manners: if women do not instinctively choose the good man, even after being given such a man as a model, where does the problem lie? I would argue that West lays the blame firmly on the socially and culturally inscribed chivalric ideal that

²⁶² McCormack p. 126.

²⁶³ *ibid.* p. 143.

creates both defective men and the women who love them.

Prudentia Homespun, the novel's narrator, is very forthright in her intentions to "explode" the conventions of romantic fiction.²⁶⁴ In the Preface, she establishes her didactic goals:

To counteract the evils incident to the romantic conclusions which youth are apt to form; to place the maternal in a dignified and pleasing point of view, and to secure happiness, by removing those capricious desires which undermine content, is the chief design of the author. (*AE* vol. I.)

Homespun separates romantic conclusions from happy endings by contrasting capricious desire with content. In this Richardsonian preface, Homespun highlights the divergence between form and content, between generic conventions and moral message, and suggests the ways in which fictional forms can act as a bar to female contentment. In the first chapter, Homespun discusses her plans for a new kind of heroine, but I would suggest that her true innovation lies in her heroes.

Homespun observes that men are not "educated for the sole purpose of wooing women":

"they never say 'do this,' and the ladies will admire you."
Indeed, we ourselves should think such an inducement would only form a coxcomb, or a petit maitre. (*AE* I. 4)

Prudentia's suggestion that men's prime directive is not matrimony requires some unpacking. Though marriage becomes increasingly central to men's claim to independence over the course of the century, "wooing," "coxcombs" and "petit maitres" suggests something effeminising and insubstantial about the kind of courtship that women are led to expect through chivalric myths. The novel advocates a rational and civic-minded model of female education as an alternative to that which is primarily ornamental and produces young ladies susceptible to gallantry. Equally important is West's prescription for an

²⁶⁴ *The Advantages of Education* vol. i. p. 3.

independent man who will deserve such a heroine.

Maria Williams, the superficially conventional heroine, has two suitors to choose from. However, the double suitor convention, considered a didactic tool as well as a test for the heroine, is, in West's deployment, at least as instructive for men as it is for women. Sir Henry Neville, who first arrives on the scene as Mr. Stanley, appears to be ideal hero material. However, his status is gradually undercut even before he is exposed; he turns out to be, as Sir William Raby suggests, "the comicallest actor he had ever seen" (*AE* 1. 140). Neville begins as a seducer, but signals his shift to more honourable intentions with a tale unfolded at Miss Raby's court. In this interview, Neville declares that he disdains mercenary unions and therefore plans to woo a villager without the aid of his fortune. Neville also reveals that his need for secrecy is also tied up in an affair of honour – he has flown the metropolis because he "wounded his antagonist in a duel" (*AE* I. 146). When he finally gets around to proposing to the disinterested object of his affections (Maria), he is refused because he will not be explicit about his circumstances or identity. He is undeterred, however:

The lover, who had a few *aristocratic* notions, (I use that word to prove my knowledge of modern politics) seemed to think it impossible that Mrs. Williams should object, when acquainted with his rank and character. (West's emphasis; *AE* I. 158)

His hopes seemingly disappointed, Neville "now acted the passionate lover; he lamented, sighed, gazed, swore it was impossible to abandon her; raved about sacrificing his own life to her scruples with indifference" (*AE* I. 159). Neville's performance of the passionate lover rehearses the hallmarks of sentimental fiction with its emphasis on the inadequacy of words to express strong emotion. But Neville as actor exposes the duplicitous potential of actions, particularly those dictated by chivalric convention. Tying Neville's adherence to romance conventions to his aristocratic notions and these aristocratic ideals to politics is important in drawing a distinction between

West's ideological position and Burkean conservatism. Burke's appeal to chivalry and feudal government betrays an emotional attachment to tradition. West's treatment of Neville reveals both the public and private consequences of being ruled by emotion and tradition, much as Wollstonecraft had done in *Vindications*. West's distrust of chivalric men, specifically the aristocratic Sir Henry Neville, signals a dislike of corruption and tyranny in both the family and the state.

Neville's matrimonial plans are ultimately thwarted by the disinterestedness of Mrs. Williams who, unimpressed by wealth and status, believes her daughter deserves equality in marriage:

In whose society do we unbend with pleasure; is it not in that of our equals, does not then the strict society of wedlock call for equality? . . . generosity and gratitude awkwardly perform those offices which are gracefully discharged by free and unconstrained tenderness. (*AE* I. 207)²⁶⁵

Though her belief in marital equality seems mitigated by the claims of "education, connexion and habit" (*AE* I. 207) it is equally evident that Sir Harry Neville, for all his estates in five counties and seat in the House of Lords, is not Maria's equal. Though lip service is paid to the preservation of rank, moral equality and equality of merit are ultimately privileged, as demonstrated in the novel's true (if unconventional) hero, Edmund Herbert.

In contrast to the disguised and "designing" Neville, Herbert possess a characteristic frankness . . . which, if not a certain proof of integrity, was a strong indication of that manly virtue which acts with full force upon a heart of conscious independence, and glowing with courage and honour. (*AE* II. 16)

This ideologically loaded description highlights the importance of reason and

²⁶⁵ Mrs. Williams' ideas about equality in marriage seem to echo those of Rousseau (see chapter 1 p. 52.) although the emphasis on equality in *Émile* seems to be more financial than Mrs. Williams' moral and personal equality.

independence. Herbert's frankness suggests plain speaking and undisguised intentions, which contrast with Neville's performance and aristocratic proclivities connecting frankness to manly virtue implicitly links aristocracy and chivalry with an effeminacy antithetical to independence and true courage, and honour.²⁶⁶ Courage and honour, though identified with the chivalric code, are redefined here. According to fashionable society, Neville demonstrates courage through the duel; however, Herbert's courage is tied to a bluntness that while it "frequently displeased the fine gentleman of his acquaintance . . . secured him the esteem of the discerning few, who know how to value integrity and truth" (*AE* II. 35). No toad eater, Herbert's courage allows him to maintain his convictions, and thereby his independence, while his honour is characterised by integrity and truth, rather than superficial reputation.

When revealing that Herbert has his flaws, including evidence of the warmth of temper that Richardson ascribes to Sir Charles, Homespun declares herself "Sorry . . . to observe, that though Mr. Herbert possessed many exalted virtues, he yet fell short of perfection" (*AE* II. 37). This statement serves two purposes. It further bursts the romantic bubble by giving the hero a discernible flaw, yet it is also slightly tongue in cheek, suggesting that the transparency of Herbert's imperfections and virtues make him ideal hero material. What you see is what you get. His "politeness" might be "awkward imitation" (*AE* II. 32), but it is untaught and therefore natural, unlike the polished performance of the fine gentleman exemplified by Neville

In the end, Neville

was a miserable being, disgusted at the folly of vice,
because it was unsuccessful; infatuated by the charms of
that virtue which he could not ruin; and caught in the net
which he had spread for the destruction of others. (*AE* II.

²⁶⁶ In Wollstonecraft's critique of Burke's *Reflections*, as I argue above, Burke's seductive, sentimental language is criticised, not only as effeminate but as producing and promoting effeminacy rather than manly virtue, reason, liberty, and independence.

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His solution is a solo performance of pistols at dawn. Herbert on the other hand wins the lady of his heart and settles down to domestic felicity in the country. Homespun anticipated protest at this ‘unromantic’ ending:

Some of my fair young readers too, who are already enamoured with the windmills of modern Quixotism, will blame me for exhibiting the portrait of my hero, engaged in the common duties of domestic life. They will tell me, that a fairer field for reputation lies before me, that I should have given him the gloss of chivalrous honour, or the sacred flame of liberty; either of which would have added elevation and enthusiasm to his virtue, and rendered him much more the object of general admiration. (*AE* II. 199-200)²⁶⁷

This defence of Herbert as hero directly engages with the war of ideas about masculinity and promotes the importance of domestic virtue. The charge of Quixotism is applied to both extremes of the public political spectrum, suggesting that men who subscribe to either of these political extremes – either an enthusiastic (and therefore unreasoned) endorsement of feudalism and chivalry or a frenzied and wholesale rejection of established modes and institutions in the pursuit of liberty – leave no real place for women. The

²⁶⁷ Homespun goes on to make some observations regarding the current state of public life, as reported in the newspapers: “I there read, to my astonishment, of Right Honourables being seized at gaming houses, in company with notorious sharpers; of assertors of the rights of men evading the rights of creditors; of patriots who gain immortal honour by combating oppression, yet unluckily are absolute bashaws, wherever their influence can extend. These discoveries somewhat check my national exultation, and notwithstanding I do not pique myself upon singularity, yet I cannot help thinking, that in proportion as public virtue, or at least what passes current for it, flourishes, private goodness declines” (*AE* vol. II 201-2). Yet her goal is not directly to reform the public character. In explaining why Herbert is not put on the national scene, Homespun notes, “as it seems chiefly necessary for a rank in life, above that in which I have placed him, as the principles of government are well understood, and the cause of liberty and philanthropy need no additional defenders; I thought that in this speculative and declamatory age, a practical, instead of a theoretical reformer, would be a novel, and not unpleasant character” (*AE* vol. II 203). There is a suggestion that both extremes of politics are flawed and ineffective, their positions essentially amounting to theory with no regard to actual practice, or the nature of man as demonstrated in society (both Burke and Paine who advert to the nature of man, suppose an idea of one variety or another). In proposing a practical reformer, and placing him as a private gentleman of property, West is not transforming politicians, but those who put them in power.

public virtue they focus on and admiration they seek is tied to a pursuit of power that corrupts, making the equality that Mrs. Williams suggests should be the rule in the domestic domain impossible to achieve.

Good men are not tyrants, despite their traditional position of pre-eminence maintained in the post-Lockean family. Being able to identify and marry such a man liberates a woman from a twofold tyranny – the tyranny of culturally constructed ‘passions’ that attract women to bad boys and the domestic tyranny that results when the chivalric lover-slave becomes the absolute master. Thus, for West there is more at stake than merely anti-sentimentalism: in rejecting chivalry, her heroines (and indeed her heroes) learn to reject slavery.

The effects of chivalry on both men and women are also explored in Charlotte Smith’s 1793 novel, *The Old Manor House*, but this time it is complicated by war, a subject that increasingly occupied the public consciousness in response to the deterioration of the Revolution. It is not, however, the French revolutionary war under consideration. *The Old Manor House* was completed by 16 December, 1792,²⁶⁸ and though the French revolutionary wars had already commenced, they did not yet include the British.²⁶⁹ Instead, Smith’s hero goes off to fight on the British side in the war against the American colonies. While some have seen this historical strategy as a way of depoliticising the novel and distancing the narrative from the war across the channel, Angela Keane observes that this is unlikely based on the specific period of the war that Smith chooses as a backdrop, as well as references to such issues as the employment of mercenaries, the exploitation of native warriors, and violence perpetrated against the colonists.²⁷⁰ The use of the American war is further complicated by its special significance for radicals. Because radicals were unanimous in their belief that wars of defence alone are legal, they believed that the American colonists’ armed defence of their rights was just. Even Mary Wollstonecraft, who sought to

²⁶⁸ Joseph Bell published the novel in March 1793 (Stanton p. 55 note 5).

²⁶⁹ France had declared war on Austria in 1792 and invaded the Netherlands in the same year.

²⁷⁰ *Romantic Belongings* (2000) p. 97.

demilitarise republican virtue, declared Washington, a citizen who fought for his country, an example of “true heroism” (*VRW* 327).

In addition to the generic expectations raised by the chivalric conventions of romance, Smith also employs those of Gothic and historical novels. Janina Nordius suggests that Smith uses the Gothic, which is “a fictional way of coming to terms with a barbaric past whose superstitions and prejudice had purportedly been superseded – or at least temporarily suppressed – by the advent of the Enlightenment,” as a way to connect explicitly the American War to ongoing discussions

about the *ideological* implications of the ‘gothic’ legacy – that is, the medieval constitution, hailed by Edmund Burke as the very guarantee of English freedom and stability, but abhorred by the English Jacobins as an icon of feudal oppression.²⁷¹

Building on this idea, I want to suggest that exploring the American war through the lens of the historical/gothic romance allows for Smith to engage directly in the ideological battles connected to the French revolution.

Jacqueline Labbe (2002) observes that *The Old Manor House* was read as a romance and not as a political novel, as the 1790s reviews suggest: “Its setting in the past, its love story plot, its Gothic-style machinery all function to promote the romance – the unreal – rather than the novel – the believable.”²⁷² Despite the general failure to recognise Smith’s apparently ‘Jacobin’ agenda, in 1810 Anna Letitia Barbauld, another writer more closely associated with radicals than reactionaries, noted that *The Old Manor House* showed “the strain of her politics.”²⁷³ However, the novels written after *Desmond* increasingly reveal the tensions in Smith’s ideological position. While she is committed to republican reform in the public sphere, her personal politics and prejudices in terms of social mobility and gentility are much more conservative. Her distrust of lawyers in particular contributes, I

²⁷¹ “A Kind of Living Death” *English Studies* 86 1 (2005): 40-50, p. 40, 43-4.

²⁷² “Introduction” p. 27.

²⁷³ qtd. Labbe p. 27.

want to suggest, to her inability to envision political and social leadership coming from outside of a narrowly defined, but properly principled, gentry. This struggle to promote democratic reform in public while preserving a species of chivalry continues in *The Old Manor House* where chivalry's persistence is more obviously problematic but ultimately inescapable

Orlando's status as feudal liege and chivalric lover resonates with the French revolutionary debates due to Burke's invocation of chivalry as the backbone of his (conservative) social ideal. Orlando's chivalric identity, built as much on his devoted love for Monimia as for his paying fealty to the lord of the manor, Mrs. Rayland, prompts his brother Philip to dub him "Sir Rowland" and "Sir Knight," while Mr. Somerive refers to Orlando's "tendency to romantic quixotism" (*OMH* 171, 174). This charge of "quixotism," however, carries more ideological weight than the usual implication of chimerical aspirations. In *Rights of Man*, Paine characterises Burke and his love of chivalry as Quixotic: "In the rhapsody of his imagination, he has discovered a world of wind-mills, and his sorrows are, that there are no Quixotes to attack them" (63). Paine dismisses chivalric quixotism as a form of madness, just as he dismissed aristocracy as an infantilising "gewgaw" (89), both of which separate man from society and from real happiness. This leaves him "immured within a Bastille of a word," to survey "at a distance the envied life of man" (89), the citizenship of republican virtue. At stake in the childish name calling that Orlando endures is the difference between slavery and independence.

The effeminising potential of chivalry is emphasised through the feudal relationship of Orlando and Mrs. Rayland that renders Orlando dependent on her whims and favour. When his uncle, a wine merchant, suggests that Orlando join his business, the proposal is submitted to Mrs. Rayland for approval. While Mrs. Rayland's aristocratic sensibilities find trade utterly repugnant, she recognises that the young man must have some employment and suggests a military career more in line with her exalted notions: "I have been accustomed from my youth" declares the venerable lady, "to consider

the profession of arms as one of those which is the least derogatory to the name of a gentleman" (*OMH* 238). This declaration instigates a disquisition on the heroic exploits of her ancestors, and in her chivalric fervour, the narrator reveals, she "forgot that hardly any other record of them remained on earth than what her memory and their pictures in the gallery above afforded" (*OMH* 238). Orlando hears her epic catalogue "with pleasure" as it appeared that Mrs. Rayland "somehow associated the idea of his future welfare with that of their past consequence" (*OMH* 238). To Orlando's enthusiastic mind, the brave constitution of the Raylands is equated to England's feudal constitution: as Burke suggests inherited (political) experience and tradition imbue both families and states with their current consequence. However, this conservative sentiment is undercut, because Smith makes an uneducated and outrageous old woman its mouthpiece and lauds paragons, who, having achieved nothing of moment, are long dead. The sterile nature of the Rayland legacy recalls Paine's accusation that Burke's feudal interpretation of the English constitution privileges the rights of the dead over those of the living.

Orlando's military service is further implicated in the chivalric economy. Mrs. Rayland's comments about the Americans – she considered them "as rebels and round-heads" – and her view of the war as "not only a national cause, but one in which her family were particularly bound to engage" (*OMH* 336) cast Orlando's military career as knight-service (the military service which a knight was bound to render as a condition of holding – or in Orlando's case, inheriting – his lands [OED]). Initially, Orlando is inclined to take Mrs. Rayland's view of things; however, as John Bartolomeo notes, Orlando's "romanticised notion of the war as a glorious struggle gives way . . . to a profound disillusionment."²⁷⁴ After a particularly awful crossing on a transport ship, in which the conditions are only slightly better than those experienced by slaves on the middle passage (*OMH* 351), Orlando reflects on the nature of military glory. Having been taught to "love glory"

²⁷⁴ "Subversion of Romance in *The Old Manor House*" (1993) p. 651.

and that “no exertion could be too great” to obtain it, his miseries prompt his good sense . . . in despite of this prejudice . . . to enquire if it was not from a mistaken point of honour, from the wickedness of governments, or the sanguinary ambition or revenge of monarchs, that so much misery was owing as wars of every description must necessarily occasion.

(*OMH* 353)

While Orlando attempts to quiet his mind by meditating on the lessons of history in an effort to believe that the actions of the Henries and Edwards were “in their descendants equally glorious, because it went to support the honour of the British name” (*OMH* 353), his complicity cannot eradicate the undercurrent of protest generated by his reflections. Thus begins the blackening of chivalry, fealty, and the feudal inheritance that is reinforced through the presentation of the American colonies and the war.

The Burkean Orlando meets Paineite reality in America. In an American continent standing in for the state of nature, chivalric masculinity is awakened to the possibilities of the rights of man. The sublime American landscape, devastated by the incursion of British brutality, weighs on Orlando’s mind, causing him involuntarily to assent to “some of the most gloomy aphorisms of Rousseau” (*OMH* 362).²⁷⁵ Orlando’s musings about the evils of civilisation are made expressly political as he reflects on the war:

He had always been told, that the will of the people was the great resort in the British Government; and that no public measure of magnitude and importance could be decided upon, but by the agreement of the Three Estates.

²⁷⁵ Orlando notes that “Every object seemed formed upon a larger scale. The rivers, more frequent than in England, were broader than the most boasted of ours, even on their approach to the sea; and the woods, larger than the oldest European forests . . . consisted often of trees of such magnitude and beauty as must be seen before a perfect idea can be formed of them. . . These woods, however, had in many places suffered like the rest of the country; and in some had been set on fire – in others the trees had been felled, as means of temporary defence” (361-2). Earlier on the same journey from New York, Orlando began to perceive the “horrors and devastations of war,” observing that “The country lately so flourishing, and rising so rapidly into opulence, presented nothing but the ruins of houses, from whence their miserable inhabitants had either been driven entirely, or murdered!” (360).

Yet the present war, carried on against a part of their own body, and in direct contradiction of the right universally claimed, was not only pursued at ruinous expence, but in absolute contradiction to the wishes of the people who were taxed to support it. (*OMH* 363)

In this natural setting, Orlando recalls a forgotten non-chivalric interpretation of the state, one in which universal rights are recognised and endowed with authority. By mentioning the Three Estates, Smith connects France's current efforts to gain liberty to the Americans' revolutionary fight for independence and political rights against a tyrannical government. Recalling Paine's observation that only governments produce disagreements between men and manufacture wars for the sake of tax revenue, Smith suggests that fighting for the rights of man is a just fight. Those who attempt to crush those natural rights, including the monarchies of Europe waging war against Revolutionary France, are mercenary brutes.

Ultimately, Smith's conclusion is ambivalent about the likelihood of revolutionary success and masculine reform. Despite recognising the true nature of military glory and the tyranny of state feudalism, Orlando returns to England to pursue his land-bound ambitions and bring the narrative to its conventional romance ending. As Bartolomeo observes, it is Orlando, and not Monimia, who "requires a fairy tale ending for material and emotional survival," characterising this inversion as a problematisation of "the romantic resolution which confers power of every kind upon the male hero" (655). While the happy marriage promised by the fairy tale, as by the ideal of the companionate marriage, was meant to secure women's happiness, Smith exposes the sentimental family as the site of patriarchal absolutism. Orlando, as the symbol of the chivalric, feudal male, is not simply dependent on a 'happy ending' for material and emotional survival, but for his political survival. That Monimia could survive without her knight-errant-cum-husband (as her fortitude during her various trials suggests), that America could survive as a sovereign territory without the interference of Britain, is a

reality too horrible to contemplate for proponents of chivalric feudalism.

Smith sending her hero to the battlefield also presents a significant turning point, not only because by the time it was published England was actually at war with France, but also in terms of developments in masculinity crucial to my thesis. As England returned to war and remained at war for the better part of the next twenty years, English masculinity was tested at sea and on battlefields on the continent and in the colonies (the West Indies, India, and Egypt). In the heat of battle chivalric masculinity is tested and irrefutably proved wanting, a development that is domesticated and incorporated into women writers' reformulations of the English gentleman, as I will demonstrate in my investigation of Smith's and West's later novels in the next chapter.

Chapter 5
From “men of theory” to Theoretical Men:
Smith, West, and Masculinity at War, 1793-1802.

In chapter four, I established the theoretical stakes of masculinity at the outset of the French Revolutionary War. Burke’s chivalric “protectors of rank and sex” were pitted against republican “men of theory,” raising questions about the qualities required of a nation’s political leaders. As the situation in France worsened, however, these theoretical concerns were of decreasing importance in the face of terrifying practice. The Terror that began in 1792, the execution of Louis XVI on 21st January 1793, and France’s declaration of war on England shortly thereafter transformed liberty, citizenship, and the consequences of reform from a war of ideas to a physical war in which personal liberty, the right to citizenship, and the radical reformulation of the French government were all at stake. In this context, the crisis of English masculinity becomes a matter of national security and theoretical postulations about its status are displaced by an urgent need for practical solutions. While Charlotte Smith continues to balance the competing claims of chivalry and reason with mixed results, Jane West moves beyond theory and makes a case for practical reforms.

Iain Scott describes 1794 as the “high-water mark” of literary radicalism in Britain. Radicals grew disillusioned by the violent and despotic turn of the Revolution, and while some writers switched political allegiances entirely (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey), many others made changes to the ways in which they mounted their “rationalist argument against the state of the ‘things as they are.’”²⁷⁶ Scott observes that those writers who retained their republican allegiances began to investigate why democratic policies “had been supplanted by violence and war” in “the minds of the French people”:

They searched for ways in which republicanism could be established more securely. Instead of basing their political

²⁷⁶ “‘Things as They Are’: the Literary Response to the French Revolution, 1789-1815.” *Britain and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): . p. 236. For the changed literary climate post-1794 see especially pp. 236-241.

beliefs on the abstract appeal to man's unfettered rational faculties, which had meant little to ordinary people, these writers now appealed to the whole of man's nature; to his feelings, domestic attachments, habits and traditions, as well as to his reason. This was the start of a more Romantic, counter-revolutionary outlook. Democratic change was now to be effected more slowly, not in direct opposition to 'things as they are,' but using the existing social state as the context, or home, from which republicanism could grow.²⁷⁷

Scott's examples – Blake, Godwin, Wordsworth, and Coleridge – are all men, but I want to suggest that Smith and West particularly, as well as other women writers, had been pursuing a more domestic approach to the situation all along. Feelings, domestic attachments, and reason are central to their attempts to explore and reshape the accepted social construction of masculinity. By launching their campaign to improve 'things as they are' from the family, they could challenge gender inequalities along with those of birth and wealth.

As the work of Paul Keen, O'Gorman, Scott, and Boyd Hilton, among others, shows, parliament's response to the revolution also changed as the war progressed. The French Revolutionary government, bolstered by early successes, made belligerent proclamations, offered aid to the oppressed,²⁷⁸ and defiantly challenged the mobilising monarchies of Europe: "They threaten you with kings! You have thrown down your gauntlet to them, and this gauntlet is a king's head, the signal of their coming death."²⁷⁹ In 1793, Pitt's attitude towards the situation had been quite confident, as he believed that "If we distress the enemy on more sides than one while their internal distraction continues, it seems hardly possible that they can long oppose any effectual

²⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 238.

²⁷⁸ 19 November 1792: the Convention declares "in the name of the French Nation, that it will accord fraternity and help to all peoples who wish to recover their liberty" (Doyle 199).

²⁷⁹ Danton in a speech to the Convention. Brissot further underlined the expansionist ambitions of the revolution: "We cannot be calm until Europe, all Europe, is in flames." William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (1989) p. 201.

resistance.”²⁸⁰ Yet despite the internal turmoil caused by the Terror and the Thermidorian reaction, France ultimately was able, through the *levée en masse*, to conscript the largest army in Europe’s history, a million man “citizen army utterly unlike the mixture of mercenaries and reluctant serf conscripts sent against them by the German despots.”²⁸¹ The kind of man fighting the war, the free French citizen as opposed to the mercenary enslaved by avarice or the serf who has no choice, demonstrates the force that liberty engenders. By 1794 the war was not going well for Britain, who, like their German counterparts relied on Hanoverian mercenaries and what Wellington would later call “the scum of the earth.”²⁸² Their forces were overstretched and, as Ian Christie notes, there were “ominous cracks” in the European alliance.²⁸³

As in the American Revolutionary wars, the subject of war and the military involved at least an implicit comment on English masculinity.²⁸⁴ Recruitment literature, as Emma Vincent Macleod has shown, appealed to masculinity by emphasising the soldier’s or sailor’s physicality but also by providing a reason for fighting – the protection of women and children.²⁸⁵ Failure to serve one’s country left one’s masculinity in doubt: “Who can call himself a *Man*,” asked ‘Job Nott’ rhetorically, ‘who can pretend love for women, who will not prepare or assist in some way to thrust such villains

²⁸⁰ 1 July 1793, qtd. Doyle p. 204.

²⁸¹ Doyle p. 204. For more on the Terror and Thermidor, see Doyle chapters 10 and 11.

²⁸² See below pp. 182 ff. for discussion of the course of the war.

²⁸³ British forces were forced to withdraw from Toulon, the Atlantic fleet’s blockade of Brest could not keep the French fleet in. Even victories, such as Howe’s defeat of the French squadron and capture of a third of the fleet, were offset, in this case by a grain fleet slipping through. Also, their allies were often distracted (Prussia and Russia were often more interested in partitioning Poland than dealing with France) and began suing for peace. The first coalition collapsed in 1795 with a Prussian peace deal that deprived Britain of its Hanoverian and Hessian troops. Christie, *War and Revolutions* (1982) p. 232-3.

²⁸⁴ *Discourse* p. 29. On the issue of war and the state of the armed forces it is helpful to look back to the American Revolution. Both the British army and navy had received a shock in a war against an underestimated adversary. Since 1783, the navy had been “carefully nursed” – 30 ships of the line had been built, while dockyard reforms ensured a supply of stores. It only remained to man them in order to embark on a blockade to cut off French shipping and cause financial ruin (Christie 229-30). However, due to obligations to continental allies, the British could not rely exclusively on their ‘blue-water’ strategy. The British army, on the other hand, defective both in numbers and training, was in no condition for deployment. As in 1775, Britain turned to mercenaries (Hanoverians and Hessians) to make up the deficit (Christie 230).

²⁸⁵ *A War of Ideas* (Aldershot: Aldgate, 1998) p. 174.

from his Country's shores."²⁸⁶ This taunt reinforces chivalric ideals (military service/feats of arms being tied to love) and also targets the pacifist proponents of the rights of man as supporting an effeminate kind of man, ultimately dangerous to national security. These concerns were also debated in the war of ideas.

The theoretical stakes of war were laid out in the initial flurry of pamphlets. Price endorsed a cosmopolitan citizenship that made all but wars of defence "always unlawful,"²⁸⁷ Burke argued that it was England's duty to preserve the European "balance of power."²⁸⁸ In *Reflections* Burke hints at the need for British interference in order to preserve British society from France's destructive reformation:

Formerly your affairs were your own concern only. We felt for them as men; but we kept aloof from them because we are not citizens of France . . . your affairs, in spite of us, are made a part of our interest; so far at least as to keep at a distance your panacea, or your plague.²⁸⁹

Burke also suggests that the spread of the French contagion could affect not only Britain's ability to defend itself but the feudal masculine order:

They have destroyed the principle of obedience in the great essential critical link between the officer and the soldier, just where the chain of military subordination commences, and on which the whole of that system depends. The soldier is told, he is a citizen, and has the rights of man and citizen. The right of a man, he is told, is to be his own governor, and to be ruled only by those to whom he delegates that self-government.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ qtd. Macleod p. 174.

²⁸⁷ Price's view is typical of the radical position. Tom Paine similarly suggests that republics are fundamentally peaceful polities and that animosity between nations "is nothing more than what the policy of their governments excite to keep up the spirit of the system. Man is not the enemy of man, but through the medium of a false system of government" (*RMI* 142).

²⁸⁸ *A third letter...* (1797) p. 75-6.

²⁸⁹ *Reflections* p. 89.

²⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 221.

The prospect of officers elected based on skill or popularity rather than appointed because of rank alarmed Burke. Burke implies that a functioning military is connected to a government founded on feudal precedent and chivalric principles. While prognosticating confusion in the French military, and almost predicting the emergence of Napoleon, Burke's emphasis on rank-based subordination to officers unintentionally draws attention to the problems within the British army. The failures of the American war were largely the failures of well-connected generals distracted by luxury into incompetence.²⁹¹ While efforts were made to rebuild the branches of the military, especially the navy, at the outbreak of the Revolutionary wars these reforms were untested.²⁹² The independence that Burke believed would destroy discipline among the ranks is, as I hope to demonstrate in this and subsequent chapters, exactly what the British officer class, and other English gentleman, required to save them from the luxurious effeminacy that hampered their ability to do their duty.

This central issue of independence is also explored in the works of Smith and West. While Smith's heroes struggle with the competing claims of chivalric society and independence, West's heroes demonstrate the vital importance of rejecting chivalric nonsense and using their reason to maintain a healthy independence both in public and private. With the nation at war, the stakes of their intervention in the discourse of masculinity are exceedingly high. Ultimately, it is West's complete rejection of chivalry and the feudal power structure that it masks and to which it is inextricably bound that offers the best solution not only to Britain's military woes but also to domestic inequalities.

* * * * *

In this atmosphere of crisis, Charlotte Smith's sixth novel, *The Banished*

²⁹¹ See chapter 3 pp. 14-5.

²⁹² Jeremy Black comments on the state of the military post-1783 and York's reforms in *Britain as a Military Power, 1688-1815*. (London: UCL P,1999). pp. 199-200. Naval reforms began in the 1770s under Sandwich, who improved dockyards, shipbuilding, began a programme of coppering ship bottoms (344). For a thorough account of Sandwich's tenure as First Lord of the Admiralty, see Rodger, *Command of the Ocean* (London: Penguin, 2005) pp. 368- 379. Changes relating to officers will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Man (1794) appeared. Begun in the autumn of 1793, the novel is inspired in part by her daughter Augusta's marriage to a French émigré, Chevalier de Foville, whom she describes in a letter as a "jeune homme [comme] il n'y a peu."²⁹³ Smith's son Charles, who had become an ensign in the 14th (Bedfordshire) Regiment of Foot in April 1793, was badly wounded at the siege of Dunkirk in July, 1793.²⁹⁴ Considering these events, it is perhaps unsurprising that Smith's political opinions seem to have shifted, as Thomas Lowe suggests in the rather cynical note he added to a letter that his wife, Lucy, had received from Smith on November 27th, 1791. Lowe records his disapproval of Smith's politics, but then observes that since her daughter had married an "emigrant French nobleman" Smith's "style both in conversation & novels altered considerable [sic]."²⁹⁵

The Banished Man follows the travels of the Chevalier D'Alonville as he attempts to find a place in the world after being driven out of his native France in 1791. The hero is, unusually for Smith, an aristocrat. The younger son of the viscount de Fayolles (whose eldest son has renounced his patrimony in favour of the Revolutionary cause), D'Alonville detests the Revolution and blames the upheaval and heartbreak it produced for causing the death of his beloved father. In the opening scene, D'Alonville and an extremely ill viscount arrive at the Castle Rosenheim: the damage wrought by civil war is evident in the state of the once-proud aristocratic men. For the viscount, the betrayal of his eldest son – who had "long thought and acted for himself" and ultimately "abjured his rank, and adhered to the men who, not contented with limiting the power of the king, and humiliating the nobility,

²⁹³ Stanton, *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*. (Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 2003) p. 97.

²⁹⁴ Stanton p. 63, note p. 73, note.

²⁹⁵ Stanton p. 39. Smith's pro-revolutionary sentiments also affected her popularity as a novelist and her ability to be published, thereby endangering her means of providing for her family. Cadell, her regular publisher, refused to publish *Desmond* in 1792 because he believed the material to be too politically sensitive (see Stanton pp 43, 55 note 6). George Robinson published *Desmond*, while Joseph Bell published the original run of *The Old Manor House*. Smith's early interest in the revolution is captured in a letter to Joel Barlow written 3 November 1792 (Stanton pp. 48-51). While approving of the revolution, Smith also expresses a growing anxiety about the fate of the emigrants: "The magnitude of the Revolution is such as ought to make it embrace every great principle of Morals, & even in a Political light (with which I am afraid Morals have but little to do), it seems to me wrong for the Nation entirely to exile and abandon these Unhappy Men" (49).

had now imprisoned the monarch, and massacred the few nobles who remained around him” (*BM* I. 179) – is more troubling than the destruction of his own fortunes. Now that he finds himself “banished and a beggar” (*BM* I. 38), death is his only choice. D’Alonville feels himself to be a “wretched outcast . . . without a home, without even a country, without even a spot of earth in which I may lay the cold remains of my father” (*TBM* I. 67). The Burkean flavour of this family romance, which deplores the elder son’s quest for a more congenial parent (independence) while applauding the younger’s proper feeling is reiterated in Smith’s presentation of the Revolutionary threat to Castle Rosenheim.

D’Alonville is granted a spot of earth by the baroness at Castle Rosenheim, but this venerable building is also threatened, and ultimately burned, by the spreading chaos of the Revolution. In the panic of preparing to flee the Castle, important papers meant to secure the Castle to the Baron’s grandchildren are left behind and D’Alonville risks his life and his liberty to retrieve them. While the family’s confessor (whose ambition eventually leads him to join the revolution) cannot fathom why “any man who valued his life” would undertake “so perilous, and in his opinion, so useless an exploit” (*TBM* I. 117), D’Alonville’s return to secure the parchment ensures that even if the symbol of the estate should crumble, its constitution will survive intact.²⁹⁶ On his mission, D’Alonville’s interactions with the peasantry also suggests a conservative agenda, as one woman dismisses the Revolution’s equality mandate, confident that “one such good house as our castle above was, is a thousand times better for the poor than all these new notions that have brought us no good yet” (*TBM* I. 150). Later, D’Alonville’s “heart sunk” in contemplating

the sad condition to which so many brave men were reduced, and the deplorable state of the country whence they were driven, for no other crime than adherence to

²⁹⁶ Because the Baron has no male heir, a document was drawn up to ensure that the property would pass to his daughter’s children, rather than to a distant cousin who they fear would dispute their claim should the document disappear (see vol. 1. 113-20).

the king whom they had sworn to defend and to a government which, however, defective, was infinitely preferable to the tyrannical anarchy which had, under the pretence of curing those defects, brought an everlasting disgrace on the French name. (*TBM* I. 175)

Though this concern for the estate and the state of the French nation suggests Burkean sympathies, this apparent conservatism is complicated when the novel moves to England, where D'Alonville eventually visits with his friend Edward Ellesmere and meets his future bride Angelina Denzil. England and Englishmen, specifically courtiers, are presented in all of their defects and clearly in need of reform, complicating the novel's, and Smith's, post-Revolution political allegiances.

While D'Alonville is an idealised French aristocrat, he and his overtly Burkean storyline are almost a diversion from Smith's desire to achieve reform in England. Ellesmere, the young Englishman whom D'Alonville meets in Vienna, is described as possessing "an heart attached to true English principles, an heart detesting tyranny and injustice under whatever semblance they appeared and ready to side with every man who dared honestly resist them" (*TBM* ii. 41-2). In marked contrast, his father and brother undermine English liberty in their pursuit of patronage at court. While Sir Maynard Ellesmere was successful for a few years and the "sacrifice of his time and independence" were "rewarded with an employment," his place was lost with a change of ministry, leaving him to spend his time and independence by raising his son to sustain the "family consequence, by becoming in his turn a statesman" (*TBM* ii. 24). Ellesmere finally does procure himself a patronage position, along with a coronetcy of horse for his younger brother in exchange for "the most perfect acquiescence in politics, whatever turn they might take" (*TBM* iii. 9). The politics he agrees to support are soon revealed to be rabidly anti-Jacobin and Ellesmere's perfect acquiescence is expressed in his warning to Edward about "Jacobin emissaries" masquerading as French emigrants of "fashion" and "good

principles" (*TBM* iii. 11). Thus, while Smith couches her disapprobation of the Revolution's violent turn in Burkean language and sentiment, she also deplores the repressive and suspicious English response and suggests that it is due to a nation of men whose consciences are not their own. Her solution to this problem in the Ellesmere family is to kill off the courtiers, leaving the right son with the right principles (i.e. Edward) to inherit and reform.

