

Women Poets and the Classics, 1700-1750

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I, Anthony William Walker-Cook confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

THESIS ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, many women writers bemoaned their restricted access to the classics. Through the culture of translation that had been pioneered by John Dryden and the changing literary market of the eighteenth century, however, women readers were able to receive the classics and offered their own adaptations of this ancient material. This thesis outlines the methods of mediation that enabled women to access the classics. Considering the role of the fragment, mythical topoi and the mock-heroic in relation to the reception of Horace, Ovid, and Homer and Virgil respectively, the chapters of this thesis explore the significant use of the classics in women's poetry of the eighteenth century as a marker of the pervasive presence of the Graeco-Roman world in eighteenth-century society and culture. In 1700 women mourned the death of Dryden in part because of his seminal role in translating the classics; however, by the 1750s, the endpoint of the thesis, women were increasingly recognised as classicists in their own right. This thesis traces this transformation.

The women writers here examined are from across the British Isles and from a range of social classes. The writing considered is in both printed and manuscript forms, and wherever possible the biographical contexts of individual women that explain the ways in which they accessed the classics – such as detailing personal libraries or suggesting some of the single volumes the women may have owned or read – are outlined. What emerges throughout this thesis is a national counter-narrative that explores how women found opportunities to experiment with the modes and mythos of the ancient world, and the ways in which they made the classics their own.

IMPACT STATEMENT

It is over thirty years since Roger Lonsdale's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* (1989) and the feminist reclamation of the canon of the 1980s began to focus on the women writers of the eighteenth century. At a time when the formal studying of classics has almost disappeared from non-fee-paying school curricula, the ways in which these women accessed the classics from the margins has a special resonance today. In drawing the attention of people both in and out of academia to these women, I hope that my work will redefine our understanding of women's education in the first half of the eighteenth century. This thesis contributes to many ongoing critical discussions within the field of eighteenth-century studies, including the emergence of the woman writer, women's access to education in the period, and the ways in which the classics were disseminated through contemporary culture. This thesis also offers new biographical details about certain writers whose reputation has been growing for the past twenty years. It is hoped that this work will not only be published in scholarly journals but also that it will consequently inform new discussions about the various topics covered herein.

One of UCL English's research themes is the focus on producing new editions of literary works. It is not uncommon for women writers of the eighteenth century to be anthologised today – for example, Lonsdale's seminal *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* – however I hope that this thesis might encourage editions of the individual writers studied in this thesis, especially Mary Leapor, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Sarah Fielding, to be commissioned. Ideally these editions would take the form of affordable paperbacks in series such as the Oxford World Classics so that students and the general public might more easily access the talents of the women writers here discussed. If editions of these writers are more readily available, then it may be more likely that these women will appear more robustly on undergraduate and post-graduate degree courses.

I would also like to use this project to increase public awareness of eighteenth-century women writers. The narrative of women breaking through cultural barriers that this work presents lends itself well to more public audiences; hence it is hoped that some of this research can be presented at events (for example, the tercentenary of Leapor's birth in 2022) or on other forms of media in the near future (my work was shortlisted for the BBC's New Generation Thinkers competition in 2020 and I hope to use the contacts gained from that experience to disseminate my research through various forms of mainstream media). A long-term target would also be to have some of the women discussed eventually included on school syllabi, thereby introducing not only these women specifically but also the eighteenth century more generally to new generations of English Literature students.

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Alongside my PhD I have been lucky enough to write for *BroadwayWorld* and *The Stage* – to the entire theatre industry, thank you for making my time in London as magical and transformative as it was. I look forward to sitting in the dark and in silence again soon.

I've always considered myself very lucky to have an amazingly supportive network of friends, and the completion of this work has proved that in abundance. To Sarah Gibbs, Marnie Howlett, Vivian Lam, Nicole Di Cicco, Bradley Austin, Tom Collier and Jack Hepworth – your support, laughter and kindness kept me smiling all the way through. I first encountered the classics with Alex Brown in 2011 when I studied Homer as part of my A Level in Classical Civilisations; it's been an odyssey made all the better by his friendship, humour and conversation.

I am hugely grateful to my parents, Angela and Gordon Cook, whose love and support has been constant; their patience has never wavered even when mine has. To my entire family for listening to me talk about my research, thank you. Finally, I cannot list the ways my partner, Carolina Filipe, has supported me throughout this project, but I know without her it (and I) would be significantly worse off. This thesis is dedicated to her.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- S *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965; repr., Oxford University Press, 1987).
- H *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, 5 vols. (Harlow: Longman, 1995-2005).
- TE *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, gen. ed. John Butt, 11 vols. (Methuen, 1939-69; repr., Routledge, 1993).
- GH Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Essays, Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, ed. Isobel Grundy and Robert Halsband (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
- GM Mary Leapor, *The Works of Mary Leapor*, ed. Richard Greene and Ann Messenger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- GT Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. Garth Tissol (Ware, 1998).

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The place of publication on all works is London unless otherwise stated.

INTRODUCTION

Listening in the Echo Chamber

Recent years have seen the emergence of a number of commercially successful women writers engaged in re-writing the classics. Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), Natalie Haynes's *A Thousand Ships* (2019), Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) and Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* (2011) and *Circe* (2018) all focus on the Matter of Troy and give its female characters an opportunity to tell their own story. Reviews of these works have all centred on this revisionist intention: Haynes's novel was praised for its 'subversive reseeing of the classics' whilst Pat Barker 'puts the experience of women like Andromache at the heart of the story'.¹ *The Silence of the Girls*, *Circe* and *A Thousand Ships* were all shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction. At a time when the formal study of the Classics is under threat of disappearing completely from the curricula of state schools, these texts are vital for the next generation of readers to encounter the classics.² Meanwhile Emily Wilson's translation of *The Odyssey* (2017) has been praised for how it strips away centuries of readings of the poem that favour its male characters, no less its hero, and was celebrated as the first translation of the epic by a woman.³ This recent surge in mainstream texts was matched by a call by Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles for a fresh scholarly interest in how women writers throughout history have understood the classical world: 'The excavation of a selection of female classical scholars whose contribution to the classical tradition and whose reputation has fallen,

¹ Elizabeth Lowry, 'A Thousand Chips by Natalie Haynes review – women of the Trojan war', *Guardian*, 23 May 2019 <<https://www.theguardian.com>> [accessed 13 April 2021]; Emily Wilson, 'The Silence of the Girls by Pat Barker review – a feminist Iliad', *Guardian*, 22 August 2018, <<https://www.theguardian.com>> [accessed 13 April 2021].

² See Fiona Cox, 'Women's Education and the Classics', in *Learning Latin and Greek from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Elizabeth P. Archibald, William Brockliss and Jonathan Gnoza (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 156-65.

³ Charlotte Higgins, 'The Odyssey translated by Emily Wilson review – a new cultural landmark', *Guardian*, 8 December 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com>> [accessed 19 March 2021]; Edith Hall, 'A woman's place is in the canon', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 2018, p. 28.

unfairly, into obscurity, is intended as a starting-point and invitation to others to develop the re-telling of that history.⁴ Hall and Wyles's collected volume, *Women Classical Scholars: Unsealing the Fountain from the Renaissance to Jacqueline de Romilly* (2016), offered twenty-one essays that covered writers from the Renaissance through to 1913 and showed how women scholars throughout history have learned from the classics and made them their own. Yet the term 'scholar' is laden, as proved in the essays, with a heavy focus on translation. In the works by Atwood, Haynes, Barker and Miller female characters especially are given the opportunity to push against the masculinist mythology that has otherwise placed them at the margins; in this respect these texts offer a modern equivalent of Ovid's *Heroides*. As Wyles states in her 'Afterword' to *Women Classical Scholars*, the intention of the work (and, implicitly, those whose research follows it) is to 'put women at the centre, not the periphery, of the scholarly radar.'⁵ The base thesis of this doctorate – that women writers of the eighteenth century were classically literate – is accepted, however I propose that the extent of women's experimentation with the characters, modes and tones of the Greco-Roman world alongside the means by which they accessed this knowledge has not yet been fully understood. This thesis therefore offers a comprehensive exploration of the pre-history to the current literary trend of putting women at the forefront of classical stories by examining how the classics were an integral part of the everyday life of eighteenth-century women and how these women used these stories in their writing.

There have been a few studies on the representation of the classics in eighteenth-century women's writing but they have tended towards variety and brevity rather than a sustained study. For example, Claudia Thomas Kairoff's 'Classical and Biblical Models:

⁴ Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, 'Introduction: Approaches to the Fountain', in *Women Classical Scholars: Unsealing the Fountain from the Renaissance to Jacqueline de Romilly*, ed. Rosie Wyles and Edith Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1-28 (p. 23).

⁵ Rosie Wyles, 'Afterword: Keeping the Fountain in Flow', in *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall, pp. 399-404 (p. 403).