While serendipitous fevers carry off problematic courtiers, Smith's Grandisonian solution of placing good men in positions of authority is a self-consciously employed convention. The fictiveness of her solution is underscored by the almost metafictional reflections of Mrs. Denzil, the heroine's mother, who, like Smith herself, supports her wronged family through her literary endeavours and populates her novels with heroes who add 'to the bravery and talents of Caesar . . . the gentleness of Sir Charles Grandison, and the wit of Lovelace" (*TBM* ii. 226). But while Mrs. Denzil creates fantasy men in her fiction, she is disillusioned with the reality of English noblemen and men of business. In a long letter detailing her (and Smith's) wrongs, Mrs Denzil gives a portrait of the people of fashion:

The less enlightened, the beauties, or rather those who insist upon being still noticed as such, dress with more eclat, though not with more care – They dash at new fashions to leave the *vulgars and raffs* at an immeasurable distance – dine at eight o'clock – go to the opera; set up half the night at deep play – talk loud about it the next day as they stop in Bond-street to some idle man who affects fashion. – If they happen to be women whose connections were originally in the city, they take care to talk a great deal to and of lords and ladies, Sir John and Sir Frederick, and to exceed in their follies and their expences these new acquaintances. – Such are the lives persons lead, who 'are very sorry for poor Mrs. Denzil, but cannot help saying they think her quite wrong in many things –

to be sure she has some talents, but nothing so extraordinary; and if she had, it is a thousand pities to use them in attacking people of consequence, who really wished her well – and then to have any opinion of politics is so extremely wrong! – There can be one opinion on those things among ‘les gens comme il faut’ – why then offend them by differing from them, when *they* only can be of use in promoting the interest of her large family.’ (*TBM* ii. 222-3)

Mrs. Denzil further laments that men, “under the pretence of serving, have undone us”:

If there is justice either on earth or in Heaven, they will have a dreadful account to answer to both. In the mean time, notwithstanding your exhortations to moderation, I shall endeavour to shew what they are to a world who is already but little disposed to think well of them – And *you* will see it really may happen in this very happy land, that men who are rich may commit, with impunity, crimes infinitely more unpardonable, because they are committed with less temptation, than those for which ‘little villains’ suffer every day – crimes which involve in their consequences the most fatal events. (*TBM* ii. 235-6)

The people of fashion are balanced by very few of the people of merit who Edgeworth and Austen posit as rising along with professionals. Indeed, Smith’s unfortunate experience with lawyers makes faith in the political potential of an increasingly genteel professional class impossible. Instead, Smith’s work becomes increasingly bleak, as will be seen in *The Young Philosopher* (1798), as the potential for reform and liberty is blocked by narrow-minded people more interested in place and wealth than liberal ideals. Her heroes, anomalies painstakingly distinguished from their peers – D’Alonville is “undoubtedly an exception to the prejudice that

indiscriminately condemns” young Frenchman as “vain” and “presumptuous” coxcombs (*TBM* i. 179), while Ellesmere has “notions of honour which mere men of the world would call romantic and ideas of friendship which such men would condemn as ridiculous” (*TBM* ii. 23) – offer only temporary and local solutions to a worsening national problem.

The novel ends with a retreat to Italy, as yet unmolested by Napoleon’s imperial expansion.²⁹⁷ Smith’s strategy of relying on conventional good men – men of birth and breeding – only mitigates the personal difficulties of the women whom they marry. Their retreat to an Italian idyll, a possibility eschewed by Sir Charles Grandison in favour of England and duty, signals Smith’s pessimistic fear that England is caught in a vicious cycle of patronage, corruption, and tyranny. It could be argued that her own prejudices of birth and education prevent Smith from imagining that good men worthy of authority could be anything other than rigidly defined, landed, born-gentlemen.

While the situation abroad worsened, Parliament set about dealing with internal threats through legislation and legal proceedings. O’Gorman notes that in 1794, the Portland Whigs joined forces with the Pitt administration, effectively neutralising Parliamentary opposition and presenting a united front in the effort to “subdue the rising tide of domestic radicalism.”²⁹⁸ By 1796, the war had become a stalemate. Though trade and the empire were mostly secure, Christie observes that French privateers continued to threaten British shipping, while French mastery of Western Europe appeared complete.²⁹⁹ Concluding that there was nothing to win, and too much at stake (including bankruptcy), Britain prepared to make overtures of peace to the

²⁹⁷ Napoleon began planning a march on Italy in the spring of 1794 (Doyle 206). By 1796, the main front of the war was in Northern Italy and Napoleon had designs on Milan, Vienna, and Venice (213-4).

²⁹⁸ O’Gorman p. 26. Habeus Corpus was suspended in 1794, the same year that the London Corresponding Society’s founders Thomas Hardy, John Thelwall, and Horne Tooke were brought to trial for treason. Two acts were promulgated in 1795 changing the definition of treason in relation to printed materials (Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act), while the Seditious Meetings Act outlawed gatherings larger than fifty people from discussing political or social reform (O’Gorman, Frank. “Pitt and the ‘Tory’ Reaction.” *Britain and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 21-38. p. 32).

²⁹⁹ Christie, *Wars and Revolutions* (1982) p. 234.

French Directory.

While the Duke of York's army in the Netherlands performed poorly and the attempt to join the royalist rebellion at Quiberon Bay in 1795 was an utter disaster, the citizen soldiers of the French Republic presented a formidable enemy and introduced a "ferocity" unknown in European warfare for more than a century.³⁰⁰ The failures of the English army in the French campaign, coupled with the memory of defeat in America, signalled that the crisis of masculinity had not yet been solved. Burke's chivalric ideal was one possibility for reform, but it is against this more traditional ideal that West continues her attack in *A Gossip's Story* (1796).

A Gossip's Story is most often viewed as a precursor to Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, with attention being focused on the Dudley sisters, Marianne and Louisa.³⁰¹ While there are similarities, and both share the central trope of the immature heroine who must choose a marriage partner, the male characters who populate this story complicate its seemingly conservative structure. Claudia Johnson argues that anti-jacobin novels constituted a marked departure from earlier novels by eschewing social criticism. The "gluttonous and sycophantic clergymen, tyrannical fathers, wastrel eldest sons" that form the stock characters of eighteenth-century novels with their "comic plots favouring the romantic energies of the young over the inflexibility and greed of the old" are deemed by Johnson to be too "politically sensitive" in the context of the Two Acts of 1795, which instituted much stricter definitions of treason and sedition, particularly in print. Johnson considers the social criticism implied by mocking authority figures to be the province of reformist/radical writers, like Wollstonecraft, Inchbald, Smith.³⁰² Johnson further argues that:

having pointedly committed themselves to an anti-Jacobin position, conservative novelists had little choice but to idealize authority per se – the authority of laws, of

³⁰⁰ Doyle p. 211-2 312-3; p. 206.

³⁰¹ See Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, pp. 98-103; Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, p. 64.

³⁰² *Jane Austen* (1988) p. 8.

conventions, of customs, and of course, of standard figures embodying them: fathers, husbands, clergymen. To do any less would be to surrender their first position and grant that the reformers they tried to discredit as maniacal and treasonous had legitimate grievances after all.³⁰³

Fathers, however, do come in for criticism in *A Gossip's Story*: Lord Clermont's mercenary ideas about marriage and cruelty to his children can hardly be considered exemplary. Nor is his son an ideal husband. And the very fact that choice is so important for Marianne and Louisa Dudley is evidence proving that not all men – whether they are authority figures or not – behave in ways that justify a wholehearted and wholesale endorsement of the status quo. Grenby observes that the conservative and evangelical campaigns to reform manners, including those of the aristocracy, was a vital course of “preventative medicine” pursued in anti-jacobin fiction.³⁰⁴ Though Grenby acknowledges that the “scathing attacks” included in “the most orthodox” of anti-jacobin novels had subversive potential, he is not willing to go as far as Gerald Newman does in *The Rise of English Nationalism* (1987). Newman characterises seemingly conservative texts as trojan horses and suggests that these novels did “much more to subvert the established order than to uphold it.”³⁰⁵ While Burney's *Cecilia* left the issue of how to fix what ailed society unsolved, and Smith increasingly advocates retreat, first simply from society in *Desmond* and then from England in *The Banished Man*, West not only addresses the problems that plague society and the family, but offers workable solutions without revolutionary action. Like Edmund Herbert, she is a “practical,” rather than theoretical, reformer (*AE* ii. 203).

In her introduction, Homespun apologises for the length of the inserted legendary tale and hopes that “a trifle will not be measured upon the bed of Procrustes” and subordinates the claims of artistry to that of the avowed end

³⁰³ *ibid.* p. 8.

³⁰⁴ *The Anti-Jacobin Novel* p. 160.

³⁰⁵ See Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*. (London: Weidenfield, 1987). pp. 233-238.

of “moral improvement” (*GS* vol. I viii). Procrustes, the host who customised his guests to fit the bed, appeared in the political debates of the 1790s as a signifier of tyranny, notably in relation to the injustice of the legal system (Godwin, *Political Justice*, 1793-6), the gagging bills (Beddoes, 1795), and in terms of colonial taxation (Burke, *Works* rpt. 1792-3). In relation to fiction, the Procrustes reference suggests West’s awareness of increasingly politically-motivated criticism and the stakes related to novel writing, which would be made manifest with the creation of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* the following year (1797). Recent criticism of the *Anti-Jacobin* novel seems to support a Procrustean interpretation of that body of fiction, as critics such as Grenby suggest that their plots were manipulated to fit narrow anti-revolutionary political concerns. The reference is also interesting because the novel deals with social and gender ideals and the varieties of torment reserved for those who do not fit. As in *The Advantages of Education*, chivalric and romantic ideals are at the root of courtship and marital problems, rendering real life a Procrustes bed of expectations for both men and women. However, West demonstrates that adhering blindly to (fashionable) ideals is problematic when those ideals neglect personal merit, in both women and men. The only characters who avoid figurative mutilation and have happy, productive lives are those who reject such nonsense and, in doing so, reject tyranny.

West provides her heroines with three suitors: Henry Pelham, Sir William Milton, and Mr. Clermont. Mr. Clermont has all the trappings of the ultimate romantic hero, down to his French-sounding name. He first encounters Marianne Dudley when rescuing her from the back of a runaway horse. His bravery is coupled with birth (he is the son of a peer) and “expressive beauty” (*GS* i. 203). Marianne and Clermont seem destined for each other:

Never was such a wonderful coincidence of opinion! Both were passionate admirers of the country; both loved moonlight walks, and the noise of distant waterfalls; both were enchanted by the sound of the sweet-toned harp, and

the almost equally soft cadence of the pastoral and elegiac muse; in short, whatever was passionate, elegant and sentimental in art; or beautiful, pensive and enchanting in nature. (*GS* i. 205)

Homespun's narration parodies the sort of sentimental nonsense that West deplores. When Marianne romanticises Clermont's "superior virtue, that inherent excellence, that sublime amiability which she already discovered was congenial to his soul" before, as Louisa notes, "their existence was confirmed by experience," it is clear that she is doomed (*GS* i. 210).

On the opposite end of the spectrum is Sir William Milton. Likened to Charles I, the effects of superiority and an inborn absolutism make Sir William repellent: "He had been too long accustomed to the servile adulation of the east, to recollect that freeborn Britons are seldom inclined to admit the claims of wealth and arrogance, if men possess no superior title to respect and esteem" (*GS* i. 56). While Clermont embodies the romantic excesses of chivalry, Sir William exemplifies the repressive absolutist tyranny of feudalism, chivalry's political avatar. Sir William's name also suggests the republicanism of the English civil war (John Milton, of course, was a republican), perhaps indicating that his character flaw, absolutist tyranny, contains the seeds of its own destruction. Despite those personality problems, Mr. Dudley encourages Louisa to accept Sir William's offer, arguing:

Personal considerations are beneath your attention.
Defect in character is the unavoidable lot of humanity. If you have discovered no reasons for disapprobation, stronger than those stated last night, and your heart is *totally* disengaged, I trust your affections may be taught by gratitude to flow in the channel which judgement prescribes. (*GS* i. 67)

Though Louisa endeavours to please her father, the turn of events suggests that Mr. Dudley's advice is wrong and that there is a fine line between listening to emotions and being ruled by passions. Louisa is spared when she

receives a letter exposing Sir William's licentiousness and cruelty – he abandoned his mistress and their children – justifying her rejection of a potential “husband deficient in moral principle” (*GS* i. 185). Her heart, which is secretly engaged, is spared, and the man who possesses it is the novel's hero, Mr. Pelham.

Pelham initially enters the novel as Marianne Dudley's suitor, which, considering the turn of events, is perhaps the ultimate deflation of the romance plot. Marianne's romantic sensibilities are offended by Pelham's rational courtship:

Mr. Pelham . . . seemed much more gay and lively than was consistent with the painful suspense in which courtship ought to keep the lover's heart. His manner was unembarrassed, which was wrong; he was comfortable in her absence; her presence indeed seemed to give him satisfaction, but not of the transporting kind she expected. He maintained his own opinions in conversation, and though he treated her with respect, yet not with deference. In his addresses as a lover he fell short of that kneeling ecstatic tenderness, that restless solicitude, that profound veneration, in short those thousand nameless refinements, which some call absurdities and some delicacies, but by which men, who really love, aspire to gain the woman of their heart. (*GS* i. 45-6)

Homespun's ironic tone suggests that Marianne's romantic notions about truly sincere suitors are to her detriment. Marianne expects a chivalric slave dancing attendance and expressing his emotions, too powerful for words, in exaggerated, sentimental displays – a hallmark of the cult of sensibility. However, as Homespun makes clear, these things are “absurdities” rather than “delicacies” that no man of sense would degrade himself by performing. Pelham, in addition to being a very sensible man, is generally unexceptionable. Mr. Dudley's observations on his social interactions are

telling:

He is respectfully treated by his superiors; a proof he is free from the contemptible meanness of fawning servility. His equals esteem him, and he is idolized by his dependents; I should therefore think his benevolence and agreeable temper unquestionable. In fine I am told that he is a kind master, an indulgent landlord, an obliging neighbour, and a steady friend. (*GS* i. 93)

Pelham, like Herbert before him, is made independent by his open, uncontrived manner. In being free from “fawning servility” he avoids the humiliating posturing of the courtier in the feudal political economy. Also, the kind master and indulgent landlord are hardly the marks of a feudal *seigneur*. Pelham’s name suggests a connection to the Parliamentary system (Henry Pelham was the third Prime Minister, 1743-54) and the triumph of constitutional monarchy over Stuart absolutism (and romance and Catholic superstition), as the real Pelham successfully quelled the final Jacobite rebellion in 1745.

The political aspects of marriage and the family are laid bare in Mr. Dudley’s advice to the quixotic Marianne:

You must know that marriage divests you of all this assumed consequence. Law and custom leave the husband master of his own actions, and in a certain degree arbiter of his wife’s. Whether your lover was a sentimental sniveller, or an artful designer, the mock majesty with which you were invested could not continue in the married state. The romantick part of love quickly evaporates, and the soonest with him who has been most visionary in his expectations. Think yourself happy if the kneeling slave does not change into the Tyrant, and compel you, in your turn, to endure without complaint, the whimsical indifference of caprice, or the sudden burst

of petulance. (*GS* i. 96)

Mr. Dudley's advice exposes the power dynamic (based on sentimental and chivalric performance) underlying marriages, reveals the wife's powerlessness, and highlights the need for a young woman to make the right choice. The "artful designer" uses chivalry to gain a subject under false pretences and perpetuate tyranny. This power reversal becomes apparent when Marianne's marriage to Clermont begins to break down.

In part, Clermont is a hereditary tyrant. Though he had received from nature "an amiable, affectionate disposition" and an "uncorrupted mind," his "despotick monarch" of a father took no trouble to curb through education the less endearing aspects of Clermont's character ("impetuous passions, and vehemence of temper") (*GS* ii. 83). The first manifestation of this latent absolutism results in the strangling of an innocent dog (*GS* ii. 83-4). The Clermont union is irretrievably fractured, as Nicola Watson observes, by the exchange of letters between Marianne and a friend.³⁰⁶ In a chapter described as "*Very palatable to the Lords of the Creation, as it exhibits them in the possession of plenitude of Power,*" Marianne is discovered arranging her journal (which contains a conversation with Clermont and comments on the "happy change" in his behaviour) to send to Miss Milton. Marianne's anxiety over this clandestine correspondence prompts her to throw it into the fire, exacerbating Clermont's fears of insubordination and secrecy. Clermont succumbs to the "meanness of suspicion" and searches for Miss Milton's letters (*GS* ii. 113). Finding that Marianne has been advised to "guard against the amiable susceptibility of [her] temper, nor any longer fix [her] happiness in the frail promises of weak irritable man" (*GS* ii. 114), Clermont's response to this treason is predictably passionate and irrational. This episode mirrors the republic of letters of the war of ideas, with the printed word threatening established orthodoxies of state and society; but by turning attention to domestic communication, West underlines the fact that the prescriptions of most male writers, whether revolutionaries or reactionaries, were directed at

³⁰⁶ *Revolution and the Form of Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) p. 75.

the public rather than private sphere.

As the heading of Chapter XXXII (Volume II) indicates, “*the politicks of Hymen seems to be in favour of limited monarchy*” (GS ii. 125). In practical terms, this constitutes a progression in family politics from Locke, who, though he rejected absolutism at the state level, he did not propose to challenge the father’s authority in his domestic kingdom. But in endorsing a constitutional model for the family, West raises the importance of women’s power of choice. Despite protestations against romantic marriages, Louisa Dudley’s good sense and judgement are rewarded with a happy marriage to the novel’s hero with whom she has been in love for most of the novel. Theirs is a marriage of true minds rather than Marianne’s “kindred minds” (GS ii. 201) a distinction that I suggest indicates that there must be a more substantial basis for marriage than affinity: tested affections provide a model of a realistically happy marriage, a partnership that is both reasonable and affectionate.

Between 1796 and 1798 when Smith’s *The Young Philosopher* appeared, was the beginning of what Ian Christie characterises as a British “fight for survival” (235). Ireland was close to rebellion and regarded as a likely stage for French invasion attempts; the French controlled three fleets (the Dutch and Spanish as well as their own); while the army, much of which was spread across the empire, was badly in need of the reforms only begun by the Duke of York in 1795. The defence of the mainland was left in the hands of regiments that lacked both training and efficiency, while Britain’s finances were reaching a crisis point. Even the Navy was a source of anxiety, as Sir John Jervis’s victory at Cape St. Vincent in 1797 was overshadowed by the Channel fleet’s mutiny at Spithead and another at the Nore later that year.³⁰⁷ The hope of peace was also shattered by extravagant French demands: the Directory demanded the return of French, Dutch, and Spanish colonies just to continue talks. Their ultimate goal was complete British surrender,

³⁰⁷ These mutinies had less to do with home-grown radicalism than the genuinely awful conditions and inadequate pay that was the lot of seamen. With the exception of the ringleaders of the Nore mutiny, mutineers were pardoned and their demands regarding wages and provisions met.

including colonial possessions in India, Canada, Gibraltar, and the Channel Islands. The British could not contemplate such terms. What they had offered “would have left France master of Europe; but no British cabinet could contemplate voluntarily also making France master of the world.”³⁰⁸ At the same time as the government was preparing to continue the war effort, their last remaining ally brokered a peace with France.³⁰⁹ The French also pursued a new strategy in 1798, abandoning plans to invade England in favour of crippling English finances in India.³¹⁰

The repressive measures of the Pitt administration against reformers had taken their toll and hostility towards reform remained unabated when *The Young Philosopher* appeared. Smith’s hopes for reform continue, though, as Loraine Fletcher suggests, her political commentary is much more reflective than in earlier novels like *Desmond* or *The Banished Man*: “The author has the advantage of hindsight, while the earlier political novels were written to the moment.”³¹¹ By this time it is clear that the French revolution had failed: the promise of the 1793 constitution was abandoned in favour of a stable government able to wage the expanding and expansionist war effort. Any hope of reform in England had also been crushed. This pessimism is reflected, I will argue, in the strangle hold that chivalry retains over even the philosophers in the text. While most modern commentators explore the bi-generational heroines, Laura and Medora Glenmorris, as evidence of Smith’s feminist and political agendas,³¹² I would like to look at the two generations of philosophers who inhabit the text.

The elder generation consists of Mr. Glenmorris, the husband and father of the heroines, and Mr. Armitage. Fletcher notes that as the novel’s “proponent of progress and perfectibility” Armitage is based on Godwin, while

³⁰⁸ Christie p. 241.

³⁰⁹ The Austrians brokered peace with the Treaty of Campo Formo in October 1798 (Christie 241).

³¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 241-2.

³¹¹ *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (London: Palgrave, 2001) p. 278.

³¹² see Elizabeth Kraft, “Introduction” *The Young Philosopher* (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1999) p. xxiii-xxix ; Eleanor Ty, *Unsex’d Revolutionaries* (1993) p. 148-54; Fletcher, *Critical Biography* p. 266-78 esp.

Glenmorris's American connection and improbable adventures recall Paine.³¹³ Mrs. Crewkherne, Delmont's crusty aunt and the novel's hypocritical anti-Jacobin biddy, "hated" Armitage for endorsing the Americans and for having, in her mind "aided and abetted . . . the atrocious French revolution" (*YP* 53). Her vitriolic assessment of Armitage's radical propensities, coupled with the subsequent description of Armitage's (fairly harmless) activities, gives an idea of contemporary resistance to reform:

he had been present at Paris at the taking the Bastille, and had applauded the speech of Mirabeau, in the Jeu-de-Paumes; and, on his return, had ventured to write a pamphlet, in which, while he exhorted the French people not to suffer themselves to be led by the first effervescence of liberty, into such licentiousness as would risk the loss of it, he hazarded a few opinions on the rights of nations, and the purposes of government, which though they had been written and spoken, and printed a thousand times under different forms, and were besides modified by the nicest attention to the existing circumstances of his own country, and softened by the mildness and amenity of language, which was thought very considerably to weaken their effect, yet these high crimes and misdemeanors had estranged from him two or three old friends who held places, and several others who expected them. (*YP* 53)

Smith takes pains to suggest that Armitage's were not *new* ideas, but the very principles on which the government of England had been built before it was corrupted by placeholders, including Burke, who had been seduced away from independence and true English liberty.

Glenmorris is a more problematic philosopher as his adventures are

³¹³ *Critical Biography*, p. 279-80. Fletcher notes that though Glenmorris resembles Paine in his "revolutionary commitment and in his long stay in America," "no work of fiction could equal the legends attaching to Paine's life," including piracy, absconding to France to avoid arrest, and his narrow escape from an appointment with Mme la Guillotine (280).

undoubtedly chivalric. The gothic tone of the inset tale describing the history of the Glenmorrises, while emphasising the cruelty of parental opposition, tyranny, and social injustice generally, forces the philosopher to turn knight-errant, draws him into the chivalric economy of honour, and makes Laura a damsel in distress. His return to England after living in America reaffirms his convictions regarding European social and political backwardness:

When he reflected on the degradation to which those must submit who would make what is called a figure in this country; that they must sacrifice their independence, their time, their taste, their liberty, to etiquette, to forms and falsehoods, which would to him be insupportable, he rejoiced that he had made his election where human life was in progressive improvement, and where he had not occasion to turn with disgust, from the exercises of abject meanness to obtain the advantages of affluence, or with pity from fruitless efforts to escape the humiliations of poverty. (*YP* 299)

Glenmorriss's solution is escape to a new world free from feudal fallout. This pattern is repeated in the young philosopher of the novel's title, George Delmont.

Delmont has already retired from society by the beginning of the novel. When "Master Marmoset" Middleton Winslow meets the young philosopher, the contrast is palpable: Delmont "seemed to be a being of another species, and not more unlike in person than in ideas" (*YP* 14, 13). The physical contrast between the robust farmer and the affected man of fashion is further mirrored in the contrast between Delmont as philosopher and Winslow's brainlessness. Mrs. Crewkherne attributes Delmont's singularity to having been educated, not at Eton like the other males of his family, but by his mother. The contrast between Delmont the philosopher, and his brother the heir, his father the colonel, and his uncle the peer suggest how dependence vitiates manly virtue.

Mrs. Delmont's influence on her son's education suggests the political influence and importance of women, and is perhaps a reflection on female novelists' intervention in the public dialogue about reform and masculinity. Mrs. Delmont also influences her son's career choice. As a second son, George was designated for the army or the navy by his uncle and father who imagined him as a second Wolfe (*YP* 29) destined to revive British military glory and prowess. His mother, however, took care to "regulate" George's "ardent spirit," hoping that "her youngest son might one day be something better than either a general or an admiral – the benefactor instead of the successful destroyer of his fellow men" (*YP* 30). While such a strapping, manly, intelligent specimen is physically just what the army needs to return to the glory days of the Seven Years' War, Delmont's education renders him unfit for unquestioning subordination. His intellectual freedom makes Delmont *too* manly for the military, too independent to be subordinated to inferior men, and too intelligent to follow orders unquestioningly. Such a soldier could only fight in a truly just war, which the radicals insisted could only be a war of defence, making Delmont entirely useless to the British in their current campaigns against the French. Having learned to rely on his reason rather than pander to the powerful for advancement, Delmont elects to become a farmer and live a retired life that allows him to help his fellow man. But, as the world intrudes itself on his retirement, it rapidly becomes clear that a standing army is not the only source of corruption.

The most insidious destroyers of men are the various aristocrats and lawyers, who, impelled by greed and lust, intervene throughout the narrative to create problems for philosophers and heroines alike. These interruptions both force the philosophers to interact with a world they would rather ignore, and threaten female virtue. Laura and Medora Glenmorris are constantly threatened by classic Gothic crimes, including imprisonment, seduction, and rape, perpetrated at the hands of villains ranging from aristocrats (Laird of Kilbrodie, Sir Harry Richmond) to pseudo-genteel lawyers and clerks (Loadsworth, Brownjohn). While the chivalric economy

that should provide them with rescuing knights has begun to break down, the destruction is incomplete. Villains remain to plague the heroines, but their knights-errant are unavailable. When Laura Glenmorris is being terrorised by her husband's relations, he is being held prisoner by an American privateer (the same circumstance that left Laura alone and vulnerable in the first place). Later, when Medora has been kidnapped by her grandmother's lawyers (in order to ensure that the favoured granddaughter's inheritance will not be divided), Delmont is unable to find her and Medora is forced to escape first from her captors, then from the lecherous Sir Henry Richmond and find her own way back to London and safety. As Fletcher notes, Smith's "heroes are poor rescuers."³¹⁴

Fletcher describes Smith's rescues (i.e. the heroines' self-rescues) as undercutting "received notions about gender and hierarchy," while "the men's incompetence seems part of the feminist, anti-sexist bias of the novel."³¹⁵ I agree, but I also would suggest that feminism and political radicalism intersect in this text; however, feminism and the broader social reform that reactionaries label Jacobinism are not the same thing. 'Jacobinism' is almost a first stage of feminist reform – the inequalities between men must be eradicated before the inequalities between the sexes can be resolved, as Wollstonecraft suggests in the *Vindications*. Smith's heroes' inability to rescue their heroines enacts the disconnect between liberal philosophy and feminism and exposes the ways in which chivalry, and the feudal politics it implies, endanger women and enslave men. Because the revolution has failed to eliminate the feudal courtier system that vitiates all men and renders them dependent, the sentimental chivalry that restrains and subjugates women is also still in place. Though the philosophers have separated themselves from society's feudal economy they are irresistibly pulled back in when their enemies use women against them. However, rather than being able to rescue them, the unsuccessful philosophers are suspicious of the ladies' actions, jealous of any aid they might have received from other gentlemen, and

³¹⁴ *Critical Biography* p. 282.

³¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 283.

betray an unattractive possessiveness. When Delmont finally finds Medora after her ordeal and has heard first about her escape from Sir Harry and then the mysterious circumstance of her travelling with a “middle aged gentleman” (*YP* 295), he begins to question her virtue: “he suffered himself to doubt whether she merited the excessive, and even agonising, solicitude which he still continued to feel” (*UP* 295). When Delmont finally finds her in London, he immediately attacks her protector with charges of his being a “Monster! villain! seducer!” only to discover that it is her father (*YP* 296). Though the philosophers do not exhibit any of chivalry’s positive, protecting attributes, the negative chivalric patterns, like jealousy and possessiveness, that disenfranchise women are clearly ingrained.

Ultimately disgusted with English corruption and wearied by dishonest and unjust lawyers, Glenmorris insists that retreat to the new American republic, a nation representing the antithesis of effeminising English luxury and tyranny, is the only answer. In Smith’s estimation, England was beyond the reach of liberal reform, and, considering the disastrous results of the French revolution, America is the best hope for English liberty to triumph.

The political idealism that had inspired the revolution was completely abandoned as the French poured all of their resources and attention into fighting the war. By 1798, their initial, nearly unchecked success met with effective resistance. Napoleon’s army, which had set out in May to conquer Egypt on its way to India, was left stranded after Admiral Nelson destroyed the French fleet at Aboukir Bay,³¹⁶ an action that left a major French army stranded and the Mediterranean in British hands. A new coalition between Britain, Russia, and Austria in the same year recommenced the continental war. As Christie notes, in the spring of 1799 the “French appeared every where to be on the defensive.”³¹⁷ Though they were defeated at sea, the French continued superior on the continent by repelling a coalition expedition to

³¹⁶ Battle of the Nile, August 1798. Christie p. 243.

³¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 246.

liberate the Low Countries.³¹⁸

In the context of an increasingly drawn-out war, West published her most overtly political novel of the revolutionary period. Watson characterises *A Tale of the Times* (1799) as “hysterically anti-jacobin,”³¹⁹ while Marilyn Butler, citing West’s reference to “the arms of France” (*TT* ii. 275), suggests that the increased ideological urgency of West’s third novel was directly connected to the political and military situation, rather than the private or theoretical.³²⁰ Claudia Johnson, also noting a shift, suggests that the novel constitutes a departure from the social criticism of West’s earlier novels: West’s “later work . . . would never again expose established institutions to criticism, but boldly announces its commitment to vindicating the status quo, and to proving, as she writes at the outset of *Tale of the Times*, that ‘filial and conjugal ties are no remnants of feudal barbarisms, but happy institutions, calculated to promote domestic peace.’”³²¹ I disagree with this assessment. As I intend to demonstrate, West continues to deploy social criticism that reveals her dissatisfaction with the status quo. As David Thame notes, reviewers of *A Tale of the Times* noticed “a disconcerting contradiction between the professed intentions of the novel and its actual elaboration.”³²² While there are grand statements about the goodness of authority figures and the dangers of women following their hearts, as in West’s earlier works, the way these maxims are treated in the text is much more complicated. The disconnection between ideal and real, between theory and ‘things as they are,’ is as much a problem for the Burkean vision of society as it is for the Jacobin version – neither ideal is unscathed in reality or

³¹⁸ This is the first campaign able to take advantage of the reforms implemented by the Duke of York in 1795. Despite the improvements to uniforms, pay, and rations, the army was still plagued by the problem of recruitment and had insufficient numbers for home defence. An operation in Holland was really the only strategy that would allow for intervention on the continent, but keep the army close enough to return home in case of an emergency (Christie 247). It was assumed that the Dutch would rise up in the wake of the allied invasion and join their ranks against the French. The number of French troops in the Low Countries was also “grossly underestimated,” revealing yet another problem – unreliable military intelligence (Christie 248). This failure led to the collapse of the second coalition.

³¹⁹ *Revolution and the Form of Fiction*, p. 76. For Watson’s reading of the role of letters in the novel, see pp. 76-8.

³²⁰ *War of Ideas*, p. 105. Also, see pp. 103-4.

³²¹ *Jane Austen* p. 6-7.

³²² “Cooking up a Story” (2004) p. 234.

in West's novel.

As in all of West's novels, the narrative is centred around a pair of heroines, in this case Geraldine Powerscourt and Lucy Evans. But more important than the heroines in the novel's investigation of feudal/patriarchal/chivalric society are the central male characters: Sir William Powerscourt (Geraldine's father); James Macdonald, Lord Monteith (Geraldine's husband); Edward Fitzosborne ('philosopher' and Geraldine's seducer); and Henry Powerscourt (Geraldine's cousin and Lucy's eventual husband). The most overtly political character is Fitzosborne, who, as a villain, is a relatively new addition to the anti-jacobin genre.³²³ While West's seducing philosopher is undoubtedly a danger to society, he is not the only source of trouble. The whole of aristocratic masculinity is criticised, and the pieces of a shattered family, standing in for a state in crisis, are put back together by a man who eschews chivalry.

Sir William is undoubtedly a Burkean figure. Johnson characterises him as the novel's moral centre with "infallible" moral judgement.³²⁴ Though he manages his estate like a "prudent monarch" (*TT* i. 66) and his attachment to his ancestral seat is "more the result of generous philanthropy than of any lucrative consideration" (*TT* i. 27), this "most singular character" (*TT* i. 27) is problematic. He is duped into an unhappy marriage and unable to control his avaricious bride, whose improvements to the estate impinge on Sir William's ability to perform his feudal duties. This event hardly suggests a man with infallible judgement, judgement which is further shown as impaired in his plans for his daughter's marriage. His plans are not mercenary. On the contrary, Sir William would prefer a "worthy man who would keep up [his] family" to sinking his "name and fortune in that of any peer in the three kingdoms" (*TT* i. 122). This laudable sentiment, however, is not as disinterested as it might seem: Sir William has been educating a young man, a cousin who bears the Powerscourt name, specifically for Geraldine (*TT* i. 123). While Johnson characterises this as just what a good patriarch ought

³²³ Butler makes this observation in *War of Ideas* p. 104.

³²⁴ *Jane Austen* p. 7.

to do, West's treatment of Sir William's plan, and the plan's disastrous result, does not bear out such an interpretation. On hearing his plan, Lord W., a relation of Sir William's who pleads on Lord Monteith's behalf, characterises Sir William as a "most extraordinary old quiz" (*TT* i. 125) and there is some justice in this criticism. He is perhaps worse than a quiz, as he has not yet revealed his grand plan to either Geraldine or Henry. Also, Sir William's unwillingness to allow a union between Geraldine and Lord Monteith is not based on a dislike of Monteith's character, morals, or principles, nor simply because it interferes with his pet project of elevating his nephew, but because he is not "very fond of lords, at least not for sons-in-law" (*TT* i. 121). Another criticism of Sir William's plan is placed in the mouth of Lucy Evans.

Upon learning of the planned union between herself and her cousin, Geraldine confides in Mrs. Evans, her surrogate mother, and her daughter Lucy. While Mrs. Evans is prevented by "uniform respect" for Sir William's character from "expressing any doubt of the propriety or practicality of the project" – a statement suggesting that she actually doubts both – Lucy has no such qualms and "reprobat[es] the absurdity of allowing her friend so little influence in an affair so infinitely momentous to her own happiness" (*TT* i. 141). While Lucy's criticism suggests romantic rebellion against parental authority, Mrs. Evans merely cautions her to conform to the notions of others, and not to let her "tenacity of opinion" make her singular (*TT* i. I 142). However, her criticism is allowed to stand, a pattern that develops throughout the narrative, suggesting that moral authority is invested in Lucy, a moral authority that she shares with the novel's hero, Henry Powerscourt.

Geraldine's chosen suitor, James Macdonald, Lord Monteith, is characterised by "uncommon elegance of figure and a gentlemanlike address" and is declared by "the whole world" to be "a most amiable and accomplished man" (*TT* i. 114). His general reputation is all that Geraldine knows of him, but she fills in the gaps to make him into her ideal: "the fair designer . . . like *Pygmalion*, became deeply enamoured with the creature of her own

imagination” (*TT* i. 115). When he finds he cannot live without Geraldine – a realisation marked by his regular pursuits, dice and cards, becoming insufficient to occupy his mind – Lord Monteith rides to see Lord W. to “consult on the properest method of making proposals to the lady who caused such cruel devastation” (*TT* i. 118). The chivalric tone of his quest, a mock epic contrast to his usual pursuits, is part of the larger problem of his aristocratic heritage. As Homespun reveals:

the reign of Charles the second, so fatal to principle and morality, first contaminated the house of Monteith, and sapped the foundations of its feudal greatness. In the voluptuous court of that dissipated monarch, the then earl forgot the wild shores of Loch Lomond . . . and abandoning his castle to ruin, and his dependents to despair, glittered a faint satellite in the train of tinsel greatness. (*TT* i. 17-8)

While this might seem to be a standard indictment of aristocratic excess consistent with the reformation of manners, the historical context of the Monteith family’s fall is significant. The Monteith family was corrupted by Charles II, and now the heir to this vitiated legacy, the current earl James attempts to continue the absolutist tradition, just as James II did. The lesson of history makes clear that, as with Sir William Milton, Monteith’s aristocratic absolutism contains the seeds of its own destruction.

In observing the differences between the sexes, Homespun declares that in her “limited observation” of men “the difference of soul in the two sexes is no where more plainly seen than in their manner of encountering vexation” (*TT* ii. 117). This observation also supplies a standard by which to judge masculinity. When Monteith’s offer for Geraldine’s hand is not immediately accepted, his instinctive response is to plan a kidnapping or challenge her approved suitor to a duel, before moderating his reaction into a plan to bribe her maid for access. The difference of soul is perhaps a proprietary, possessive impulse, the kind of impulse that makes property so central to politics. His schemes are the stratagems employed by Gothic villains, and his responses to

adversity are directly the opposite of those expected of rational, manly, honest heroes.

As the couple moves towards marriage, more is revealed about Monteith. His “good temper” and “open-hearted easy generosity” are contrasted with strong, unrestrained passions “increased by continual gratification.” Though “[n]ature intended him to be humane and beneficent” his lack of discipline reduced him to “indulgent selfishness” (*TT* i. 193-4). Further, Monteith problematically has a character that “rather fitted its possessor to follow others than to be a leader”:

Unhappily for him, his birth and fortune obtruded him into notice, and placed him in situations to which his natural talents were unequal. The splendour of his rank and his reputed munificence surrounded him with parasites; and the impetuosity of his temper prevented him from having any directing friend. (*TT* i. 194-5)

Monteith’s lack of natural leadership aptitude illustrates what Paine meant when he characterised monarchy as a system of “*mental levelling*”:³²⁵ inherited rule will necessarily eventually result in a ruler who is unfit for the job. While Lord Monteith neglects both his estate and his duties in the House of Lords, Geraldine sets about restoring the estate to its former glory. In many ways Geraldine becomes the long-suffering wife who proves yet again the ridiculousness of the notion that ‘A reformed rake makes the best husband’.³²⁶ However, this is not where the story ends. Instead, Geraldine’s “sensibility. . . prevented her from viewing the defects in her lord with the indifference which a mind of common refinement would have experienced” (*TT* ii. 27), incidentally revealing the pitfalls of unequal marriages. And while she is initially able to quell her just complaints, she cannot sublimate them entirely and their existence makes her vulnerable to the insinuating villain,

³²⁵ *Rights of Man* Part II (1792) p. 163.

³²⁶ Sarah Pennington rejects this truism, which Richardson also hoped to disprove in *Clarissa*, in her 1761 conduct book *An Unfortunate Mother’s Advice to her Absent Daughter*. For the role of conduct literature in giving matrimonial advice and how it might be read, generally and in relation to novels, see Vivien Jones, “The Seductions of Conduct:” (1996) pp. 108-32.

Fitzosborne.

Edward Fitzosborne enters the Monteith's lives through a suitor of Lord Monteith's sister Lady Arabella, Lord Fitzosborne. West's combination of James, Arabella, and a suave suitor-villain closely echoes *Clarissa*, foreshadowing the tragedy that ultimately befalls Geraldine.³²⁷ Fitzosborne is described by travellers as "an honour to his name, possessed of elegant manners, uncommon erudition, and an irreproachable character" who "appeared in the first circles, corresponded with the first literary characters of the age, and was fitted to move in the most exalted sphere" (*TT* ii. 96). When Lord Fitzosborne recalls his brother from the grand tour to take a seat in parliament, Fitzosborne begs to "remain at Paris, where he was just then contemplating the sublime spectacle of a great nation emancipating itself from the fetters of tyranny and superstition" because he believed that witnessing these events "would enlarge his mind, and render him still worthier of the office of a British legislator" (*TT* ii. 97). Shortly thereafter, barely escaping an engagement with Mlle la Guillotine (*TT* ii. 99), a detail that situates the narrative firmly in the Terror of 1794, Fitzosborne arrives on English soil and is presented as a philosopher. The timeline is particularly interesting. In the same year that English Jacobins, who had long championed the rights of man, were being tried for treason and changing their rhetorical tactics – indeed after many had turned away in disgust at the revolution's violent turn – Edward Fitzosborne arrives on a mission of gratuitous destruction. Not only is Fitzosborne not actually committed to the principles of the revolution – after his escape in a fishing boat it is revealed that "his admiration of that meretricious liberty whose distinguishing code is equality of wretchedness, was rather abated" (*TT* ii. 99) – but translates *liberté* into licence and hides his licentiousness under an impeccable façade.

³²⁷ Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1748). James and Arabella Harlowe are Clarissa's elder siblings and among her most vicious tormentors, next to Lovelace, the dangerously attractive libertine who cannot be reformed by Clarissa's virtue. Arabella sets out to attract Lovelace for herself, and when he prefers Clarissa, Arabella is prompted to exact revenge. An unconnected quarrel between James and Lovelace creates a feud between Lovelace and the Harlowe family that is exacerbated when their choice of suitor – the execrable Mr. Solmes – is rejected by Clarissa.

Upon meeting the Monteiths, Fitzosborne, both jealous of their apparent connubial bliss and aware that their happiness is precarious (*TT* ii. 119, 120), sets out to ruin them:

His vices were systematic; the result of design, guided by method, sanctioned by sophistry, and originating from the covert war which he waged, not merely against the chastity, but also against the principles of his victims: not solely against their reputation, their peace of mind, and their temporal prospects, but against their notions of rectitude and religion, against those immortal hopes which sustain the afflicted and soothe the corroding pangs of repentant guilt. (*TT* ii. 153).

By showing a carefully cultivated mask of reason and philosophy to Geraldine to cover his “dark disguises of premeditated villainy” (*TT* ii. 146) while enabling Monteith’s self-destructive vices (especially deep play) and ultimately feeding his jealousy – “he assailed the honour of Geraldine by vitiating the mind of her husband” (*TT* ii. 299) – Fitzosborne is able to completely destroy both husband and wife.

As Butler observes, the villain is a new character in anti-Jacobin fiction when West introduces Fitzosborne as philosopher-seducer. I would venture so far as to say that he is the first, making comparisons rather difficult. As I suggested earlier, he can be seen as an updated version of Richardson’s Lovelace: a freethinking libertine hero connected to the excesses of the English Restoration and Charles II’s court. When Fitzosborne is considered alongside the philosopher-seducers who follow, Lovelace is the most appropriate comparison.³²⁸ Fitzosborne’s villainy is empowered by aristocratic connections and strikes at the heart of an aristocratic family standing in for the monarchy. Geraldine, like Clarissa before her, is raped. Though her

³²⁸ Elizabeth Hamilton’s Vallaton, for example, is a ridiculous French hairdresser, while his conquest of Julia Delmond, an English analogue of Rousseau’s Julie, is consensual (*Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, 1800). Also, later when Fitzosborne is fleeing the fruits of his villainy, he escapes to France at the stage when the revolution is devouring its children, and, too cowardly to die by the guillotine, he commits suicide, the ultimate sign of his lack of commitment to revolutionary, or indeed to any, principles.

principles are not eradicated – Fitzosborne’s “atrocious crimes . . . made him master of lady Monteith’s person, while he knew her uncontaminated soul revolted at the ideal of conjugal infidelity” (*TT* ii. 281) – Geraldine’s power to save her family dies with her. Fitzosborne simply does not fit the profile of the ‘English Jacobin’ (mostly idealistic Dissenters), while the revolutionary philosophy he spouts is a smoke screen to hide his villainous machinations and his absolutist political aspirations.

Associating Fitzosborne more with a corrupt aristocracy rather than with dangerous French philosophy changes the nature of his destabilising influence. Homespun ascribes to Fitzosborne a belief in the Mandevillian principle that “private vices are public benefits” (*TT* ii. 294), which further aligns him with a mentality that rejects the republican optimism in virtue represented by the Glorious Revolution.³²⁹ Fitzosborne does not want liberty, fraternity, or equality and he is entirely the slave of his villainous desires for power and for Geraldine. Fitzosborne does not propose to continue the project of the Glorious Revolution, as English radicals did, he wants to overturn it and endow himself with absolute authority.³³⁰ Fitzosborne’s villainy is part of a larger indictment of aristocratic masculinity and its lack of independence. Sir William’s lack of knowledge of the world renders him first a victim of a

³²⁹ In contrast to civic humanism’s emphasis on virtue as the basis of citizenship, as discussed in chapter 1, Bernard Mandeville rejected this philosophy of public spiritedness as incompatible with human nature and the self-interest that motivates it (Horne x). For example, in *The Grumbling Hive* (1705), the poem that formed the basis for *The Fable of the Bees* (1715/29), Mandeville praises the power of avarice: “Their crimes conspired to make them great:/ And virtue, who from politiks/ Had learned a thousand cunning tricks,/ Was, by this happy influence,/ Made friends with vice...” (p. 2). He also highlights the usefulness of various vices, including luxury which “Employed a million of the poor” as well as “odious pride” which took care of “a million more” (p. 3). “Envy” and “vanity” are “ministers of industry,” while “Their darling folly, fickleness,/ In diet, furniture and dress,/ That strange ridiculous vice, was made/ The very wheel that turned the trade” (p. 3). Luxury and fashion are held up as the prime movers of national wealth. In response to proponents of the reformation of manners, whose success would destroy vice-gotten prosperity, Mandeville advises them to “leave complaints: Fools only strive/ To make a great an honest hive./ T’ enjoy the worlds conveniences,/ Be famed in war, yet live in ease,/ Without great vices, is in vain/ Eutopia seated in the brain./ Fraud, luxury and pride must live./ While we the benefits receive...” (p. 4). For more on the socio-political implications of Mandeville’s philosophy see Thomas A. Horne, *The Social Thought of Bernard Mandeville* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

³³⁰ Price’s *Discourse* draws connections between the National Assembly’s efforts to reform French government and the Glorious Revolution settlement. He also suggests the ways in which the Glorious Revolution fell short of true liberty in England and suggests that they take the opportunity to remedy inequalities at home. See chapter 4, p. 144-145.

petticoat tyrant who alters his estate in keeping with fashion, and later a foolish old quiz attempting to usurp the independence of the next generation through dynastic matchmaking; Monteith's lack of education and weak character make him easily influenced and dependent on the opinions of others, a situation that exposes the dangers of inherited power; Fitzosborne's evil plotting exposes how the wider lack of independence in 'natural leaders' leaves the nation vulnerable to tyranny. Furthermore, Fitzosborne's seemingly progressive suggestion that transferring property from "an indolent sensualist to an active intelligent enterprising citizen who would turn it to beneficial purposes" would be a "general advantage" (*TT* ii. 294) is a double-edged declaration. Fitzosborne is committed to nurturing the indolent sensualist in question, essentially enslaving Monteith by enabling his private vices for gambling and drink, before moving in for the kill, hardly a virtuous manoeuvre. While this plan is labelled a "monstrous atrocity" (*TT* ii. 294), Homespun deplors the morality of the manipulator, not the prospect of a shift in power. The property transfer does take place in the end as West signals her rejection of absolutist slavery and places authority with an independent man. The remedy to 'things as they are' is Henry Powerscourt.

Initially described as exciting the "esteem of every intelligent observer by his ingenuous diffidence, unaffected gentleness, and a thousand unequivocal proofs of a generous, grateful heart" (*TT* i. 155), Henry is no romantic hero:

His countenance was open, and his features agreeable, though they had no pretensions to beauty; his figure was naturally good, but he seemed quite at a loss how to manage it to the best advantage. . . . Of the world he was totally ignorant; and he seemed, like his respectable kinsman, to be not very anxious to be initiated into its mysteries. (*TT* i. 155)

What is most striking about this description of Henry is that there is no artifice, no disguise. His ignorance of the world does not mean that he is a

booby squire or as tragically naïve as his uncle. Rather, Henry is uninterested in intrigue, patronage games, and the snares of fashionable society. While the rejected Henry spends much of the novel rustivating at Powerscourt keeping Sir William company and falling in love with Lucy Evans, in the third volume Henry is called upon to step into, and redefine, the role of hero.

When Fitzosborne insinuates himself into the Monteith family, Lucy Evans is immediately suspicious, and her instinctive dislike of him, coupled with her love for Henry, who also senses Fitzosborne's villainy, reiterates her position of moral authority within the novel. Though they are unable to stop Fitzosborne's machinations and save Geraldine (Henry arrives nine pages and twelve hours too late) Henry and Lucy are crucial to the reconstruction that must come after Geraldine's death and Monteith's retreat. Not only is this the first of West's novels to feature a villain, *A Tale of the Times* is the first of her works that end with a hero and heroine being left with children. That these children are not their biological children, but the children of aristocrats who cannot raise them, is significant. The MacDonald children represent a real chance to rehabilitate the ruling class into people of merit. Chivalric/feudal/aristocratic principles had damaged both families. Their status at the beginning of the novel was connected directly to the reign of Charles II, an absolute monarch with a debauched and debt-ridden court, the epitome of everything that is wrong with cavalier court culture, the aristocratic code of honour, and the feudal system. Instead, they will be raised by a good man and a woman who is his equal, a defender of religion as well as an outspoken critic of parental tyranny, a man who proves his heroism in his actions not his appearance, and a heroine who finds love unsullied by romantic illusions. Lloyd characterises this redistribution of property as a move away from a "weakened, dissipated, or flawed hereditary aristocracy into the hands of a new, moral aristocracy" (210). However, rather than emphasising the state of rank at novel's end, the most important point is that power and authority have transferred to people of merit because of their merit – Sir William, for all

his flaws, would have disinherited Henry had he been a frippery fine gentleman. Power, then, is linked to personal qualities and qualifications, rather than accidents of birth.

West's next novel, *The Infidel Father* is also a tale of the times, but by 1802 things were quite different. After peace settlements with Austria and Russia, the French once again concentrated their attentions on Britain, now under the Addington ministry.³³¹ The threat of a Northern armed neutrality, meaning economic warfare on Britain, was effectively crushed by Hyde Parker and Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801. The same year also saw an important military victory in Egypt, in which the British army finally proved itself by defeating Bonaparte's abandoned army.³³² France too experienced a change of administration in a coup that ended the Directory and installed Napoleon as First Consul. Shortly thereafter, the peace process was begun.

These political developments are reflected in West's literary innovations. *The Infidel Father* features a virtuous aristocratic military hero and an entirely corrupt aristocratic father, the 'Infidel' of the title. While these characters could be regarded as a signal that West is moving away from the reform promised in *The Advantages of Education* and *A Gossip's Story* towards a conservative rehabilitation of chivalric aristocracy, I want to suggest that the hero's novel circumstances reflect a larger shift in attitudes toward English masculinity that begins at the end of the Revolutionary wars, continues through the Napoleonic wars, and is further developed in the works of Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen.

Early in the novel, Prudentia Homespun announces her conservative intentions to the reader as she sets out to remedy such "enormities of the age"

³³¹ The Act of Union (1801) incorporated Ireland into Great Britain. Ireland had been a source of anxiety for the administration – the threat of French invasion beginning there and the general threat of rebellion not finally put to rest until 1798. Some attributed recent problems to Catholicism, however Pitt recognised that the true problem had been Jacobinism and therefore believed that the only way that union would actually work would be to emancipate Catholics and allow them full rights, including political ones. George III, however, was opposed to Catholic emancipation and would not budge, leaving Pitt with little choice but to resign.

³³² Christie p. 248.

as “dereliction of parental authority, extravagant expectations, romantic attachments, and the dangers arising from confidential intimacies, especially with people of *doubtful* principles.”³³³ In addressing her critics, however, she challenges them to “skip as many pages as [they] choose, find out *hidden* meanings, and overlook what are *obvious*” (*IF* i. 9). While this is in part a response to critics who found in *A Tale of the Times* “contradictions between the statement of facts, the motives assigned for them, and the inferences deduced”³³⁴ – in other words, they identified a disconnect between Homespun’s stated intentions and the events and sympathies of the plot – I want to suggest that underneath the almost comically conservative Prudentia voice lies West’s more progressive message. Though the framing narrative of the comically vulgar Fitz-John family is a straightforward indictment of Rousseau, revolutionary principles, and social levelling, the story of the earl of Glanville, who is introduced almost incidentally as a suitor for Melisandriana Fitz-John, is a complex investigation of the state of the ruling classes.

The earl of Glanville, the titular infidel father, is a symbol of everything wrong with the aristocracy. He attracts Melisandriana through his reputation as a man of “*vast* good sense and spirit” who had “fought two duels” and “lost half his estate at faro the day he came of age” (*IF* i. 100). Based on the evidence of his manners, “occasionally correct, conciliating,” he presents himself as equal parts courtier and man of sense (*IF* i. 116).

Homespun further reveals that

³³³ *The Infidel Father*. 3 vols. (1802) vol. i. p. 7-8.

³³⁴ Thame p. 605. *Analytical Review* 1 June, 1799, p 602. qtd Lloyd (Brandeis, 1997) 219. The review goes on to suggest that these contradictions “give the whole history of Lady Monteith the air of a studied palliation of the conduct of some actual demirep” (605). The *Lady’s Monthly Museum* was concerned about the effect the novel would have on women. The *Monthly Review* was similarly concerned: “A tone of distress and dissatisfaction is, however, so wantonly assumed everywhere, that the most obvious effect of all its evolutions and incidents is to depress the feeling mind. And were it the most moral book in the language, this quality, in our opinion, renders it more pernicious to the sex than almost any other. The condition of woman in civilized life is not much adapted to keeping up of their spirits . . . All, or most of, our tragical inventions from Clarissa Harlowe to *The Tale of the Times*, are so degraded by this detestable bias, which has depreciated every thing sacred and venerable in the opening apprehensions of the rising generation; as it exhibits virtue in the most unlovely view, and transfers to vice perpetual prosperity” (153). The reception of the novel suggests that it was not perceived as an unproblematic endorsement of conservative, reactionary values.

Reputation was the idol that Lord Glanville worshipped; he wished to be considered as the first man of the age; but he was educated in that old school of manners which deprived the jockey, the brute, the boor, and the buffoon, of all hopes of attaining that enviable distinction. He had been taught, that if the morals of the man did not at least seem to regard decorum, an indelible shade would be thrown over his public character. (*IF* i. 144)

In making reputation his idol and living by the aristocratic code of honour, Glanville is like Godwin's Ferdinando Falkland, and while Glanville's initial crime that will out is, in the eyes of the justice system, less serious than the murder committed by Falkland, it is ultimately far more serious. Glanville's crimes are complicated and domestic. As a young viscount, Glanville indulged his libertine propensities with Sophy Aubrey, a milliner's assistant described by Homespun as a paragon, whom he seduced under promise of marriage. Unusually, a secret marriage does in fact take place, and Sophy gives birth to a legal heir. When Glanville's father dies, presumably leaving him free to acknowledge his marriage, he instead gives Sophy an annuity, sends her to a farm in Wales, and sets out to find a rich society wife.

The novel finds Glanville raising his (technically illegitimate daughter) Lady Caroline according to his infidel principles and finding that they are not conducive to domestic harmony. The secret of his prior marriage and son are revealed by the clergyman and consummate gentleman, Mr. Brudenell. Mr. Brudenell, whose daughter married Glanville's son Henry, is the representative of his granddaughter, Sophia, whose parents both died while her father was serving in the American war. When apprised of the situation, Glanville, conscious of his reputation, offers £10,000 to make Sophia and the scandal disappear; however, Brudenell rejects this offer asserting that they seek "justice" and not "charity" (*IF* i. 56). Brudenell is a better-equipped Caleb Williams, one who is not awed by Glanville/Falkland's position and reputation. While Godwin leaves the problem of masculinity, and through it

society and justice, unresolved, West provides a solution in the person of Sophia's suitor, Lord Selborne.

Viscount Selborne, "an agreeable young nobleman in regimentals," is in fact much more than that. He is described as having a character that "stands high in the estimation of sensible people. He is said to have passed through the ordeal of military life with high respectability. He is termed a polite scholar" (*IF* i. 157). But before his various virtues are rewarded with the heroine's hand, he must prove that he actually possesses them. In introducing him as Sophia's suitor, Homespun takes care to deflate all romantic expectations:

Determined not to encourage this passion for the extraordinary, and the sentimental, which has so often proved fatal to female repose, the little that I shall say of Lord Selborne shall be devoted to the delineation of his character as a human being. And though falling upon his knees, kissing the lady's hand, wearing a lock of her hair, stealing her picture, with a proper quantity of "ohs, angels, and divinities" would make him look very agreeable in *my* book, at least in the judgment of eighteen, I should myself feel so conscious of being describing a simpleton, that I never could deem him a fit companion for a woman of sense. (*IF* i. 243-4)

West takes an aristocrat, and an officer no less, a traditionally chivalric figure, and completely strips him of the trappings of romance in order to make him a suitable partner for a woman of sense. The suggestion is not only that such a woman will reject chivalric romantic nonsense, but that chivalric men lack sense. In continuing her anti-sentimental, anti-chivalric campaign, West once again privileges women of sense and reforming men in order to accommodate them.

The innovation in Selborne's character is, as I mentioned, that is he is a military hero, which allows West to expand her rational, anti-chivalric, and

loyalist project of improving masculinity to the aristocracy. When he is challenged to a duel, Selborne refuses, explaining that

my military reputation was established; that my King and my country had a right to my life; and that I would not risk it in a private quarrel, with a man whom I knew to be a slanderer; but whom, nevertheless, I have never injured. (*IF* ii. 325)

But to reiterate that he is not coward, Selborne adds that should his challenger propose to assault him, he wears a sword and knows how to use it. Shortly thereafter, Selborne is sent abroad but leaves Sophia in no doubt of his heart. In a letter home, Selborne provides a defence of the military:

We frequently march through defiles, under a burning sun, suffering every privation, and combating difficulties which the least indiscretion on our part would render insupportable. If the soldier, then, felt, no nobler impulse than a thirst for individual glory, would he not immediately hazard a painful wearisome life to obtain it, and rush madly upon the enemy who hover about us in small detachments, anxious to wear away our strength in unprofitable skirmishes? would he stand under arms for many hours, patient and collected; while our watchful foe, alarmed at the formidable front we present, and fearful of attacking us, employs every device to allure us from the advantageous ground we have chosen? It is on these occasions, when I have seen my brave companions fainting with fatigue, yet uttering no complaint, burning with military ardour, yet passive as infant gentleness, that I have felt the superiority of the virtue that proceeds from principles, as opposed to the frothy effervescence of sentiment and feeling; and I have learned, not merely the value of military discipline and subordination, but the

propriety and necessity that we should all be early instructed in the admirable rule of always regulating our actions by the desire of *doing what we ought*. Much has been lately said respecting our being creatures of habit, and many popular theorists build our virtues on no firmer ground; forgetful of this consideration, among many others, that contingencies will most probably arise to break those habits, and to form new combinations ; whereas nothing external can shake the deeply-rooted principle that is founded on a clear conception of what is right, and a certainty that we are accountable creatures. Let not our virtues depend upon our habits, but rather form them. (*IF* iii. 195-7)

I have quoted this passage at length because I think it is vital, not only to West's attempt to rehabilitate a traditionally aristocratic and chivalric profession, but to the professionalization of the military present in the novels of Edgeworth and Austen. Selborne's letter addresses the two extremes of the ideological argument of the period, chivalry and revolutionary enthusiasm, and shows that both of their assumptions are wrong. Neither a desire for chivalric glory nor a bloodthirsty mercenary ethic can account for soldiers doing their duty: neither is sufficient inducement to endure the hardships that an Egyptian campaign must entail.³³⁵ Selborne's reference to "creatures of habit" calls to mind Burke's invocation of "prejudice" and Paine's criticism of prejudice's unreasonable privileging of tradition because it is tradition. But in declaring that principles should be based on "a clear conception of what is right, and a certainty that we are accountable creatures" Selborne suggests individual responsibility and reason, rather than mere habit and unthinking tradition, are necessary for a man to be a good soldier or officer. The

³³⁵ It is likely that the campaign that Selborne is on is the 1801 expedition to Egypt, particularly in figuring as a vehicle for promoting a new kind of military heroism, as the British army showed a marked improvement and that it had benefited from the duke of York's reforms. Another possibility, however, is that Selborne was sent to India to fight the French-backed Tipu of Mysore (1799), another successful English campaign that also saw the rise of Napoleon's nemesis, Sir Arthur Wellesley.

individual voluntarily, indeed independently, subordinating himself for the greater good, as Selborne does, is the true essence of good government, not a blind adherence to an inherited system simply because it is the inherited system.

Upon his return, Selborne and Sophia, now the “sole inheritrix” of her infidel grandfather and the only one of his family left unscathed, are united. The kind of masculinity endorsed by a woman of sense is clear: “The same manly virtue, rational piety, unshaken honour, and unboasting goodness [Sophia] formerly *venerated* in Mr. Brudenell, she now *loves* in Lord Selborne” (*IF* iii. 346). The Infidel is removed from his position of inherited authority and a new family government based on personal merit and virtues rises phoenix-like from the ashes. Furthermore, the professionalism that West gives to Selborne is slightly ahead of the curve for the army: this kind of professionalism, which will be considered in relation to the law, medicine, and the Navy in the following chapters, would increasingly be associated with the rise of Sir Arthur Wellesley and the decision to value demonstrated ability above precedence, rank, and connections.³³⁶ West’s understated promotion of professional merit anticipates the importance of this new system of authority to Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, as I shall demonstrate in the remaining chapters.

While the Peace of Amiens brought the French Revolutionary wars to an official end 25 March, 1802, the debate regarding masculine ideals was far from over. The campaign against chivalry, which had its genesis in Burney’s works, is forcefully articulated by Wollstonecraft and developed in the novels of Smith and West. Edgeworth and Austen attempt to redefine masculinity in the context of the Napoleonic war’s double threat of invasion and tyranny. Picking up where their predecessors left off, they promote professional gentlemen as the solution to the persisting problem of chivalric masculinity.

³³⁶ The rise of the professions generally is charted in Penelope Corfield’s *Power and the Professions*, while conduct manuals, like those written by Thomas Gisborne and the Edgeworths, discuss the importance of professionalisation in late eighteenth-century society. N. A. M. Rodger explores the necessity of professionalism and respect in the Navy in *The Command of the Ocean* (2005).

Part IV
From Ennui to Meritocracy:
Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, and the Redefinition of 'Gentleman.'

Chapter 6
**“A really respectable, enlightened and useful country gentleman”:
Men of Fashion, Men of Merit, and the Professionalization of the
Gentleman.**

In earlier chapters, I have explored the ways in which women writers highlighted the problems of chivalric masculinity and chivalry's implications for the family and for British society. In this chapter, as well as in the next, I will explore the solutions to this problem offered in the works of Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. Also, I will be suggesting that the military successes of the Napoleonic wars served as a catalyst to masculine change, as these successes were dependent on placing command in the hands of a man, in this case Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Wellesley, because he was qualified rather than of sufficiently high rank. This move away from rank bias in the military is contrasted with the decadence of fashionable society associated with the Regency period and also provides a high profile illustration of the potential of the professionalism promoted by contemporary conduct writers. Penelope J. Corfield's work argues convincingly for the importance of the professions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Using her work along with the prescriptions of conduct writers including Thomas Gisborne, R. L. Edgeworth (who wrote his educational manuals with his daughter), and Jane West, I will not only explore the importance of the professions to bolstering a new kind of socio-political authority based in merit and skill, but also show how this professional ethic was applied to land-owning gentlemen in order to revolutionise society without radically altering its existing structures. I will suggest that this tension between merit and fashion, between professional authority and landed feudal power, is central to the reformation of masculinity undertaken by Edgeworth and Austen. It is solid worth, the substance beneath the crisp white linens, elaborate cravats, and austere black suits prescribed by Beau Brummell as the sign of gentlemanliness, that Austen and Edgeworth promote as the solution to the nation's problems.

While the stopgap solutions for the crisis of masculinity offered by

Burney, Smith, and West resulted in largely unsettled and unsatisfying endings, these endings also suggest that the sentimental family is a reward for female virtue dependent on too many contingencies and vulnerable to innumerable abuses related to men. In Edgeworth's *Ennui* (1809), *The Absentee* (1812), and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) the comic marriage ending functions in its happiest and most radical form by signalling the creation of a new society. Whereas Burney, Smith, and West only mitigate some of the problems of a society at the mercy of corrupt masculinity,³³⁷ the professionalising ethic requires a new kind of education and implies a value system inimical to fashion. Professionalisation, far from being confined to the liberal professions or the military, was also prescribed by the Edgeworths, Gisborne, and in Adam Smith's economic theories as a remedy for corruption at the state (politicians) and estate (landowners) levels.³³⁸ The improved estates promised by the novels' endings highlight the importance of landed responsibilities to the stability of society; but, I want to suggest, rather than promoting an idealised Burkean status quo, Edgeworth and Austen are proposing a more radical, and professional, approach to the gentleman. Though the fundamental structures of social organisation remain intact, the implications of heroes as professionalized gentlemen who must prove their merit constitutes a radical challenge to traditional social and political leadership.

³³⁷ To clarify, I am not using corrupt and corruption here to suggest that men are consciously corrupt in a political sense (influenced by bribery etc., though this aspect of corruption is explored in Edgeworth's *Patronage*. See chapter 7) or entirely morally corrupt (only villains like West's Fitzosborne could be characterized as "infected with evil, depraved, perverted" or "wicked"); and while suggesting that they have been "perverted from uprightness and fidelity in the discharge of duty" is perhaps overstating the case, in the civic humanist sense of what a man should be masculinity has been corrupted in this way. Their dependence – on patronage, on fashion, on credit, on the luxury credit buys – is the sign of their corruption: independence is the antithesis of this corruption and the state to which true gentlemen should aspire.

³³⁸ R. L. Edgeworth in *Professional Education* (London: Johnson, 1809) outlines the kind of education and experience that a young gentlemen should have, including active military service and some acquaintance with the wider world. Thomas Gisborne is also concerned to suggest what qualities and values private gentlemen as well as politicians should have. Adam Smith is concerned with the economic impact of gentlemen and proposes certain reforms (including a blueprint for what I describe as the people of merit) that will result in greater prosperity in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). I will be discussing R. L. Edgeworth's and Gisborne's ideas in greater depth later in this chapter, and I will return to them, along with Smith, in chapter 7.

To observe that the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth was a period of tremendous change is to state the obvious. But positing reasons for that change, as I intend to do in suggesting why Edgeworth and Austen could propose an alternative gentleman, requires careful consideration of a number of factors and historiographical interpretations. While traditional Whig progress narratives were superseded by E. P. Thompson's Marxist interpretation, arguments for Britain as *ancien régime* or confessional society (J. C. D. Clark), or fiscal military state (John Brewer), I want to focus my attention on the changes that specifically target the gentleman and ideas of gentility, including shifting attitudes towards the monarchy, the professions, and the military.³³⁹ As I have demonstrated in earlier chapters, the drive to reform the masculine ideal did not occur in a vacuum and, as I have suggested, much of the impetus was due to successive wars with France and America. The American and French revolutionary wars had ended badly for England, particularly for the empire, as peace treaties in each case required England to cede colonial holdings. The crisis of masculinity that had prompted the questioning of military leaders (in the case of the American war) and ideas of heroism and chivalry (in the French revolutionary wars) continued in the brewing conflict with Napoleonic France. During the course of the latest exacerbation of the crisis, concerns prompted a re-evaluation of Mandeville's maxim about the public benefits of private vices. In this context the Prince Regent, whose private vices were widely publicised, becomes a feudal foil to Wellesley's professional General; the representative of fashion provides a stark contrast to the Duke's demonstrated merit. In order to uncover the complex circumstances surrounding the competing forces of fashion and merit, it is necessary to

³³⁹ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), J.C.D Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832: Social Structure and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime* (1985), John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* (1989). Also, see Frank O'Gorman's Introduction to *The Long Eighteenth Century* (1997). I have previously mentioned my debt to Penelope Corfield for her work on professions and gentility. Linda Colley's work on nationalism (especially in *Britons*) as well as on the monarchy has influenced my work in this chapter, as has Marilyn Morris's article on the Prince Regent. In terms of military history, Rory Muir's overview of the Napoleonic wars was tremendously informative and N. A. M. Rodger's *Command of the Ocean* answered all questions Naval.

explore connections between the pressures of war and shifts in military organisation and reputation, as well as changing ideas about the education of boys and young men, and more general social trends, like the influence of evangelicalism.

Linda Colley has suggested that after the American war the King came to symbolise an “honest uncomplicated worth in contrast with those meretricious, complex, and/or immoral politicians who had failed.”³⁴⁰ Similarly, Marilyn Morris posits a shift during George III’s reign away from aristocratic excess and towards the “domestic probity, simple tastes, unfashionable pastimes, religiosity, and thrift” that characterised his court and provided a “rallying point” for the middling sort.³⁴¹ In this way, argues Morris, the Prince’s profligacy becomes both a “weapon in the Hanoverian oedipal struggle between king and heir apparent” and “a symptom of a monarchy divided between two lifestyles, each with its own set of principles.”³⁴² This fissure in the royal family exposes what Morris identifies as a wider social split between people of fashion and people of commerce: those who engaged in and imitated the Prince’s aristocratic excesses, and those who, as Colley suggests, valued the king’s “uncomplicated worth.”³⁴³ While Morris’s formulation is fundamentally class-based, I want to suggest that the split is more personal than structural and separates people of fashion from what I

³⁴⁰ Linda Colley. “The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820.” *Past and Present* 102 (1984): 94-129. p. 104.

³⁴¹ “Princely Debt, Public Credit, and Commercial Values in Late Georgian Britain.” *JBS* 43 (2004): 339-365. p. 340.

³⁴² *ibid.* p. 342.

³⁴³ Marilyn Morris describes the Prince’s behaviour in the 1780s as that of “the stereotypical aristocratic prodigal” (342). By 1786, the Prince, who had accrued debts of nearly £250,000 since coming of age in 1783, was forced to shut up Carleton House, sell off his racing stud, and retire to retrenchment in Brighton. By the time of the Regency Crisis, the heir apparent, whose alliance with the Foxites and political manoeuvrings were generally regarded with distaste, was described in *The Times* as a “hard-drinking, swearing, whoring man ‘who at all-times would prefer a girl and a bottle to politics and a sermon; his only states of happiness were gluttony, drunkenness and gambling” (qtd. Hibbert i. 105). Morris suggests that the resentment felt and expressed against the Prince and his enormous debts was not so much for his adherence to an aristocratic code in which courage was demonstrated by high-stakes gambling, but because of his “apparent violation” of that code. Beyond his unpopularity, debt, and vice-ridden aristocratic lifestyle, the Prince’s vexed relationship with the King, an increasingly popular king whose popularity signals a shift in the British *mentalité*, is central to understanding the split between people of style hiding behind the seemingly civilised mask of chivalry and people of substance whose merit requires no such embellishment.

identify as people of merit.

By insisting on the opposition of merit rather than commerce and fashion, I am offering a microcosm-level examination of shifts that are usually considered in relation to larger historical trends – the rise of the middle class, the embourgeoisement of the aristocracy, and the evangelical movement.³⁴⁴ The category of ‘people of fashion’ cuts across social, public/private, and gender boundaries. Fashion can be attained and maintained through emulation and sufficient money or credit, as demonstrated by the Regency’s relatively lowborn arbiter of fashion, George Bryan “Beau” Brummell.³⁴⁵ Fashion and fashionable affiliation is about self-fashioning: something that can be controlled by the individual rather than being dependent on accidents of birth or prescribed by religious teachings. The category of the people of merit, I want to suggest, is structurally parallel.

‘Merit’ is a moral distinction with political consequences: it entails a new social economy that rejects entitlement, privilege, patronage, and obligation in favour of earning rewards through excellence, worth, and skills cultivated by the individual. The result more of nurture than nature, then,

³⁴⁴ Middle class-based models of social change are problematic for this period as no defined bourgeois class existed until well into the nineteenth century. In *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006) Boyd Hilton identifies Clapham evangelicalism as worthy of consideration because “its tone increasingly informed public morality” (182), while in his study of the influence of Evangelical thought and ethics, Hilton connects evangelicalism’s “distinctive middle-class piety” to “new concepts of public probity and national honour, based on ideals of oeconomy, frugality, professionalism, and financial rectitude” (*The Age of Atonement*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988. p. 7). However, the effects of the admonitions of Hannah More, William Wilberforce, and Thomas Gisborne for greater attention to social duty were limited, as can be discerned from the prevalence of Regency rakes (Hilton 178). Furthermore, Hilton observes that many evangelical social ideas had wider currency and were not necessarily religious in nature and uses Prime Minister William Pitt, a key figure in complicating class- and religion- based models for “public morality,” as an example of a “secular evangelical.” Hilton notes that, “Pitt cornered the market in political virtue by promising to defend property, the currency, the *patria*, the nation, the King, and Whig revolution principles. He stood for public service, incorruptibility, rational government, and a balance between interests, and he benefited from his deliberately non-committal association with Wilberforce’s evangelicals” (*Mad, Bad* 194).

³⁴⁵ See Ian Kelly *Beau Brummell* (New York: Free Press, 2006). George Bryan “Beau” Brummell was not a natural born leader of fashion. His father, William Brummell, was the son of a valet-turned-boardinghouse proprietor: Brummell’s social status rose as he rose in government. By Brummell’s death in 1794, he was worth £60 000, owned a country estate, and had “the approbation of Britain’s political elite” (24). The Beau took his £30, 000 fortune and built on his father’s legacy of social mobility, revolutionising men’s fashions and becoming an intimate of the Prince of Wales. While aristocratic heritage was certainly no prerequisite to fashion, a taste for luxury and idleness was, making money, and increasingly credit, rather than class affiliation, indispensable.

merit could be seen as a product of education, making the type of education a young man receives crucial. In *Practical Education* (1798) the Edgeworths weigh the pros and cons of public and private education. One of the problems they identify with public school education is that “too little attention is paid to the general improvement of the understanding and formation of the moral character” as “a schoolmaster cannot pay attention to the temper and habits of each of his numerous scholars” (ii. 501).³⁴⁶ Though Eton and Oxford were the accepted route for producing the ultimate in “English gentlemanliness,” the Edgeworths implicitly question whether this sort of education is sufficiently interested in the “intellectual and moral education of individuals,” to produce true, independent gentlemen capable of running an estate or entering the professions.³⁴⁷ Interest in the professions can also be seen in the more religious conduct books of Thomas Gisborne and Jane West. In *Letters to a Young Man* (1801), West directs her attention specifically at professional and commercial men, tradesmen and manufacturers, and the yeomanry belonging to the established church (i. xiii). This group, according to West, gives “energy to our exertions, and stability to our constitution” (i. xi). While West’s intended audience might broadly represent a ‘middling sort,’ it incorporates all of the ‘useful’ members of society. Her grouping suggests another reforming force, one that is present in both *Professional Education* and the evangelical Thomas Gisborne’s *Enquiry into the Duties of Men* (1794) – professionalisation. However, the shift towards standards and requirements being implemented was not limited to the professions or trade. Rather, as Gisborne’s *Enquiry*, with its section on the duties of peers, politicians, and private gentleman, suggests, the responsibilities of landowners – paramount among them educating their children appropriately and managing their estates – require skills and attitudes that

³⁴⁶ Edgeworth, Maria. *Practical Education*. (London, 1798).

³⁴⁷ “English gentlemanliness”: Kelly 37. “intellectual and moral education”; Butler *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) p. 221. The Edgeworths continue their investigation of ‘independent’ education in *Professional Education* (1809) as I will discuss below and in the following chapter. Maria Edgeworth also used the precepts developed in *Professional Education* in *Patronage* (1814) which will be discussed in-depth in the next chapter.

are not necessarily inherited along with the estate.

Professionalising the gentleman constitutes a move away from chivalric feudalism. While some of the the fine feelings that chivalry is meant to inspire and inculcate are retained – Dr. Robertson identifies them as “valour . . . gallantry, humanity, courtesy, truth, honour, and generosity” (qtd. West i. 217) – chivalry, as a performance and feudal economy of social exchange, has been discredited as purely cosmetic. Professionalisation and its attendant emphasis on personal merit constitute an internal ethic, making virtue contingent upon personal improvement rather than external obligations. People of merit represent a cross-section of society more interested in substance and personal worth than the style of the people of fashion.