The Female Poetic Tradition' in nineteen pages focuses on Anne Finch's use of reference, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Horatian imitations, and Elizabeth Tollet's translations of Horace.⁶ If brief, Kairoff's essay does introduce the idea that women's classicism expressed itself in various forms. There is however a gap in studies surrounding the reception of the classical world in eighteenth-century women's writing, and no better is this seen than in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature: Volume 3* (2012), edited by Charles Martindale and David Hopkins. In this collection, twenty-two essays and an annotated bibliography purport to discuss how 'the works of classical antiquity constituted one of the most important aspects of [lived] experience in the [eighteenth-century] world; Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Cicero taught not only to write, but also how to live'.⁷ Chapters are organised by different principles, including: the reception of ancient authors in the period; how individual contemporary authors imitated, adapted and translated the classics; generic studies that consider literary modes relevant to the period, for example 'Travesty and Mock-Heroic'; and, finally, how ancient literary genres impacted the literature of the period. Penelope Wilson's two essays – 'The Place of Classics in Education and Publishing' and 'Women Writers and the Classics' – are the outsiders to these categorisations. Whilst much of the volume provides useful contextual material, it is the latter of Wilson's essays that is most appropriate for this study. Much like Kairoff, Wilson is forced within the strict confines of a single essay to account for how women engaged with the classical world, and, naturally, her essay deals in broad strokes:

what [women] did have at their command ranges from classical reading and linguistic competence to match that of many well-educated men [...] to a vaguely defined echo chamber or generalised locus for cultural or literary polemic. Evidence of knowledge of

⁶ See Claudia Thomas Kairoff, 'Classical and Biblical Models: The Female Poetic Tradition', in *Women and Poetry, 1660-1750*, ed. Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 183-202.

⁷ David Hopkins and Charles Martindale, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 3: 1660-1790*, ed. Charles Martindale and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 1-28 (p. 1).

classical languages among women writers is sporadic and often uncertain, partly because women are as likely to disclaim first-hand classical expertise as to display it. Women writers with no opportunity, or perhaps inclination, to learn the languages were, however, often deeply interested in the classical world.⁸

As Wilson offers the ‘vaguely defined echo chamber’, so too are women’s voices in this collection heard only in passing. This omission is all the more ironic as Wilson calls Elizabeth Carter ‘the most prominent English classicist of the eighteenth century’.⁹ This absence is explained in Hopkins and Martindale’s ‘Preface’, which sets forth the governing principles of the entire *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* series, the first of which being that the texts analysed are of ‘high quality and maximum historical importance’.¹⁰ Of this rather troublesome condition it is apt to quote Annette Kolodny: ‘Under [the] wide umbrella [of feminist literary criticism], everything has been thrown into the question: our established canons, our aesthetic criteria, our interpretative strategies, our reading habits, and, most of all, ourselves as critics and as teachers.’¹¹ This study endeavours to explore the ineluctable differences between the ways in which men and the majority of women in the eighteenth century could access the classics; in doing so, this thesis re-contextualises many of the alternative modes of reception active in the period and suggests how women took the lead from this increasingly malleable conception of the classics in the writing of their own poetry.

Discussing the works of over twenty women writers, this thesis builds on the feminist reclamation of the canon by writers including Jane Spencer and Roger Lonsdale during the 1980s. On this (re)discovery of women’s writing, Isobel Grundy observed in

⁸ Penelope Wilson, ‘Women Writers and the Classics’, in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 3*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins, pp. 495-518 (p. 496).

⁹ Wilson, ‘Women Writers and the Classics’, *Oxford History of Classical Reception, Vol. 3*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins (p. 509).

¹⁰ Hopkins and Martindale, ‘Preface’, *Oxford History of Classical Reception, Vol. 3*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins (p. ix). The two other principles focus more on reception studies: firstly, that writers are active readers and their works engage with ancient texts; and that literary history is a process of editing, imitating and moulding previous texts through a process of mutual inheritance.

¹¹ Annette Kolodny, ‘Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of the Feminist Literary Criticism’, in *The Norton Anthology of Literary Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), pp. 2048-2066 (pp. 2048-2049).

2000: 'In practice discovery is usually non-heroic. One stage of it is more like noticing something which was there all the time, in full view but nevertheless overlooked. The next stage is more like a work of renovation: scraping off accretions, dismantling, reconstructing, making good.'¹² These works, Grundy continues, 'can teach us something of how it felt to live as a woman in a culture [...] in which the inferiority and subordination of women was utterly taken for granted;' it is about learning of those 'who broke into literature from the outside, who in taking up the pen were claiming a privilege which in general was denied to them.'¹³ Twenty years on, it is time that a study should now, in detail, explore, gather and curate the means by which these women accessed a scheme of learning that was, on the face of it, denied to them.

This introduction will therefore explore Wilson's metaphor of the 'vaguely defined echo chamber', suggesting that women's classicism in the eighteenth century takes on this varied and unconventional form owing to the numerous opportunities (both literary and other) that allowed women to encounter the classics. The first section of this introduction outlines both the routes (some expected, and some not) by which women received an education in the eighteenth century and some of the obstacles that could have prevented women receiving this knowledge. A longer second section explores the notion of a feminine classicism by first outlining how women wrote of the culture of translation that partly enabled their access to the ancient world. Taking Alexander Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* (1715-20) as an example of a translation geared towards women readers, contemporary responses to Pope's work will be used to outline the typical connotations that attached themselves to female classicism. These concerns – of a gaudy, trifling and insubstantial classicism – could also be attached to the period's emerging fascination with objects. In exploring the interactions between the material culture of the

¹² Isobel Grundy, '(Re)discovering Women's Texts', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 179-196 (p. 181).

¹³ Grundy, '(Re)discovering Women's Texts', *Women and Literature in Britain*, ed. Jones (p. 185).

eighteenth century and the cultural obsession with the classics, it shall be suggested that objects decorated with the stories of the ancient world not only in fact hold vital lessons about the modes of reception available to women of the period but also offered a route to learn of the classics in and of themselves. This consideration of these classical curiosities acts as a preface to the four chapters of this thesis by informing our understanding of the *ad hoc* education in the ancient world women of all classes could receive.

Outlining the Routes to Learning

It is a commonplace of single-authored poetry collections by women of the eighteenth century that the preface, if there is one, includes a declaration that the author acquired her learning through diligence and independent study. At various points throughout this thesis, the individual methods of how these women were educated, where known, are detailed. Rarely is there a poetry volume however that does not somewhere provide some clues as to how these women were educated. Some were educated by their fathers and family members (for example Jane Brereton, Mary Collier, and Elizabeth Tollet), others by vicars (as was the case with Constantia Grierson, who was ‘a very good Latin and Greek scholar’ according to Swift), whilst, especially later on in the period, others benefitted from a tutor, including Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier.¹⁴ Outlining these routes attests to the variety with which women became acquainted with the classics in the eighteenth century.

Other more unusual stories existed. The patchy evidence of Susanna Centlivre’s biography can be collected from various contemporary accounts of her life. Giles Jacob’s record in *The Poetical Register; or, the Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick*

¹⁴ *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold William, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), iii. 369.

Poets (1719) emphasised that ‘Her Education was in the Country; and her late Father dying when she was but three Years of Age; and her Mother not living till she was twelve, what Improvements she has made, have been merely by her own Industry and Application’, a sentiment that was shared in William Chetwood’s posthumous note in *The British Theatre* (1750), though the latter source also notes how ‘Her Education was intirely owing to her own Industry, and the Assistance of a Neighbouring French Gentleman’.¹⁵ However, Abel Boyer’s obituary for Centlivre, who died in 1723, adds a curious caveat: ‘From a mean Parentage, and after several Gay Adventures (over which we shall draw a veil) she had, at last, so well improved her natural Genius, by Reading and good Conversation, as to attempt to write for the Stage; in which she had as good success, as any of her Sex before her.’¹⁶ What were these ‘Gay Adventures’ that seem almost shameful to Boyer? A fourth and final account, potentially by John Mottley, reveals the story behind Boyer’s arras, beginning ‘if we may give Credit to some private Stories concerning her she had for a short Time a kind of University Education’.¹⁷ Mottley suggests that Centlivre left Lincolnshire because she ‘was so ill-treated by her Mother-in-Law’ and, on the road to London, became acquainted with Anthony Hammond, who was then studying at Cambridge University. After seeing the young lady (here a ‘weeping Damsel, then in the Bloom of Youth and Beauty’) sat by the side of the road, Hammond proceeded to take her to a nearby village where they purchased a set of boy’s clothes. With Hammond pretending that Centlivre was his cousin Jack, the two lived together in the halls of residence for several months, and where, so that ‘Jack’ ‘might go away from [the] College with a little more Learning than he brought thither, which is more than every one can say, his Cousin took a good deal of Pains to teach him

¹⁵ Jacob and Chetwood in Susanna Centlivre, *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret*, ed. John O’Brien (Peterborough: Broadview, 2004), respectively p. 124 and p. 129.

¹⁶ Boyer in Centlivre, *The Wonder*, ed. O’Brien, p. 124.

¹⁷ Mottley in Centlivre, *The Wonder*, ed. O’Brien, p. 125.

a little Grammar.’¹⁸ With the deceased parents, an evil stepmother, a beautiful young damsel, and cross dressing, this story of ‘education’ is almost the stuff of fairy-tales or a Shakespearean comedy.

Centlivre’s opportunity to live and study at Cambridge is one that many women writers zealously hoped for – Elizabeth Tollet’s ‘To my Brother at St. John’s College in Cambridge’ records her disappointment at the gender inequality faced by women seeking an education in the eighteenth century:

Thrice happy you, in Learning’s other Seat!
No noisy Guards disturb your blest Retreat:
Where, to your Cell retir’d, you know to choose
The wisest Author, or the sweetest Muse.
Let useful Toil employ the busy Light,
And steal a restless Portion from the Night¹⁹

Tollet here indicates the differences between men and women trying to sit in ‘Learning’s Seat’: forthcoming examples from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Barber respectively suggest that these ‘noisy Guards’ might have been a busy social life or the demands of being a mother. By contrast, men are able to seek their own solitude and study without distraction. Tied to this is the use of a library or study as a space of latent potential in women’s writing, as seen in Barber’s ‘Written at Camberwell, near London, in the Study of Mr Wainwright, now Baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, where the Author accidentally din’d alone’:

Whilst happily I pass my Hours
In Camberwell’s delightful Bow’rs;
From thence the beauteous Walks survey;
Or thro’ the fragrant Mazes stray;
Or o’er the Study cast my Eye,
Where Virgil, Coke, and Horace lie,
Just Emblem of a Bosom grac’d
With Law, and Elegance of Taste;

¹⁸ Mottley in Centlivre, *The Wonder*, ed. O’Brien, p. 127.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions. With Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII. An Epistle* (1724), p. 21.

Apollo I invoke in vain,
Apollo answers with Disdain:
“MORTAL, you’re here allow’d to roam,
And bid to think yourself at home:
O’er the Domesticks then preside;
Let that content your Female Pride;
In vain you call on me To-day;
Here Wainwright only I obey.”²⁰

Framing Wainwright’s study as a forest (‘Bow’rs’) adds the suggestion that this space offers pastoral safety, but through the voice of Apollo Barber expresses the traditional expectation that only men can be ‘at home’ with learning whilst women must occupy themselves with ‘the Domesticks’. Barber’s poem notes with obvious frustration how for many women domestic chores were considered their realm.

To consider women’s role as being the sole executor of ‘the Domesticks’ also touches on the working-class poets of the eighteenth century. The contemporary interest in natural genius, led by the poetic success of Stephen Duck, means there is information about the self-led education of several working-class poets. Samuel Chandler’s description of the life of his sister, Mary Chandler, which was written almost ten years after her death in 1745 and published in Theophilus Cibber’s *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (1753), records her love of Horace and Pope, as discussed in detail in Chapter II. Meanwhile of Mary Leapor, a Northamptonshire kitchen maid, her patron Bridget Freemantle wrote in ‘To the Reader’ of *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748-51), ‘Mrs. *Leapor* from a Child delighted in reading, and particularly Poetry, but had few Opportunities of procuring any Books of that kind. The Author she most admired was Mr. *Pope*, whom she chiefly endeavoured to imitate; how far she succeeded in this, or any other of her Attempts, must be left to the Judgment of the Publick.’²¹ Elsewhere Freemantle wrote that ‘Mrs. *Leapor*’s whole Library consisted of about

²⁰ Mary Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1734), pp. 165-66; emphasis mine.

²¹ GM xli.

sixteen or seventeen single Volumes, among which were Part of Mr. *Pope's* Works, *Dryden's* Fables, some Volumes of Plays, &c.'²² Moreover, Richard Greene has compiled a catalogue of the library at Weston Hall, where Leapor worked, which reveals an impressive collection of texts, the influence of which on Leapor shall be explored throughout the coming chapters. Leapor's zeal for reading and writing did overlap with her work: a spurious letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1784) noted how 'Her fondness for writing some verses there displayed itself by her sometimes taking up her pen while the jack was standing still, and the meat scorching.'²³ Adopting the persona of 'Mira' across her poetry, in 'An Epistle to a Lady' Leapor juxtaposes her low social status with her impressive education. Through a dream vision, Leapor records how her work prevents her from fully achieving her desires:

You see I'm learned, and I shew't the more,
 That none may wonder when they find me poor.
 Yet *Mira* dreams, as slumbering Poets may,
 And rolls in Treasures till the breaking Day:
 While Books and Pictures in bright Order rise,
 And painted Parlours swim before her Eyes:
 Till the shrill Clock impertinently rings,
 And the soft Visions move their shining Wings:
 Then *Mira* wakes, - her Pictures are no more,
 And through her Fingers slides the vanish'd Ore.
 Convinc'd too soon, her Eye unwilling falls
 On the blue Curtains and the dusty Walls:
 She wakes, alas! to Business and to Woes,
 To sweep her Kitchen, and to mend her Clothes.

(ll. 19-32)

Leapor's focus on touch in 'An Epistle to a Lady' (how *Mira* 'rolls in Treasures' and has the vision slip 'through her Fingers') adds to the sadness when these tangible experiences leave her at the end of the dream vision. It is a sharp juxtaposition with the representation of male learning in the sleeping Biron in her 'Crumble-Hall', who is found 'with Books

²² GM xl.

²³ *Gentleman's Magazine* 54, November 1784, p. 807.

encircled round; / And him you'd guess a Student most profound. / Not so – in Form the dusty Volumes stand: / There's few that wear the Mark of Biron's Hand.' (ll. 90-93) This image of male scholasticism, of books unused to the extent that dust has covered them, is a sharp relief to Mira's world of gleaming armour and objects in 'Crumble-Hall'. Biron's negligence of his books emphasises the wasted influence of these works. Given Leapor describes how the rest of the house is clean, it might also be inferred that she (as a kitchen maid and as a woman) was simply not allowed to enter the study to execute her jobs. Other working-class poets indicate the pleasure that studying the classics gave them: Mary Chandler's enjoyment of Horace, for example, allowed her the opportunity to imagine a world of seclusion and relaxation. The opening out of the classics in the eighteenth century meant these ancient texts were no longer as intimidating as they once were, hence throughout this thesis writers like Leapor and Chandler are discussed as often as aristocratic women like Mary Chudleigh or Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Whilst working-class poets occupied themselves with manual labour, Montagu's letters suggest how a woman of the upper classes might devote her time to reading and self-improvement. Famously a self-taught scholar, in a letter to Anne Wortley on the 8 August 1709 Montagu, then aged twenty, records how she became familiar with the classical authors not only in translation but also in their original languages:

My study at present is nothing but dictionaries and grammars. I am trying whether it be possible to learn without a master; I am not certain (and dare hardly hope) I shall make any great progress; but I find the study so diverting, I am not only easy, but pleased with the solitude that indulges it.²⁴

In conversation with Joseph Spence later in life, Montagu said: 'I used to study five or six hours a day for two years, in my father's library, and so got that language whilst

²⁴ *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), i. 6.

every body thought I was reading nothing but novels and romances.’²⁵ Whilst the amount of time Montagu dedicated to her studies for a young girl is impressive, what is striking in both passages is the freedom that the work gave her. As implied from Tollet’s poem, for these women to be intellectually fulfilled meant to be ‘pleased with the solitude that indulges’ the studying. Alongside the young Montagu’s determination to go without a tutor is her mockery of the social expectations that imply that her time spent in the library would focus on ‘novels and romances’. These expectations would be further satirised in texts like Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752) later on in the period. However, the joy of both the intellectual work and its ensuing solitude did have its own pressures. In a letter sent to Pope in June 1717 from Turkey, a distinct tone of frustration can be identified in Montagu’s outline of her weekly routine:

To Say Truth, I am Sometimes very weary of this Singing and dancing and Sunshine, and wish for the Smoak and Impertinencies in which You toil, thô I endeavour to persuade my Self that I live in a more agreeable Variety than You do, and that Monday Setting of partridges, Tuesday reading English, Wednesday Studying the Turkish Language (in which, by the way, I am already very learned), Thursday Classical Authors, Friday spent in Writing, Saturday at my Needle, and Sunday admitting of Visits and hearing Musick, is a better way of disposing the Week than Monday at the Drawing Room, Tuesday Lady Mohun’s, Wednesday the Opera, Thursday the Play, Friday Mrs. Chetwynd’s, etc.: a perpetual round of hearing the same Scandal and seeing the same follies acted over and over, which here affect me no more than they do other dead people.²⁶

This focus no doubt extended to educating her daughter, which she called, in a letter to her sister Lady Mar in July 1722, one of her ‘chiefe Amusements’ alongside some ‘small alterations’ to her house in Twickenham.²⁷ Though Montagu suggests how women of the upper classes could both act as a parent and find time to read the classics, the ‘Dedication’ to Mary Monck’s *Marinda: Poems and Translations upon Several*

²⁵ Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. J. M. Osborn, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), i. 303.

²⁶ *Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Halsband, i. 366-67.

²⁷ *Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Halsband, ii. 19.

Occasions (1716) by her father, Robert Molesworth to Caroline, Princess of Wales,

clearly implies that this was not always the case:

As to these Poems which give me the opportunity of Addressing myself to your Royal Highness, it becomes me to say but little of them. Most of them are the Product of the leisure Hours of a Young Gentlewoman lately dead, who in a remote country retirement, without any assistance but that of a good library, and without omitting the daily care due to a large Family, not only perfectly acquired several languages [Latin, Italian, and Spanish], here made use of, but the good morals and principles contain'd in those small Books.²⁸

Here again are Tollet's 'noisy Guards' tempering what should be a celebration of Monck's independent success: the results of her studies are important, but more so because they were done so without any detriment to her efficiency as a mother. However, on the topic of domestic learning a distinction of class must be acknowledged: the domestic education of girls of the middling and upper classes is characterised, according to Michèle Cohen, by 'orderliness and [a] strict, often self-imposed discipline.'²⁹ Montagu's and Monck's dedication respectively as student and teacher was enabled by their social class, which afforded them the time to read. For working-class poets like Leapor, as already shown, the issue was more of finding time to study, perhaps to the detriment of her 'chores'. In Mary Barber's 'A True Tale', 'A Mother, who vast Pleasure finds / In modelling her Childrens Minds' sometimes teaches scripture, whilst:

At other Times, her Themes would be
The Sages of Antiquity:
Who left immortal Names behind,
By proving Blessings to their Kind.
Again, she takes another Scope,
And tells of Addison and Pope.³⁰

²⁸ Mary Monck, *Marinda: Poems and Translations upon Several Occasions* (1716), sig. [b7^v].