Nothing could provide a starker contrast to the professionalising ethic than the Prince of Wales and his fashionable friends. By the time he was Regent, the fashion-conscious Prince was considered entirely devoid of substance. In 1812 the *Examiner*, responding to a panegyric printed by the *Morning Post* (a paper firmly in the pocket of Carleton House), noted that the so-called “Glory of the People” was “the subject of millions of shrugs and reproaches”:

this Adonis of Loveliness was a *corpulent gentleman* of fifty!
 . . . a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in
 debt and disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the
 companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who has just
 closed half a century without a single claim on the gratitude
 of this country or the respect of posterity.³⁴⁸

The problem could be attributed, at least in part, to the Prince’s education. Modelled according to the practice of the French monarchy, governors and sub-governors were in charge of discipline and morals, while instruction – with a curriculum similar to what was offered at the best public schools – was

³⁴⁸ qtd. Hibbert *George IV: Regent and King, 1811-1830*. (London: Allen, 1973) p. 23.

left to preceptors and their subordinates.³⁴⁹ This is precisely the sort of education that Rousseau is trying to correct in *Émile*, and considering the result, with good reason. Despite his wish of being the First Gentleman of Europe, the Regent can only manage to be the “Prince of Modern Macaronis.”³⁵⁰

The Prince’s love of fashion included a fascination with military uniforms. As Ian Kelly suggests, the Prince “posed himself as a man of action, a military prince.”³⁵¹ However, though the Prince could sigh for the chance to be a soldier, he further problematised the chivalry that Burke insists is necessary to the officer and the gentleman. As Tim Fulford (1999) suggests, the Prince of Wales and his brothers justified criticisms of chivalry’s utility as their callous treatment of dismissed mistresses and wives “showed chivalry to be propaganda, to be a disguise behind which they could satisfy their desires without consequences to themselves.” Further, these discarded women – particularly the Princess of Wales – were regarded as “symbols of a nation subject to arbitrary power, a country at the mercy of the desires of Princes who were unchecked by parliament.”³⁵² In contrast to the Prince’s feudal and absolutist affiliations, the power of merit and professionalisation was made manifest in the Peninsular war.

Wellington’s declaration in the aftermath of the battle of Fuentes de

³⁴⁹ See M. L. Clarke. “The Education of Royalty in the Eighteenth Century” *British Journal of Education Studies* 26 (1978): 73-87. The Prince of Wales’s last and longest serving preceptor, Bishop Hurd was described as “an old maid in breeches” and while he gave the prince an impressive classical and literary education, Clarke notes that the greatest effect this had was to give “a certain grace” to an otherwise unsuitable ruler (81). Hurd was the author of, among other publications, *Lectures on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) – it would be interesting to see what this might indicate about what kinds of ideas the Prince might have imbibed regarding feudalism. Clarke suggests that a “Fénélon might perhaps have been able to make him if not a model prince at least a more self-controlled and responsible man” (81), an hypothesis that connects many of the Prince’s problems to his absolutist education.

³⁵⁰ Hibbert vol. ii. p. 30.

³⁵¹ *Beau Brummell* p. 57. The Prince believed a uniform would make him *appear* properly Royal. His father eventually gave him a regiment that he could “both command and dress as he pleased.” The uniform he ultimately chose was elaborate, expensive, and impractical. For Kelly’s description of the elaborate uniform of the Tenth Light Dragoons see *Beau Brummell*, pp. 60-2. Thackeray also drew attention to the Prince’s love of dress and display, noting that he had dressed up in “every kind of uniform, and every possible court dress – in long hair, with powder, with and without a pigtail – in every conceivable cocked-hat – in dragoon uniform – in Windsor uniform – in a field marshal’s clothes – in a Scotch kilt and tartans, with dirk and claymore (a stupendous figure)– in a frogged frock-coat with a fur collar and tight breeches and silk stockings – in wigs of every colour, fair, brown, and black” (*Four Georges* p. 92).

³⁵² *Romanticism and Masculinity* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1999) p. 5.

Oñoro (1811) that “there is nothing on earth so stupid as a gallant officer” signals not only his rejection of chivalric and absolutist models of masculinity as inimical to military success, but, crucially, a dismissal of chivalric and absolutist models of authority.³⁵³ The implication of rejecting chivalry and its absolutist feudal politics is a revolution in the men who occupy positions of authority, whether they be princes, officers, gentlemen, or, crucially for Edgeworth and Austen, husbands. Authority, or the *virtus* required to take an active role in the *polis*, shifts from having its genesis in a chivalry-tainted combination of land and arms to being the product of professional and personal merit and consistency between the public appearance of virtue and private performance. In the following investigation of Edgeworth’s *Ennui* (1809) and *The Absentee* (1812), and Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) each hero represents a rejection of the Macaroni masculinity embodied by the Prince Regent and in ruling his estate represents the power and possibility of the professionalized gentleman.

Maria Edgeworth’s *Ennui* (1809), the first of her *Tales From Fashionable Life*, features a dramatic revision of masculine character. For much of the tale, Lord Glenthorn is the consummate man of fashion suffering from the fashionable man’s disease, known by its “naturalized” French name, ennui.³⁵⁴ More than the disease of individual luxury, ennui targets those very men whose wealth and consequence marks them as both political and social

³⁵³ qtd. Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon 1807-1815*. (New Haven: Yale, 1996) p. 150. Letter to his brother W. W. Pole 15 May 1811. The battle at Fuentes de Oñoro saw Wellington repulse the French general Massena’s attempt to relieve the fortress of Almeida (Gates, *The Napoleonic Wars, 1803-1815*. London: Arnold, 1997. p. 189). In *Wellington: A Personal History* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), Christopher Hibbert writes that Wellington was unhappy with the Almeida operation. Not only was it a difficult battle – Wellington wrote to his brother William that it “was the most difficult one I was ever concerned in” and elsewhere elaborated that “we had very nearly three to one against us engaged; above four to one in cavalry; and moreover our cavalry had not a gallop in them while some of that of the enemy were fresh and in excellent order. If Boney had been there, we should have been beaten.” Moreover, the unevenly matched forces were complicated by incompetence among his officers: Sir William Erskine and Colonel Bevan of the 4th Foot were late. When Erskine, who was generally acknowledged to be mad, blamed Bevan, Bevan blew his brains out rather than stand the stain on his honour implied by a court-martial. An officer who behaved recklessly elicited Wellington’s scathing comment about gallantry, as he further noted that while there is nothing wrong in wanting to be “forward in engaging the enemy,” “cool, discriminating judgement in action” was much more important (105).

³⁵⁴ see p. 144 for a description of Glenthorn’s symptoms.

leaders, making it an affliction infecting the British nation. In purging this disease from the hero, along with the pernicious feudal inheritance targeted by her predecessors, Edgeworth offers a viable alternative masculine model in the professional gentleman.

The importance of professionalism in traditionally rank-based contexts was given particular urgency by the war with Napoleonic France. *Ennui's* appearance coincided with one of Britain's bleakest moments of the Peninsular war at Vimiero (1808) where the ill-judged interference of high-ranking incompetents sabotaged a victory. Sir Henry Burrard arrived and, "daunted by the prospect of more fighting," prevented Wellesley from making the general advance that would have "converted the French retreat to a rout."³⁵⁵ The terms of the Cintra Convention, in which the British agreed to return the surrendered French army and their equipment to France at British expense, made this disgrace intolerable to Britons.³⁵⁶ Celebration soon gave way to outrage: "We can hardly refrain from shedding tears . . . the common cause has suffered most grievously by this expedition to the Tagus; it has been cruelly detrimental to our affairs, and, above all, to our character."³⁵⁷

This fiasco raised questions in the cabinet about how military commands should be assigned and led to tension between the King and his ministers. Command had originally been given to Wellesley; however, the King and Duke of York protested that it should have been assigned with attention to seniority. This resulted in Wellesley being superseded by Sir Hew Dalrymple and his second in command Sir Henry Burrard in order to pacify the King but against the better judgement of the Cabinet. As Canning wrote to Castlereagh, "If he can," – if Wellesley can defeat the French in Spain – "why should not *local* rank make him equal to *any* command without regard to the technicalities of army etiquette?"³⁵⁸ Wellesley's assessment of the timidity of his superiors called into question their masculinity, as he

³⁵⁵ Gates p. 107; Muir p. 51. Hibbert (1997) notes that Burrard was "excessively wary by temperament" and had been "made more cautious still by the uniformly unsuccessful expeditions in which he had previously been engaged" (73).

³⁵⁶ Muir p. 51.

³⁵⁷ *The Times* 16 Sept. 1808; qtd Muir p. 54-55.

³⁵⁸ 17 Sept. 1808; qtd. Muir p. 56.

characterised them as interfering old women, ill-equipped to win a war: “*Dowager Dalrymple* and *Betty Burrard* are Haggling with Kellermann [the French envoy] on inadmissible terms, and losing a glorious opportunity of having the whole French army at our mercy.” Before being compelled to sign the “disgraceful convention,” he had “resisted to everything short of Mutiny.”³⁵⁹ The continued privileging of rank over ability by the Royal family, and their insistence that the war be fought according to their social values, draws attention not only to the kind of masculinity that is fostered by a monarchical mentality, but how that masculinity, and indeed that mentality, is damaging to the nation, both at war abroad and in government at home. Edgeworth, like Canning, Castlereagh, and Wellesley, is concerned about the deleterious effects of privileging the claims of rank over merit; however, by situating her critique in a tale of fashionable life Edgeworth demonstrates how improper subordination is problematically ingrained in and perpetuated by English society. *Ennui* attempts to redress the situation through re-educating its hero.

Essentially an occupational hazard of the idle rich, ennui, or ‘hypochondriasis’ as the Scottish physician William Cullen calls it, is a nervous complaint. Noting that “nothing is so pernicious” to the sufferer as “absolute idleness, or a vacancy from all earnest pursuit,” Cullen attributes ennui and its prevalence to “wealth admitting of indolence, and leading to the pursuit of transitory and unsatisfying amusements, or to that of exhausting pleasures only.”³⁶⁰ As Marilyn Butler notes, Lord Glenthorn’s apparently dissipated activities, from gambling to gourmandizing, are recommended as cures for ennui, along with “moderate exercise” – especially riding – and travel.³⁶¹ Glenthorn’s cure for ennui, like that of the Prince of Wales and the Royal dukes, leads to debt, financial distress, and a disastrous, mercenary marriage. Glenthorn is saved from his downward spiral into suicide by a riding accident and a visit from Ellinor O’Donoghoe, his Irish nurse.

³⁵⁹ quoted by Lady Bessborough in a letter to Lord Granville Leveson Gower 27-29 Sept. 1808; qtd. Muir p. 58.

³⁶⁰ Cullen, William. *First lines of the practice of physic*. (Edinburgh, 1784) p. 268.

³⁶¹ Butler “Introduction” (1992) p. 32; Cullen p. 269, 272).

While convalescing, Glenthorn's English life falls to pieces – his wife runs away with his corrupt man of business, Captain Crawley, while his servants rule the roost. Understandably “tired of England” he decides to leave for his Irish estate (*E* 169). Upon arriving at Glenthorn Castle, the young nobleman is given an “idea of my own consequence beyond any thing which I had ever felt in England”:

These people seemed ‘born for my use’: the officious precipitation with which they ran to and fro; the style in which they addressed me; some crying, ‘Long life to the Earl of Glenthorn!’ some blessing me for coming to reign over them; all together gave me more the idea of vassals than of tenants, and carried my imagination centuries back to feudal times. (*E* 168)

It is significant that the idle man suffering under the effects of ennui is so enticed by the prospect of a fiefdom. The same pursuits of the idle prescribed as cures for ennui are tied to the chivalric pursuits of idle knights by Jane West:

is horseracing more manly than the ancient custom of hunting and hawking; is gaming more moral than tilts and tournaments; are late hours more natural or more healthy than early ones; is modern intrigue more innocent than the gallantry of knighthood; or, finally, is the effrontery of the coxcomb preferable to the rusticity of the boor?³⁶²

West's comparison not only highlights the frivolity of both modern and medieval pursuits, suggesting a feudal precedent for the idleness of modern man, but implicitly draws attention to what both knights and gentleman should be doing. A knight on a crusade has no time to play at war (tilts and tournaments) for the entertainment of ladies; instead, he is busy earning his claim to political virtue (and independence) through arms. Similarly, the

³⁶² *Letters to a Young Man* (London: Longman and Rees, 1801) vol. i p. 91.

fact that the amusements of the modern coxcomb are entirely divorced from the pursuit of *virtus* points up the ways in which the luxurious specialisation deplored by civic humanists has led to idle men incapable of fighting for their country.³⁶³ Furthermore, idleness is implicitly connected to dependence and is exposed as a personal vice that facilitates the public evil of absolutism. In the light of politically-inflected concerns about ennui and its cure (idleness and idle pursuits), the fact that Glenthorn's feudal pursuits are insufficient to shake Glenthorn out of his chronic ennui suggests that feudalism and its hierarchies produced and perpetuate the problem. While he is occasionally able to bestir himself in moments of heroism – defending Christy O'Donoghoe, securing a post for Cecil Devereaux, or thwarting an attempt on his life – a far more serious revolution is required to break Glenthorn out of the bastille of boredom.

In the midst of the Irish rebellion of 1798 and a plot to compel his co-operation with the rebels, Glenthorn's life is turned upside down when Ellinor reveals that he was swapped at birth for the true but sickly heir and that he is in fact not the Earl but her son. This fantastical turn of events, while improbable, is absolutely necessary to reforming the private and political properties of man. As part of this redefinition of man, ideas about birth, education, and heredity are also destabilised. Neither the earl by birth nor the earl by education are capable of running the estate. Though Irene Beesemyer contends that by the end of the tale, Glenthorn embodies a new “paradigmatic man” for the nineteenth century – “the man of breeding and sensibility who possesses both inherited wealth and the invaluable experience of working for his living” (*E* 86) – this is not quite as straightforward as it

³⁶³ See discussion of civic humanism in chapter 1, p. 40-43. Again, my debt to Pocock's work is clear. Civic humanist and republican discourse identified land and arms as the guarantors of a man's political virtue and I see this ingrained emphasis on virtue and its connection to politics as informing the discussions of independence in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Britain. This said, I am not suggesting that writers are endorsing a pure kind of civic humanism because the attitude to a standing army – traditionally seen as one of the four horses of a republic's apocalypse – necessarily shifts in this period. The citizen-soldier will not work in an English context, but the point is not that all men should bear arms: rather, that they should be capable of a similar exertion and disinterestedness that signals their independence. This more intangible form of *virtus* is the essence of the distinction I am trying to draw between the people of fashion and the people of merit.

seems.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, her suggestion that he embodies the “oxymoronic ‘bourgeois aristocrat’ of the future” is problematic (*E* 86). Glenthorn’s ‘breeding’ is problematic on several counts, not least of which is that his supposed ‘birth’ – a quality that seems etymologically inextricable from breeding – meant that his tutors, governors, and trustees were more interested in placating him while lining their pockets than ensuring that he was educated to fulfil the obligations of his station. While he has the social credentials to gain entrée to the world of fashionable amusements that distract from his responsibilities, he does not have any better idea how to order his affairs than his blacksmith foster brother. Both actively contribute to the estate’s demise through their passivity – Glenthorn’s born of indolence, Christy’s of bewilderment. The other problem is the bourgeois aristocrat label, which, besides being an ahistorical construction working back from an interpretation of Victorian masculinity, does not adequately express what Edgeworth creates. “Any man, you see, may be made a lord; but,” as Christy observes, “a gentleman, a man must make himself” (*E* 290). The class-bound nature of Beesemyer’s formulation does not allow for the fluidity that Christy’s statement suggests. Accidents of birth can make a man an aristocrat or a blacksmith; but, in a more internal variety of self-fashioning, a man’s character is of his own making. In order for Glenthorn to reinvent himself as a gentleman, he must be stripped of his noble crutch and forced into the world and, leaving his idle aristocratic ways behind him, become an active useful citizen.

Instrumental to Glenthorn’s transformation are Lord Y– and Cecilia Delamere, the one filling the roles of “guide, philosopher, and friend” (*E* 299), the other as Glenthorn’s ostensible prize. Lord Y– advises Glenthorn – now plain Mr. O’Donoghoe – to study the law and he also introduces Glenthorn to a new way of estimating a man’s worth. In an enlightening eavesdropping session, Lord Y– allows Glenthorn to hear how he was valued through the gossiping of Lady Y– and Mrs. Delamere, representatives of fashionable

³⁶⁴ Irene Beesemyer. “Romantic Masculinity in Edgeworth’s *Ennui* and Scott’s *Marmion*” *Papers on Language and Literature* 35(1999): 74-96.

opinion. The sensation caused by his extraordinary history leads to reflecting on his character, reputation, and marriageability, as Mrs. Delamere laments that he is no longer eligible for her daughter. When Miss Delamere wonders that her mother could want her “to be united to such a man as Lord Glenthorn was said to be,” Mrs Delamere questions her daughter’s fastidiousness:

‘Why? what was he said to be, my dear? – a little dissipated, a little extravagant only: and if he had a fortune to support it child, what matter? . . . all young men are extravagant now-a-days – you must take the world as it goes.’ (E 299)

However, Miss Delamere will not lower her expectations to the way things are, nor is she interested in a young man who is “quite uninformed, without any taste for literature, and absolutely incapable of exertion – a victim to ennui” (E 300). The only way she can imagine herself falling in love with Lord Glenthorn is if she “found him the reverse of what he is reported to be” (E 300). Lord Y– explains that he has sought to show Glenthorn “how much superior you are to the opinion that has been commonly formed of Lord Glenthorn” in order to impress upon him his conviction that “when a man has sufficient energy to exert his abilities, he becomes independent of common report and vulgar opinion” (E 301). Following this revelation, and Lord Y– introducing him to the ladies as the *ci-devant* Earl, Glenthorn becomes an intimate of the household and falls in love with Cecilia. But before he can win her hand, he must prove himself in the professional arena.

Glenthorn is not the first hero of fiction to be spurred to manhood by a fair Cecilia, but he represents a radical departure from Burney’s Mortimer Delvile.³⁶⁵ While Delvile’s efforts to win Miss Beverley are complicated by family ties and chivalric ideals and serve to expose a problematic masculine

³⁶⁵ For Delvile’s inability to gain independence see Chapter 3 p. 131-134. The family romance connection that I make between Delvile’s domestic difficulties and the conflict between the American colonies and the British government highlights the fact that Mortimer Delvile is one of the few heroes who has living parents. Glenthorn’s transformation is certainly facilitated by the fact that he has only himself to please.

identity, Glenthorn's pursuit of Miss Delamere, a young lady who seems rather firmer in her convictions than her predecessor, is the impetus needed to transform him from frippery nobleman labouring under the horrors of ennui, to a respected barrister and a man of talent and information. Most significantly, there is no difficulty regarding changing his name. While this probably has something to do with the fluidity of his identity, the accidents of his infancy burst feudal and hereditary bonds, allowing his identity to be created, not by birth, but by education – however lately acquired – and perseverance. In taking Miss Delamere's name, Glenthorn also signals that he concurs with her – and ostensibly Edgeworth's – scale of masculine worth that privileges the talented self-made barrister over the aristocratic lout.

The final improbable circumstance to mark the narrative – the fire that destroys Glenthorn Castle and kills Christy's heir – is no less integral than the baby-switching. The rightful heir is no more able to run the estate than the impostor, a circumstance made manifest by Christy's inability to control his family who are impressed with their new-found consequence, but understand none of their responsibility. In resisting his father's authority, Johnny informs Christy that as he has only a "life interest" in the estate – language recalling the stewardship expected of Burke's 'life-renters' – he "expects to be indulged" (*E* 317), suggesting that Johnny is only interested in what he can get from the estate and cares little for any obligations he may have to it. Burning the castle translates the destruction of the feudal ethic – through a rejection of chivalry and absolutism – into a physical destruction of the symbol of that feudal order. Glenthorn Castle is not only a second Bastille, it also represents the destruction of the Burkean estate. The abuses embodied in Glenthorn Castle could not be palliated by minor changes. A complete renovation was necessary, and in gutting the edifice the Delameres can begin on a fresh foundation of professional values, personal merit, and mutual affection.

While Edgeworth endorsed professional values and personal merit for gentlemen in *Ennui*, professional skill and integrity were transforming the

English war effort. After having placed command in the hands of a succession of senior but ultimately unsuccessful generals, Cabinet placed control of operations in Portugal and Spain in the hands of Sir Arthur Wellesley. While his political and personal connections certainly helped his career along,³⁶⁶ Cabinet members like Canning and Castlereagh were more interested in his competence:

In Wellesley . . . you will find everything that you can wish – frankness – temper – honesty quickness – comprehensiveness – and military ability – not only eminent beyond any other military commander that could be chosen – but perhaps possessed by him alone, of all our commanders, in a degree that qualifies for great undertakings.³⁶⁷

With the Peninsular campaign, the British had ceased to fight the war on the seas or in absentia by seeking and funding allies to do the dirty work. And with the selection of Wellesley, operations ran as smoothly as military operations can be expected to. A series of victories – Oporto and Talavera (1809), and Almeida (1811)³⁶⁸ – signalled a turn in favour of Britain and Portugal and provided a glimpse of the potential results of employing a man of skill and ability.

The last of the *Tales of Fashionable Life*, *The Absentee*, is also identified as one of Edgeworth's national novels, giving a dual public/private focus to her depiction of a man of merit, Lord Colambre, whose judicious measures save his family's Irish estate. While this might seem to resurrect the Burkean settlement destroyed in the conclusion of *Ennui*, the implications of the kind of

³⁶⁶ Wellesley was the son of an Irish peer, the Earl of Mornington. His brother Richard, 2nd Earl and later Marquess Wellesley, held a number of ministry positions, including Foreign Secretary during much of the Peninsular campaign. He also had other brothers in government and the diplomatic corps (Hibbert 92). Norman Gash, 'Wellesley, Arthur, first duke of Wellington (1769–1852)', (Sept. 2004).

³⁶⁷ qtd. Muir p. 94.

³⁶⁸ The battle of Oporto (12 May 1809) saw British troops drive Marshal Soult and his armies out of Portugal. At Talavera (28 July) Wellesley's armies began the long and difficult task of pushing the French out of Spain with a victory against the larger French force. Wellesley was created Viscount Wellington as a reward for this victory. For a discussion of Almeida, see above p. 231, note 17. *The Oxford Companion to British History*. (1997).

hero needed to save the Clonbrony estate from ruin at the hands of evil agents are far more radical. I see Edgeworth's rehabilitation of the estate as part of the national focus of the novel: the estate standing in for the nation must be salvaged because the nation it represents must be saved. The kind of man who initiates such change is the most important part of this reform and as such, I want to suggest, *The Absentee* translates Glenthorn's transformation to a public and national scale and implies that a stable, thriving (e)state requires a radical revolution in leadership.

Irene Beesemyer characterises Lord Colambre as a further refinement of "the Glenthorn male prototype" that "culminates in a polished—and finished – ideal of masculinity for the new century."³⁶⁹ I have already expressed reservations about her labelling Glenthorn a bourgeois aristocrat, though I agree that Edgeworth presents Colambre as a "leader of tomorrow."³⁷⁰ This interest in society, in a family dynamic, rather than simply the individual as explored in *Ennui*, is a shift that may reflect the influence of Étienne Dumont, a utilitarian who raised questions regarding the education of societies in his correspondence with Edgeworth.³⁷¹ The focus on the larger group is also a feature of the National tale or novel, which ideally depicts a "modern society with all its parts functioning in their real-life relations to one another," and is a form that takes the individual of the eighteenth-century novel and places him or her in his or her social context.³⁷² The task of creating a new kind of individual man is accomplished with Glenthorn; with Colambre, Edgeworth sets herself the task of reforming society to reflect the new masculine ethos. In order to accomplish this feat, Colambre becomes a sort of domestic Wellington, transforming the 'scum of the earth' – or idle, useless people of fashion – into a well-oiled citizenry. In this way, Colambre's interest in the military – first in perusing Paley's *Military Policy* at Count O'Halloran's and later when he thinks he must escape his feelings for Grace –

³⁶⁹ "I though I never set my eyes on a finer figure of a man" *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) p.125.

³⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 129.

³⁷¹ Butler, *Literary Biography* p. 221.

³⁷² *ibid.* p. 394, 396.

takes on a new significance.

When Lord Colambre turns to Count O'Halloran, whose military history ultimately provides the key to unlocking the mystery of Grace's birth, for advice regarding a possible stint in the army, the Count declares that, "To go into the army these days, my lord, is in my sober opinion, the most absurd and base, or the wisest and noblest thing a young man can do":

To enter the army, with the hope of escaping from the application necessary to acquire knowledge, letters, science, and morality; to wear a red coat and an epaulette; to be called captain; to figure at a ball; to lounge away time in country sports, at country quarters, was never, even in times of peace, creditable; but it is now absurd and base. Submitting to a certain portion of ennui and contempt, this mode of life for an officer was formerly practicable – but now cannot be submitted to without utter, irremediable disgrace. Officers are now, in general, men of education and information; want of knowledge, sense, manners, must consequently be immediately detected, ridiculed, and despised, in a military man . . .

The life of an officer is not now a life of parade, of coxcombical or of profligate idleness – but of active service, of continual hardship and danger. All the descriptions which we see in ancient history of a soldier's life, descriptions which in times of peace appeared like romance, are now realized; military exploits fill every day's newspapers, every day's conversation. A martial spirit is now essential to the liberty and the existence of our own country. In the present state of things, the military must be the most honourable profession, because the most useful. Every movement of an army is followed, wherever it goes, by the public hopes and fears. Every

officer must now feel, besides this sense of collective importance, a belief that his only dependence must be on his own merit – and thus his ambition, his enthusiasm, are raised; and, when once this noble ardour is kindled in the breast, it excites to exertion, and supports under endurance. (A 224-5)

The transformation of ‘officer’ from an occupation that serves as a passport to the fashionable world of balls, sporting, and ennui, to an active useful profession presents a professional example of Glenthorn’s reformation. While the presence of Heathcoat and his sporting companions suggests that the process is not complete – Count O’Halloran mistaking them for militia officers suggests that reform is confined to those serving abroad in the Peninsular wars (an idea I will return to with *Pride and Prejudice*) – these are the only young men of fashion present in the text. Lord Colambre’s friends, Sir James Brooks and Sir Arthur Berryl, are, like good officers, men of education and information, and their lives are characterised by a type of “active service.” Though not defending the country from Napoleon, their activities are very much “essential to the liberty and existence” of the country. While the Count suggests that the military is the “most honourable profession” and is perhaps technically right in its being the most important in the context of war, his assertion is undercut by the events of the narrative which suggest that the profession of landowner that is most important as the landed family – including tenants and dependants not immediately related to the owners – is the backbone of society. While this might seem like a Burkean assertion, it is a fact of agrarian society rather than a politicised interpretation. Thus, it is imperative that land-owners, like officers, move away from fashionable dilettantism towards a professional ethic. Lord Colambre, like his friends, is of this opinion. Just as Britain fought to secure the balance of power and economic prosperity from the threat of Napoleonic France, Lord Colambre spends the novel fighting a war against the empire of fashionable excess and irresponsibility that threatens the nation’s moral economy.

The opening of the novel finds Colambre fresh from Cambridge and waiting to come of age in London. His first taste of fashionable life disgusts him as he observes how the rage for surfaces has corrupted the virtues of his family. Though once a good and valued lady Patroness on her Irish estates, his mother has become a woman who denies her identity, seduced by the glittering novelty of “Lon’on” society. The superficiality of her endeavours in the metropolis is evident as she strips the woods of Clonbrony in the name of lavish, tasteless, and inauthentic decorating. Lord Clonbrony is similarly debased in his new surroundings, and, lacking the good company to which he was accustomed as a man of consequence in Dublin, is forced to associate with the likes of Sir Terrence O’Fay. But the Clonbronies are not the only absentees indulging in a deleterious game of social one-upmanship. The Berryl family’s difficulties, the result of an earlier generation abandoning responsibilities to enjoy high life in London, suggests that the tension between style and substance, between making a figure and being a man, is very much a British concern rather than simply an Irish one. Though disgusted by his family’s situation, Lord Colambre loses his first battle with the fashionable surface, but in his undercover mission to assess the state of the family estates he lays the ground to win the war by investigating the root of the problem.

Colambre’s Battle of Clonbrony, is dependent, like any successful campaign, on good intelligence. As Colambre wades into the – to him – unknown world of agents and tenants, he first encounters the significantly named Mr. Burke, the agent for the Colambre estate. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this estate is ably managed and thriving. However, it is interesting to note that it is not done on chivalric principles – education for the tenants and fair-dealing along with professional integrity on Burke’s side rather than fealty accounts for its happy condition. After getting a taste for the way things should be, already threatened by the insatiable demands of fashion, Colambre encounters things as they are at Clonbrony.

The confrontation at Clonbrony can be read as the most ‘Napoleonic’ of Colambre’s campaigns. Like Napoleon, the corrupt agents Old Nick and St.

Dennis Garraghty take advantage of a power vacuum and set themselves up as tyrants whose expansionist ambitions are clear from their bid to oust Burke from Colambre. Their avaricious rule over the Clonbrony estates, which sees them set up court in my lady's sitting room to collect rents and other tributes, is contrasted by their courtly behaviour to their now-foreign head of state. Instead of securing a democratic republic for the people of France, Napoleon's absolutist and dynastic ambitions – from emulating monarchs and establishing his brothers as satellite tyrants – are echoed in Nicholas Garraghty, Esq. of College Green Dublin and his brother Dennis. In his unchecked tyranny, Old Nick holds court in the “*presence-chamber*” (A 168), to receive – and intimidate – and redraws the map of Clonbrony to further his ambitions. The abuses of power suffered by the Clonbrony tenants are exemplified in the Garraghty brothers' treachery regarding the Widow O'Neil's lease and their self-interested plot to evict her in favour of one of their minions.³⁷³ The Garraghtys' usurpatory and self-serving abuses of their stewardship, coupled with their embezzling of the inflated Clonbrony rents at the expense of both Lord and tenants, rehearses the worst abuses of absolutist rule. However, Old Nick and St. Dennis³⁷⁴ are thwarted by Colambre who, armed with information, integrity, and righteous indignation, sets off to win his parents over to a sense of responsibility and save the estate, and by extension society, from utter ruin.

Colambre arrives in London just in time to prevent his father from signing Old Nick's fraudulent leases. After exposing “honest old Nick” (A 179) as an embezzler ruining Clonbrony, Colambre convinces his father of the necessity of taking his affairs in hand properly before they are beyond remedy. His condition for paying his father's debts and setting all to rights is

³⁷³ At issue is a pencil addenda written by Lord Clonbrony on Widow O'Neil's lease promising that she would be granted a lease on the land in the event of her husband's death (A pp. 153-4). After assuring the widow that there would be no difficulty about the lease, the brothers Garraghty ambush them with eviction at their “levee” (A 168-9).

³⁷⁴ As McCormack and Walker observe in their note, the nicknames assigned to the Garraghty brothers are significant – St. Dennis is the patron saint of France, while Old Nick is a long standing euphemism for the devil (see note 140 pp. 309). Both represent the enemy, but this enemy is also specifically linked to absolutism, the abuse of absolute power, and the corruption that results making these personal slurs political statements.

the family's return to their ancestral home. The real battle is convincing his mother to give up the "Lon'on" society that she clings to so tenaciously in favour of a more fulfilling and useful, even powerful, existence at Clonbrony. Colambre wins Lady Clonbrony's mind by appealing to her heart, for London fashions have only touched the surface and have not turned her heart to ice like those of the Ladies St. James and Langdale. The battle for Clonbrony is necessarily a two-pronged campaign against corrupt usurpers, but more importantly against the root of the evil, the influence of fashion that poisons people of merit, as the Clonbronies were before their stint as absentees by turning responsibility into entitlement.

Mary Jean Corbett characterises *The Absentee* as a novel held together by a Burkean family plot – a device that she sees as connecting the seemingly unconnected absentee plot to the marriage plot – declaring that the “intergenerational restoration of rightful rulers, and particularly the resident Anglo-Irish patriarch is perfectly Burkean insofar as it established a legitimating masculine presence as part of the cure for a disordered society.”³⁷⁵ Butler suggests that a theme from *Professional Education* may be used to reconcile the two seemingly unrelated plots – R. L. Edgeworth's insistence on the importance of early education which Butler describes as “an extension, even a *reductio ad absurdum*, of the Locke-Hartley doctrine that environment matters more than heredity.”³⁷⁶ Dumont and Frances Edgeworth (R. L. E's fourth wife) encouraged him to moderate his opinion, but Mr. Edgeworth would not budge. While Edgeworth herself stayed out of the argument, Butler suggests that her tales bolster her father's opinion. Thus, were Grace's early education to have been under the aegis of a fallen woman, she would be hopelessly corrupt. I find both interpretations problematic, but I will begin with Corbett's Burkean interpretation.

While I obviously agree that the right kind of masculine presence is required to remedy a society disordered by fashionable dissipation, I disagree

³⁷⁵ Mary Jean Corbett. “Public Affections and Familial Politics” *ELH* 61 (1994): 877-897. p. 886.

³⁷⁶ *Literary Biography* p. 331.

with Corbett's interpretation of Grace's Burkean role. Grace's alleged illegitimacy, in Corbett's formulation, has both political and domestic implications, as Burke's socio-political ideal requires restrained female sexuality: "the moral character of women takes on specifically political and economic importance."³⁷⁷ However, I want to suggest that proving Grace's legitimacy is a comment on the state of the English constitution and advocates constitutional reform. While this might seem like a rather far-fetched claim, if the constitution can be considered as a political genealogy of sorts, then there is a connection in that Grace's genealogy – or at least the interpretation of its legitimacy – is at issue. The secret of her birth is passed verbally, but it is open to dispute because it lacks textual authority – one of the issues debated endlessly throughout the American revolution controversy.³⁷⁸ When the marriage certificate is finally uncovered amidst the late Austrian ambassador's hopelessly disorganised papers, tangled up with "old Vienna Gazettes,"³⁷⁹ all that is left to be done is relay the information to Mr. Reynolds, Grace's grandfather, and facilitate their reconciliation and acknowledgement. The evidence that clears Grace's reputation is hardly surprising as she has been an exemplary heroine throughout.

And just what might a young lady's reputation have to do with the British constitution? Grace is not a protagonist of a feminocentric novel nor is she a comment on the female condition; rather, Grace Nugent serves as a metaphor for just government. Seen as the guarantee of English rights and liberties, the Constitution is rather like the late ambassador's papers:

³⁷⁷ "Public Affections" p. 883.

³⁷⁸ Paine establishes the nature of constitutions and their relation to government in *The Rights of Man, Part I* (1791), and observes that "wherever it cannot be produced in a visible form, there is none" (53). He goes on to ask whether Burke can produce such a document for Britain: "if he cannot, we may fairly conclude, that though it has been so much talked about, no such thing as a constitution exists, or ever did exist, and consequently that the people have yet a constitution to form" (89-90).

³⁷⁹ p. 229. While it is unclear what dates might have been included in the Ambassador's untidy collection, it is likely that some of them would have contained news of the revolution and the war, perhaps even the early rise of Napoleon. Continuing with the constitution metaphor, there could be a suggestion that the revolution had retarded the course of reform and derailed natural British justice- which might connect to the natural leaders of Ireland decamping after the Act of Union (1801);but now that the threatening principles of the revolution have been reduced to the contents so many dusty newspapers reform should move ahead.

portfolios of letters, and memorials, and manifestos, and bundles of paper of the most heterogeneous sorts; some of them without any docket or direction to lead to a knowledge of their contents; others written upon in such a manner as to give an erroneous notion of their nature. (A 229)

Compounding the constitution's problematic paper trail is Tradition, perhaps the legal equivalent of the gossip that obscures Grace's origins. The other factor in Grace's 'constitution' is her education. Butler suggests that "Colambre's refusal to overlook this fact [Grace's potentially corrupt early education] is another attempt by Maria to prove that environment and early education determine character."³⁸⁰ However, until Colambre hears Lady Dashfort's malicious hints regarding a stain on her birth, he has no reason to doubt Grace's early education or integrity. The question remains whether the marriage certificate, a slip of paper, is the proof that Grace is uncorrupted or whether the proof is her character, her consistently good and just behaviour. The wrong – or in Grace's case incomplete – interpretation of the constitution serves to disenfranchise the heroine, who is significantly a (relatively) poor female dependent with presumably Catholic connections – groups excluded from the political process.³⁸¹ But in vindicating Grace's right to reputation, Colambre overcomes the deficiencies of the constitutional tradition by fighting to redress an injustice. Similarly, a reinvigorated British masculinity is needed to reform the British constitution and make merit more powerful than hierarchy. In other words, men would become leaders and participants based on their objectively-considered qualifications, the kind of merit displayed by Colambre (integrity, perseverance, a sense of justice, a determination to do what is right etc.), rather than gaining power through patronage and pandering to the prejudices of the right

³⁸⁰ *Literary Biography* p. 333.

³⁸¹ It is revealed that Grace has a fortune of £5,000 that she had lent to her uncle during the family's difficulties. However, this would hardly make her an heiress. Her expectations are considerably enlarged when she is acknowledged by Mr. Reynolds, but prior to this event, she is considered a poor dependent. The Catholic connection is not explicit, but her mother, Miss St. Omar bears the name of a Jesuit institution and was educated in a French convent.

minister/duke/Prince etc.

While Burke believes that chivalry holds society and the constitution together, “the unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiments, and heroic enterprise” is indeed “gone” in Edgeworth’s vision of society. In its stead are men who, while sharing some of its better qualities – Robertson’s valour, humanity, courtesy, truth, honour, and generosity – eschew chivalry’s tyrannical tendencies, specifically its feudal political implications and absolutist gender model. Grace becomes the “nurse of manly sentiments” and “heroic enterprise” but not in the name of chivalric gallantry, in the name of justice. Justice, not chivalry, is the code of the man of merit, just as “deeds not words” – the triumph of substance over style and expression – is his motto. And it should be justice, and not feudal tradition, that governs the estate, the British nation, and constitutional reform.

In Austen’s second novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), the character of the gentleman is of paramount importance and the competing claims of fashion and merit in his makeup are explored. In their post-mortem of the Meryton Assembly Elizabeth and Jane reflect on Mr. Bingley:

‘He is just what a young man ought to be,’ said she, ‘sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners!– so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!’

‘He is also handsome,’ replied Elizabeth, ‘which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete.’ (9)

However, it rapidly becomes clear that a young man must comprehend more than these basic accomplishments of fashionable manners, as the novel’s Derbyshire men reveal. Through Wickham, Austen continues the tradition of women novelists exposing gallant chivalry as a mask to hide socially disruptive vices dangerous to women. Austen’s treatment of Darcy is more complicated. As he moves from appearing to be a man firmly allied with the

claims of fashionable society to one belonging to the people of merit, Darcy's transformation constitutes a critique of a form of masculinity and political power based on the feudal tradition embraced by Burke.