²⁹ Michèle Cohen, "'A Little Learning'?: The Curriculum and the Construction of Gender Difference in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29.3 (2006), 321-35 (p. 325).

³⁰ Barber, *Poems*, pp. 7-8.

Maybe here was an opportunity to women to learn alongside their children: reading the myths to their children means these women would also be coming into contact with the ancient world. It should not be ignored, however, that contemporary translators like Joseph Addison and Pope are held alongside the ‘Sages of Antiquity’. These modern authors were held in a similar esteem alongside the classics: in ‘On Learning. Desired by a Gentleman’, Elizabeth Teft explains how, if she was educated, she would ‘In Conference with deathless Homer be, / Read Virgil’s Thoughts, and Milton’s Poetry,’ suggesting how the final poet in the set had become one of the classics.³¹ Throughout this thesis then the reception of contemporary works including John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* (1714-15) is considered because these texts were also key to the mediation of the classics in the period. Women of all classes managed to access the classics, which was the result of not only their determination but also of the opening out of the ancient world through translation and other indirect modes (for example the mock-heroic) that synthesised and distilled the features of classical poetry.

Aside from allusions or poems that praise a particular translation, it is difficult to exactly identify the specific texts that enabled women to receive the classics; nonetheless this section has documented some of the methods that enabled this access, preparing for the various individual biographical outlines throughout this thesis that explore how women from across the classes secured a knowledge of the ancient world. In this survey of the routes to learning taken by women of the eighteenth century, it is apparent that no single method can be identified. But variety— of the discussed poet’s social class, of the tutors who educated these women, of the ages at which these women accessed this learning, and of the documents that help us identify the reception of the classics in

³¹ Elizabeth Teft, *Orinthia’s Miscellany: Or, a Compleat Collection of Poems, Never Before Published* (1747), p. 9.

women's writing – has characterised this section. This section has therefore begun to contextualise Wilson's metaphor of the echo chamber by suggesting the personal stories that might have influenced individual women; the second half of this introduction will discuss eighteenth-century culture more broadly by exploring how conceptions of contemporary material culture influenced and became indicative of the concept of a feminine classicism.

A Female Classicism: Desirability, Display and Danger

In 'Verses occasioned by the busts in the Queen's Hermitage', which was published anonymously in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1737), Catharine Trotter writes of how women, with

Learning deny'd us, we at random tread
Unbeaten paths, that late to knowledge lead;
By secret steps break thro' th' obstructed way,
Nor dare acquirements gain'd by stealth display.³²

Trotter's lines reveal many of the concerns faced by women readers who wanted to learn about the classics. Trotter's metaphorical journey, which notes how these women had to tread 'at random' down 'Unbeaten paths' to learning, suggests how there was no fixed passage to acquire a knowledge of the classics. For women, however, these fresh explorations into the classics were to be pioneering exhibitions, but they required 'secret steps', implying, in part, their clandestine quality. The result was a knowledge 'gain'd by stealth', suggesting again that it was something to be hidden and, consequently, that it cannot be displayed. Trotter's lines condense many of the connotations both positive and negative that were attached to women's learning in the period and this thesis explores

³² *Gentleman's Magazine* 7, May 1737, p. 308.

several of the 'Unbeaten paths' used by women from all backgrounds to receive the classics.

However even once women had achieved poetic success their talents were questioned, as suggested by the labouring-class poet Mary Collier who was doubted to be the author of *The Washerwoman's Labour* (1739) by 'an Exciseman', which prompted her to pen an 'An Epistolary Answer' to these accusations. Collier frames her response as a legal defence, opening the poem with 'by our English Laws / The Accused party may / Have leave to plead, themselves to clear, / But you condemn Straightaway.'³³ 'For you are sure, I hear', Collier notes later, 'No woman ever made those lines / That in my Name appear.'³⁴ As to her education, Collier explains:

Tho' my Extraction was so low,
And I to labour bred;
Yet Stories of the Pagan Gods
I oft have seen, and read.³⁵

Evidence of Collier's familiarity with classical 'Stories' is seen in her literary exchange with Stephen Duck's *The Thresher's Labour* (1730), which described the unrelenting work of a land labourer within a classical frame: at the end of the poem Duck describes how 'No respite from our Labour can be found: / Like Sisyphus, our Work is never done'.³⁶ Mirroring Duck's couplet form, Collier directly responded to Duck's poem by making specific references to his work. For example, Collier writes of how

While you to Sisyphus yourselves compare,
With Danaus' Daughters we may claim a Share;
For while he labours hard against the Hill,
Bottomless Tubs of Water they must fill.³⁷

³³ Mary Collier, *Poems on Several Occasions* (Winchester, 1762), p. 30.

³⁴ Collier, *Poems*, p. 31.

³⁵ Collier, *Poems*, p. 31.

³⁶ *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. David Fairer and Christine Gerrard, 2nd edn (Blackwell, 2004), p. 267.

³⁷ Collier, *Poems*, p. 16.

Donna Landry notes how both Duck and Collier re-orientate classical figures to their own plebeian perspective.³⁸ By the end of her ‘Epistolary Answer’, the hurtful effects of the accusations can be sensed in Collier’s tone:

But Since that we such Ideots are,
I hope, you do refrain
Our Company, for fear you Shou’d
Your Reputation Stain.

Tho’ if we Education had
Which Justly is our due,
I doubt not, many of our Sex
Might fairly vie with you.³⁹

Collier responds so strongly to these accusations because they questioned both her gender and her class, yet the sentiment expressed in the final stanza above is one that may have been shared by many women of the eighteenth century. The period’s fascination with translation however was not received in solely positive terms: Roger L’Estrange complained of ‘the selling of translations so dog cheap [that] every nasty groom and roquey lackey is grown familiar with Homer, Virgil and Ovid.’⁴⁰ Where this is a concern for L’Estrange, his sentiment in this thesis is read positively: for it would not only be grooms and lackeys who could buy these ‘dog cheap’ editions, but also women of all social classes, as evidenced by Collier’s familiarity with the ‘Stories’ of the ancient world or Mary Leapor’s small (but no less insignificant) personal library.

There remained much trepidation and frustration from women towards openly displaying their learning. Indeed, the opening poems of Teft’s *Orinthia’s Miscellany* (1747) explore her lack of learning and how this would affect the reception of her

³⁸ Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Labouring-Class Women’s Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 64.

³⁹ Collier, *Poems*, p. 32.

⁴⁰ Cited in R. A. Day, *Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 69.

volume. The second poem in the collection, 'On Learning. Desired by a Gentleman', in its title alone implies the condescension a female poet would experience during the period. 'Why are not Girls, as Boys, sent forth when young / To learn the Latin, Greek and Hebrew tongue?' Teft asks.⁴¹ Yet Teft concludes she would rather be a woman, for

We in their native Dress our Thoughts impart,
Yours deck'd with Learning, and adorn'd with Art.
Every Error generously excuse,
Consider, Sir, a simple Virgin's Muse.⁴²

Teft perhaps explains much of the impulse behind this thesis. It is apparent that women's poetry is, like that of their male contemporaries, 'deck'd with Learning', yet it is also remarkably different. In his 'Life of Milton' Samuel Johnson makes a distinction between comparing the number of sales in Milton's time with his own because 'The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge.'⁴³ By the mid eighteenth century, women's attempts to 'aspire to literature' had partly succeeded, as evidenced perhaps by the presence of young, vivacious female readers in literature. George Colman's Polly Honeycombe or Henry Fielding's Sophia Western give a flavour of what Johnson would term in his 'Life of Swift' the 'nation of readers' that had emerged by the 1750s.⁴⁴ During the first twenty years of the eighteenth century, collaborative editions of the *Metamorphoses* and of Horace's poetry would appear, as would the periodicals that were addressed to women. This thesis does not, however, presume that all of these works were written specifically

⁴¹ Teft, *Orinthia's Miscellany*, p. 8.

⁴² Teft, *Orinthia's Miscellany*, p. 10.

⁴³ Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets: With Critical Observations on Their Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), i. 270.

⁴⁴ Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Lonsdale, iii. 196.

for women. If that were the case, then John Dryden's 'The Sixth Satire of Juvenal' would be an unusual, uncharacteristic and vitriolic choice, especially with its characterisation of 'The book-learn'd wife, in Greek and Latin bold' (l. 561), a line that was an addition by Dryden to the original, whilst parallels might also be found between 'The critic-dame who at her table sits, / Homer and Virgil quotes, and weighs their wits, / And pities Dido's agonising fits' (ll. 62-64) and the typical characterisation of learned women. Unsurprisingly, women do not respond to this aspect of Dryden's Juvenal: Montagu often asterisked admired passages of poems and left four marks in her copy of this text, though she ignored these misogynistic passages.⁴⁵ The learned lady is an archetype of eighteenth-century literature: Henry Fielding's novel *Amelia* (1751) describes Molly Bennet as being 'a woman of very unaccountable turn; all her delight lies in books'.⁴⁶ Molly is ultimately ruined by her classical education and, during a *tête-à-tête* with Captain Booth, she quotes lines from Dido's speech in Latin 'with so strong an emphasis, that she almost frightened Amelia out of her wits, and not a little staggered Booth, who was himself no contemptible scholar.'⁴⁷ *Amelia* rejected female education so strongly that Anne Donnellan, a correspondent of Samuel Richardson's, asked, 'Must we suppose that if a woman knows a little Greek and Latin she must be a drunkard, and a virago?'⁴⁸ Critiques of learned ladies also appear, however, in works by women writers: Bathusa Makin observed in her *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673) that 'A Learned Woman is thought to be a Comet, that bodes Mischief, when ever it appears.'⁴⁹ Makin's internalisation of the hostility towards the scholarly aspirations of women somewhat indicates how during the seventeenth century the classics were

⁴⁵ Isobel Grundy, 'Books and the Woman: An Eighteenth-Century Owner and Her Libraries', *English Studies in Canada* 20.1 (1994), 1-22 (p. 16).

⁴⁶ Henry Fielding, *Amelia*, ed. Linda Bree (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2010), p. 276.

⁴⁷ Fielding, *Amelia*, p. 274.

⁴⁸ *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Thomas Lockwood and Ronald Paulsons (Routledge, 2013), p. 319.

⁴⁹ Bathusa Makin, *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues. With An Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (1673), p. 3.

typically classed as masculine; in this context, a learned lady was something almost to be feared, presumably partly for the ways in which she straddled gender boundaries and norms of acceptable behaviour.

Elizabeth Thomas's 'One Sir J--- S--- saying in a Sarcastic Manner, My Books would make me Mad. An Ode' ventriloquises those voices that disparaged women from learning. 'Unhappy sex!' the poem begins, 'how hard's our fate, / By Custom's tyranny confined / To foolish needlework and chat, / Or such like exercise as that, / But still denied th' improvement of our mind!'⁵⁰ The indignant tone of the poem mirrors the sarcasm identified in the title met by Thomas; she relates, for example, 'if we enquire for a book, / Beyond a novel or a play, / Good lord! how soon th' alarm's took'.⁵¹ This causes men to 'howl' "Alas, poor Plato! All thy glory's past: / What, in a female hand arrived at last!" / "Sure," adds another, "'tis for something worse; / This itch of reading's sent her as a curse."⁵² Thomas's suggestion of the 'itch of reading' not only pathologises the act but also implies its constant, almost-unquenchable presence. Yet it is not the woman who is figured as an inhuman anomaly in Thomas's poem but those men who 'howl' against her. Nonetheless, the suggestion that Plato has passed into a 'female hand' implies something of the opening out of the classics for women, even if this act was met with disdain from those who thought the classics should remain just for men.

Throughout this thesis various examples of women making the classics their own are explored, however this does not mean that act was readily accepted. The classics represented a pinnacle of achievement and culture: when Laetitia Pilkington gave her poetry to the Earl of Chesterfield on the recommendation of Colley Cibber, he 'positively

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany Poems on Several Subjects* (1722), p. 181.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 184.

⁵² Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, pp. 184-85.

insisted on it, that I must understand Greek, and Latin, otherwise I never could write that English so well. Mr. Cibber said, he had not enquired, but that he would that Moment: And, accordingly, came, and told me, what my Lord had said; I reassured him, I was ignorant of every Language, except my Mother-tongue'.⁵³ Penelope Wilson writes that the publicising of the classics is about 'an opening out, or extension of access, beyond [the] elite' and points towards women writers as an indication of the alternative routes that could be accessed to receive this knowledge.⁵⁴ Women writers considered this new knowledge as something that was forbidden; as the seventeenth century headed towards the eighteenth, one caveat was beginning to temper women's frustration at not being able to access the classics, as identified by Aphra Behn in 'To the Unknown Daphnis on his Excellent Translation of Lucretius', written to Thomas Creech in 1683 on his translation of *De Rerum Natura*:

Till now I curst my Sex and Education,
 And more the scanted Customs of the Nation,
 Permitting not the Female Sex to tread
 The Mighty Paths of Learned Heroes Dead.
 The Godlike Virgil and Great Homers Muse
 Like Divine Mysteries are conceal'd from us
 [...]
 So Thou by this Translation dost advance
 Our Knowledge from the State of Ignorance;
 And Equallst Us to Man!⁵⁵

Although Deborah Uman reads Behn's verse as celebrating the accessibility of the classics through translation, she notes how Behn, in writing in the present tense and the passive voice, implies there are still those who would '[permit] not the Female Sex to

⁵³ Laetitia Pilkington, *Memoirs of Laetitia Pilkington*, ed. A. C. Elias Jr, 2 vols (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1997; repr., 2016), i. 160.

⁵⁴ Penelope Wilson, 'The Place of Classics in Education and Publishing', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 3*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins, pp. 29-52 (p. 30).

⁵⁵ Aphra Behn, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols (Pickering and Chatto, 1992) i. 25-26.

tread' the paths to knowledge.⁵⁶ Writers including Dryden, William Congreve, Addison and Pope, together with the periodicals and miscellanies that dominated the burgeoning print culture, produced a corpus of literature that no longer required the classics to be read in their original languages and, therefore, the skills that had been the preserve of the masculine elite. Dryden described the standard of his translations in the following terms in the 'Dedication' to *Examem Poeticum* (1693): 'I have likewise attempted to restore Ovid to his native sweetness, easiness, and smoothness; and to give my poetry a kind of cadence, and, as we call it, a run of verse as like the original as the English can come up to the Latin.'⁵⁷ There should thus be a tone of great optimism read in Judith Drake's observation 'tis possible for an ingenious Person to make a considerable progress in most parts of Learning, by the help of English only,' since through 'the obliging Humour' of translators, 'scarce any thing either Ancient or Modern that might be of general use either for Pleasure, or Instruction is left untouch'd.'⁵⁸

That Behn considered herself 'curst' by her sex in her poem to Creech implies a connection back to Eve and her first transgression. Anne Finch's poem 'The Introduction', which writes of the social repercussions that will be faced by 'a woman that attempts the pen', asks 'How are we faln, faln by mistaken rules?'⁵⁹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write of Finch's lines as casting the Miltonic fall 'as a specifically female dilemma'.⁶⁰ The consequent result of this fall according to Finch is that women are 'Debarred from all improvements of the mind, / And to be dull, expected and designed'.⁶¹ In Anthony Hammond's *A New Miscellany of Original Poems, Translations and Imitations* (1720), Pope connected Montagu with Eve:

⁵⁶ Deborah Uman, *Women as Translators in Early Modern England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012), p. 106.

⁵⁷ H iii. 221-22.

⁵⁸ Judith Drake, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1697), pp. 41-42.

⁵⁹ Anne Finch, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. Jennifer Keith with Claudia Thomas Kairoff, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020-21), i. 35.

⁶⁰ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press, 2000), p. 219.

⁶¹ Finch, *Works*, ed. Keith and Kairoff, i. 35.

Then bravely fair Dame,
Renew the Old Claim,
Which to your whole Sex does belong,
And let Men receive,
From a Second bright Eve
The knowledge of Right and of Wrong.

But if the First Eve,
Hard Doom did receive,
When only One Apple had she,
What a Punishment New,
Shall be found out for You,
Who Tasting, have rob'd the whole Tree.⁶²

Whilst Pope's designation of Montagu as a 'second Eve' casts her mental capabilities with an epic grandeur, it also registers the suggestion that Montagu, like Eve, was active in achieving this fallen state: after the first bite, she proceeded to eat all of the fruits. Montagu's hunger, like that of all the women explored in this thesis, may have been satiated, but few can claim to have been afforded the opportunities to have such a comprehensive education as Montagu; issues of class, money, family, status or scandal all may have prevented some women from continuously picking from the tree of knowledge. Pope implores Montagu to 'Renew the Old Claim' of women to knowledge, perhaps gently echoing Finch in 'An Epistle From Ardelia to Mrs Randolph' when she evokes Sappho as a fellow poet and female friend who represents the 'Ancient Claime' of women to write.⁶³ With the line of female poetic succession passing through Eve, Sappho and Finch to Montagu, Pope's compliment affirms the emerging possibility during the earlier years of the eighteenth century that women could taste the fruits of learning. But it also contributes the idea that this knowledge was something forbidden and that it required a form of transgression ('rob'd') to achieve.

⁶² In Anthony Hammond, *A New Miscellany of Original Poems, Translations and Imitations* (1720), pp. 274-76.

⁶³ Finch, *Works*, ed. Keith and Kairoff, i. 89.

Women responded to Eve by blaming her for their lack of learning. Other female figures from classical mythology also offered difficult models for eighteenth-century women to work with, none more so than Sappho. Sappho embodies many of the problems that might be associated especially with a female classicism – she has, according to Susan Gubar, ‘haunted the female imagination.’⁶⁴ Writing about Sappho’s role in women’s poetry of the eighteenth century involves partly tackling the expectation that love was the only traditional subject women could write on. It is obvious within the context of this thesis alone that this was not the case, but Jane Spencer believes that Sappho was the classical foremother for this thought, suggesting her ‘reputation as a poet of love had already begun to establish a precedent for the kind of writing expected from a woman, and the later association of women writers with romance heroines was reinforcing the notion that their subject was love.’⁶⁵ Moreover, in lieu of actual poems by Sappho, her reception in literary history has been occupied by the mythology perpetuated by Ovid’s ‘Sappho to Phaon’, which focuses on her reliance on and abandonment by a man.