Discussing *Pride and Prejudice* in relation to its contemporary context is a complicated task due to its textual history. Originally conceived as *First Impressions* in the late 1790s, rejected for publication by Cadell in 1797, and revised in 1811, there is no clear consensus about when or how much the text was altered in its transformation from *First Impressions* to *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen herself writes that it was "lopt & cropt,"³⁸² while Kathryn Sutherland points to Cassandra Austen's recollection that it was altered and contracted.³⁸³ R. W. Chapman argues that the timeline of the novel corresponds with dates for 1811/12, a fact that suggests a substantial reworking in 1812 requiring scholars to "modify the assumption which is commonly made, though it rests on slender evidence, that *Pride and Prejudice* as we have it is substantially the same book as *First Impressions*" (iii. 406). The novel is most often categorised along with *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* as an early, 1790s, work and is contextualized accordingly.³⁸⁴ The later date has an interesting effect on the kind of contextualizing I want to do, exploring how the novel is responding to and shaped by discourses of masculinity, fashionable society, and the war. Mr. Bingley's blue coat, and Lydia's anxiety about Wickham wearing a blue coat for their wedding, points to Brummell's influence, suggesting that details relating to fashion were updated prior to publication. This would of course be necessary if, as I am suggesting, Austen wished to engage directly with fashionable masculinity.

While *Pride and Prejudice* is not usually regarded as a 'war novel' I want

³⁸² *Letters* p. 202.

³⁸³ *Jane Austen's Textual Lives* (Oxford: OUP, 2005) p. 124. Sutherland uses Cassandra's "Note of the Date of Composition of her Sister's Novels" (reprinted in *Minor Works*) as her evidence for composition dates (see note 8).

³⁸⁴ see, for example, Marilyn Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) and Claudia L. Johnson's *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (1988) which examine Austen's political allegiances and ideas in a 1790s context, and Peter Knox-Shaw's *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004) who argues that Austen's ideas derive not from the revolutionary decade, but from enlightenment philosophy. Roger Sales, who investigates Austen's novels in a Regency context, continues this trend by focusing his attention on the Austen's last three novels and the fragment of "Sanditon" (*Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England*, London: Routledge, 1996).

to suggest that the progress of the war abroad is as important for Austen as it is for Edgeworth. Evidence from the letters suggests that through her brothers' involvement in the war and her own reading and engagement with public concerns Austen was well aware not only of the results of battles, but had opinions on the way the war was being fought and the kinds of men who were fighting it.³⁸⁵ *Pride and Prejudice* appeared after the victory at Salamanca (1812), a battle that further solidified British confidence in Wellesley – now Wellington – and his proven leadership.³⁸⁶ In this context of a reinvigorated and successful military, Wickham's drifting into the militia on a whim is a further indication of the kind of superficial masculinity he embodies. With the threat of invasion long over (Trafalgar and the destruction of the French fleet had put that fear to rest in 1805) Wickham avoids honourable active service in favour of the kind of fashionable idleness that Count O'Halloran deplors. The optimism that grows out of successive British victories – suggesting that something is finally right with British masculinity – is evident in the fact that good men, reformed societies, and happy marriages end the novel.

Of course there is more to the prevailing fashion for manliness for the period(s) in question, and George Wickham embodies the most superficial varieties. Though Elizabeth characterises him early on as “her model of the amiable and pleasing” (117), her final opinion of his practised gallantries – “he simpers and smirks and makes love to us all” (251) – is the disgusted reflection that he is “*such* a man” (230). If Wickham is the true foil for

³⁸⁵ For example, Austen comments on Sir John Moore's death at Corruna. She writes that she is “sorry to find that Sir J. Moore has a Mother living, but tho' a very Heroick son, he might not be a very necessary one to her happiness . . . I wish Sir John had united something of the Christian with the Hero in his death. – Thank Heaven! we have no one to care for particularly among the Troops – no one in fact nearer than Sir John himself” (173). On numerous occasions she refers to admiralty news (172), victories or the state of military affairs (pp. 163, 252 (note 10 - Austen refers to Vitoria victory) 273), her brothers' army (Henry) and Navy (Francis and Charles) careers (see pp. 2, 12, 23, 26, 28, 32, 75, 133, 181, 235,), the prospect of peace (255). She also read Paley's *Military Policy*, which she pronounced “delightfully written and highly entertaining.” Austen declared Pasley “the first soldier I ever sighed for” (see p. 198). I will return to Austen's interest in the war briefly in relation to William Price and General Crawford in Chapter 7 and again in more detail with my discussion of *Persuasion* in the Conclusion.

³⁸⁶ 22 July 1812. Wellington destroyed the French army and forced Joseph Bonaparte to retreat to Madrid, further confirming British dominance of the war in Spain. *The Oxford Companion to British History*. (1997).

Darcy, then a careful examination of his performance of masculinity is necessary for elucidating Darcy's variety of manliness. Laurie Kaplan explores the connections between the relationship of Darcy and Wickham with a possible prototype in Shakespeare's *Two Gentleman of Verona*, suggesting that Wickham's status as gentleman (i.e. whether he can in fact be classed as such) depends on how society judges gentlemanliness, whether on first impressions or longer acquaintance – appearance rather than worth – on whether a man possesses the “outward guise” or the “essential worth” of the gentleman.³⁸⁷ In investigating the question, Kaplan employs a distinction established by Shakespeare's Duke of Milan between a “gentleman of worth” and a “gentleman of blood” (3.1.107, 121). Kaplan suggests that this categorisation hinges on issues of nature (blood) and nurture (worth): “Throughout the novel, Austen uses the word ‘gentleman’” – which Kaplan notes appears over eighty times –

to question contemporary ideas about birth, worth, and social mobility, and she carefully sets up a context for a theme of personal worth and social equality. Birth is one estimation of gentlemanliness; worth is another principle altogether.

Unlike Darcy, Wickham is not a gentleman by birth – as the son of a steward he falls into the murky milieu of the middling sort – but he is given a gentleman's education. As the godson of the late Mr. Darcy, Wickham was supported at school and Cambridge, receiving a similar kind of ‘nurture’ to Darcy. But here their education seems to diverge. While Darcy's consequence and social entrée are secured along with his inheritance, Wickham overcomes the misfortune of his birth by resorting to a Chesterfieldian model of self-fashioning. As Jennifer Preston Wilson notes, Wickham seems to have internalised the advice from the *Letters* regarding openness, appearance, and social manipulation: “The height of abilities,” advises Chesterfield, “is, to have . . . a frank, open and ingenuous exterior, with a prudent and reserved

³⁸⁷ Laurie Kaplan. “The Two Gentleman of Derbyshire.” *Persuasions On-Line* 26 1 (2005).

interior; to be upon your guard, and yet, by a seeming natural openness, to put people off theirs.”³⁸⁸ Wickham’s ability to play the gentleman taps into long-standing concerns regarding the gender performativity and inauthenticity that surface in Burney’s novels.

Wickham’s profession-hopping makes him a particularly useful subject for investigating masculine codes and ethics. Designated for the church by his patron and finding the clerical life not to his dissipated tastes, Wickham briefly fixes on the law. After gambling away the £3000 that Darcy gave him in exchange for the promised church patronage and to aid him in pursuing his chosen profession, Wickham ends up in the militia, an institution that was the source of contemporary anxiety for a number of reasons. As Fulford (2002) explains, the militia offered an opportunity for a self-fashioning that could tangibly alter social status. With ranks below that of captain exempt from property qualifications, adventurers like Wickham “could acquire social status regardless of merit or their reputation among those who knew their worth.”³⁸⁹ In addition to offering social fluidity, the army’s seeming incompetence prior to Wellington’s Peninsular triumphs (and indeed from the time of the American revolutionary wars up to the time of the novel’s publication), and the corrupting influence of aristocratic leadership and patronage, were sources of anxiety to a nation threatened by invasion rather than a guarantee of security.³⁹⁰ The threat of the militia is primarily a social and domestic one. Fulford observes that Wickham joins the militia for “constant society, and good society” (Austen 59) but goes on to note that the ‘society’ that Wickham embraces was itself a source of anxiety for Austen and her contemporaries, as “a soldier posted away from his home was

³⁸⁸ *Lord Chesterfield’s Letters* (Oxford: OUP, 1998) p. 105; Jennifer Preston Wilson, “‘One has got all the goodness and the other all the appearance of it’” *Persuasions On-Line* 25 1 (2004).

³⁸⁹ Tim Fulford, “Sighing for a Soldier” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 57 (2002): 157-178. p. 157.

³⁹⁰ Fulford, “Sighing” 158-163. Among other debacles, Fulford points to the 1808 York affair following the controversial Convention of Cintra as evidence of military weakness and corruption. In 1808 the Duke of York, much criticised for his failures in the field (as immortalised in the “The Grand Old Duke of York”) came under fire again when it was revealed that his former mistress Mary Anne Clarke had been selling commissions and promotions. Forced to resign in the wake of this scandal, he was reinstated in 1811 during his brother’s Regency. The Convention of Cintra further underscored problems with the military. See p. 224-225, 230-231 above.

free from those who knew him and his reputation. His very identity was changed: he was now an officer by title, and his previous self and his social status were covered by his gaudy regimental dress.”³⁹¹ The issues of uniforms and the performativity implied by the regimental costume presents a further reflection on anxieties about masculinity, one that is put into sharper relief by sending the regiment to Brighton.

Fiona Stafford highlights Brighton’s association with both the militia – as Chapman notes, the militia were stationed in Brighton in 1793, 1794, and 1795 (ii. 406) – and the Prince of Wales. The Prince, who removed to Brighton in 1786 as part of his programme of retrenchment, transformed the seaside town into a fashionable resort associated with “wealth and wild behaviour.”³⁹² As it is also where he and Mrs. Fitzherbert first set up house together, Brighton carries with it deeper associations of illicit and imprudent relationships. But the Prince of Wales and the military share a connection more intimate than location. It was the Prince’s dearest wish that he have some active employment in the military, but the king continually refused to grant it. His rage for a military career was rather superficial and most of his interest was concentrated on the uniform. When he was finally given his own regiment – on the understanding that he would never be promoted or serve as more than a ceremonial commander – his passion for military fashion was well known. The Prince’s privileging of style over substance is a problem that manifests itself in the militia and plays on larger anxieties about masculine performance: “Playing at soldiers turns to playing at dressing up, and lost in the process is the knowledge of how to play – and be – a man.”³⁹³ As the pageantry of the militia – and indeed of the Prince – blurred the definition of gentlemanliness, as Fulford notes, Austen is attempting to redress the situation through a redefinition of masculinity that stresses the importance of “manners and morals” that are tested and proven over what Fulford describes

³⁹¹ Fulford “Sighing” p. 169, 157.

³⁹² For the Prince’s retrenchment and life in Brighton, see Morris p. 343 and Hibbert p. 59, 72; for Stafford’s comments see “Introduction” (2004) p. xii.

³⁹³ Fulford, “Sighing” p. 172.

as “an imitation of the self-indulgence and vanity of the great aristocrats.”³⁹⁴

Rather than laying all of the fault at the door of the nobility, however, I want to suggest that the problem of superficiality, appearance, and impressions has more to do with fashion than with rank.

Hazlitt suggests that “fashion is gentility running away from vulgarity, and afraid of being overtaken by it,” surely “a sign that the two things [i.e. gentility and vulgarity] are not very far asunder.”³⁹⁵ ‘Fashion’ is a capacious category that comprehends those born to the fashionable order and those aspiring to its ranks and, as I have suggested, its very pervasiveness makes class an insufficient rebuttal to its effects. Mr. Darcy is not automatically the remedy to the masculinities Wickham performs because he is not untainted by fashion’s influence. Mr. Darcy’s preoccupation with fashion also leads to problems, but rather than problems of character, they serve to obscure his true worth.

Darcy is frequently considered in relation to Sir Charles Grandison. Gerard Barker, for example, suggests that Darcy is a humanised version of Grandison, an almost anti-hero figure who offers an “allusive critique” of Richardson’s impossible paragon and whose reformation signals “the emergence of a more psychologically realistic Grandisonian hero.”³⁹⁶ Kenneth Moler suggests that the Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice* is a descendent of a *First Impressions* Darcy who was a burlesque of the Richardson/Burney “patrician hero” similar to Charles Adams in “Jack and Alice.”³⁹⁷ However, something that is problematic about Grandison, aside from his impossible perfection, is his relationship to fashion. In an attempt to avoid singularity, and in deference to the rakish standards of his father, Sir Charles dresses fashionably. His rakish manners constitute another deferral to literary fashions. In attempting to make his good man a gentleman who will attract ladies and distract them from the Lovelaces of the world, Richardson marries

³⁹⁴ *ibid.* p. 176.

³⁹⁵ “Conversations with Northcote” *Works* vol. xi p. 293.

³⁹⁶ *Grandison’s Heirs* (1985) p.170.

³⁹⁷ Kenneth L. Moler. “*Pride and Prejudice*: Jane Austen’s ‘Patrician Hero’” *SEL* 7 (1967): 491-508.

fashion and the gentleman in a problematic way. Though mitigated by his goodness, Sir Charles's manners and dress are self-consciously projected, creating the effect of deliberate performance. Darcy's refusal to "perform to strangers" and his confidence in his fashionable status – and therefore his desirability – leads him to the opposite extreme from Chesterfieldian manners. In the same paragraph that Chesterfield advocates an open exterior to mask interior reserve, he cautions his son never to "seem dark and mysterious; which is not only a very unamiable character, but a very suspicious one too; if you seem mysterious with others, they will be really so with you, and you will know nothing."³⁹⁸ Considering Elizabeth's difficulty in sketching his character and Darcy's difficulty in reading her, Chesterfield might have had a point. Darcy's arrogant confidence in his own worth, though ultimately vindicated by the evidence at Pemberley and his later exertions to prove his worth to Elizabeth, is based on his fashionable status and reinforced by the flattery of the Bingley sisters.

There has been much speculation regarding Darcy's transformation, and, as Philip Drew suggests, a common criticism of the novel is the seeming inconsistency of Darcy's character, a criticism that assumes an artistic flaw on Austen's part and overlooks the root of the issue, which is the problem of performed gentlemanliness.³⁹⁹ In arguing that Darcy acts consistently throughout, Drew suggests that Georgiana's elopement, which would have taken place mere months before the Meryton assembly, is the reason behind Darcy's impoliteness and suspicion of the fortune-hunting lower-classes. Another argument for consistency of behaviour comes from Kaplan, who posits that Darcy's "innate seriousness" makes him unpopular in Meryton, rendering him unreceptive to "games of chance, for long evenings of gossip and dancing, for frivolous conversation." Innate seriousness does not seem to

³⁹⁸ *Letters* p. 105.

³⁹⁹ Philip Drew. "A Significant Incident in 'Pride and Prejudice'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 12 (1959): 356-358. Drew quotes Sylvia Townsend Warner's contention that Darcy is split "into two halves: the unamiable Darcy of the opening, the amiable Darcy of the close" (qtd. 356). Drew also suggests that Darcy is proud of having saved his sister and his family name in his late actions; however, his lack of judgment in hiring Mrs. Younge must have produced a sense of guilt and failure.

be a particularly compelling explanation, however, considering Wickham's suggestion that:

‘Darcy can please where he chuses. He does not want abilities. He can be a conversible companion if he thinks it worth his while. Among those who are at all his equals in consequence, he is a very different man from what he is to the less prosperous. His pride never deserts him; but with the rich, he is liberal-minded, just, sincere, rational, honourable, and perhaps agreeable, – allowing something for fortune and figure.’ (62-3)

If he can be social, even “agreeable,” seriousness is not holding him back as frivolous or tedious amusements make up social intercourse as much in London as they do in the country. And though Wickham is not the most reliable of narrators – Austen cautions in *Sanditon* “those who tell their own Story you know must be listened to with Caution” (305) – his information, as Elizabeth notes, turns out to be basically correct. Wickham's testimony, coupled with Darcy's tolerance for the pretensions of Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, suggests Darcy's disdain for the feelings of his inferiors has more to do with fashionable snobbery than the insipid nature of fashionable amusements.

Darcy's fashion consciousness is established early on. His impression of the Meryton assembly fixates on “a collection of people in whom there was little beauty and no fashion” and in whom he has no interest (11). The level of fashion to which he is accustomed is revealed in the description of Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst on the previous page. Those “fine ladies,” like Mr. Darcy, “were not deficient in good humour when they were pleased, nor in the power of being agreeable where they chose it; but proud and conceited” (10). Their claims to the privileges of pride and conceit do not have the same basis as Darcy's, however. While their looks, education, and fortune set them up as people of fashion, “in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank,” these facts are qualified by the rider that

their respectable origins in the North were “more deeply impressed on their memories” than the fact that the family fortune was made in trade (10). The superficiality of the Bingley sisters, who would prefer their brother to form a fashionable connection with Miss Darcy rather than a substantive marriage based on affection, mirrors the glossy surface of fashionable society. But what lies beneath? For the Bingley sisters the answer is nothing, but for Darcy the question is more complex.

As Elizabeth learns, beginning with Darcy’s letter and continuing through her visit to Pemberley and Lydia’s elopement, beneath Darcy’s fashionable surface is a man whose virtues are not confined to the ability to be pleasant should he so choose. Instead she finds a devoted brother, a good landlord and master, a man who takes his responsibilities seriously. When, after her visit to Hunsford, Elizabeth tells Wickham that “Mr. Darcy improves on acquaintance” she qualifies her statement by insisting that “in essentials . . . he is very much what he ever was” and that rather than the improvement being a material one in Darcy – “I do not mean that either his mind or manners were in a state of improvement” – it is her perception of him that has changed – “from knowing him better, his disposition was better understood” (179). In this way Mrs. Reynolds’s glowing account (187) can be reconciled with his pathetic performance at the Meryton assembly. Despite his abhorrence for disguise, Darcy’s performance of the ‘man of fashion’ disguises his merit, pointing to the flaws of both a society fixated on appearances and an education that inculcated similar principles, a problem that I will return to a little later.

Darcy – and indeed all gentlemen of fashion – needs to realign the way he calculates worth, and not just as regards women worthy of being pleased, as his meeting with the Gardiners illustrates. When he asks Elizabeth to introduce them at Pemberley, she recognises the irony and is “hardly able to suppress a smile, at his now seeking the acquaintance of some of those very people, against whom his pride had revolted, in his offer to herself” (193). Guessing that he mistakes them for “people of fashion” (193) suggests the

problematic nature of judging by appearances. The Gardiners are dismissed out of hand as liabilities when they are shadowy relations, but when they materialise before him they appear to be fashionable people. And while they do have money, taste, and good manners, there is substance behind the surface that makes them acceptable to Darcy. His prejudice against the Gardiners sight unseen is due to Darcy's adherence to fashion and a mistaken allegiance to his parents' tastes and prejudices. Though his parents had individual merit, particularly his father, and they inculcated good principles in the young Darcy, they also imbued him with a sense of superiority. They "almost taught [him] to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond [his] own family circle, to think meanly of the rest of the world, to *wish* at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared to [his] own" (282). In having his behaviour shaped by his parents, Darcy is like Grandison. But the pernicious results of Darcy's fashionable education suggests that it is fashionable society and the transmission of fashionable values along with good ones that Austen is writing against. Instead, as both Darcy and Elizabeth learn through their interactions, people must be measured based on the intangibles of merit, not a hasty first impression. Both Darcy and Elizabeth are guilty of judging on impressions and appearances dictated by fashion and their judgements are wrong because of it. Elizabeth eschews fashionable dictates for feminine behaviour – exemplified by the Bingley sisters – in favour of more open behaviour, which is able to win Darcy over in spite of himself. Ultimately their judgements and their love must be based on a knowledge of what lies beneath the surface. Love at first sight becomes yet another of fashion's victimising tools and it is merit, embodied in the Gardiners, that is the means of "uniting them" (298).

In each of these novels the landed gentleman who has inherited his position must properly exert himself to win the woman he loves. While Colambre approaches Grandisonian perfection in not requiring Glenthorn's reformation or Darcy's repackaging, each must prove his merit through deeds

and reject the superficial claims of fashion. In so doing, at least in the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, the reader is finally rewarded with a truly satisfying ending in which merit and mutual affection promise happiness and a prominent place in the next generation. The ending of *Pride and Prejudice* is set apart from those of *Ennui* and *The Absentee* here because the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, is far more compelling and fully drawn. Cecilia Delamere and Grace Nugent are rather flatter and serve mostly as a reward for the heroes' embodiment of the right kind of masculinity. Because of this, I see Austen as the more socially progressive of the two. Her unconventional heroine is validated in the new society formed at the end of the novel, while the Darcy marriage seems as though it will be a true partnership perhaps vindicating Wollstonecraft's suggestion that men must liberate themselves in order that women can do so. The move towards professionalisation in landowners and their families constitutes a rejection of feudalism and chivalry that allows for society to be constructed on a more solid foundation. I explore the possibilities of this burgeoning meritocracy in the next chapter as the professions are presented as an alternative route to the gentlemanly independence traditionally associated with land in Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814) and Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814).

Chapter 7
“Gentleman-like manner”:
Gentlemanly Professionals, Merit, and the End of Patronage.

“Now I will try to write of something else;” wrote Jane Austen to her sister after completing her revisions for *Pride and Prejudice*, “– it shall be a complete change of subject – Ordination.”⁴⁰⁰ This chapter also constitutes a change of subject, as I leave behind the landed gentleman in need of a professional ethic to explore gentleman-professionals. The idea that a profession was by definition “a respectable calling that was fit for the elusive but desirable character of a ‘gentleman’”⁴⁰¹ is in place by the time Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen are writing. Their novels of 1814 – Edgeworth’s *Patronage* and Austen’s *Mansfield Park* – examine gentlemanly professionals and explore their roles in the family and society. By comparing the professional gentleman with his landed gentry, or even aristocratic, antecedents Edgeworth and Austen suggest that these gentleman and their professional, meritocratic ethos are the way of the future. Though critics frequently suggest that Edgeworth is the more progressive writer – Butler makes this claim in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*⁴⁰² – Austen’s novel goes further in revising the identity of gentlemen by adding to their ranks William Price, a young man whose professional merit has the power to raise him above his humble origins, a theme that is explored more fully in the

⁴⁰⁰ *Letters* p. 202.

⁴⁰¹ Penelope Corfield, *Power and the Professions*. (1995). p. 174.

⁴⁰² For example, in the conclusion, Butler writes, “The unyielding scepticism about the individual conveyed by that plot [ie. “a single all-revealing fable” that “reflects on the individual’s life in society”] suggests that she is innately more orthodox than either of her leading contemporaries, Scott and Maria Edgeworth.” Edgeworth, though heavily didactic “is a genuine enough intellectual to toy with her own ideas as she goes along: on occasion, as in *Leonora*, to end with ideological contradictions. But Jane Austen never allows the inward life of a character . . . seriously to challenge the doctrinaire preconceptions on which all her fiction is based” (293-4).

band of naval brothers featured in Austen's final novel *Persuasion*.⁴⁰³ While Edgeworth's vision for correcting the corruption of the people of fashion is limited to creating a class of people – professional-, landed-, and noble-gentlemen and women – characterised by merit, useful education, and integrity, the deliberately unsatisfactory ending of *Mansfield Park*⁴⁰⁴ suggests that Austen wishes to go further in advocating a true meritocracy but is prevented from realising this radical reorganisation of society by the exigencies of war.

Though this chapter constitutes a change in subject in terms of the kind of gentleman under discussion, ordination itself, or “placing in ranks and order” (OED), as I will argue Austen would have understood the term, has been a recurring theme throughout this thesis. Austen's ordination comment has received quite a lot of critical attention. Lionel Trilling observed that “it startles us to discover that ordination was what Jane Austen said her novel was to be ‘about’” and suggests that ordination is “not really a religious question, but, rather, a cultural question, having to do with the meaning and effect of a *profession*.”⁴⁰⁵ Marilyn Butler, who characterises Austen's “most visibly ideological work” as engaged primarily with the contemporary debate regarding female education and its effects, dismisses the relevance of ordination and with it Edmund's importance in the novel.⁴⁰⁶ In contrast to Butler's conservative interpretation of Austen, Johnson characterises

⁴⁰³ As I will suggest below, William Price's origins are more complicated than they at first seem. While the Price family lives in relative squalor in Portsmouth, the result of Mr. Price's professional difficulties, the fact that Mrs. Price, Lady Bertram, and Mrs. Norris are all sisters complicates the rigid divisions that are imposed between the Price and Bertram children, a division especially apparent in the treatment that Fanny receives for much of the novel. William introduces a model of fratriarchy, of equalising fraternal love, that challenges the patriarchal hierarchy enshrined in the Bertram marriage and ordering Mansfield Park. While fratriarchy does not triumph completely by the novel's end, there is a promise that when William's naval responsibilities allow, when the war is over, he will return and complete this revolution, as the naval heroes do at the end of *Persuasion*, as I shall argue in the conclusion.

⁴⁰⁴ As I will argue more thoroughly below, the marriage of Edmund and Fanny, while fulfilling the requirements of comedy, is emotionally unsatisfying in a way that, I want to suggest, indicates Austen's ideological dissatisfaction with the state of England. While she identifies the *kind* of change that must take place, she is unable to take it to the degree necessary to remedy England's ills in its war-weakened state.

⁴⁰⁵ *The Opposing Self* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955) p. 214.

⁴⁰⁶ Butler attributes the mix-up to a misreading of punctuation in the letter and, in her estimation, ordination has nothing to do with the novel. See *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* 1(975/1987) pp. 219-20, 236 note 2.

Austen's project as one of "demystification:" an "enquiry into the moral wardrobe of the venerable father himself." Johnson observes that the novel may well have moved away from the "terms [Austen] intended for it at the outset" and suggests that the ordination comment simply reiterates that she was not interested in producing another "light, and bright, and sparkling" novel.⁴⁰⁷ Recently, Michael Karounos has suggested another way of examining *Mansfield Park* in relation to ordination.⁴⁰⁸ As Karounos observes, and as Trilling suggests, the primary sense in which ordination would have been understood in Austen's day was not related to the Church; rather ordination would have denoted "the action of ordering, arranging, or placing in ranks or order; the condition of being ordered or arranged, an arrangement" (OED). In this chapter, I will explore the political and social implications of ordering that takes place through Austen's and Edgeworth's promotion of professional values. Karounos argues that Austen's ordination ultimately endorses a Burkean order;⁴⁰⁹ however, I will demonstrate that when ordination is redefined and considered along with the professional concerns raised within the novel, the result is more complicated, and ultimately more radical.

The importance of the professions and professionalisation to *Patronage* is obvious and in the little critical attention the novel has received it is acknowledged that it is a fictional reworking of the educational and philosophical treatise *Professional Education* (1809) that Edgeworth wrote with her father.⁴¹⁰ Edgeworth's intellectual relationship with her father and his belief in the importance of independence influenced her work, so much so that Butler suggests that, while her own political ideas were more conservative than her father's, her novels "draw deeply" on her father's

⁴⁰⁷ *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*. pp. 100, 94.

⁴⁰⁸ Michael Karounos, "Ordination and Revolution in *Mansfield Park*" *SEL* 44 (2004): 715-736.

⁴⁰⁹ Karounos suggests that in *Mansfield Park* Austen is engaged in a Burkean project of conservation and correction: "The ordination of Fanny and Edmund, and Sir Thomas's support of the worthy William, is Austen's solution for the controversies of her time. Austen reveals how, without alteration or innovation, improvement in the mode and substance of those institutions can occur when the spirit of a gentleman (Edmund) works with the spirit of religion (Fanny) to reform but not revolve the state/estate" (734).

⁴¹⁰ see Marilyn Butler's comments in *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Life* (1971) pp. 217, 223. See also Jenny Davidson "Professional Education and Female Accomplishments." *Eighteenth-Century Women* 4 (2006): 259-285.

political experience.⁴¹¹ Despite moving in radical, dissenting circles and spending time in France during the Peace of Amiens, R. L. Edgeworth's politics, though liberal, were distinctively landed: as Butler suggests, the most fundamental of his beliefs was

the *idea* that the representatives of the gentry were independent individuals, the very symbols of free and manly people (the analogy with the early Roman republic was well to the forefront of his political thinking).⁴¹²

The influence of the Edgeworths' status as gentry landowners is often neglected in favour of exploring their association with liberal, even radical, utilitarians and rational empiricists. Biographical and ideological considerations, I want to suggest, have also contributed to a misreading of Austen's political ideology. The professions and their accompanying meritocratic ethos are no less important in *Mansfield Park*. As the daughter and sister of professionals, Austen's interest in and knowledge of – indeed opinions about – the professions should hardly be surprising.⁴¹³ However, due to a (now declining) critical tendency to focus on Burkean conservatism and Evangelical religiosity as informing Austen's social vision, the crucial redefinition of gentility facilitated by professionalism that takes place in the novel has been obscured.⁴¹⁴ Ultimately, both texts advocate a re-ordering, a re-ordination of society that reflects the meritocratic ideal and hinges on a redefinition of the gentleman, in *Patronage* through triumph and in *Mansfield Park*, ultimately, through failure.

⁴¹¹ The issue of Richard Lovell Edgeworth's influence on Edgeworth and her works is investigated by both Marilyn Butler and by Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father's Daughters* (New York: OUP, 1991). While Kowaleski-Wallace suggests that Edgeworth is complicit in promoting a "new-style," "nontyrannical" patriarchy (17, 105), Butler highlights the ways in which Edgeworth's politics differ from her father's ideology.

⁴¹² p. 182.

⁴¹³ Austen's father, George Austen, was a clergyman and ran a small boys school. Her brother James was a clergyman, Francis and Charles had successful naval careers, while Henry was a soldier, a banker, and, after his bankruptcy in 1815, a clergyman.

⁴¹⁴ Butler's is the most famous and influential reading of Austen's politics as self-consciously conservative. While the influence of this reading continues (Karounos, for example, advocates a Burkean Austen), it has been increasingly challenged. Claudia Johnson (1988) was one of the earliest proponents of a much more radical Austen. More recently, Peter Knox-Shaw (2004) has suggested that Austen remained committed to enlightenment principles despite the reaction against the French Revolution.

Perhaps the most important result of professionalisation is its role in the ongoing redefinition of the gentleman, masculine virtue, and independence, and the effect that this redefinition had on the socio-political development of eighteenth-century Britain. In the previous chapter I examined the effects of the professional ethos on the landed gentleman. To a certain extent, this was putting the cart before the horse. However, the move from landed heroes to professional ones suggests that the redefinition of the gentleman that resulted from professionalisation extends to a redefinition of the hero. The hero need no longer be the prototypical Grandisonian man of property, rank, and fashion. With a redefinition of the gentleman comes a redefinition of the hero as well as a reordering of society.

In *Mansfield Park*, Mrs. Norris tenaciously clings to the old order of birth and consequence, lamenting “the nonsense and folly of people’s stepping outside of their rank and trying to appear above themselves” (173) and doing her utmost to keep Fanny Price confined to her lowly station. However, Mrs. Norris’s definition of rank entirely privileges conjugal ties over the bonds of sisterhood. She punishes Fanny for her mother’s imprudent marriage to an impoverished, and ultimately unlucky, Marine by emphasising the superficial externals of rank and wealth, when the cousins are actually more closely connected through blood. Mrs. Norris’s prejudices represent the old system, a system that Mrs. Percy in *Patronage*, despite her own aristocratic prejudices, acknowledges as rather behind the times:

merchants are now quite in a different class from what they were at the first rise of commerce in these countries . . . Their education, their habits of thinking, knowledge, and manners are improved, and, consequently, their *consideration*, their rank in society is raised. In our days, some of the best-informed, most liberal, and most respectable men in the British dominions are merchants.
(263)

Mrs. Percy’s perspective emphasises the same internal qualities – qualities of

mind and manner – promoted by professionalisation. Part of Mrs. Norris’s villainy (for lack of a better descriptor) is her resistance to the merit-based social mobility that is a bi-product of professionalisation.

Before the impact of professionalisation on social structure and organisation can be gauged, it is necessary to explore eighteenth-century social organisation. As Corfield observes of the eighteenth century,

There was no consensus about the number or identity of the significant groupings. Nor were the class boundaries clearly defined. As a result, the social classes within British society were not homogeneous blocks but drew upon a tessellation of rival interest groups. It was within this pluralist context that the emergent professions jostled for power.⁴¹⁵

Assessing and categorising people was the subject of numerous treatises throughout the century, with writers identifying anywhere from two large classes – rich and poor – to as many as seven categories of social gradation.⁴¹⁶ Perhaps the most influential, at least retrospectively, is Adam Smith’s three class system based in economic distinctions:

The whole annual produce of the land and labour of every country, or what comes to the same thing, the whole price of that annual produce, naturally divides itself, it has already been observed, into three parts; the rent land, the wages of labour, and the profits of stock; and constitutes a revenue to three different orders of people; to those who live by rent, to those who live by wages, and to those who

⁴¹⁵ *Power and the Professions* p. 8.

⁴¹⁶ See P. J. Corfield “Class by name and number in eighteenth-century Britain.” *Language, History, and Class*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). James Nelson, for example, identified five distinct classes in 1753 – “the Nobility, the Gentry, Mercantile or Commercial People, Mechanics, and Peasantry.” Nelson goes on to note that “were we to divide the People, we might run it to an Infinity” (qtd. 101). Defoe had identified seven categories in 1709 – “The Great, who live profusely; The Rich, who live plentifully; The middle Sort, who live well; The working Trades, who labour hard but feel no want; The Country People, Farmers, etc. who fare indifferently; The Poor that fare hard; The Miserable, that really pinch and suffer want” (from *A Review of the State of the British Nation* 6 no. 26, 25 June, qtd. 115). In 1795, the dissenter William Smith suggested just two groupings – the ‘useful’ (commercial) class and the ‘useless’ (landed) class – a suggestion that was hastily rejected by Pitt (119).

live by profit. These are the three great, original and constituent orders of every civilized society, from whose revenue that of every other order is ultimately derived.⁴¹⁷

While identifying the three classes of land owners, capitalists, and labourers, Smith also hints at “other” orders, and identifies professionals among the unproductive labourers who fall outside of the economic three-class model. Further complicating the economic model is Smith’s moral model, which identifies two groups: the “people of fashion” characterised by liberal or loose morals and the “common people” marked by more austere manners:

The degree of disapprobation with which we ought to mark the vices of levity, the vices which are apt to arise from great prosperity and from the excess of gaiety and good humour, seems to constitute the principal distinction between these two opposite schemes or systems.⁴¹⁸

But this two-tier system presents a challenge for the “man of rank and fortune” because his “authority and consideration depend very much upon the respect which this society bears to him”:

He dare not do anything which would disgrace, or discredit him in it, and he is obliged to a very strict observation of that species of morals, whether liberal or austere, which the general consent of this society prescribes to persons of his rank and fortune.⁴¹⁹

The great man’s authority is based on the consent of the people and, Smith suggests, is signalled by a sort of moral contract: his adherence to the moral code of their choosing. Moral divisions are independent of economic divisions insofar as one particular economic class is not identified as fashionable, but fashion is determined by fortune.

Further complicating moral and economic rankings is Smith’s discussion of subordination. Identifying four causes, Smith lists superiority of

⁴¹⁷ *Wealth of Nations* (1776) vol. i. p. 265

⁴¹⁸ *ibid.* vol. ii. p. 794.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.* vol. ii. p. 795.

personal qualifications, followed by age, fortune, and birth. There is a tension between his ranking and what he identifies as the priorities of society. Smith seems to be privileging qualities like strength, wisdom, virtue, prudence, justice, fortitude, and moderation of mind by listing them first; however, though he suggests that these “qualifications of the mind can alone give very great authority,” their “invisible” nature – “always disputable and generally disputed” – makes them impractical for settling the “rules of precedence, or rank, and subordination.”⁴²⁰ Instead, age, as a “plain and palpable quality which admits of no dispute” is the first consideration of society, followed closely – if not superseded – by fortune, and finally fortune’s partner, birth which together form the “two great sources of personal distinction, and are therefore the principal causes which naturally establish authority and subordination among men.”⁴²¹ This confusing account of subordination suggests that though distinctions based on personal qualities and qualifications would be sensible, the reality is that money and family take precedence, while age is a further subdivision of subordination within the various categories of wealth and birth. When considered in conjunction with the binary moral system and the tripartite economic divisions of class, the professions, with their emphasis on personal merit, seem not only to slot into the “common”, but as I shall demonstrate, advocate reordering the current model of subordination to make Smith’s “qualifications of the mind” take precedence. But, as subordination seems ultimately to rest on the consent of the subordinated, this ranking of qualities is subject to the whims of the governed.

In the midst of this complex and shifting system of rank and class the professions grew and developed, leading to the emergence of “new authority figures whose power and prestige,” as Corfield notes, “were derived not from birth or title – nor from their money (which was often precarious)– but primarily from their occupation.”⁴²² Moreover, just as Smith notes the

⁴²⁰ *ibid.* vol. ii. p. 711.

⁴²¹ *ibid.* vol. ii. p. 714.

⁴²² *Power and the Professions* p. 24.

contractual nature of his social models, professional power derived from specialist knowledge and required social acceptance: “dignity was not ultimately sustainable if public interest in their services and acceptance of their powers faltered.”⁴²³ This interest is based in trust: “[w]e trust our health to the physician; our fortune and sometimes our life and reputation to the lawyer and attorney.”⁴²⁴ But, “[s]uch confidence could not safely be reposed in people of a very mean or low condition” therefore the reward of the professional must allow them to maintain “that rank in society which so important a trust requires.”⁴²⁵ And essential to maintaining this rank is independence; independence of fortune and opinion, independence from party, and most importantly, independence from patronage. Thomas Gisborne advises the lawyer to “be on his guard against indolence, fickleness, irresolution, immoderate love of amusements, and against every ensnaring and dissipated habit, the natural affect of an overgrown, wealthy, and luxurious capital.”⁴²⁶ Meanwhile, the lawyer who enters parliament must be a “reflecting and conscientious man” and “resolutely steer an independent course” avoiding both of the “embattled squadrons of Ministry or of Opposition.”⁴²⁷ Gisborne has similar advice for the clergyman and the physician, discouraging both from currying favour with patrons or patients as such behaviour would be detrimental to their well-being and, equally important, to the professional’s independence.

In *Professional Education* Edgeworth recognises the importance of independence to the happiness of the private gentleman, noting that “independence of mind and of fortune” as well as “independence of manly character” are characteristics required to make “a country gentleman beloved and respected” (284). The professions, as Corfield observes, provide another path to gentlemanly independence. Gentlemanliness, and indeed gentility, were increasingly separated from landed status, a process begun in

⁴²³ *ibid.* p. 42.