Anne Dacier (then Anne Le Fèvre) had provided a French translation of two of Sappho’s odes – Fragments 1 and 31 – and two funeral epigrams in prose in *Les Poésies d’Anacréon et de Sapho* (1681), which Jacqueline Fabre-Serris suggests was orientated towards female readers given her prefatory remarks on Anacreon: ‘En traduisant Anacréon en nôtre langue j’ay voulu donner aux Dames le plaisir de lire le plus poly & le plus galand Poëte Grec que nous ayons’ [‘By translating Anacreon into our language, I wanted to give ladies the pleasure of reading the most urbane and gallant Greek poet that we have.’].⁶⁶ *Les Poésies* was a popular text, with a second edition in 1696 followed by a

⁶⁴ Susan Gubar, ‘Sapphistries’, *Signs* 10.1 (1984), 43-62 (p. 44).

⁶⁵ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 30.

⁶⁶ Translation from Jacqueline Fabre-Serris, ‘Anne Dacier (1681), Renée Vivien (1903): Or What Does It Mean for a Woman to Translate Sappho?’, in *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall, pp. 78-102. The numbered sequence of Sappho’s fragments referred to corresponds with the modern LOEB edition: *Greek Lyric*, trans. David A. Campbell (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982).

third and fourth in 1699 and 1716 respectively. The latter two editions included Latin notes and a Latin translation of the ‘Hymn to Aphrodite’ by Tanneguy Le Fèvre, Anne’s father.⁶⁷ Anne Finch’s modern editors suggest her ‘Melinda on an Insipid Beauty In Imitation of a fragment of Sappho’s’, a free imitation of Sappho’s Fragment 55, could indicate her familiarity with Dacier’s biographical ‘Life of Sappho’, which was included in *Les Poésies*.⁶⁸ Finch moves away from Sappho’s poem by focusing not on the fate of the speaker’s rival but her own successes: though her own beauty is transient, her ‘fam’d works shall thro’ all times surprise, / My polish’d thoughts, my bright ideas rise, / And to new men be known, still talking to their eyes.’⁶⁹ This early work suggests a more promising attitude towards Sappho and the impact of the 1681 edition on Sappho’s reputation according to Fern Farnham is seen more in England than in France, as suggested through issues of *The Spectator*, which printed Ambrose Philips’s translations of Fragments 1 and 31 in 1711.⁷⁰ Farnham has also demonstrated the influence of Dacier’s work on these translations by focusing on the representation of Sappho’s sexuality in both texts, concluding that the heterosexual love, which is at odds with the homosexual tones that are traditionally associated with Sappho, presented in these works come from Dacier’s translation.⁷¹

Addison’s introduction to Sappho and her poetry in *Spectator* 223 suggests she is like a lost relic whose beauty has been chipped away quite literally by the progression of time:

When I reflect upon the various Fate of those multitudes of Ancient Writers who flourished in Greece and Italy, I consider Time as an Immense Ocean, in which many noble Authors are entirely swallowed up, many very much shattered and damaged, some

⁶⁷ For the various editions of Dacier’s Sappho, see Fern Farnham, *Madam Dacier: Scholar and Humanist* (Monterey: Angel Press, 1976), pp. 81-85.

⁶⁸ Finch, *Works*, ed. Keith and Kairoff, i. 494.

⁶⁹ Finch, *Works*, ed. Keith and Kairoff, i. 67. For a discussion of the poem in more detail, see Martha Rainbolt, ‘Their Ancient Claim: Sappho and Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century British Women’s Poetry’, *Seventeenth Century* 12.1 (1997), 111-34 (pp. 126-27).

⁷⁰ Farnham, *Madam Dacier*, p. 73.

⁷¹ Farnham, *Madam Dacier*, pp. 77-82.

quite dis-jointed and broken into pieces [...] Among the mutilated Poets of Antiquity, there is none whose Fragments are so beautiful as those of Sappho.⁷²

Despite the suggestion that these fragmentary pieces leave a broken sense of identity and authorship ('shattered and damaged'), which even risks tonal or thematic inconsistencies that affect how we understand these writers ('dis-jointed'), Addison remarks how these pieces 'give us a Taste of her way of Writing, which is perfectly comfortable with that extraordinary Character we find of her, in the Remarks of those great Criticks who were conversant with her Works when they were entire.'⁷³ In *Spectator* 229 Addison aligned Sappho's poetry with the Belvedere Torso since all that remains of both are fragments. Both *Spectator* issues included translations of two of Sappho's poems by Ambrose Philips. In *Spectator* 223, which presented Philips's 'An Hymn to Venus', Addison remarked: 'In a Word, if the Ladies have a mind to know the manner of Writing practised by the so much celebrated Sappho, they may here see it in its genuine and natural Beauty, without any foreign or affected Ornaments.'⁷⁴ Just as with the Belvedere Torso, with this singular fragment women can learn of Sappho's work. Addison ends the article by suggesting that the reason a translation of Sappho's work had not previously been attempted is that there has been the fear that to translate Sappho into English would risk 'the Beauties of the Original [...] appear[ing] weak and faded in Translation.'⁷⁵ The 'unnatural Witticisms' that are the contemporary vogue amongst 'ordinary Readers' threaten this 'natural Beauty', but Addison emphasises the accomplishment of Philips's 'Pathetick Simplicity which is so peculiar to him' that endears him to both translating Sappho and, by extension perhaps, the female readers of the periodical.⁷⁶ Addison states of Philips's tactful and reserved translation: 'I shall only add, that this Translation is

⁷² S ii. 365.

⁷³ S ii. 365-66.

⁷⁴ S ii. 367.

⁷⁵ S ii. 369.

⁷⁶ S ii. 367-69.

written in the very spirit of Sappho, and as near the Greek as the Genius of our Language will possibly suffer.’⁷⁷ Whereas the male writers of the Roman period like Horace, Ovid and Catullus understood Sappho as the paradigmatic poetic voice of female desire and sexuality, Philips’s translation underplays the connotations of excess that are typical of the poet.

Sappho’s reception therefore identifies the role of periodicals in transmitting the classics to wider audiences. In *Spectator* 10 (1711) Addison wrote of these texts as bringing ‘Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses.’⁷⁸ Addison specifically focused on the potential of these volumes for his women readers; although he presented some women as living vapid lives obsessed with the passing fancies of the *beau monde*, he acknowledged how

there are Multitudes of those [who experience] a more elevated Life and Conversation, that move in an exalted Sphere of Knowledge and Virtue, that join all the Beauties of the Mind to the Ornaments of Dress, and inspire a kind of Awe and Respect, as well as Love, into their Male-Beholders. I hope to increase the Number of these by publishing this daily Paper, which shall always endeavour to make an innocent if not an improving Entertainment, and by that Means at least divert the Minds of my female Readers from greater Trifles [...] In the mean while I hope these my gentle Readers, who have so much Time on their Hands, will not grudge throwing away a Quarter of an Hour in a Day on this Paper, since they may do it without any Hindrance to Business.⁷⁹

Periodicals not only encouraged an active revision of how contemporary readers conceived of certain poets but they also were a key part of the movement of the classics into more sociable and feminine spaces. With the classics increasingly available, women writers of the period were poised to further revise the classics in their own ways.

However Sappho’s presence in the eighteenth century perhaps offers more of a distraction to understanding women’s use of classical literature than anything else. Mary

⁷⁷ S ii. 391.

⁷⁸ S i. 44.

⁷⁹ S i. 46-47.

Leapor's 'An Hymn to the Morning' has been quoted as an example of not only the presence of Sappho in women's writing but also the influence of the articles in the *Spectator* on women readers.⁸⁰ Leapor's poem certainly shows some debt to Philips's translation from *Spectator* 223 – the mode of hymn, the focus on a female goddess and the language of invocation indicate similarities between the two works – yet the topic of Leapor's poem, the rising sun, arguably belongs more to Homer than Sappho. The first and third stanzas introduce the coming of dawn:

See the lovely Morning rise,
 See her Glories paint the Skies,
 Half o'er the reviving Globe
 Gaily spreads her Saffron Robe:
 See the Hills with Flowers crown'd,
 And the Valleys laughing round.

[...]
 See Clione's gilded Car,
 See it blazes from afar;
 Here the fair One bends her Way,
 Balmy Zephyrs round her play;
 Now she lights upon the Vale,
 Fond to meet the western Gale.

(ll. 1-6, 13-18)

As is typical with Leapor, the inspiration for this description of dawn can be traced back to Pope's translations of Homer, especially the *Odyssey* (1725-26). Pope translates the formulaic epithet of 'rose-fingered Dawn' differently each time across the epic, and quoting some examples of Pope's translation of the epithet suggests the lexicon and syntax Leapor would have gained from the work: 'The saffron Morn, with early blushes spread, / Now rose refulgent from Tithonus' bed; / With new-born day to gladden mortal sight, / And glid the courts of heav'n with sacred light' (V.1-4); 'Now fair Aurora lifts her golden ray, / And all the ruddy Orient flames with day' (VIII.1-2); 'Now did the

⁸⁰ See editorial matter on the poem in GM 313.

rosy-finger'd Morn arise, / And shed her sacred light along the skies' (XIII.21-22). The reference to Sappho at the end of 'An Hymn to Morning' has potentially directed readers away from this Homeric and Popean influence:

Thus sung Mira to her Lyre,
Till the idle Numbers tire:
Ah, Sappho sweeter sings, I cry,
And the spiteful Rocks reply,
(Responsive to the jarring Strings)
Sweeter – Sappho sweeter sings.
(ll. 43-48)

Donna Landry reads the reference as being indicative of lesbian undercurrents throughout Leapor's poetry.⁸¹ However Leapor uses Sappho more to signal her isolated life and to elevate the Greek poet as a classical exemplar for the female poet. Yet Landry's observation is indicative of how Sappho's presence in women's poetry can often be an unsteady one: Leapor's Sappho is more akin to the Sappho seen first in Dacier's translation and then in the *Spectator* issues than the homosexual Sappho of the ancient world.

This example from Leapor's 'Hymn to the Morning' does suggest how women referenced, identified with and attempted to re-write Sappho's literary history so as to make her a more approachable figure. However these minor references have been overshadowed by the literary battle between Pope and Montagu, in which the title 'Sappho' became a moniker used by the former poet against the latter as a shorthand for slatternly, over-sexualised behaviour. As a soubriquet, however, Pope did not always use the name Sappho within a negative frame of reference: in an inset six-line verse sent as part of a letter to the young Judith Cowper in October 1722, he observed:

⁸¹ See Landry, *The Muses of Resistance*, pp. 83-86.

Tho' sprightly Sappho force our Love & Praise,
A softer Wonder my pleased soul surveys,
The mild Erinna, blushing in her Bays.⁸²

The 'sprightly Sappho' here is Montagu, then in her early thirties, and the 'mild Erinna' is Cowper, then aged twenty. Broadly, Pope's evocation of the name Sappho raises questions about her femininity; that Montagu as Sappho was 'sprightly' suggests a vivacity and vigour to her character that would have been evident alone in her attempts to have inoculation become standard practice in England, especially following the smallpox epidemic in 1721.⁸³ The 'force[ful]' Montagu is juxtaposed with the young, beautiful, and 'blushing' Cowper. What is curious about Pope's naming of Montagu as Sappho, however, is how this shifted following their disagreement; the exact nature of what happened to turn the two against each other towards the end of the 1720s is not completely clear but it publicly began with the publication of the *Dunciad Variorum* (1729).⁸⁴ The final four lines of the verse sent to Cowper were later included in *The Epistle to a Lady* (1735) in praise of Martha Blount, and in this later poem Pope had also re-framed Sappho so that the name derided, not praised, Montagu:

Rufa, whose eye quick-glancing o'er the park,
Attracts each light gay meteor of a spark,
Agrees as ill with Rufa studying Locke,
As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock;
Or Sappho at her toilet's greasy task,
With Sappho fragrant at an ev'ning Mask:
So morning Insects that in muck begun,
Shine, buzz, and fly-blow in the setting-sun.
(ll. 21-28)

⁸² Alexander Pope, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), ii. 139.

⁸³ See Daniel J. R. Grey, "'To bring this useful invention into fashion in England': Mary Wortley Montagu as Medical Expert", in *British Women and the Intellectual World in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Teresa Barnard (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 15-32.

⁸⁴ At this point, Addison's warning to Montagu in 1719 to 'Leave [Pope] as soon as you can [...] He will certainly play you some devilish trick else: he has an appetite to satire' may well have felt prescient. Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. Osborn, i. 305.

Aside from the general accusations of Montagu's uncleanness, emphasised by the incessant and intense repetition of the name 'Sappho', Pope's lines also allude to her previous literary battle with Jonathan Swift. Swift's dressing-room poems attacked the contemporary use of cosmetics by women by focusing on the unhygienic habits of Celia. Montagu retaliated with 'The Reasons that Induced Dr S[wift] to write a Poem call'd the Lady's Dressing room', suggesting a failed dalliance with a prostitute prompted his vitriolic writing. Where Swift's poem was about women in general, in the *Epistle to a Lady* Pope re-casts Swift's Celia so that it is Montagu (as Sappho) who is described with scatological realism. Pope echoes Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing-Room', which described how 'a dirty Smock appear'd, / [that was] Beneath the Armpits well besmear'd'.⁸⁵ Earlier editions of the *Epistle to a Lady* use the name Flavia, which was a name Montagu gave herself. Likewise, in *The Epistle to Bathurst* (1733), Pope changed the name from Lesbia to Sappho.⁸⁶ In switching to Sappho, Pope marks a shift in the nature of his attack on Montagu's character from private to public.⁸⁷ Writing no longer of a 'sprightly Sappho', Pope draws on both Montagu's literary exchange with Swift and the connotations associated with the Greek poet to deride her character: for Pope, Montagu represents a series of contradictions and antitheses that reveals her status as the 'dirty' Sappho.

The title Sappho was therefore laden with too many contradictions to be used consistently to any effect by women writers; as shown with Pope and Montagu, its easy adaptation from a name of praise to one of accusation indicates its instability. This may suggest why, broadly, eighteenth-century women writers rarely engage with Sappho's work even though Dacier's translations and Philips's *Spectator* issues were attempting to move her away from her difficult reputation. Sappho's presence in this thesis is therefore relatively minor, however this discussion has suggested the ways in which women

⁸⁵ *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. Fairer and Gerrard, p. 81.

⁸⁶ See TE iii.ii. 99.

⁸⁷ Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Comet of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 352.

writers of the period were trying to re-write those figures from mythology who posed difficult or uneasy questions about the nature of a female classicism. This topic is explored more fully in Chapter I by examining the ways in which women writers assume or use the figure of the muse to elevate and justify their own experiences as writers. Sappho may have represented this ‘Ancient Claime’ for Finch, but the goddesses who inspired poetry also offered a fertile opportunity for women writers to re-assert their own ability.

This thesis will explore both the methods by which eighteenth-century women achieved this knowledge and the poetic experiments that followed by focusing on the period between 1700 and 1750, a time that has traditionally been termed ‘Augustan’. In ‘The Triumvirate of Poets’, Elizabeth Tollet celebrates ‘this Augustan age’, likening Addison to Virgil, Matthew Prior to Horace and Pope to Homer. The availability of the classics is a topic also discussed in Sarah Dixon’s ‘On the xxxth of January’:

Whilst shining Characters from Greece or Rome,
By learned Authors, are transmitted Home;
We trace the Glories of each distant Age,
And read with Pleasure the instructive Page.⁸⁸

Dixon’s poem connects this literary movement with the execution of Charles I in 1649 on January 30. The act of forming a national corpus of literature elicits from her an awareness of the past and how it is received: Dixon hopes to ‘Give to [Charles’s] Memory, at least, its Due.’⁸⁹ Dixon’s poem forms an optimistic pair with John Dryden’s ‘To the Earl of Roscommon on his Excellent Essay on Translated Verse’. In the first of

⁸⁸ Sarah Dixon, *Poems on Several Occasions* (Canterbury, 1740), p. 126.

⁸⁹ Dixon, *Poems*, p. 127.

the commendatory poems in *An Essay of Translated Verse. By the Earl of Roscommon* (1684), Dryden writes of how:

The wit of Greece, the gravity of Rome,
Appear exalted in the British loom;
The Muses' empire is restored again
In Charles his reign, and by Roscommon's pen.
(ll. 26-29)

Although Dryden refers to the 1660 restoration of Charles II, he registers like Dixon the flourishing of translation (and other poetic modes) that comes with a stable monarchy. Given that the opening of Dixon's poem is somewhat analogous to Dryden's, as is the political undertone, it would not be unfair to suggest that 'To the Earl of Roscommon' provided a model for 'On the xxxth of January'. For women in the eighteenth century, Dryden's closing lines offered a glimpse into the future for how the great writers of the classical world would be available:

Now let the few beloved by Jove,
[...]
On equal terms with ancient wit engage,
Nor mighty Homer fear, nor sacred Virgil's page:
Our English palace opens wide in state,
And without stooping they may pass the gate.
(‘To the Earl of Roscommon’, ll. 73-78)

It has been suggested that in *An Essay of Translated Verse* Roscommon had implicitly imagined Dryden as the head of a new generation of translator-poets who together would herald in this stately vision.⁹⁰ The above lines refer to Aeneas's visit to Evander in the eighth book of the *Aeneid*, and just as the foundations of Rome were identified in Latium, Dryden implied that in the near future translations would continue to flourish.

⁹⁰ See H. A. Mason, 'Cliques Puffery in Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse?*', *Notes and Queries* 37.3 (1990), 296.