⁴²⁴ *Wealth of Nations* vol. ii. p. 122.

⁴²⁵ *ibid.* vol. ii. p. 122.

⁴²⁶ *Enquiry into the Duty of Man* p. 234.

⁴²⁷ *ibid.* p. 254.

the early part of the century, so that by the end of the century “individual vintners, tanners, scavengers, potters, theatre managers, and professors of Divinity could all claim the status [i.e. of gentleman] and without irony.”⁴²⁸ While it is doubtful a scavenger’s claim of gentility would have been recognised, members of the liberal professions, military officers, and eminent merchants were increasingly recognised as gentlemen. Corfield charts the “rise of the gentleman” but also the expansion of the term from “a strict definition of external status towards a more personalised qualification.”⁴²⁹ Characterising the category of ‘gentleman’ as latitudinarian, Corfield suggests that historians “have too often ignored – or mentioned only to dismiss – [its] bourgeois component.”⁴³⁰ However, invoking a bourgeois component of gentility is problematic. In France the term distinguished freemen from both peasants and nobles. However, in England, where all men were free, their differences defined in terms of manners and economics, rank was sufficiently fluid to allow professional men to redefine what it meant to be a gentleman and change the qualifications for those invested with power and authority.⁴³¹

With this new definition of gentlemanliness came a new definition of honour. As in the old chivalric code of honour, reputation was an important part of the emerging professional code because professional success was tied to a certain kind of reputation. Like chivalric knights and barons, professionals provide a service, but instead of *noblesse oblige* and military service, the professions were marked by a kind of “*savoir oblige*.”⁴³² In his discussion of the medical profession, Gisborne suggests that while there is no place for ego in the physician – “The conduct of a Physician whose solicitude for the recovery

⁴²⁸ Corfield, “Class” p. 107.

⁴²⁹ P. J. Corfield, “The Rivals: Landed and Other Gentleman” *Land and Society in Britain*. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996). p. 2. McCormack observes a similar trend in relation to manly independence.

⁴³⁰ *ibid.* p. 7.

⁴³¹ Corfield herself notes that while the word did appear, it “did not Anglicize very well” (*ibid.* p. 120). The bourgeoisie in France were also in a rather ambiguous position as the wealthy but essentially disenfranchised members of the Tiers Etat. Their traditional exclusion from power and influence were among the contributing factor of the Revolution. See Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* p. 94.

⁴³² Corfield, *Power and the Professions* p. 202.

of his patients is founded on pure and laudable motives, will be free from the influence of private and personal considerations in the application of his art⁴³³ – the concern for professional reputation represents a different kind of self-interest – the same kind of disinterested self-interest that Smith identifies as sympathetic to the public interest. Smith suggests that men choose to enter the professions because they desire the “reputation which attends upon superior excellence in any of them” and because a man will always choose to enter into the best and most rewarding employment that his circumstances (his “capital”) allow. The disinterested element of this self-interest is coincidental: “the study of his own advantage naturally or rather necessarily leads him to prefer that employment which is most advantageous to society.”⁴³⁴ Edgeworth argues that “[s]uccess is the ultimate standard, by which medical skill and learning, like all other species of merit, are appreciated by mankind.”⁴³⁵ Further, in relation to the law, which R. L. Edgeworth regarded as the profession with the most scope for merit-based success, Edgeworth suggests that talent “once seen and known” – the establishment of a professional reputation – “he must be employed, and his rising in his profession will not depend on others, but on himself” (384). Because the professions are based on providing a service – saving lives, souls, fortunes, and nations – success depends on impressing potential clients with talent and probity. Thus in promoting the public interest – the need for such jobs to be done properly – the man who strives to excel in his profession rather than rise through the interference of his friends, serves both his own interest and that of society. Furthermore, professional honour illustrates Corfield’s claim that the professions constitute a “radicalising” (though not revolutionary) force in British society:

Apparent continuity sometimes masks or underpins
evolutionary changes . . . [C18-19 Britain] was an open
and adaptive society, one that became a major world

⁴³³ *Enquiry* p. 404.

⁴³⁴ *Wealth of Nations* vol. i. p. 454.

⁴³⁵ *Professional Education* p. 224.

power – not without stress and turmoil, but without a political cataclysm. Its catchphrases were ‘improvement’ and ‘progress’ rather than ‘upheaval’ or ‘revolution.’⁴³⁶

While appearing to be much the same, even sometimes using the language of chivalry to express itself, the professions produced radical change in the way social structures were peopled and operated.

But a trend towards increasing professional probity and a co-requisite internalised code of honour does not on its own account for the kind of social change that Edgeworth and Austen are advocating. I would suggest that the catalyst, the source of urgency in their projects of social regeneration, is the war with France which exposed the potential costs of ‘old corruption’ – the loss of the war, empire, freedom – while revealing the potential of meritocracy. As Edgeworth observes,

the present system of parliamentary interest and cabal must thwart, and in some degree palsy, every effort to give to real merit the precedence, which it deserves; but every firm and judicious mind will be convinced, that this wretched system must destroy itself. The pressure of danger, of fiscal as well as military danger, will force these petty means and worn out resources from the political system.⁴³⁷

In 1809, when *Professional Education* was first published, the war with France and its allies made the destructive potential of patronage particularly dangerous, as I discussed in the previous chapter.⁴³⁸ At the same time the military, particularly the Navy, provided a very public platform on which to highlight the virtues of a system based on merit and talent.

In *Men of Honour* (2005) Adam Nicolson pinpoints the battle of Trafalgar as a moment that exemplified both the potential of the new professional masculine ethos and its triumph. While historians have debated

⁴³⁶ *Power and the Professions* p. 209

⁴³⁷ *Professional Education* p. 56-7.

⁴³⁸ see especially p. 196-197, 202-203.

the significance of this battle in terms of its role in securing the seas for the British and confining Napoleon's forces to the continent for the remainder of the war, in exploring the concept of heroism that made Trafalgar possible Nicolson brings together eighteenth-century concerns regarding proper masculinity, gentility, and professionalism.⁴³⁹ Similarly, Arthur Herman suggests that in challenging the "tyranny of custom," encouraging dynamic and independent officers, and requiring demonstrated skill for advancement, the navy was at the cutting edge of the growing British meritocracy.⁴⁴⁰ And the man who seemed to exemplify this spirit was Admiral Lord Nelson, whose skill and timely insubordination made him a hero at the Nile and whose daring and unconventional tactics made him the saviour of a nation. This is not to imply, however, that the Navy was a pure meritocracy. Patronage and connections certainly did play a role – even Nelson, whose uncle had interest in the Navy, had help from higher up to be made at eighteen and attain post rank two years later – exceptional skill was usually rewarded.⁴⁴¹ However, the Navy was far more meritocratic than the army, and naval successes suggested the potential of privileging talent over connections. The army, on the other hand, up until command of the Peninsular campaign was grudgingly given to a more junior lieutenant general – Sir Arthur Wellesley – demonstrated the perils not only of patronage and politicking, but of

⁴³⁹ Nicolson and Herman's *To Rule the Waves* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), both more popular accounts of the Navy interested in exploring the larger historical significance of the Navy, were helpful and accessible, as was Rodger's more traditional approach to naval history in *Command of the Ocean* (2002). For a study that explores Austen's specific engagement with the navy, a text I consult more heavily in the next chapter, see Brian Southam's *Jane Austen and the Navy* (Greenwich: National Maritime Museum P, 2000).

⁴⁴⁰ *To Rule the Waves* (2004) p. 267.

⁴⁴¹ Nelson's career illustrates this point admirably. After earning the Admiralty's displeasure for his politicking and insubordination in Sicily – he ignored orders to return to duty – he was given another chance at Copenhagen in 1801 under Admiral Sir Hyde Parker. After initial success in their bombardment of the harbour and the Danish fleet, Parker's order to withdraw would have resulted in disaster for the British fleet. Nelson disobeyed orders once again – famously putting his glass to his blind eye – and proceeded to completely route the Danes. He was rewarded with independent command. Generally speaking, good officers were rewarded with promotion – although once post rank was attained, the climb to admiral was first come first served – and, during war, with prizes and an honourable mention in the Naval Chronicle or Navy List. In 1813, Austen commented that she was "tired of Lives of Nelson" (235) and the number of biographies have increased exponentially since then. Nicolson, Herman, and Rodger were my primary authorities as they focus on his career in its larger context. For a contemporary account see Southey's *Life of Nelson* (1813), the very biography that Austen protested that she would not read unless Frank was mentioned. He is not.

assigning command according to rank instead of abilities. But by 1814, after a string of victories from Salamanca to Vitoria, the British forced the French out of Spain and marched into France, proving that a more meritocratic approach was needed to win the war on land as it had done by sea.⁴⁴² The army finally redeemed itself from the ignominy of carousing generals in the American war and the Duke of York's tactical and logistical failures in the French Revolutionary war: the key was professional excellence that trumped connections, precedence, and the king's anxiety about rank order. The armed forces, connected since feudal times with masculine identity, was the site on which anxieties regarding masculinity, empire, and nation were projected, but by the end of the Peninsular campaign it became the site of a reinvigorated masculinity characterised by skill, integrity, and professionalism rather than land, wealth, or birth.⁴⁴³ Adam Smith's convergence of personal and public interest is made manifest in the military's successes, which offer persuasive proof that merit makes the man, makes the military, and saves the nation. The nation's respect is earned by those who do their jobs well, allowing the development of a social contract based on respect and trust in which those in positions of authority must consult the advantages of their clients rather than their own.

Both *Patronage* and *Mansfield Park* are engaged in the highly charged debate about the nature and qualifications of the gentleman that preoccupied writers and thinkers as diverse as Daniel Defoe and Adam Smith.⁴⁴⁴ The

⁴⁴² Salamanca, 22 July 1812, and Vitoria, 21 June 1813, were important British victories against the French in Spain. Vitoria secured the liberation of Spain, allowing Wellington to push into French territory in November 1813. Napoleon abdicated unconditionally on 6 April 1814, just before Wellington took Toulouse. The war ended 12 April 1814 (see Muir pp. 299-304).

⁴⁴³ see my discussion of the civic humanist fear of standing armies in chapter 1, p. 41-42, 54, and chapter 2 p. 77 note 13.

⁴⁴⁴ Critics have noted the similarities between *Patronage* and *Mansfield Park*, though it has been long been assumed (by Butler, Bradbrook, and Davidson) impossible that either novel could have influenced the other as they were both completed in 1813 prior to their 1814 publications. *Patronage* was completed March 1813 and published December 1813, though the title page is dated 1814. *Mansfield Park* was completed summer 1813 and published May 1814 (Davidson, 260). For an examination of similarities between the novels, see Davidson, Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and her Predecessors* (1966) pp. 115-17, and Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975), pp. 219-20. However, very recently Jocelyn Harris has suggested that in the nine months between completing the original manuscript of *Mansfield Park* and its publication, Austen revised sections in response to Edgeworth's novel (paper presented at The Johnson Society of the Central Region meeting in April 2008).

communities presented in these novels reflect the tension between the people of fashion, clinging to their decadent morality and corrupt feudal politics, and the rising people of merit, whose disinterest changes the terms of the civic humanist tradition, modernising it into a meritocracy. Both novelists underscore the importance of this shift in the nation's independence by placing their characters' struggles against the backdrop of war. Though Edgeworth promotes meritocracy as the solution to corrupt feudal practices – symbolised by patronage – Austen's solution is less optimistic, inhibited by the war, and ultimately deferred until Lieutenant William Price and his naval band of brothers can return home.⁴⁴⁵

* * * * *

Patronage charts the fortunes of the Percy family and their war of independence against the forces of patronage and feudal corruption. Their principles and independent spirit carry them through professional and private adversity – from the sons toiling in the early stages of their respective professions (army, law, medicine) to the loss of the main family estate to an unscrupulous and spendthrift relation.⁴⁴⁶ In contrast, the novel also chronicles the seeming rise of the Falconer family who court patronage because, though it may “sometimes be a public evil . . . it is often a private benefit” (129). The Percy family's principles, however, allow them to triumph in adversity, while the Falconer family ends in ruin and disgrace, their mean stratagems discovered and their lack of individual worth exposed. Marilyn Butler suggests that *Patronage* is “little more than a series of illustrations of the themes of *Professional Education*;⁴⁴⁷ however, I would like to suggest that the novel should be read as a national tale. Just as *Ennui* and

⁴⁴⁵ William Price could be seen as an early version of Frederick Wentworth – a promising young man with greatness ahead of him. *Persuasion*, then, becomes a sequel of sorts to *Mansfield Park* as the Navy's “domestic virtues” are required to revitalise British society.

⁴⁴⁶ Both Mr. Percy and Sir Robert Percy are grandsons of Sir John Percy. Sir John's will left the paternal estate to the eldest grandson, but also made a provision for the younger in a property that was part of his wife's marriage portion. Sir Robert, working under the feudal terms of strict primogeniture, believes all of the property should be his and constantly schemes to obtain it. The Percys' library burns and the deed is discovered missing, a situation that comes to the attention of Sir Robert's unscrupulous lawyer, Sharpe, who uses the document's disappearance to eject the Percys from their home. They move to the Hills, a smaller property worth £800 p.a.

⁴⁴⁷ *Literary Biography* p. 223.

The Absentee present “a modern society with all its parts functioning in their real-life relations to one another,”⁴⁴⁸ *Patronage* complicates the earlier model by providing Edgeworth with a larger cast of characters and wider range of experience to explore. With this larger canvas and a focus on the professions, Edgeworth demonstrates that the professionalism and merit that secured independence to her earlier landed heroes will also secure the independence of men engaged in the liberal professions. By separating independence from the land, Edgeworth suggests an alternative means to achieving the *virtus* required for citizenship and gentlemanly status.

In the only article on the novel, Jenny Davidson suggests that ‘patronage,’ in Edgeworth’s usage, becomes a “blanket term for domestic as well as professional abuses,” and argues that this “forces into alignment the problems that face young women whose showy accomplishments are designed to maximise their success on the marriage market and the problems facing young men who rely for their professional advancement on family connections rather than merit.”⁴⁴⁹ However, viewing *Patronage* as a national tale, rather than as another exploration of female education or fictionalised conduct book, changes our perception of the scope of Edgeworth’s project that perhaps better reflects Edgeworth’s intentions. In July 1809, Edgeworth refers to her new work as “a story in which young men of all the different professions should act a part” but also one that features “‘Celebrina in search of a Husband,’ without my father’s knowing it, and without reading ‘Coelebs’ that I may neither imitate or abuse it.”⁴⁵⁰ Characterising it as a domestic rendering of *Professional Education*, Edgeworth further emphasises the focus on masculinity by suggesting that professional and personal qualifications are equally desirable – indeed essential – in marriage.

Like More’s ‘Coelebs,’ which, as Mary Waldron observes in her introduction simply means “bachelor,” Edgeworth’s ‘Celebrina’ is an impossibly perfect paragon in search of an ideal husband.⁴⁵¹ Though critics

⁴⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 394.

⁴⁴⁹ Jenny Davidson. “Professional Education and Female Accomplishments” (2006). p. 266.

⁴⁵⁰ *qtd.* Davidson “Professional Education” p. 267.

⁴⁵¹ p. xi. *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*. (Bristol: Thoemmes P,1995).

have suggested that Austen's Fanny Price is a heroine cribbed from a conduct book,⁴⁵² Caroline Percy – her name is even the feminine version of More's Charles – has a much better claim to this title. Her brother Godfrey describes her as “fit to be the sister, and I hope will some time be the mother of heroes” (101), an assessment that points up the importance of sensible, virtuous women to the nation.⁴⁵³ Edgeworth's exploration of Caroline's matrimonial prospects, and to a lesser degree those of her sister Rosamund, provide a revised conduct manual for young women. Marriage is presented as woman's great life decision, much like the choice of career is for young men, with love substituting for independence as the goal. This is a revision of earlier prescriptions for young women, which highlighted the importance of esteem and friendship, though not ‘love’ – perhaps because of its unpredictability as a passion, among many other considerations of character, position in life, and

⁴⁵² See, for example, Marian Fowler, “The Courtesy-book Heroine of Mansfield Park” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 44 (1974): 31-46. Fowler groups Fanny Price and Anne Elliot together as “princesses of propriety.”

⁴⁵³ Hannah More, for example, in the much reprinted *Strictures on Female Education* (1799) wrote that the current state of the nation required “beauty, and rank, and talents, and virtue, confederating their several powers, to come forward with a patriotism at once firm and feminine for the general good!” (i. 6). She states that in this “moment of alarm” she is calling on her fellow countrywomen to “come forward, and contribute their full and fair proportion towards the saving of their country” by raising “the depressed tone of public morals” and awakening “the drowsy spirit of religious principle” (i. 4). More is quick to note that she is not “sounding an alarm to female warriors” or attempting to excite “female politicians” – characters which she abhors – but she advises propriety as women's call to duty (i. 6).

parental approval.⁴⁵⁴ Presented with a series of admirers and potential suitors of differing qualities and quality – the dissipated but kind-hearted Buckhurst Falconer, the respectable Mr. Barclay, the hunted Lord William, her eventual husband the German count, Albert Altenberg – Caroline is determined that, not only is love the only motive that could induce her to marry (201), “no common degree of love, and no common love, would be sufficient” (202). This sentiment, revealed in the aftermath of Caroline’s decision to refuse the worthy and eligible Mr. Barclay, is given in response to Rosamund’s fear that Caroline would accept him and end up “married like any body else, to a man with a good fortune, good character, good sense, and every thing very good, but nothing extraordinary” (200). This somewhat extravagant statement expressed by the romantic Rosamund is vindicated by Caroline, though Caroline’s prudence and good sense mean that she will not be carried away by passion. Furthermore, she is a firm believer that a woman’s love should “*not*

⁴⁵⁴ Later in the novel, Lord Oldborough laments that there are no lettres de cachet in Britain as there are in France when his niece, now the Marchioness of Twickenham, is caught in an affair with Captain Bellamy. The lettre de cachet gave the head of the family ultimate control over his dependants. In the eighteenth century, marriage was primarily viewed as the means of supporting the social structure. Tony Tanner describes it as “structure that maintains the Structure” (*Adultery in the Novel* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1979] 15), an observation that it is supported by the work of Carole Pateman in *The Sexual Contract* (1988) in which she argues that the sexual contract that forms the family is as essential to society as the social contract that binds men together in the public realm. Lawrence Stone notes the effects of the move from a dynastic model to a more companionate matrimonial model in *The Family, Sex, and Marriage* (1977): “The increasing stress laid by the early seventeenth-century preachers on the need for companionship in marriage in the long run tended to undercut their own arguments in favour of the maintenance of strict wifely subjection and obedience. Once it was doubted that affection could and would naturally develop after marriage, decision-making power had to be transferred to the future spouses themselves, and more and more of them in the eighteenth century began to put the prospects of emotional satisfaction before the ambition for increased income or status” (325). Despite Stone’s assertion, the forces of fashion impeded the forces of personal fulfilment, as James Fordyce, who saw marriage as “necessary to the support, order, and comfort of society” (166), laments in his *Sermons to Young Women* (1769): “The times in which we live are in no danger of adopting a system of romantic virtue. The parents of the present generation, what with selling their Sons and daughters into marriage, and what with teaching them by every possible means the glorious principles of Avarice, have contrived pretty effectually to bring down from its former flights that idle, youthful, unprofitable passion, which has for its object personal attractions, in preference to all the wealth in the world. With the successful endeavours of those profoundly politic parents, the levity of dissipation, the vanity of parade, and the fury of gaming, now so prevalent, have concurred to cure completely in the fashionable of both sexes any tendency to mutual fondness” (151). Edgeworth’s endorsement of love as the only good reason for marriage is, then, yet another weapon in her war against fashionable feudal society.

unsought be won"(213).⁴⁵⁵

When Lady Jane Granville, a cousin of the Percys, visits the Hills she offers to take Caroline to Tunbridge in order to help her find an eligible match with the aid of the "patronage of fashion" (148). The Percys refuse, but Lady Jane cannot comprehend their reasons, which she regards as too theoretical for their own good:

We who live in the world must speak as the world speaks – we cannot recur continually to a philosophical dictionary Though I don't pretend to draw my maxims from books, yet this much I do know, that in matrimony, let people have ever so much sense, and merit, and love, and all that, they must have bread and butter into the bargain, or it won't do. (149)

In response, Mrs. Percy expresses her wishes for her daughters' marriages:

I should wish them to marry, if I could ensure for them good husbands, not merely good fortunes. The warmest wish of my heart . . . is to see my daughters as happy as myself, married to men of their own choice, whom they can entirely esteem and fondly love. – But I would rather see my daughters in their graves, than see them throw themselves away upon men unworthy of them, or sell themselves to husbands unsuited to them, merely for the sake of being *established*, for the vulgar notion of *getting married*, or to avoid the imaginary and unjust ridicule of being old maids. (152)

The slavery implied both by the image of being sold and the implied lack of choice ties in, as I will demonstrate, with Edgeworth's depiction of fashionable masculinity as a form of slavery. Marriages and careers founded on patronage are both inimical to independence, suggesting that good marriages

⁴⁵⁵ Milton, *Paradise Lost* Book 8. Caroline is thus connecting herself to a pre-lapsarian Eve. Though Caroline ultimately does fall deeply in love with Count Altenberg before his own regard is declared, this issue is smoothed away because he loves her in return and has involuntarily expressed his admiration.

provide a kind of freedom to women.

The public and political aspects of Edgeworth's critique of patronage centre on the careers of the Falconer family, who abuse the system through their relationship with the Prime Minister, Lord Oldborough, and those of the Percy sons, who make their own way through merit. Lord Oldborough is presented as a man of talents jaded by years of ambition and politics, whose former idealism has descended into "an overweening love of aristocracy, . . . an inclination towards arbitrary power," "a hatred of innovation," and the belief that "free discussion should be discouraged, and that the country should be governed with a high and strong hand" (97). Critics of the novel suggest that the scenes of political intrigue are anachronistically based on the Walpole government.⁴⁵⁶ However, McCormack suggests that the early-eighteenth century's preoccupation with virtue and corruption continues well into the 1830s.⁴⁵⁷ Though no modern politician would have laid claim to absolutist ambitions, Lord Oldborough's tyrannical tastes recall elements of Pitt's terror as well as radical criticisms of Burke's political values in *Reflections*.⁴⁵⁸ To assume that Edgeworth's depiction of politics is Walpolean rather than a realistic critique of contemporary political life also ignores the perceptive connection that she draws between corrupt modern political systems and feudalism:

the forms of homage and the rights of vassalage are altered; the competition for favour having succeeded to the dependence for protection, the feudal lord of ancient times could ill compete in power with the influence of the modern political patron. (107)

⁴⁵⁶ Marilyn Butler, for example, suggests that a biography of Walpole was Edgeworth's source for Lord Oldborough. See *Maria Edgeworth* (1972), p. 245.

⁴⁵⁷ *The Independent Man* p. 18, 57.

⁴⁵⁸ During the mid-1790s parliament passed a number of acts directed against the radical supporters of the French revolution in Britain, particularly the corresponding societies: these included suspending Habeus Corpus, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech (Thomis and Holt 13-16). Pitt would have had some sympathy, at least politically, with Lord Oldborough's distrust of 'free discussion' and the acts are evidence a strong, if slightly high, hand. Also, see my discussion of the Two Acts and their effect on radical literature in Chapter 5. Burke was regarded as endorsing a feudal absolutism that, according to Paine, privileged the claims of the dead over those of the living. See my exploration of the radical response to Burke's politics in chapter 4 p. 145 ff.

Edgeworth highlights the retrograde metamorphosis embedded in Burke's panegyric on the feudal inheritance and rejection of enlightenment's promised social progress. It is this struggle between merit's promise of progress and the stunting effects of corruption that the novel's exploration of the Percy and Falconer families exposes.

The Falconer family represents old corruption in all of its guises. The men embody corrupt masculine models and engage in corrupt professional practice, while the daughters of the family represent a superficial femininity and their mother, in order to protect the family appearance, resorts to a fraudulent appropriation of patronage. Commissioner Falconer's besetting sin is not so much ambition for his own and his sons' careers as it is the way he attempts to achieve these ambitions, having taught his family "that merit was unnecessary to rising in the world or in the church" (418). When he discovers the Tourville papers, Falconer presents them to Lord Oldborough, an old acquaintance of Mr. Percy's, essentially in exchange for a secretaryship for his second son, Cunningham, whom he intends for the diplomatic service.⁴⁵⁹ Cunningham is the consummate courtier, "well skilled in all those arts of *seeming wise*" (24), a creature whose innate servility and narrow-minded self-interest are incompatible with a manly independence. Cunningham's ignorance and arrogance make him a patron's worst nightmare. Later in the novel Alfred Percy discovers that Cunningham has a starving former law student (his friend Mr. Temple) do his work for him (77) and it is based on "*written irrefragable proofs*" of *Temple's* "ability and information," (110) that Cunningham is selected as His Majesty's Envoy to the German court. This promotion, however, proves his undoing. His ignorance is exposed in inept and "*slovenly*" despatches and his ambitions lead him to engage in foreign and domestic intrigue instead of representing the

⁴⁵⁹ A ship sinks off the coast near Percy-Hall carrying a German diplomat (Tourville). In the confusion of evacuation, a packet of important papers is lost, only to be retrieved by John Falconer's dog.

interest of England.⁴⁶⁰

The eldest son, Buckhurst, is intended by his father for the church; however, this young buck recognises that, without being very bad, he is “scarcely sober, and *staid*, and moral enough for the church” (33). His father, however, is determined and refuses to pay his debts unless he takes orders. While he initially resists his father’s machinations – he accepts money from Mr. Percy to discharge his debts and study the law – he finally succumbs to the path of patronage, seduced by the easy success of his brothers. His living is given to him by a nephew of Lord Oldborough, a Colonel Hauton who Buckhurst saved from an embarrassing situation and whose life ambition is “to look like his own coachman; he succeeded only in looking like his groom” (29). It is clear from the beginning of their acquaintance that neither is going to do the other any good.

Buckhurst becomes just the sort of fashionable London preacher that Henry Crawford expresses admiration for in *Mansfield Park*. Alfred Percy reports that Buckhurst is:

much admired, but I don’t like his manner or his sermons
– too theatrical and affected – too rhetorical and
antithetical, evidently more suited to display the talents
of the preacher than to do honour to God or good to man . .
. Of all men, I think a dissipated clergyman the most
contemptible. (231)

Lord Oldborough, who had hoped that Buckhurst would help to restrain Hauton’s excesses, draw him “from the turf to the senate,” and raise in his mind “some noble ambition,” wonders “what could induce such a man as Mr. Buckhurst Falconer to become a clergyman?” (298). His next career move is

⁴⁶⁰ p. 299. Count Altenberg, “without design to injure Cunningham” accidentally exposes Cunningham’s “private intrigue . . . to get himself appointed Envoy to the Court of Denmark, by the interest of the opposition party” to Lord Oldborough and the Commissioner (299). Lord Oldborough finds himself in patronage bind – he cannot remove Cunningham without acknowledging that he made a mistake and bestowed his patronage on an unworthy recipient. Upon receiving concrete evidence of his treachery, which included “betraying the confidence reposed in him regarding the Tourville papers” (521) Lord Oldborough recalls Cunningham (437). Cunningham defies this summons and travels to Denmark on the basis of opposition promises (522); however, he gets his just desserts when he is abandoned in favour of another ambassador and imprisoned for debt (592).

to marry the parsimonious sister of a bishop in order to add to his preferments, earning domestic infelicity along with his subsequent livings.

The final Falconer son, John, is the family “dunce,” though in reality he is the perfect country booby squire, and is consequently deemed useless for anything but the army (34). Commissioner Falconer is able to obtain Lord Oldborough’s interest in John’s career, but John’s incapacity is immediately apparent:

Officers returned from abroad had spoken of his stupidity, his neglect of duty, and, above all, his boasting that let him do what he pleased, Lord Oldborough’s favour – certain of being a major in one year, a lieutenant-colonel in two. (298)

The danger that Colonel Falconer poses to the nation becomes crystal clear when, shirking his duty in order to go out on a shooting party, he misses orders which lead directly to the failure of a “secret expedition” because the troops under his command failed to arrive (524-5). That he is subjected to a court-martial hardly makes up for the evils his incompetence has caused on an international scale. While the Commissioner may have been right – that merit or talent are not necessary to rise in the world – skill, application, and integrity are clearly necessary to actually perform well in positions of trust and authority, and as such are necessary for the sake of the nation.

Lord Oldborough is horrified by the results of his ill-bestowed patronage:

Of this single error he had not foreseen the consequences; they were more important, more injurious to him and to the public than he could have calculated or conceived. It appeared now as if the Falconer family were doomed to be his ruin. (525)

While Lord Oldborough requires the spectacular disasters caused by the Falconer family to jolt him out of his old-corruption complaisance, Mr. Percy’s long-held views on the evils of patronage are vindicated:

Wherever the honours of professions, civil, military, or ecclesiastical, are bestowed by favour, not earned by merit – whenever the places of trust and dignity in a state are to be gained by intrigue and solicitation – there is an end of generous emulation and consequently of exertion. Talents and integrity, in losing their reward of glory, lose their vigour, and often their very existence. If the affairs of this nation were guided, and if her battles were fought, by the corrupt imbecile creatures of patronage, how would they be guided? – how fought? – Wo be to the country that trusts to such rulers and such defenders! Wo has been to every country that has so trusted! – May such never be the fate of England! – And that it never may, let every honest independent Englishman set his face, his hand, his heart, against this base, this ruinous system! (128-9)

By the end of the novel the misadventures of the Falconer sons illustrate what happens when the ‘corrupt imbecile creatures of patronage’ are placed in positions of authority. Balancing the Falconers’ ignorance and intrigue are the Percy brothers, who have been taught to make their way through diligence and skill. The results are strikingly, if predictably, different.

While his sons are enjoying a meteoric rise in the world, Commissioner Falconer gloats in the face of the Percys’ struggles:

Ha! my good cousin Percys, where are you now? –
 Education, merit, male and female, where are you now?
 Planting cabbages and presiding at a day-school: one son
 plodding in a pleader’s office – another cast in an election
 for an hospital physician – a third encountering plague in
 the West Indies. I give you joy! (113)

But Falconer does not see the value of independence. By teaching his family to value independence, Mr. Percy follows Rousseau in *Émile* by providing the kind of education that prepares the individual for any reversals that life may

hold for him by emphasising abilities rather than inherited station. The Percy sons are the complete opposites of the Falconer boys and the society they belong to is far more resilient than that founded on the brittle frame of patronage.

The only overlapping profession between the Falconers and Percys is the army. Godfrey, the eldest Percy son and heir, is a soldier as his father, in an echo of *Professional Education*, “thought it advantageous for the eldest son of a man of fortune to be absent from his home . . . to see something of the world, to learn to estimate himself and others,” an experience that should give him the “means of becoming a really respectable, enlightened, and useful country gentleman” rather than “one of those booby squires, born only to consume the fruits of the earth, who spend their lives in coursing, shooting, hunting, carousing” (61-2). Despite not having to rely on the army permanently for his livelihood, Godfrey has the “noble ambition to distinguish himself . . . in truth, and as a governing principle of action, he felt zeal for the interests of the service” (62).⁴⁶¹ Colonel Hungerford, another exemplary officer who balances the demands of the service with an innate humanity visible in his domestic dealings, makes the case for the importance of a competent military:

We are now . . . less likely than ever to see the time when all the princes of Europe will sign the good Abbé St. Pierre’s project for the perpetual peace; and in the mean time, while kingdoms can maintain their independence, their existence, only by superiority in war, it is not for the defenders of their country to fix their thoughts upon the ‘price of victory.’ (208-9)

Considering the financial pressures of the war on England’s economy and public and parliamentary opinion regarding it, and the high demand for soldiers, especially with the outbreak of war with the United States in 1812 draining soldiers off to North America, Hungerford’s assessment of the price of

⁴⁶¹ see *Professional Education* pp. 298.

victory is just another aspect of the cost of war. However, there is a difference between war and victory, and the Napoleonic wars proved that the difference was in the men calling the shots in the thick of the action – the Nelsons and Wellingtons succeeding where Dalrymples, Burrards, and Chathams failed. Thus, to have men like Hungerford, Godfrey Percy, and Major Gascoigne and Mr. Henry, possessed of professional zeal and abilities, rather than Colonel Hauton, John Falconer and other unsuitable commanders populating the officer corps, is essential not only to winning the war, but to maintaining all-important independence.⁴⁶² Men concerned to maintain their own independence will also hold dear the independence of the nation.

The remaining Percy sons, Alfred, a lawyer, and Erasmus, a physician, demonstrate that the hard work and dedication required to obtain the necessary skills and information for his profession ultimately leads to success that is earned by merit rather than unearned favours from patrons. Davidson characterises the Percys' abhorrence of patronage as "paranoid;"⁴⁶³ but patronage, in terms of a person in a position of power using influence to support another person's career, is not the problem per se. The problem is what patronage has come to stand for – the idea that connections and intrigue are prerequisites for advancement rather than intelligence, talent, and hard work. The patronage system is a battleground in the struggle between fashion and merit. In *Professional Education* Edgeworth writes of the perils of fashion in relation to the private gentleman. Noting the connection between independence of fortune and independence of mind, she complains that the

⁴⁶² Dalrymple and Burrard were responsible for transforming the victory at Vimiero into defeat through the Cintra Convention. See chapter 6 for my discussion of this event p 224-225. The Earl of Chatham (another rank-conscious appointment) led the disastrous Walcheren landing that failed to instigate resistance to the French in the low countries and resulted in the British army being decimated by dysentery and fever (J. A. Cannon "Walcheren landing" *The Oxford Companion to British History*. 1997). The cycle of the political appointments of incompetent commanding officers is duplicated (and exaggerated) in *Patronage*, not only in John Falconer's outrageous promotion schedule and blatant incompetence, but in the neglect of Godfrey's Major Gascoigne in favour, first of a nephew of Lord Skreenes who controlled two votes in parliament (84), and second of the drunkard who "can hardly keep himself awake while he is giving the word of command" (98).

⁴⁶³ "Professional Education and Female Accomplishments" (2006) p. 266. Davidson focuses particularly on Erasmus's worry that the recommendations of those he has treated constitutes improper patronage.

lure of the fashionable world has the power to sever this vital link:

the desire to make a figure in the metropolis, or to outshine their neighbours, enter into contests of extravagance and scenes of fashionable dissipation; if, instead of living upon their own estates and attending to their own affairs, they crowd to watering places, and think only of hazard or Newmarket, the consequences must be, the ruin of their private fortunes, and the forfeiture of their political integrity. Instead of being their country's pride and the bulwark of her freedom, they will become the wretched slaves of a party, or the despicable tools of a court. (278-9)

How much more tempting must be the lure of easy advancement to a young man who has yet to make his fortune in his profession, as Buckhurst Falconer's inability to face the drudgery of legal studies illustrates. Without independence of fortune, there is a strong temptation to sacrifice independence of mind: as Edgeworth suggests, between these two "there is such an intimate connexion, that the one must be destroyed if the other be sacrificed" (278). But the Percy brothers, unwilling to pander to the fashionable, manage to maintain their independence and the only patronage they benefit from has been earned not courted. Erasmus's patrons are O'Brien, an Irish labourer, whose leg he saved from amputation, and the wealthy merchant, Mr. Gresham, whom he impressed by refusing to toady to the illustrious physician Sir Amyas Courtney. Alfred's reputation as a "man of business and talents who was *always prepared*" (273) brings him to the notice of the Lord Chief Justice who promotes his career. As the narrator notes, "this was a species of patronage honourable both to the giver and the receiver. Here was no favour shown disproportionate to deserts, but here was just distinction paid to merit, and generous discernment giving talents opportunity of developing themselves" (273).

Alfred Percy's skill becomes the key to resolving the Percys' legal

quandary. When he recovers the deed that secures Percy-hall to his family, mistakenly mixed up with Commissioner Falconer's documents, Sir Robert, the heir-at-law, attempts to retain the estate by producing a revocation of the deed. It is up to Alfred to prove that this new document is a forgery. The elaborate fraud is exposed when the elderly, and apparently trustworthy, witness refers to a sixpence under the seal. Upon closer examination Alfred notices that the coin features George III though Sir John died during George II's reign. The document is thus unequivocally proved to be a forgery. Attention to detail and professional merit win the day and secure the estate, a powerful reiteration of merit as the key to securing the independence and existence of the state.

The social model advanced by *Patronage* is undoubtedly a meritocracy. The Percys, with their professional integrity, specialist skills, and independence represent the kind of individuals, the kind of men, required by England to forestall the ruinous effects of corruption and save the nation's independence. While I intend to demonstrate that in *Mansfield Park* Austen is also advocating a meritocratic model, I want to suggest that the novel's ambivalent ending acknowledges, as Edgeworth does not, that the way forward is not as easy as simply rejecting patronage and fashion. By considering *Mansfield Park* not simply as a condition of England novel, a representation of the state in the estate, but as a national novel like Edgeworth's in which a fully functioning society is presented, in this case a view of England as it is, the ending suggests that England, like Mansfield Park, has not progressed quite as far as it needs to. While it could be argued that the next (socially progressive and idealised) stages of stadial history are written in *Emma* and *Persuasion*, as I intend to do in the conclusion, *Mansfield Park* leaves the reader with a slightly chastened 'things as they are' and a promise for the future if they can read the ending the right way. The right way, as I intend to argue, is not to reject the ending, as some critics have suggested, as an implausible attempt at comedy, or to see it as an endorsement of Burkean

values, but as fundamentally, and purposely, problematic.⁴⁶⁴ Austen's mode of expressing the tragedy of Mansfield in comic terms, by paradoxically subverting the expectations of the courtship plot by fulfilling them, reveals that a more radical course of treatment is necessary to purge the ills of Mansfield Park. Edmund Bertram's inability to save Mansfield Park from the contaminating influence of fashion demonstrates that it is not the clergy and a land-bound definition of virtue, but a fundamental re-ordering that is required to save both Mansfield and England. This reorganisation is tied to the career of William Price, whose professional and personal merit promise to raise him above his station and into a new ruling class.

Mary Waldron notes, "what is not often remarked upon in the discussion of *Mansfield Park* is the almost unmitigated disaster of the ending."⁴⁶⁵ Johnson also sees the ending as problematic and argues that it constitutes a dismantling of conservative myths by the myth-makers themselves. I agree that the ending, with its abrupt turn to comedy and away from "guilt and misery" (362), presents a problem that cannot be ignored or reconciled to a straightforward Burkean settlement. The traditional comic ending thrust at the reader is lacking in both emotional and ideological fulfilment: though Fanny and Edmund do eventually marry, they remain, for all intents and purposes, under Sir Thomas's, slightly reformed, rule, while the promise of a new society, William Price, is at sea. Throughout the novel nearly everything is working against Edmund and Fanny: Mrs. Norris reassures Sir Thomas that a union between Fanny and either of her cousins is "morally impossible" (6). But Mrs. Norris's moral impossibilities are really social impossibilities, and changing the social order changes the possibilities, which is precisely what Austen proposes to do. Waldron observes that the alternative ending suggested in the denouement – one in which Fanny rewards Henry's reformation "within a reasonable period from Edmund's marrying Mary" (367) – is the ideal ending, providing redemption

⁴⁶⁴ Waldron sums up the critical reception of the ending quite nicely in "The Frailties of Fanny: *Mansfield Park* and the Evangelical Movement" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 6(1994): 259-281. See p. 266-7.

⁴⁶⁵ "Frailties of Fanny" (1994) p. 266.

for all and fitting neatly into an evangelical paradigm. This tidy package is precisely what Austen is writing against, as Waldron makes clear; however, discrediting the “‘practical piety’ of William Wilberforce and Hannah More”⁴⁶⁶ is perhaps only a part of Austen’s larger project of social ordering, or ordination. The disaster at the end is that this project is only imperfectly accomplished and too many of the old ways are retained for the compromise to be permanent.

As Michael Karounos observes, ordination’s relevance to *Mansfield Park* is primarily social. Issues of order, particularly rank order, permeate the novel. Fanny’s introduction to the Mansfield family represents the first disordering, the first interruption of the old order. Her status as social other is a source of anxiety, and the question of where to put her, what her place will be, occupies Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris even before she arrives. The white attic, near the old nurseries, the governess, and the maids, and “not far” from Maria and Julia, is Fanny’s allocated space in the house, and, as far as Mrs. Norris is concerned, it would be impossible to “place her any where else” (8). Her quarters in the house, closer to the upper servants than her cousins, accord with Sir Thomas’s ideas about her social standing and the need to preserve distinctions of rank:

There will be some difficulty in our way, Mrs. Norris . . . as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up; how to preserve in the minds of my *daughters* the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far to make her remember she is not a *Miss Bertram*. I should wish to see them very good friends, and would, on no account, authorize the girls the smallest degree of arrogance toward their relation; but still they cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always

⁴⁶⁶ Waldron “Frailties” p. 281.

be different. It is a point of great delicacy, and you must assist us in our endeavours to choose exactly the right line of conduct. (9)

Sir Thomas's statement indicates an endorsement of the old order in which worth is estimated primarily by birth. But the situation of the Bertram and Price families exposes the patriarchal nature of that order, as Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris ignore the matrilineal equality of the cousins. Because her mother married an impoverished Marine, Fanny is not entitled to the same privileges as her cousins. Instilling in his daughters a "consciousness of what they are," the product of their birth and education, highlights the superficialities of this distinction. Their showy education, which, as events demonstrate, neglected intellectual and moral development, mirrors the superficial values of fashionable society, including its system of rank. Only Edmund is saved from the excesses of fashion because as a younger son he must be bred to some profession or other.

Things at Mansfield begin to change when Tom returns from Antigua. Roger Sales suggests that the novel's composition coincides with the Regency crisis of 1810-12, a suggestion that Karounos takes up in order to substantiate his claim that Tom's tenure as 'lord of misrule' constitutes the disordering of Mansfield Park and introduces the "innovations that corrupt his sister."⁴⁶⁷ Karounos's reading of the Regency connection is problematic because, as I hope to demonstrate, Mansfield Park was 'disordered' long before Tom's regency – it was disordered in its adherence to the old order. The "excess freedom" that Karounos attributes to the theatrical, which he characterises as an infection carried into the estate by Yates, does not produce the corruption of Maria or Julia; rather the freedom is produced by the absence of Sir Thomas, which "relieved" his daughters "from all restraint" and left them "immediately at their own disposal" (26). Tom's regency does not represent a revolution in manners or morals, but serves to uncover the corruption that is repressed in the presence of a father who "had never seemed the friend of

⁴⁶⁷ "Ordination and Revolution" p. 721.

their pleasures” (26). Like the Prince Regent, Tom moves the furniture around: the changes he makes are superficial and easily remedied. Maria’s rebellion, choosing to marry Rushworth to secure “independence and splendour” (158), though superficially acceptable, has more serious consequences. Though Sir Thomas sets his room to right, dismissing the scene painter and wiping “away every *outward* memento” of the theatrical (149; emphasis mine), his restoration does nothing to curb his eldest daughter’s taste for liberty:

Independence was more needful than ever; the want of it at Mansfield more sensibly felt. She was less and less able to endure the restraint which her father imposed. The liberty which his absence had given was now become absolutely necessary. She must escape from him and Mansfield as soon as possible, and find consolation in fortune and consequence, bustle and the world, for a wounded spirit. (158)

Sir Thomas’s attention to appearance does not, as Karounos contends, constitute an ordination, or ordering, of the estate. By restoring Mansfield Park to the *appearance* of order, Sir Thomas reinstates the old status quo without addressing the substance of the problem. He too seems to assume that his family’s misadventures were due to Tom’s irresponsible indulgence. Sir Thomas is wrong. While Tom’s vices – gaming, Newmarket, heavy drinking (a catalogue of vices deplored by Edgeworth in *Professional Education*) – lead to his own illness, they are not responsible for infecting Mansfield with Revolutionary upheaval. Instead, the problem is Sir Thomas’s adherence to the old order, an order which Fanny’s presence implicitly challenges.

Karounos argues that

For Sir Thomas’s volumes of sermons to give way to *Lovers’ Vows* constitutes a revolutionary change in the canon, undermines the principle of law, and demotes the traditional role and moral authority of the gentry in the

management of the state/estate. The consequence of Tom's disordering is that the values of reading and learning (typified by Edmund and Fanny) are subordinated to values of performing and spectating (typified by Tom, Maria, the Crawfords, and Mrs. Norris). From reading and learning may come correction and improvement, but performing and spectating can only result in improvisation (as innovation) and indolence, the twin evils of an unhealthy society.⁴⁶⁸

Karounos's estimation of the situation only glances the surface. Maria, who simply uses the theatrical to cover her flirtation with Henry Crawford, is not seriously affected by its content. While the play privileges affection over convenience in marriage and cautions that the decision to wed must not be taken lightly, Maria wilfully pursues liberty through a marriage of convenience. Fanny, however, who actually reads the play – she learns “every word” of Rushworth's part (significantly that of the libertine Count Cassel who aspires to Amelia's hand) and “read, and read the scene [Amelia's declaration of love] again with many painful, many wondering emotions” (130-1) – imbibes its supposedly revolutionary message and follows Amelia's example in refusing her fashionable suitor because she does not love him. More problematic still is Karounos's assertion that the best prophylactic against revolutionary infection is a strong ruler,⁴⁶⁹ a suggestion that conjures an absolutist model of government that would not be tolerated in the English state and should not be tolerated at Mansfield Park. That Sir Thomas attempts to rule in such a way at Mansfield – Tom's dissipated behaviour and Maria's unquenchable thirst for liberty underscore the stifling atmosphere – is the true source of Mansfield's corruption.

Karounos locates the novel's crucial act of reordering in Fanny's coming out ball, which “ordinates Fanny into the family, into the estate, and most

⁴⁶⁸ “Ordination and Revolution” p. 723.

⁴⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 723.

importantly, into the status of equal personhood.”⁴⁷⁰ While I do see Fanny as occupying a place in Austen’s social re-ordering and the coming out ball as precipitating a crisis, Fanny’s rejection of the “status” conferred on her by her purported entrance into society is key. It is not substance that earns Fanny a ball, but surface – her improved looks attract Sir Thomas’s notice and prompt him to take a greater interest in her and to end the “mistaken distinction” that relegated a seemingly unpromising girl to the chilly east room.

Edmund’s hope that Sir Thomas will find “as much beauty of mind” (154) as person in Fanny is wishful as Sir Thomas apparently believes that women should be pretty and submissive. He did marry Lady Bertram, after all.

Marriage to Henry Crawford would secure to Fanny status and, as the wife of a gentleman, allow her access to the fashionable world. But Fanny rejects him, rejects fashion, and challenges not only Sir Thomas’s authority but the fashionable values he implicitly endorses. Fanny’s choice of spouse and approval of her brother indicates a privileging of the qualifications of the mind over the expectations of birth and wealth.

Edmund is undoubtedly the best of a bad lot, saved from the superficialities of his siblings by his status as second son and a consequent need to take up a profession. Though he has not chosen his own profession – the church is chosen for him because his father has livings to dispense – Edmund is still determined to be a credit to it. Incredulous that Edmund is destined for the church, a profession that is “never chosen,” Mary Crawford questions the profession’s status, asking “what is to be done in the church? Men love to distinguish themselves, and in either of the other lines [i.e. law or military] distinction may be gained, but not in the church. A clergyman is nothing” (73). Edmund defends his profession and makes a case for its usefulness:

The *nothing* of conversation has its gradations, I hope, as well as the *never*. A clergyman cannot be high in state or fashion. He must not head mobs, or set the ton in dress.

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 731.

But I cannot call that situation nothing, which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind, individually or collectively considered, temporally and eternally – which has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence. No one here can call the *office* nothing. If the man who holds it is so, it is by the neglect of his duty, by foregoing its just importance, and stepping out of his place to appear what he ought not to appear.

(73)

Mary cannot see that Edmund's portrait of the role and purpose of the clergyman has any basis in a reality that she is familiar with:

One does not see much of this influence and importance in society, and how can it be acquired where they are so seldom seen themselves? How can two sermons a week, even supposing them worth hearing, supposing the preacher have the sense to prefer Blair's to his own, do all that you speak of? govern the conduct and fashion the manners of a large congregation for the rest of the week?

One scarcely sees a clergyman out of his pulpit. (73)

Part of the irreconcilable difference in their ideas about clergyman comes from Mary's experience being that of fashionable London, while Edmund speaks of the duties of a country clergyman. Another problem is their differing definition of manners. While Mary thinks in terms of "good breeding," "refinement and courtesy" (74), Edmund envisions the clergyman influencing what "might rather be called *conduct*," essentially the morals of the people and having that moral grounding inform manners (74). For the ton, even religion is superficial – as *Patronage* shows with Buckhurst Falconer's popularity as a London preacher – and it is this superficiality – suggested by the abandoned Sotherton Chapel – that threatens Mansfield Park, and English society, with destruction.

Henry, as the novel's resident arbiter of fashion and taste, introduces the issue of gentlemanly identity to the discussion of professionalism in giving his opinion on Edmund's destined career.⁴⁷¹ After visiting Thornton Lacey, Henry suggests improvements that will give it the "air of a gentleman's residence" (190). Though Edmund acknowledges the necessity of gentility, he is uninterested in the "much more" that Crawford also envisions:

you may give it a higher character. You may raise it into a *place*. From being the mere gentleman's residence, it becomes, by judicious improvement, the residence of a man of education, taste, modern manners, good connections. All this may be stamped on it; and that house receive such an air as to make its owner be set down as the great land-holder of the parish, by every creature travelling the road; especially as there is no real squire's house to dispute the point; a circumstance between ourselves to enhance the value of such a situation in point of privilege and independence beyond all calculation.

(191)

By raising a gentleman's residence into a *place*, Crawford intends to transform the gentleman into the *fine* gentleman, the man of fashion, whose most important attributes – "taste, modern manners and good connections" – are superficial. For Henry, independence is the appearance of being the highest authority in the vicinity, of being taken for the great land-holder. And indeed, for the landed man of fashion who spends most of his time pursuing pleasure in London, all he has is the appearance of being the great land-holder while he misuses that position to fund his leisure activities. Henry wants to establish Edmund's claim to gentility through externals of dress, manners, and residence. That very residence, however, is a symbol of Edmund's professional integrity. He is no absentee clergyman, leaving his parishioners to the care of an underpaid, overworked curate. Edmund

⁴⁷¹ Sales identifies him as a Brummell figure (103) Henry earlier establishes his credentials as an improver at Sotherton, see p. 49 for the initial plan and chapters 9 and 10 for the visit.

represents the other side of the 'gentleman' debate, that proposes to justify the gentlemanly status of the professional by changing the definition of gentleman rather than dressing him in his landed trappings. True independence is not found by fooling passers-by into recognising the appearance of authority: it is a state of mind.

Henry's idea of the professional duties of a clergyman further illuminates his superficiality. In trying to impress Fanny with proper religious sentiment, Henry continues to betray his inability to transcend appearance. His comments about the liturgy and sermons reveal that he is most concerned with the performance, rather than the actual message. In Henry's estimation, the eloquent preacher has an effect on his audience similar to that of a great actor:

The preacher who can touch and affect such an heterogeneous mass of hearers, on subjects limited, and long worn threadbare in all common hands; who can say anything new or striking, anything that rouses the attention without offending the taste, or wearing out the feelings of his hearers, is a man whom one could not, in his public capacity, honour enough. I should like to be such a man. (267)

In response to Edmund's laugh, Henry elaborates:

I should indeed. I never listened to a distinguished preacher in my life without a sort of envy. But then, I must have a London audience. I could not preach but to the educated; to those who were capable of estimating my composition. (267)

Henry is concerned with performance and perception rather than with substance and the consequences of influence.

While Edmund's profession sets him the task of reforming the morals of the people and setting an example of true gentlemanly independence, William and the navy must save the independence of the state. William's

presence in the novel reminds the reader that England is a nation at war, a nation that “expects that every man will do his duty” as Nelson famously phrased it on the morning of Trafalgar. William, with his “open, pleasant countenance, and frank, unstudied, but feeling and respectful manners” provides a contrast to the actors who have inhabited the Mansfield stage. He also manages to draw out Fanny because he treats her as an equal: their conversations during his visit are characterised as “unchecked, equal, fearless” (183). It is during this episode that Austen privileges fraternal over conjugal love, but notes that while fraternal love is “sometimes almost every thing” it is “at others worse than nothing” (184). At Mansfield Park, fraternity is worse than nothing: jealousy divides sisters, taste and education divide brothers, birth-based rank ostracises a cousin who should have been raised as a sister. Privileging the fraternal over the conjugal implicitly challenges the patriarchal hierarchy at the root of marriage that has the ordering of Mansfield Park.

The emphasis on fraternity has a special resonance with William’s profession. Nelson referred to his Captains as his “Band of Brothers” in a conscious invocation of Henry V’s Saint Crispian’s Day speech.⁴⁷² William represents the next generation of this group of officers exemplified by courage and professional abilities, men including Austen’s brother Frank, who Nelson described as being equal in honour to “any person in Europe, however elevated his rank.”⁴⁷³ And this spirit of respect marked Nelson’s dealings with the men as well. In his *Life of Nelson*, Robert Southey notes that Nelson “governed men by their reason and their affections: they know that he was incapable of caprice or tyranny; and they obeyed him with alacrity and joy; because he possessed their confidence as well as their love.”⁴⁷⁴ This style of command differs markedly from that of Sir Thomas Bertram, who manages only to create a feeling of restraint in his daughters, antagonise his heir, and manipulate his dependent niece. In his ability to draw out his sister and

⁴⁷² See Rodger p. 537, Herman p. 357, and Nicolson p. 125-7.

⁴⁷³ qtd. Southey, *Life of Nelson* (1813) p. 118.

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 304.

command the respect and admiration of both Sir Thomas and Henry Crawford, William displays qualities in common with England's naval hero. Under William's influence, Fanny is liberated from the shackles of dependency and fear, demonstrating the potential of the patriarchal meritocracy he represents. In choosing William and rejecting Crawford, Fanny makes her bid to reorder society, revealing her preference for talent and merit, equality and independence, over the wealth, luxury, and ease of fashion's feudal remains.

Henry is initially inspired by William's tales of his adventures, just as he confesses to being enthralled by eloquent preachers. Hearing William's stories, Henry

longed to have been at sea, and seen and done and suffered as much. His heart was warmed, his fancy fired, and he felt the highest respect for a lad who, before he was twenty, had gone through such bodily hardships, and given such proofs of mind. The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was! (185)

However, as the narrator notes, Henry's wish of being something of his own making rather than the creature of ease and inheritance, "was eager rather than lasting" (185). While Henry's vision of the distinguished clergyman suggests how fashionable religion is a problematic reforming tool, his flirtation with the Navy reveals that the man of fashion has no business on a man of war. Henry plays the patronage game in order to win Fanny – by bringing William to Admiral Crawford's attention and having him 'made' he believes he is making Fanny an offer she cannot refuse. In rejecting Henry, Fanny not only rejects the 'patronage of fashion,' but she also refuses that

interest in her brother's profession that would have smoothed the trajectory of his upwardly mobile career through a connection to Admiral Crawford. Fanny places her faith in the seagoing band of brothers (as distinct from the squabbling, land-bound, half-pay admirals who populate fashionable society), and in the substance of her brother's merit, rather than Crawford's undeniable style. Henry the dandy, the fine gentleman, rather than performing a duty that requires substance, takes on a series of roles, preferring to perform his way through the novel. In *Lovers' Vows* he plays a soldier in order to pursue the Bertram sisters, a performance in which he largely succeeds. In Portsmouth, however, his attempts to play the patriot are more difficult to swallow. As Sales observes, the landmarks that are visited by the Price family in company with Henry, including the dockyards and the Garrison Chapel were "inextricably linked with the war effort" in the public consciousness (91). It is against this backdrop that William and countless other officers and seamen prepared to perform their duty defending the nation, while in contrast Henry Crawford merely performs.⁴⁷⁵ This is not to say that Henry would have had to join the Navy in order to prove his worth. But in doing his duty as a landowner, making agricultural improvements at Everingham that would benefit his tenants instead of ornamental refinements that gratify his own superficial need for display, he would have represented the professional private gentleman promoted by Gisborne and Edgeworth, represented in *Pride and Prejudice*, but entirely absent from *Mansfield Park*. Instead, Henry is held in thrall to a feudal vision of society and family, like Sir Thomas who encourages his suit. While Edmund realises that Fanny cannot be won by "gallantry and wit," Sir Thomas believes that absence will make the heart grow fonder, at least insofar as Fanny will feel "the loss of power and consequence" in her professed lover's absence (288). But Fanny does not crave the arbitrary power accorded the lady on her pedestal in the chivalric courtship game that Henry plays at. Though he believes that "[i]t is not by equality of merit" that Fanny

⁴⁷⁵ Sales observes, Henry's "lack of profession allows him to make professions of love when dressed in a military uniform, or else when walking around a naval dockyard" (91).

can be “won” (269), Henry is wrong: it is *only* by equality of merit – or at least demonstrable merit – that Fanny can be won, that Mansfield can be saved, that England can be strengthened.

In the end, merit is the key to Fanny’s heart and to the new social order. But, as I have suggested, the ending itself is problematic. William is off at sea, his “continued good conduct, and rising fame” promising a bright future, but his bright future is also Mansfield Park’s. The revitalised social order usually promised by a happy ending is deferred: naval meritocracy is the promise of the future. While in *Patronage* Edgeworth is satisfied that professional merit is sufficient to triumph against the forces of fashion and corruption, Austen’s ending, ambivalent at best, suggests that the forces of fashion are not so easily defeated in England’s current embattled state. The near-wreck of the Mansfield family suggests that England may well get worse before the grasp of feudal power finally disintegrates, and that such a dire state of affairs might be necessary to jolt the nation out of its old-corruption complaisance, just as it takes the defection of his daughters to jolt Sir Thomas into realising the fatal flaw in his educational and social philosophies. Austen’s vision for post-war reconstruction appears in her final completed novels. While in *Emma*, Austen transforms the landed gentleman by entirely professionalising the exemplary Mr. Knightley, the final deathblow to the feudal ascendancy, with its privileging of birth and land over worth, comes with the return of the band of brothers in *Persuasion*.

Conclusion
“You misled me by the term *gentleman*”:
A Final Farewell to “foppery and nonsense.”

“You misled me by the term *gentleman*. I thought you meant some man of property: Mr. Wentworth was nobody . . . One wonders how the names of our nobility become so common” (*Persuasion* 25).

Sir Walter Elliot’s lament ostensibly regarding the inability to determine rank from a person’s name, points to the state of flux regarding the term gentleman and the rising status of the professions. Though Mr. Wentworth may be a nobody on the scale of nobility and fashion, his professional status makes him a gentleman. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the definition of the gentleman preoccupied many writers throughout the eighteenth century. The problem of the gentleman is also central to the novel and, as I have demonstrated, is of particular interest to women novelists. Of the novel, Jason Solinger (2005) writes,

for a genre whose rise has been routinely linked with the rise of the middle class, eighteenth-century fiction exhibits little interest in the kinds of men that historians single out as representative of the middle class, namely merchants, traders and manufacturers.⁴⁷⁶

Solinger identifies Captain Wentworth as a departure from “the Mr. Bs and Mr. Knightleys,” but believes he stops just short of being a part of the rising middle class: “Austen and her contemporaries had difficulty imagining a new type of ruling class male” (274). However, the problem here is not in imagining a new ruling class male, but in recognising how Mr. Knightley differs from Mr. B, how the ruling class male is still a gentleman, but how that gentleman is a vastly different animal. It is the result of the process of social reorganisation observed by Defoe in *The Compleat Gentleman*. In a century in flux between feudalism and modernity, between rank and class, it is impossible to recognise evolutionary changes when constrained by tidy class

⁴⁷⁶ p. 274. “Jane Austen and the Gentrification of Commerce.” (2005).

distinctions. While Defoe believed that “Bred Gentlemen” could not truly be considered gentlemen because they lacked the leisure and propertied stake in the country necessary to take the disinterested view required by the civic humanists,⁴⁷⁷ by the process of professionalization, the self-interest of the professional has become necessarily, if paradoxically, disinterested. The professional’s concern for his reputation ensures that he must be a model of integrity and probity, must have the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure competency (the property necessary for political participation), must not allow greed or a lust for power to cloud his judgement and interfere with his work; essentially, he must be disinterested in order to make a living. And if this disinterest, believed to be essential to having a stake in the nation, is attainable through a profession, through personal merit, the old order of land and rank falls away leaving the path clear to well-educated and talented “upstarts.” The distinction then becomes one of personal qualities rather than personal property. The people who ally themselves with professional values are part of the radicalising force of the people of merit, while those who cling to inherited structures are part of the frivolous, and increasingly obsolete, people of fashion. In the eighteenth century this process of social evolution was facilitated by war, which provided professional opportunities in the army and navy, but also demonstrated the national importance, not simply of the professions themselves, but of professional men who earned their status through skill rather than connections.

As Leo Braudy has observed, war facilitates medical and technological innovations as well as alterations to the gendered balance of power. As I have demonstrated, throughout the three major wars in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and first two decades of the nineteenth century, masculinity was a constant source of anxiety. Gender relations were constantly being revised in order to compensate. Women novelists intervened in this redefinition, attempting to fashion a gentleman who was able to fill the needs of the both the nation and the family.

⁴⁷⁷ *The Compleat English Gentleman* p. 256-7.

In *Evelina* Frances Burney could offer Lord Orville as a variation on the theme of an idealised eighteenth-century masculinity, a nobleman whose nobility is drawn from the example of rising professionals (Captain Cook) and those unsullied by corrupt civilisation (Omai); however, this solution is shown to be completely untenable in the context of the American war. In the midst of the colonial struggle for independence, Mortimer Delvile is held in thrall to family demands and expectations, and a chivalric model of masculinity that is countered by an outmoded civic humanist ideal. Delvile exposes 'things as they are' and the need for change is reiterated in the lacklustre marriage ending. In the 1790s, Charlotte Smith and Jane West return to the enslaving tendencies of chivalric masculinity and offer overtly political critiques and solutions. While Smith proposes to liberate men through republican principles and political reform, a strategy that is ultimately unsuccessful, West turns her attention to the internalised codes of behaviour that override political ideologies. Her heroes' rejection of chivalry and fashionable masculinity liberates them from feudal social structures, while a modified civic humanist ethic allows them to act as independent men. The concern for masculine independence is also present in the Napoleonic-era novels of Edgeworth and Austen, who promote an internal, professional ethic, rather than the landed virtue of civic humanism, as a means of reforming gentlemen, winning the war, and reordering society. With the prospect of peace and a return to domestic concerns – both in the family and the nation – Austen is concerned to consolidate power in suitable male hands. While this might seem like a conservative impulse, I want to suggest that in rejecting traditional models of masculinity – particularly those informed by feudalist- and absolutist-tainted chivalry – and promoting men whose worth is calculated by more than income, birth, or connections, Austen is advocating a meritocracy, which not only rejects the 'old corruption' of patronage and the immorality of the Regent, but also provides scope for female agency.

In *Emma* Austen returns to the professional gentleman that she began to cultivate with Darcy in order to further the distinction between men of

fashion and men of merit. However, in this post-war context – Austen began writing the novel just before Napoleon’s first abdication (6 April 1814) and it appeared shortly after Waterloo (18 June 1815)⁴⁷⁸ – issues of domestic government are of prime importance. Men of merit are here figured as the ‘men of sense’ who take their duties seriously, while gallant, chivalric suitors are exposed as frauds and allied with corrupt government.

While many critics have fixated on femininity, or lack thereof, in *Emma*, particularly Emma’s ‘mannishness,’ a charge frequently coupled with hints at lesbianism, as Johnson notes, the novel is far more interested in interrogating standards of masculinity: “What true masculinity is like – what a ‘man’ is, how a man speaks and behaves, what a man really wants – is the subject of continual debate, even when characters appear to be discussing women.”⁴⁷⁹ Men of fashion and men of merit present two broad categories from which to begin this exploration of masculinity. In order to understand what constitutes the ‘gentleman-like’ – an interesting turn of phrase in itself which suggests that gentlemanliness is not the exclusive purview of those born gentleman nor is it necessarily a characteristic they all carry – it is necessary to examine those men of fashion in the text whose manners represent outmoded and dangerous ideas regarding manly perfection that are ultimately rejected.

Mr. Woodhouse is an obvious symbol of an antiquated variety of masculinity. He is the aged hero of sensibility, immobilised by his emotions, in this case excessive anxieties about the slightest change affecting everything from his household to his health. Possessing the “tenderest spirit of gallantry” (63), he represents a Burkean knight. His feebleness, impotence, and general state of decline signal that this version of gallant

⁴⁷⁸ Chapman p. 498.

⁴⁷⁹ *Equivocal Beings* (1995) p. 196. Lionel Trilling famously observed that “[t]he extraordinary thing about Emma is that she has a moral life as a man has a moral life” (qtd. 192). Johnson notes that Trilling’s perception of Emma’s “manliness” is the “least original thing” about his assessment and points out that numerous post-WWII critics regarded Emma as unsexed, e.g. Edmund Wilson “A Long Talk about Jane Austen” (1944) who highlights Emma’s infatuation with women and apparent disinterest in men. For an excellent summary of critical engagement with Emma’s gender bending propensities, see *Equivocal Beings* pp. 192-5.

masculinity, and its associated feudal absolutist government, is not long for this earth. Though frequently stigmatised by critics as “a silly old woman,”⁴⁸⁰ his commitment to gallantry is part of a concerted cultural effort to keep women silly. And while he has abdicated all real authority, confining his tyranny to dictating what his guests can and cannot eat, behind his seemingly benign exterior lurks the dark side of hereditary rule. His impotent feebleness raises the spectre of the incapacitated king, a reflection that raises the issue of Emma as “lovely woman” ruling alone in relation to the Regency vacuum of moral authority, but I intend to return to this issue a little later. First, however, I want to examine Mr. Woodhouse’s successors in gallantry in order to expose the evils that Mr. Woodhouse’s age and hypochondria mask.

Mr. Elton, one of Mr. Woodhouse’s fellow knights, is a more straightforward indictment of chivalry. Though Emma initially points to him as a better pattern for young men than Mr. Knightley – “I think a young man might be very safely recommended to take Mr. Elton as a model. Mr. Elton is good humoured, cheerful, obliging, and gentle” (28) – the course of his ‘true love’ exposes a mercenary agenda hidden by a performance of gallantry. Not fooled by chivalric excess, Mr. Knightley warns Emma that Mr. Elton “may talk sentimentally but he will act rationally” (53), as is revealed when Mr. Elton proposes to Emma and her £30 000 instead of the impoverished Harriet Smith. His manipulation of the chivalric code from moral compass into a social mask allies him with the calculating and mercenary interests of the Regent and the Royal dukes who Tim Fulford describes as similarly corrupting the chivalric code.⁴⁸¹ Mr. Elton’s performance of the courtly lover reiterates the dangers of this debased chivalry for women, a point that is made manifest in the double meaning of his charade.

There is more to the charade Mr. Elton produces than the solution at

⁴⁸⁰ Johnson suggests that Edmund Wilson is the first to characterise Mr. Woodhouse as such, p. 197.

⁴⁸¹ see *Romantic Masculinity* p. 4-5. Also, see my discussion in chapter 6 p. 221-223.

which Emma arrives.⁴⁸² While ‘courtship’ is a perfectly plausible answer, Colleen A. Sheehan argues persuasively for an alternative. Harriet’s confusion, and indeed some of her suggestions, are not as dim-witted as they seem, but part of an elaborate political joke embedded in the charade’s second solution. Instead of ‘court’ the first two lines could mean Prince, while a more natural monarch of the sea is a whale. When these are combined the solution is ‘Prince of Whales.’⁴⁸³ In this way ‘displaying the pomp of kings’ signals the nature of the Regency – the Prince is not actually the king, he is just playing at it – while ‘luxury and ease’ become barbs directed at his lavish mode of living. While whales might seem a bit of a stretch in the second two lines, as they purport to present another view of man and, as I am sure Jonah would agree, ships are much more comfortable for ocean voyages than whales, they presented a second view of the same man, the corpulent whale. Austen was by no means the first writer to translate Wales into Whales in relation to the prince. Charles Lamb’s “the Triumph of the Whale” appeared (anonymously) in 1812, suggesting a re-evaluation of the “Regent of the Sea”:

By his bulk, and by his size,
By his oily qualities,
This (or else my eyesight fails),
This should be the PRINCE OF WHALES.

That Austen is referencing this poem is suggested by the fact that the first letter of each line in each stanza forms an anagram of LAMB (Sheehan). Two months after the publication of Lamb’s poem, George Cruikshank published a caricature entitled “The Prince of Whales or the Fisherman at Anchor.”

Besides putting the Prince’s face on the body of an enormous whale, the print features a cuckolded Neptune, whose mermaid consort gazes lovingly at the

⁴⁸² My first displays the pomp of kings
Lords of the earth! their luxury and ease.
Another view of man, my second brings,
Behold him there, the monarch of the seas!

But, ah! united, what reverse we have!
Man’s boasted power and freedom, are all flown;
Lord of the earth and sea, he bends a slave,
And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone. (57)

⁴⁸³ Colleen A. Sheehan. “Lamponing the Prince” *Persuasions On-Line* 27 1 (2006).

whale, while other sea creatures include sharks. The only thing from Harriet's catalogue missing from Cruikshank's print is the trident, which suggests that authority and majesty are also absent. While this might seem to be simply a delightful digression from the issue at hand, the second solution adds a significant new dimension of meaning to the charade in which the mask of chivalry is materially compromised. What Peter Knox-Shaw calls the "see-saw of conventional gallantry"⁴⁸⁴ will not only reverse the promised woman-ruler/lover-slave dichotomy, but it is significant that Princess Caroline, to whom Harriet bears a resemblance (blond, plump, blue-eyed), is banished to 'reign' alone and is humiliated socially by her estranged husband, a pattern repeated in Elton's cut-direct at the ball. That he is sunk after this incident is evident, as Emma "owns herself mistaken" in Elton, whose display of "littleness" revokes his status as a "superior creature" (259, 261).

The last of the Highbury knights, Frank Churchill, who, like Elton, has his own reasons for paying court to Emma, is a more complicated case as his chivalric attentions are combined with dandyism, providing yet another link to the Prince. Mary Waldron characterises Frank as a gentleman of the Chesterfieldian stamp, "one for whom manner and general agreeableness are of first importance;"⁴⁸⁵ however, Chesterfield was attempting to mould a courtier and a diplomat, a man with some substance, and machiavellian tendencies, behind his polished presentation. Frank Churchill has no such substance. Sales locates Frank's dandy ways, not so much in the fact that he dashes off to London for a haircut, but in the way he justifies it with "the kind of elegant, polished one-liner that was cultivated by both Brummell and Henry Crawford."⁴⁸⁶ Connected to this is James Thompson's idea that characters clothe themselves in words, making "Frank's rhetorical costume" that of the dandy.⁴⁸⁷ Mr. Knightley's suggestion that Frank cannot be "amiable" in English, only in French (*aimable*), suggests a further connection

⁴⁸⁴ *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* (2004) p. 209.

⁴⁸⁵ Mary Waldron. "Men of Sense and Silly Wives." *Studies in the Novel* 28 (1996): 141-157. p. 152.

⁴⁸⁶ *Representations of Regency England* p. 144.

⁴⁸⁷ qtd Sales 144-5. For more on this see James Thompson *Between Self and World: The Novels of Jane Austen* (1988) esp. pp. 19-43.

to the dandy Prince as “First Gentleman of Europe.” Frank, like the Prince, is more interested in his appearance, both having secret romantic entanglements to protect – for Frank, a secret engagement to Jane Fairfax, for the Prince, a secret marriage and a string of mistresses. Their superficiality betrays the position they should occupy, which is, in Frank’s case indicated in his name. While Frank ends up being more closely connected to a feudal Gallic context than exhibiting “ingenuous, open, sincere” or “undisguised” (OED) qualities, he also betrays his surname, Churchill, which recalls John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, the celebrated military commander of the Battle of Blenheim. While Marlborough was a handsome courtier whose “stylish manners and courtly conversation” helped propel his career, there was undoubted substance and talent beneath the surface (DNB).⁴⁸⁸ With Frank, however, the courtly manners that marked the civil and well-rounded, and in Marlborough’s case heroic, man in the earlier period simply conceals an inconsequential fribble whose sole ambition is to cover Jane Fairfax in jewels and be idle. As Emma suggests, Frank is “so unlike what a man should be” (312).

Like Frank, Mr. Knightley is someone who does not exactly live up to his name, but with Mr. Knightley it is more a case of redefining what the name represents, than betraying its meaning. St. George is still the saviour of England, but chivalry is the dragon he must slay rather than the knightly ideal he must embody. Through the discussions of what it means to be a gentleman, the final answer is a man of sense, also known as a man of merit, a designation that cuts across social, financial, and professional gradations of rank in order to slay the beast of chivalric feudalism and place society in the hands of truly worthy rulers.

Inseparable from issues of gentlemanliness and masculinity in *Emma* are issues of rank. In discussing Emma’s snobbery at the ball and her annoyance at Mrs. Elton claiming precedence, Knox-Shaw notes that her chagrin is “intensified by the way she has collapsed any alternative scale of

⁴⁸⁸ John B. Hattendorf, ‘Churchill, John, first duke of Marlborough (1650–1722)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004).

value by repeatedly pronouncing on the priority of rank over worth.”⁴⁸⁹ Her scale of masculine worth betrays this fact as she values the polished, showy manners of Mr. Elton and Frank Churchill rather than the solid worth of Robert Martin. Waldron characterises Emma as the novel’s “lone reactionary and conservative” attempting to impose a Chesterfieldian standard in the face of increasingly flexible barriers of rank.⁴⁹⁰ Waldron’s assertion that Mr. Knightley is a fallible character, rather than the paragon of paternal government he is frequently characterised as by proponents of a Tory Austen, is also important for defining the man of sense/merit, but I will return to that a little later. Emma’s approbation of Mr. Knightley is ill-founded for much of the novel, based on superficial expressions of rank rather than the evidence of his solid worth. As Beth Fowkes Tobin observes, Emma “has mistaken shadow for substance, equating the accoutrements of gentility with being a gentleman.”⁴⁹¹ Though she values his “downright, decided, commanding sort of manner” she sees these characteristics as idiosyncratic, suitable for his “figure and look, and situation in life” (28) rather than a pattern to be emulated. Her indignation at Mrs. Elton pronouncing “Knightley” to be “a very gentleman-like man” – “Actually to discover that Mr. Knightley is a gentleman!” – is a knee-jerk reaction to Mrs. Elton as a “little upstart” with “airs of pert pretension and under-bred finery” (218). In other words, it is rank reacting against encroaching mushrooms. And while Mrs. Elton certainly qualifies as an underbred species of fungus, she serves to destabilise Emma’s preconceived ideas about gentility. While Tobin suggests that Mr. Knightley establishes that the true gentleman is characterised by an attention to duty, responsibility, and civility,⁴⁹² this catalogue is rather feudal, as is perhaps to be expected from a proponent of a Tory Austen. However, rather than representing an idealised Burkean paternalist, Mr. Knightley is the epitome of the professional gentleman.

⁴⁸⁹ *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* p. 201.

⁴⁹⁰ “Men of Sense” p. 143.

⁴⁹¹ Beth Fowkes Tobin. “The Moral and Political Economy of Property in Austen’s *Emma*.” *ECF* 2 (1990): 229-254. p. 231.

⁴⁹² “Moral and Political Economy” p. 231.

Though he is a great landowner, Mr. Knightley also manages to be the right kind of improver, a combination that Adam Smith suggests is not common: “To improve land with profit, like all other commercial projects, requires an exact attention to small savings and small gains.”⁴⁹³ This required attention to financial detail that is rarely cultivated in the very rich, whose meticulousness is usually confined to matters of appearance.⁴⁹⁴ On the other hand, merchants who retire to a country estate are characterised by Smith as “the very best of all improvers” because the “merchant is accustomed to employ his money chiefly in profitable projects; whereas a mere country gentleman is accustomed to employ it chiefly in expence.”⁴⁹⁵ Clearly, Mr. Knightley, whose professionalism is always in evidence, is no mere country gentleman. His close working relationship with William Larkins is a sort of running joke throughout the text, and that he values his employees as more than so many serfs paying agricultural tribute can be seen in his interactions with Robert Martin. He is constantly being referred to in a professional capacity – meeting with William Larkins, discussing drainage with his brother, discussing agricultural periodicals with Robert Martin, riding to market towns, going here and there on parish business, or serving as magistrate. While Mr. Darcy must throw off the appearance of the fashionable gentleman and embrace his inner professional man of merit, Mr. Knightley already exemplifies that ideal, his disdain for the “foppery and nonsense” of the fine gentleman a source of irritation to the fastidious Emma.⁴⁹⁶ Mr. Knightley makes plain the fact that the true gentleman is emphatically not a gallant knight-errant or a polished dandy. On the contrary he is plain spoken, open, and honest, even making his proposal in “plain, unaffected, gentleman-like English” (352) – what you see is essentially what you get. Nor is gentlemanlike behaviour the exclusive preserve of those who hold the rank of gentleman, as the negative examples of

⁴⁹³ *Wealth of Nations* vol. i. p. 285.

⁴⁹⁴ *ibid.* vol. i. p. 285. Significantly, Mr. Knightley does not care much for his appearance.

⁴⁹⁵ *ibid.* vol. i. p. 411.

⁴⁹⁶ Among other things, Emma objects to Mr. Knightley’s propensity to walk everywhere instead of taking his carriage as would befit a man of his station.

Mr. Elton and Frank Churchill demonstrate. The category that Mr. Knightley seems to prefer, and what he ranks himself as, is the man of sense. Sense implies reason, understanding, and intelligence, qualities that Mr. Knightley displays most of the time – a notable exception is in his argument with Emma regarding sensible men and silly wives and this conversation is key in establishing the character of such a man.

Emma and Mr. Knightley's quarrel over Robert Martin's proposal and Harriet Smith's refusal quickly escalates beyond the matter ostensibly under discussion. As Waldron notes, once Emma reveals Harriet's refusal, Mr. Knightley's reaction is emotionally-charged and hardly the response of the "sober and rational thinker we have at one level been led to expect."⁴⁹⁷ His irrational and agitated arguments overthrow his earlier assessment of the match, as Emma's observation that the brainless beauty Harriet is just the sort of wife a man would want – going so far as to suggest saucily that were he ever to marry, "she is the very woman for you" – goads him into declaring "[m]en of sense, whatever you chuse to say, do not want silly wives" (51). This is a slightly problematic statement considering that earlier in the conversation he had praised Robert Martin's sense (47) but now denigrates his choice as silly. Other types of men identified by Mr. Knightley in his rebuttal include men of family and prudent men, indicating that men still marry for connections and money. The man of sense, however, is separated from these more worldly concerns. Samuel Johnson defines "silly" as "harmless, weak, simple, foolish." On considering the principal wives presented in the text – Mrs. Weston, Jane Fairfax, Harriet, Isabella, and Mrs. Elton – they all qualify in some way or another.⁴⁹⁸ Only Emma, who possesses powers of mind and exercises the powers of Regent in her father's stead, is exempt. Mr.

⁴⁹⁷ "Men of Sense" p. 148.

⁴⁹⁸ Rather than necessarily suggesting an insubstantial character, silly suggests a lack of personal power or influence. Mrs. Weston lacks the force of character to influence those in her charge, as suggested by her relationship with her former pupil Emma; Jane Fairfax, as the chronically disenfranchised heroine plucked from the novel of female difficulties, is rendered harmless and weak through her poverty and dependence; Harriet, in addition to being powerless, is more simple than foolish; Isabella Knightley is weak and simple and harmless enough in her hypochondria; Mrs. Elton represents the most negative, even vicious, possibility for silly as her weaknesses are of understanding and her foolish sense of superiority actually leads her to cause harm to others.

Knightley's declaration seems to exempt men of (professional) worth, like his brother and Robert Martin from the man of sense category because they have preferred silly wives as, Mr. Bennet would point out, others have done before them. Thus, Mr. Knightley's statement, and claim of sense, is a personal declaration, possibly a Freudian slip. The man of sense, as a category, seems to hinge on attitudes to women, attitudes that are emphatically not chivalric or subscribing to a stadial theory that envisions essentially silly, idle women as indicative of the level of civilization attained by their men.

Austen reveals that Fitzwilliam Darcy is a gentleman who regards his responsibilities with professional seriousness over the course of *Pride and Prejudice* by removing his fashionable disguise and teaching him that solid worth, regardless of its origins, is far more important. With George Knightley this professionalism and value of merit are almost taken for granted. Mr. Knightley is completely untouched by fashion's influence and cares little for appearances – though he finds Emma beautiful, it is her brain that attracts him most, and he is usually quick to suspect that behind “smooth plausible manners” lies something to be concealed (118). Johnson suggests that rather than being a Tory paternalist land-owner-cum-educator of wayward ‘unsex’d’ heroines, Mr. Knightley is a hero who builds on the tradition of the enlightenment that was interrupted by Burke and his chivalric revival in the 1790s.⁴⁹⁹ I agree with this assessment, but while Johnson characterises Mr. Knightley as something new, I hope I have demonstrated in this thesis that he is built on a tradition of women writers whose male characters have served as a critique for feudal gender relations. Furthermore, Mr. Knightley and Emma's relationship embraces the fraternal model anticipated but not finally achieved in *Mansfield Park*.⁵⁰⁰ Johnson suggests that Emma does not realise that Mr. Knightley is in love with her because her love is fraternal.⁵⁰¹ The equality suggested in the fraternal relationship – seen in Fanny's

⁴⁹⁹ *Equivocal Beings* p. 201.

⁵⁰⁰ In “Emma as Sequel” Paul Pickrel notes the brother-sister connection and its repudiation remarking “if *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* were to be joined under a common title, it could well be *Brother and sister! no, indeed*” (*Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 40 (1985): 135-153. p. 136.

⁵⁰¹ *Equivocal Beings* p. 201.

interactions with her brother and Edmund – has implications for female agency in *Emma*.

Mr. Elton's charade raises the possibility of female agency – "And woman, lovely woman, rules alone" (59). But in negotiating a world hemmed in by chivalric machinations, Emma's potential is limited by expectations for proper femininity, as exemplified by her comic attempts to manipulate society through matchmaking. Her observation that men prize beauty and docility in their wives, though dismissed by Mr. Knightley, captures the ornamental place of women in chivalric society. In order for a woman to rule alone, she would have to be a widow - the father would have to be dead in order to cede control.⁵⁰² Mr. Knightley's response to Emma – that she is abusing her reason ("Better be without sense, than misapply it as you do") (51) – separates him from superficially civil men by encouraging Emma to act like the rational creature that she is. Because Mr. Knightley is not threatened by Emma's intelligence, she does not have to rule alone at Hartfield or abandon her subjects. Mr. Knightley, in moving to Hartfield, acknowledges that his wife's responsibilities are equally important and becomes perhaps the first non-royal example of a man moving to facilitate his wife's career. Emma and Mr. Knightley's relationship is not so much fraternal as fraternal, making theirs a union of equals that cannot exist under patriarchy. In refusing to put Emma on a pedestal and worship her in the manner of a courtly lover, Mr. Knightley demonstrates that the man of sense seeks moral and mental equality in marriage, just as he seeks those things in his friends and colleagues. Fratriarchy makes a truly companionate marriage possible.

In an issue of his literary magazine, *The Loiterer* (vol. 50, no. 9, 1790), James Austen wrote a speculative next stage of stadial history in which affectation runs amok. The resulting society is described by Knox-Shaw as one in which "commercial culture has led . . . to shame being replaced by

⁵⁰² The husband would be a father because children would be needed as subjects.

guilt, and status by personality.”⁵⁰³ In *Emma* and *Persuasion* Austen writes an alternative feminist stadial possibility – one in which (affected) civility to women is not the hallmark of civilization. Instead, by recognising women’s personal merit, their minds, their talents (not accomplishments), their strengths along with their weaknesses, and valuing their merit, men signal that they have entered a new phase of society. It is a realisation of Wollstonecraft’s *Vindications* – men must be reformed and must rethink the ways they define and value themselves before the problems of the subjection of women can be addressed.

This interpretation represents not only a furthering of the radical possibilities I have already suggested for Austen’s work, but a radical departure from the cautious, even pessimistic, efforts of her contemporaries to solve these problems. However, this can be explained, in part, because the long war against the French had finally come to an end, and with it the fear of suggesting substantive reform. Rather than fretting about manliness and Englishness and how they will stack up against the French, attention can be turned inward to implementing the solutions that have been forged in the context of war to remedy the problems of the masculine status quo once and for all. Perhaps what leads proponents of a conservative Austen astray as regards Mr. Knightley and *Emma* as a whole is the fact that this impeccable gentleman is a landowner, a fact of heredity that seems to disguise his professionalism, valuing of merit, and rejection of anything smacking of chivalry or feudalism, and also prevents his relationship with Emma from being recognized as the prototype for the Croft’s naval partnership. It is a mistake that cannot be made with Austen’s final hero, Captain Frederick Wentworth.

⁵⁰³ *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* p. 61. “In the last century nothing so effectively secured our Reputation against the attacks of Slander, as a strict regard to propriety in our conversation, our behaviour, even our dress: Provided these external appearances were preserved, few concerned themselves about our good temper, liberality or candour . . . At present we seem to profess a very different system of Ethics; certainly not too observant of the Form, we flatter ourselves we are more attentive to the substance of Virtue; and while we modestly give up all claim to a nice propriety of conduct and behaviour, we pride ourselves on our superior proficiency in those qualities which conduce most to the happiness of Society” (*The Loiterer* p. 3-4).

Persuasion essentially begins with the problem of defining the gentleman. While Sir Walter Elliot lives in a fantasy land of precedence and opulence, the novel makes clear that the only other people interested in his world view (Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Clay) are out for what they can get and crave the patronage of fashion. The truly admirable people are those who work for their place in society, whose disinterested service meets their own modest needs alongside those of society. The future lies not with Sir Walter Elliot and his dressing room of mirrors (perhaps an echo of Versailles's hall of mirrors) but with the fraternal meritocracy of the naval band of brothers who are more interested in the state of the nation than the state of their complexions.

Sir Walter represents an *ancien régime* whose time has passed, a regime that has sown the seeds of its own destruction. The Baronetage, Sir Walter's favourite book, enshrines his waning power in the joint birth and death date of his stillborn son. 5 November 1789, which Jocelyn Harris describes as a "conflation of two revolutionary dates" indicating that "he is on the way out,"⁵⁰⁴ suggests that while neither the Gun Powder Plot nor the French Revolution could shake the traditional feudal ruling class in England, their own increasingly narcissistic behaviour and arbitrary and frivolous abuse of power and position will be their ultimate undoing. This is the man, after all, who thinks that it would be a disgrace to chop up the estate, but has no problem encumbering it: "He had condescended to mortgage as far as he had the power, but he would never condescend to sell. No; he would never disgrace his name so far. The Kellynch estate should be transmitted whole and entire, as he had received it" (15). However, the estate is not being handed down as he received it. The next heir will inherit debts and an estate squeezed to satisfy the aspirations of its spendthrift former incumbent. The worth and utility of Sir Walter's estate is entirely tied up in his consequence and appearance. He perverts the role of the benevolent Whig land owner – rather than condescend to interest himself in his tenants he condescends to

⁵⁰⁴ Jocelyn Harris, "Domestic Virtues and National Importance" *ECF* 19 (2006-7): 181-205. p. 199.

mortgage, as if by mortgaging the estate he is doing some disinterested act rather than freeing up cash for the “comfort[s] of life” (17).⁵⁰⁵ The dignity of his name is tied to his estate, however the land alone is not sufficient to feed Sir Walter’s vanity. He is an aged example of the man determined to cut a figure in society described by Edgeworth in *Professional Education*. His pursuit of fashion has cost him his financial independence; it is doubtful that he ever rated his independence of mind very highly.

Sir Walter is undoubtedly one of Austen’s dandies – his obsession with his and everyone else’s appearance makes that fact inescapable:

Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot’s character; vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth; and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did; nor could the valet of any new made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united these gifts was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion. (10)

He is an effeminate fribble, and his dandy status implicitly draws a parallel to the Prince Regent. In equating Sir Walter with a valet, Austen echoes criticism of the Prince Regent that suggested that he was better qualified to be a tailor or a man-milliner – anything other than the ruler of Great Britain.⁵⁰⁶ Similarly, Sir Walter, with his attention to complexions, capes, and cuffs, is more suited to dressing the master of an estate than actually being the master. Tim Fulford suggests that for Sir Walter, “freedom from labour incurs no duties to the nation, only to one’s appearance. A profession demeans the gentleman because it makes him less, not more self-interested – less

⁵⁰⁵ Among the “decencies” that Sir Walter feels private gentleman must be seen to enjoy are “Journeys, London, servants, horses, table” and he views the “contractions and restrictions” of retrenchment as an insult to his gentlemanly dignity (17).

⁵⁰⁶ Caroline, Princess of Wales, observed: “My husband understands how a shoe should be made or a coat cut . . . and would have made an excellent tailor, or shoemaker or hairdresser;– but nothing else” (Kelly, *Beau Brummell* 57).

interested in his own looks.”⁵⁰⁷ Sir Walter reveals the ways in which the civic humanist justification for landed power has been undermined by the frivolity and fashion-consciousness of landed fine gentlemen.

But if Sir Walter represents a waning past, an *ancien régime* that has lingered beyond its expiration date, *Persuasion* seeks to answer the question of who is to inherit, not simply the Kellynch estate, but the state of Great Britain. While most critics agree that *Persuasion* is a departure from Austen’s earlier work, few agree on the direction of that departure and what kind of political allegiance it might betoken. Butler sees the innovation of *Persuasion* as primarily of technique, while characterising the novel’s ideological message as a primarily middle-class, Evangelical-Utilitarian critique of aristocracy.⁵⁰⁸ The radical possibilities of the navy and Captain Wentworth are dismissed with the suggestion that Wentworth is a “well-intentioned but ideologically mistaken hero” who must learn to understand Anne’s decision to end their engagement.⁵⁰⁹ Johnson, who rejects the depiction of *Persuasion* as “autumnal,” suggests that what separates this from Austen’s earlier novels is that the landed classes have “lost their prestige and their moral authority for the heroine.”⁵¹⁰ Deidre Shauna Lynch posits *Persuasion* as a particular kind of historical novel engaged in the early nineteenth-century project of historicisation and periodisation:

Persuasion both assists with, and reacts against, the new tasks of historicizing and of periodizing that literature was being called on to perform after 1815. It too aims to investigate the past so as to specify the historical location of the present.⁵¹¹

Lynch goes on to note that while military victory created a “modern era of aftermath” it is a modernity that seems, “strangely, to have restored the political status quo”:

⁵⁰⁷ Tim Fulford, “Romanticizing the Empire” *MLQ* 60 (1999): 161-196. p. 189.

⁵⁰⁸ *War of Ideas* p. 284-5.

⁵⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 275-6.

⁵¹⁰ *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* p. 144, 145.

⁵¹¹ “Introduction” (2004) p. x.

The year 1815 saw, in fact, the re-establishment across Continental Europe of the old despotic monarchies that had been deposed first by the French Revolutionaries and then by Napoleon's occupying armies; even in celebrating Britain's triumph in the war, many recognized that this victory had signed the death warrant for the possibilities for political transformation that had been opened up by the Revolutions of 1789.⁵¹²

Though there appears to be a return to the status quo *ante-bellum*, I would suggest that in Britain it is only the structure that remains the same, while the people who populate that structure at the highest levels are increasingly radically different.

The personal nature of larger scale political change is exemplified in Anne's choice of suitor. Anne's two matrimonial options have direct implications for both the past and the future. In marrying Mr. Elliot, Lady Russell suggests that Anne would take her mother's place and restore the estate to its former glory. Captain Wentworth's return gives Anne the chance to revisit her own personal history. With Anne, Austen takes what Jean Kennard calls the double suitor convention and uses the choice between the "unscrupulous or 'wrong' suitor and the exemplary or 'right' suitor" not to signal the heroine's "progress towards maturity," but to intervene in the course of history.⁵¹³ Anne must choose whether to relive her family past, adding Annes to the lists of Elizabeths and Marys who have produced generations of Elliots, or rewrite her own personal history to reflect her

⁵¹² *ibid.* p. xx.

⁵¹³ *Victims of Convention* (Hamden: Archon, 1978) p. 11. Kennard posits the double suitor convention as a conservative mechanism in Austen's fiction: "in spite of her spirited heroines who are often subordinated in marriage to less interesting heroes, because there is really no conflict between these marriages and Austen's ideology. In Augustan fashion she argues for some submission to the social order for all her characters, men as well as women" (13). Maturity in the heroine constitutes submission: "it consists in finding one's rightful place in the social structure . . . the reality the heroine must perceive and accept is the true nature of the right suitor who has understood the world and to a large extent established his values before she meets him" (22). While the double suitor convention undoubtedly exists, I am not convinced that it has such reactionary aims, as I shall demonstrate in my reading of it in *Persuasion* as a site of female agency and intervention in the historical development of society.

dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Mr. William Elliot is the grandson of a baronet, the son of a younger son, who must find some sort of employment in order to support himself. Originally, it was just such younger sons for whom the title ‘gentleman’ was coined.⁵¹⁴ When Sir Walter first takes an interest in his heir-apparent, Mr. Elliot seems poised to follow the trend of professional gentility by studying the law. But not content to wait for his professional endeavours to raise him to consequence or sacrifice independence by marrying Elizabeth Elliot (“the line marked out for the heir of the house of Elliot”), Mr. Elliot purchases “his independence by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior birth” (13). The breach that this union causes between baronet and heir, however, is healed by the time Anne arrives in Bath, and she finds herself courted by her prodigal cousin. His suave manners allow him to soothe wounded self-consequence – “He had no idea of throwing himself off; he had feared that he was thrown off, but knew not why; and delicacy had kept him silent” (113) – while he meets the charge of disparaging the family name with astonishment and banishes suspicion with a boast of attention to connections that “were only too strict to suit the unfeudal tone of the present day” (113).

Though he manages to impress Lady Russell, Anne senses and finds repulsive Mr. Elliot’s lack of openness (130). His Chesterfieldian *modus operandi* is reinforced by his assessment of the merits of good company and the best company. Mr. Elliot is content to settle for “birth and good manners” and pursue the patronage of fashion, noting that “rank is rank” and that it brings “that degree of consideration which we must all wish for” (122). We, however, does not include Anne. Her distrust of Mr. Elliot and his motives are confirmed by Mrs. Smith, her invalid former school friend, whose history with Mr. Elliot reveals him to be “a man without heart or conscience; a designing, wary, cold-blooded being who thinks only of himself; who, for his own interest or ease, would be guilty of any cruelty, or any treachery, that could be perpetrated without risk of his general character” (160). While this

⁵¹⁴ see Philip Mason *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (London: Pimlico, 1982) pp. 26-7.

is quite a melodramatic catalogue of villainous traits, Mrs. Smith's story highlights the damaging consequences of self-interest. While Mr. Elliot's is more publicly malignant – he swindles his business partners – he is motivated by the same desire for luxury that leads his illustrious forbear Sir Walter to ruin his estate and his dependants into the bargain.

Before Mr. Elliot is revealed as the villain of the piece, Lady Russell has great hopes of a match between him and Anne, viewing that potential union as “a most suitable connection.” Though Anne protests that they “would not suit” Lady Russell persists in imagining her as “the future mistress of Kellynch” and taking her mother's place (129). Were Anne to follow Lady Russell's advice and marry Mr. Elliot she would indeed be repeating history, as Mrs. Smith's revelations make clear. She would become another Lady Elliot whose merit is wasted in maintaining appearances for her husband. Anne recognises this, however, and her estimation of Mr. Elliot's attentions – “Their evil was incalculable” (154)– takes on new significance.

In Sir Walter's scale of social significance, Captain Frederick Wentworth and his clergyman brother are nobodies, “quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Strafford family” (25). But Wentworth, armed with “confidence,” a “sanguine temper” and “fearlessness of mind” (27), does not allow his lack of fashionable connections to impede his rise to status through his profession. He had “always been lucky” and in 1806, “he knew he should be so still” (27). His reappearance in 1814 with a fortune of £25, 000 and a high professional reputation proves that his skill and luck served him well. But Wentworth's profession and his rise to status and independence through that profession are central to more than the successful conclusion of the courtship plot. The professions redefined the idea of the gentleman, allowing nobodies to earn the right to the title and a stake in the state. The war highlighted the contrasting successes of the meritocratic navy with the failures of the aristocratic army, putting the danger of the old system into sharp relief against the need for the new to triumph. This shift and its effect on society even reaches the comically self-centred Sir Walter who disdainfully notes that, in addition to

ruining complexions, the navy has been “the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours that their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of” (22). Significantly, there is no information given about Wentworth’s parents – he is unique among Austen’s heroes in this respect⁵¹⁵ – only his brothers and sisters. He is also connected to a wider group of adopted siblings through his own naval ‘band of brothers.’ Anne chooses Wentworth along with his meritocratic and fraternal band of brothers, casting her vote for a radically different future.

Many critics have considered the role of the navy in their interpretations of Austen’s social vision as articulated in *Persuasion*. Fulford suggests that Austen is continuing in fiction what Southey and Coleridge did in their naval biographies – depicting “naval men as gentlemen, professionals, as patriotic and chivalric knights”:

No Nelson or Ball emerged to command Britain as Malta and the fleet had been commanded, yet men of similar origins staked and won a claim to share government. They did so not least because the public now accepted that professional men possessed the virtues that had formerly been associated with the aristocracy. After Nelson, Ball, and other professional sailors and soldiers had been made heroes, the duty, authority, and disinterest thought necessary for government were best embodied in the professionalized gentry.⁵¹⁶

Anne Frey argues that Austen is suggesting that “administrative agencies such as the British navy define individuals’ obligations to the nation as a whole and the people with it.”⁵¹⁷ This variety of institutional feudalism creates a nation predicated not on a shared culture or experience binding the

⁵¹⁵ Though no specific information is given about George Knightley’s parents, we know that his father was the Mr. Knightley of Donwell Abbey before him.

⁵¹⁶ “Romanticizing the Empire” (1999) p. 184. Robert Southey’s *Life of Nelson* was published in 1813, while Coleridge’s “Life of Sir Alexander Ball” was essentially a eulogy which appeared in his periodical *The Friend* in 1809.

⁵¹⁷ Anne Frey. “A Nation Without Nationalism: The Reorganization of Feeling in Austen’s *Persuasion*” *Novel* 38 (2005): 214-234. p. 214.

people together, but on an imposed bureaucratic connection that replaces a now-socially irresponsible aristocracy. Both of these interpretations suggest a fundamentally feudal foundation – chivalry on the one hand and an institutionalised system of obligations on the other. But where my band of brothers hypothesis differs is in a rejection of feudal organisation and ideals. While the navy does have a structure that clearly identifies the duties of different parts of the community,⁵¹⁸ the only thing keeping the structure intact is respect. The authority of naval commanders – whether Admirals over the Captains in a fleet action or Captains over their crews – depends on the respect of their men and their own competence in earning it. As N. A. M. Rodger observes, naval discipline rested on a system of “mutual respect,” “an implicit alliance between the officers and the professional seamen.”⁵¹⁹

The navy is notable for more than professionalism and promoting meritocratic values. As my discussion of Nelson and his band of brothers in Chapter 7 suggests, the navy also offers an example of a more fraternal system. Fraternity is emphasised on at least two important occasions in *Persuasion*. Louisa Musgrove’s panegyric on naval virtues at Lyme lists “their friendliness, their brotherliness, their openness, their uprightness” as proof “of sailor’s having more worth and warmth than any other set of men in England,” and further asserts that “they only knew how to live, and they only deserved to be respected and loved” (83). The second reference comes in Anne’s assessment of her own and Wentworth’s family connections:

There she felt her own inferiority keenly. The disproportion in their fortune was nothing; it did not give her a moment’s regret; but to have no family to receive and estimate him properly; nothing of respectability, of harmony, of good-will to offer in return for all the worth and the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters, was a source of as lively pain as her mind

⁵¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 219.

⁵¹⁹ *Command of the Ocean* (2005) p. 322. Mutinies were the “safety valve” of the system that secured attention to the seamen’s interest.

could well be sensible of, under circumstances of otherwise strong felicity. (202).

The fundamental difference in their families is that Anne's has a vain and self-important head who estimates a man's value by his complexion and connections, while Wentworth's family is a tight-knit community of equally valued and equally valuable individuals. The equality and independence (liberty) sought by the French revolution is found in the fraternity of the navy.

What separates Austen's navy from Nelson's is the fact that her band of brothers makes room for sisters. Fulford suggests that Austen's navy provides a model for gentlewomen in Mrs. Croft,⁵²⁰ while Sales suggests that Mrs. Croft's "partnership with her husband" is "not so much an accurate account of life on the quarterdeck during the Napoleonic wars, as a potentially radical proposal about how it ought to be organised in the future."⁵²¹ I want to suggest that Mrs. Croft's equality with her husband and her statements about what women want signals an unequivocal repudiation of the chivalry that is embedded in Southey's and Coleridge's romanticised accounts of the professionalised navy. When Wentworth protests against having women on board his ships, his sister replies, "But I hate to hear you talking so, like a fine gentleman, as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us want to be in calm water all our days" (60). The Elliot men prove what poor creatures "fine gentlemen" are – no more rational creatures than their fine lady counterparts. Mrs. Croft refuses to be placed in that category and demands to be considered a rational creature, worthy of the professional rigours of the navy and the new meritocratic and fraternal order. While Southey and Coleridge make the movement of moral and political authority away from landed gentleman towards professional gentleman more palatable by couching the transfer in chivalric terms – a strategy that Solinger also attributes to Austen when he suggests that the new masculine ideal authorised at the end of *Persuasion* is made possible by the "incorporation of

⁵²⁰ "Romanticizing the Empire" p. 188.

⁵²¹ *Representations of Regency England* p. 181.

traditional gentlemanly traits,” “the signs and symbols of aristocratic culture” (275) – Austen’s reordering of gender roles is much more consonant with the “unfeudal tone of the present day” (113).

Persuasion opens with Sir Walter sitting at his favourite book and adding the minutiae of his personal history. During the war, the actions of the brave professionals of the navy proposed to change the course of history, their actions recorded in the periodical press. By the end of the novel the pen has transferred from Sir Walter to Wentworth. Anne and Captain Harville discuss the power of history as evidence and the written record as an accurate representation of history and as Anne observes that men have dictated the historical record – “the pen has been in their hands” (188) – Wentworth drops his pen. When he takes it up again to record his love for Anne, his actions are both dictated by and dependent upon female agency. Men might write history or letters of business, but it is a woman writing this novel and a female character whose agency allows her to re-write history. Miranda Burgess highlights the potential power of women’s writing as she observes that “legitimate social order can be produced by romance reading in a chain of homes across Great Britain.”⁵²² Part of this new social order places emphasis on female agency and the importance of women using their one right – the right of answering a marriage proposal – to bolster a new order, to write a new history. Men write what has happened and what is happening, but women hold the key to the future. Revolution is tied to women’s feelings. In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny’s feelings were “all in revolt” against attempts to coerce her into marrying Henry Crawford. In *Persuasion*, Wentworth’s letter produces a “revolution” in Anne that is “almost beyond expression” (190). With this in mind, I want to suggest a new way of looking at the last sentence with its emphasis on the navy’s “domestic virtues” as well as its “national importance” (203). If the navy, as I am suggesting, is providing a model of a meritocratic patriarchy for the state, it is offering the same kinds of equality and liberty to the family, society in miniature. The aims of English

⁵²² *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000) p. 185.

feminism, from Mary Astell to Mary Wollstonecraft, have then been realised as Austen depicts a family that rejects the absolutist gender model behind the traditional family structure. Husbands and wives are both rational creatures in a navy marriage – like the Crofts’ union, marriage must be a true partnership.

On the surface there is a great deal that unites the heroes who populate the novels written by women between 1778 and 1818, not the least of which is the domestic role that these gentlemen must play. While not all of the authors considered in this thesis engage directly or overtly with contemporary politics, their consistent concern with the family, with its structures, with the relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, is part of a wider concern with the structures that govern and organise social interactions on a public level. Penelope Corfield’s assertion that professionalisation is a “radicalising” rather than a revolutionary force provides an explanation for the kind of change advocated by Burney, West, Edgeworth, and Austen.⁵²³ The “[a]pparent continuity” that underpins their explorations of social change is the family, the marriages that form families, and the fact that men head families. But the changes wrought by improvements to those men, to the masculine models and values they are meant to emulate – moving from chivalric honour, to civic humanist *virtus*, to professional merit – produces radical evolutionary change that cannot be produced by the kind of revolutionary public and political change, advocated by Smith, that alters the surface without affecting the individual.

Finally, I want to suggest that it is no coincidence that the heroes who are able to attain true independence are free (or freed) from paternal influence. Burney’s first hero’s independence facilitates his perfection: Lord Orville’s father is not mentioned and in his willingness to marry Evelina regardless of whether she is owned by Sir John Belmont or not reiterates that he is his own master and able to please himself without reference to

⁵²³ See *Power and the Professions* p. 209.

interfering relations of any sort. Mortimer Delvile, on the other hand, is constantly thwarted by parental interference and coddling. His lack of independence reflects wider social and political concerns about the state of English liberty, while his father's gothic insistence on micromanaging his family, down to how the next generation will be constituted, highlights the ways in which tradition can be a kind of slavery, stripping agency and autonomy from the next generation.

Smith's heroes fit into the pessimistic model Burney establishes with Delvile. In *Desmond*, the hero has inherited his father's estate, and though he embraces revolutionary republicanism, he exhibits chivalric symptoms in his possessive obsession with Geraldine and her purity. Orlando Somerive's probable inheritance of the titular old manor house keeps him firmly in the chivalric line, in thrall to the Lady of the manor and sent out on her behalf to campaign against the 'roundheads,' modern day political infidels, in America. While he has a republican epiphany in the war-ravaged wilderness, this enlightenment is short-lived: he returns to rescue the fair maid from the machinations of corrupt servants and lawyers and take his rightful place as lord of the manor. Though in Smith's most conservative and pessimistic revolutionary-era novel, *The Banished Man*, Edward Ellesmere's status as second son perhaps gives him sufficient distance to find fault in his father's courtier ways, Albert D'Alonville's veneration of his father, embodiment of chivalric values, and repugnance towards his brother's defection to the republican revolution perpetuates an idealised version of *ancien régime* France in an Italian Anglo-French idyll. *The Young Philosopher* marks Smith's return to republicanism; however, George Delmont's pursuit of the civic humanist dream as an independent freeholder is thwarted by the constant imposition of family expectations. The only way that he is finally able to achieve independence is to leave England in favour of freedom in America, the symbol of a successful rejection of patriarchal tyranny.

With West there is a shift away from heroes repressed by paternal influence. Edmund Herbert is remarkable for his independence in *The*

Advantages of Education. His father was self-made and, now deceased, has left no long-standing landed legacy to control his son. Herbert is free to do and to marry as he pleases. This is in marked contrast to Sir Henry Neville, who though inhibited by family considerations insofar as any marriage he enters into will reflect on his status, is corrupted by his fashionable tastes and way of life (which, along with his title and five estates, dictate his social status rather than his rank). In West's novels, family tyranny is implicitly tied to the enslaving tendencies of the fashionable world, as can be seen in *A Gossip's Story*. Clermont illustrates the negative effects of a tyrannical father (West draws attention to Lord Clermont's domestic villainy by having him instil mercenary ideals of marriage in his children), while both he and Sir William Milton demonstrate how a feudal-chivalric approach to marriage destroys domestic happiness – Clermont's abject lover turns domestic tyrant, while Sir William's authoritarian demeanour masks his private enslavement by a demanding mistress – Henry Pelham represents an independent alternative. His rejection of feudal government on his estate is mirrored in his refusal to play the chivalric hero to Marianne's sensibility heroine, while his eventual marriage to Louisa is marked by an equality of sense and merit notably absent from Marianne's to Clermont. A similar trend is present in *A Tale of the Times*: Lord Monteith's inherited position and inherited dissipation stand in for parental tyranny, while Edward Fitzosborne's villainy can be seen as the accumulated tradition of the corrupted feudal masculinity of the libertine. In each case, their enslavement by the traditions of their fathers (whether literal, as in Monteith's case, or figurative, as in Fitzosborne's) results in domestic breakdown either through criminal neglect (Monteith) or active maliciousness (Fitzosborne). In contrast, Henry Powerscourt comes into his own and becomes a hero when he attempts to fix the havoc created in part by his uncle's irresponsible rule – it is, after all, Sir William's secret plan for a dynastic marriage coupled with his poor judgement in approving Monteith that sets the tragedy in motion. Henry's rejection of chivalry and of the fashionable world, which result in independence, makes him key in the

reconstruction that necessarily follows the disintegration of the Monteith family. Furthermore, his marriage to the outspoken critic of familial absolutism, Lucy Evans, is a true partnership and indicates how the independent man's family could have more radical consequences for social organisation. In *The Infidel Father*, the need for independent gentlemen is presented in arguably its most politically significant form, as Lord Selborne is not only a peer of the realm, but an officer in His Majesty's army. The eponymous infidel father, Lord Glanville, is under attack for more than his infidelity: he is targeted because he is a patriarch and because his rule, despite its revolutionary irregularities, features the hallmark abuses of feudal and absolutist tyranny. Selborne's status as Glanville's political equal (both were entitled to a seat in the House of Lords) places his rejection of chivalry and private vice hidden by a reputation for public virtue on a national stage. Because West chooses a hero with palpable public significance, this novel, more than the others, demonstrates the ways in which the family influences the state and the public possibilities of independent masculinity. The patriarchal system that perpetuates the pernicious influence of chivalry and tyranny is rejected, but West does not articulate specifically what Selborne's ascendancy entails. It remains for Edgeworth and Austen to take West's rejection of chivalry further through embracing professionalism and fraternity as tools for reordering society.

Edgeworth ultimately does not follow the implications of professionalism as far as Austen does. In *Ennui*, the reforming impulse is directed at men: the lazy and entitled Glenthorn is jolted out of his inherited feudal rut by killing his idea of his father, his inherited identity. Once emancipated, he must be redeemed through professional virtue in order to be worthy of the fair Cecilia's hand. The path to masculine reformation and gentlemanly independence is established as professionalisation in *Ennui*, making the professionalised gentleman, an innovation in itself, a logical hero for *The Absentee*. Lord Colambre's mission to eliminate the abuses of Irish absenteeism, what essentially amounts to a coup in which he seizes his

irresponsible father's authority, is a metaphor for a larger project of dismantling feudal government at the state level. In *Patronage*, however, there is an exception to the increasingly, if figurative, patricidal trend. Mr. Percy is very much alive and, unusually, is a positive presence in the novel. This is possible because Mr. Percy advocates the kind of independence that Glenthorn must learn to appreciate and actively instils its value in his sons. The Percy brothers demonstrate how professional values and the privileging of independence apparent in Glenthorn and Colambre might function in the next generation. Alfred Percy, in particular, demonstrates how the professions, specifically law, and the economy of merit they promote are necessary to save not only the estate of Percy-Hall, but the state of England, from corruption and the destructive tendencies of patronage.

Though Austen begins from essentially the same place – Edward Ferrars must overcome the evils of social-climbing-induced idleness in his quest for gentlemanly identity, and Fitzwilliam Darcy must remove his fashionable mask and reject his inherited prejudice, including fashionable society's standards of gentility, in order to please a woman worthy of being pleased – her novels move from simply placing faith in the power of professionalism to advocating a fraternal reorganisation of society based on professional values. *Mansfield Park's* interest in social ordering stops short of producing a society built on fraternity in the only case of a patriarch presiding at the end of a novel. Sir Thomas's continued rule, though slightly mellowed, is a damper on the happy ending: the restraint that earlier both impeded and created his eldest daughter's lust for liberty inhibits the independence that should be granted to the merit of Edmund and Fanny. It will ultimately require the return of William Price, the embryonic representative of the band of brothers, to complete the reordering of the (e)state. The potential of fraternalism is revisited in *Emma* in the marriage between Emma and Mr. Knightley. Though they are not actually brother and sister ("no, indeed!"), they treat one another with the same freedom and frankness. They are truly equals. And the "perfect happiness" of their

marriage reflects the fact that it is a proper partnership. The radicalism of *Emma*'s endorsement of patriarchy is masked by Mr. Knightley's seemingly conventional gentility and a tendency to conflate his chivalric name with chivalric qualities rather than the professional virtues he embodies, but Captain Frederick Wentworth makes this case of mistaken identity impossible. Wentworth is emphatically not a part of the traditional structure of gentility ("not at all connected with the Strafford family"), for which Sir Walter dismisses him. But Sir Walter clearly does so at his peril. It is not "the Elliot way," the system of laughably autocratic fashionable gentility, that triumphs at novel's end, but the nationally important domestic virtues of the naval band of brothers that Anne chooses to ally herself with. *Persuasion* is the culmination of forty years of women writers trying to construct a masculinity that is divorced from patriarchy. The navy, with its Nelsonian band of brothers, provides a fraternal model, but it is fraternity with a difference. The naval fraternity presented at the close of *Persuasion* differs from French revolutionary *fraternité* in its inclusion of women. Admiral and Mrs. Croft's marriage provides a model of equality and partnership, of conjugal fraternity.

Essentially, Burney, Smith, West, Edgeworth, and Austen have been engaged in a long-running feminist family romance, one with private and public significance. In longing to replace the father of the family with a better one, they have been, on a figurative level, implicitly imagining the king's death. The social and political revolution implied in this project is achieved through their progressive revision of gentility, from the values of chivalry and landed civic humanist virtue to a professionalized emphasis on merit as the basis of gentlemanliness and the passport to independence. Once men have been liberated from the constraints of inherited models of authority and social hierarchy and have achieved independence, women can begin to liberate themselves through truly equal marriages. Though the endings of *Evelina* and *Persuasion* are structurally similar in featuring happy marriages, the distance between Burney's fairy tale and Austen's serious

naval reality – the narrator adverts to the “dread of a future war” (203) – demonstrates how the “radicalisation” of English masculinity has completely altered the quality of the structure without seeming to have altered its composition.

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