The perception of a classically literate woman continued throughout the period and was matched by a culture in which the classics became more available. The major works of the Greek and Roman periods were steadily translated over the first fifty years of the eighteenth century, but they often appeared in miscellanies and periodicals. With this shift that meant the classics were available in a more public (and therefore more accessible) form came a suggestion of a feminine classicism. It is important to recognise, however, how male critics responded to this emerging literary culture that meant the classics were no longer the preserve of the male upper classes. One text that is representative of this changing literary culture is Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, which was published in instalments between 1715 and 1720. Pope's Homer was targeted at the generation of readers who were familiar with *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* not only for their entertainment but also for their refinement. The text appealed to women readers according to Claudia N. Thomas for two reasons: firstly, Pope sentimentalised the text so that readers feel sympathy for the heroic characters in place of the typical readings that focused on the martial frame and violent themes of the epic (which were typical masculine responses to the work); secondly, scenes and characters are adjusted to resemble patterns of refined behaviour that could be seen also in the genteel culture of the eighteenth century.⁹¹ Pope's notes throughout the volumes also targeted a female audience.⁹² However whilst many women responded positively to the work, it was also subject to many accusations of not being a rigorous, scholarly text. Much of this criticism focused on Pope's handling of Homer: Richard Bentley famously commented of the translation that 'it is a pretty poem, Mr Pope; but you must not call it Homer'.⁹³ Bentley's comment genders the translation: because of its 'pretty', feminine qualities, Pope's Homer can be degraded. With this gendering of the classics, wider questions emerge

⁹¹ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 25-35.

⁹² These notes are discussed also in Chapter IV.

⁹³ Thomas Bentley, *A Letter to Mr. Pope, Occasioned by Sober Advice from Horace* (1735), p. 14.

about the ways in which a feminine classicism could be conceived of and criticised. Bezaleel Morrice thought of Pope's translation that: 'He smoothes [Homer] o'er, and gives him grace and ease, / And makes him fine, the beaux and belles to please.'⁹⁴ Those who read Pope's Homer also read the contemporary periodicals. As suggested by Bentley and Morrice, contemporary readers found something shallow in these works: they are 'fine' and without edge, designed only to 'please'. Classical texts that were orientated towards a feminine culture, then, might be said to exist in a diluted form. Learned women were defined contradictorily as both harsh and abrasive and gentle and pretty. These polarised concepts that surrounded women and the classics imply a culture that was still attempting to understand the changing boundaries of what constituted acceptable feminine behaviour especially regarding learning.

In spite of the increasing availability of translations in the period, this thesis engages in a discussion of the ways in which the classics could be accessed from the periphery. In exploring these alternative modes of reception, it should be unsurprising that the notion of a female classicism in the first half of the eighteenth century is characterised by experimentation and innovation, which was then replaced in the 1750s with the emergence of professional women translators including Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Fielding. From the comments on Pope's Homer, it might be inferred that what the text lacked in rigour it made up for in its desirability to those 'beaus and belles' referenced in Morrice. The increasing availability of the classics during the period ran parallel to the period's obsession with objects. Alongside the opening out of the classics through translation, the material culture of the eighteenth century represents another way in which women could learn of the ancient world. The concerns expressed by male critics of Pope's translation of the *Iliad* can also be applied to the notion of a feminine

⁹⁴ Quoted in David Hopkins, 'Homer', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 3*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins, pp. 165-95 (p. 175).

classicism. Was it too gaudy, too shallow, and something purely for display? These concerns were also present for the emerging consumer culture of the early eighteenth century. Yet embedded in the popular objects of the period's material culture are vital lessons regarding the methods by which women received the classics. These diminutive objects are indicative of the condensed nature of the classics in the period; even if various criticisms attended these objects they reveal a method of reception that enabled women to receive the classics in an acceptable and sociable way.

It is a commonplace of eighteenth-century historiography to write of the period as one obsessed with objects, with discussions using Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* as a compendium of what was considered vital, for better or for worse, to a young woman of the period. As part of his literary portrait of a woman's library in *Spectator* 37 (1711), Joseph Addison connected objects with books:

The very sound of a Lady's Library gave me a great Curiosity to see it; and, as it was some time before the Lady came to me, I had an Opportunity of turning over a great many of her Books, which were ranged together in a very beautiful Order. At the End of the Folio's (which were finely bound and gilt) were great Jars of China placed one above another in a very noble piece of Architecture. The Quarto's were separated from the Octavo's by a pile of smaller Vessels, which rose in a delightful Pyramid. The Octavo's were bounded by Tea Dishes of all Shapes, Colours and Sizes, which were so disposed on a wooden Frame, that they looked like one continued Pillar indented with the finest Strokes of Sculpture, and stained with the greatest Variety of Dyes [...] In the midst of the Room was a little Japan Table, with a Quire of gilt Paper upon it, and on the Paper a Silver Snuff-box made in the shape of a little Book.⁹⁵

This tableau should be read in two ways. A cue should be taken from the snuff box 'made in the shape of a little Book', which implies that these objects not only were read by women but also that they can (and should) be read to learn of contemporary women's literary habits. However, Addison also implies that these books are mere collectibles with no true worth alongside the bric-a-brac also present in the study. The 'great

⁹⁵ S i. 153.

Curiosity' of a lady's library presents a tableau of 'finely bound and gilt' objects that turns the books into objects. Trifling as they may have seemed, however, these objects and the material culture of the eighteenth century played a vital part of the reception of the classics in the period, and from which larger comments about how women accessed the ancient world can be drawn. Examining how objects acted as transmitters of the classics means to engage with the same contemporary stereotypes that dismissed women's engagement with the ancient world.

Constructions of the identities of both women and objects suggested their delicacy and fragility. For instance, Edmund Burke wrote of 'Beautiful objects small' in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757):

There is a wide difference between admiration and love. The sublime, which is the cause of the former, always dwells on great objects, and terrible; the latter on small ones, and pleasing; we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us; in one case we are forced, in the other we are flattered into compliance. [...] So that attending to their quantity, beautiful objects are comparatively small.⁹⁶

Burke also observed how 'An air of robustness and strength is very prejudicial to beauty. An appearance of delicacy, and even of fragility, is almost essential to it.'⁹⁷ Likewise, Johnson defines a 'toy' in his *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) as 'A pretty commodity; a trifle; a thing of no value. [...] A plaything; a bauble. [...] [A] Matter of no importance.'⁹⁸ This equation of both women and objects as pleasing, small and fragile raises questions for the potency of how the latter could act as a conduit for the classics in the period in much the same way that the concept of a female classicism was thought of as below those of the Augustan male writers. These objects, however, raise important

⁹⁶ Edmund Burke, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. T. O. McLoughlin and James T. Boulton, 9 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981-2015), i. 273.

⁹⁷ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, ed. McLoughlin and Boulton, i. 275.

⁹⁸ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), s.v. 'Toy'.

questions about the modes of reception that were available to women that enabled them to engage with the classical world. Maxine Berg observes that ‘A key point about these objects [...] was their modernity. They were not the luxuries of ostentation and excess associated with oriental despots, but those of novelty, fashion, and ingenuity.’⁹⁹ Indeed, these objects also offer condensed equivalents of contemporary modes of reception that enabled women to access the classics: they operate with the power of the mock-heroic, they utilise classical topoi and, in being gathered together, they function with the power of the miscellany. In this way, these objects not only reveal a culture in which routes into the classics were to be found everywhere but they also form an introduction to the themes explored through the separate chapters of this thesis that focus on the methods of reception women used to access the classics.

In his essay on ‘Thing Theory’, Bill Brown wrote of the ‘audacious ambiguity’ of the word ‘things’: ‘It denotes a massive generality as well as particularities, even your particularly prized possessions [...] The word designates the concrete yet ambiguous within the everyday [...] It designates an amorphous characteristic of a frankly irresolvable enigma.’¹⁰⁰ The whirling set of contradictions that attends the word ‘things’ is not dissimilar to the power of the mock-heroic, as suggested by the opening lines of Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*: ‘What might Contests rise from trivial Things, / I sing’ (I.2-3). Pope’s poem describes a culture obsessed with the ‘trivial’, yet the rhetoric of epic allows him to transform these objects; Brown’s meanings also identify the potency of these curiosities. The potential of these items can be seen in ‘Thursday’, one of Montagu’s *Six Town Eclogues* (1747), in which she depicts a card game between

⁹⁹ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ Bill Brown, ‘Thing Theory’, *Critical Inquiry* 28.1 (2001), 1-22 (p. 4).

Cardelia and Smilinda, two fashionable ladies.¹⁰¹ In the poem Cardelia asks her friend and the accompanying Betty Loveit to:

Behold this Equipage by Mathers wrought,
With fifty Guineas (a great pen'orth)¹⁰² bought.
See, on the Tooth pick Mars and Cupid strive,
And both the struggling Figures seem alive.
Upon the bottom, see the Queen's bright Face,
A Myrtle Foliage round the Thimble Case.
Jove, Jove himself does on the Scissars shine;
The Metal, and the Workmanship Divine!
(ll. 30-37)

Various details in Montagu's poem warrant attention. Montagu relies on the juxtaposition of the classical culture embossed on the toothpick with its diminutive size, an effect achieved in mock-epic works generally. This small case has been 'wrought', casting toyshop owner Charles Mathers almost like Vulcan forging the shields of Achilles and Aeneas. Alongside this the use of the word 'Equipage' carries connotations of both war and ornament, a pairing represented in the figures of Mars and Cupid on the item. In the period, an 'equipage' also meant, alongside the traditional martial meaning, a metal case containing thimbles, scissors and tweezers, etc.¹⁰³ An example of a woman's 'Equipage' can be found in Figure One, a toilet case dated approximately to 1750 and engraved with Pygmalion on one side, Mercury and Herse on the other, and Cupids on the lid. Inside the case is a folding knife, a pair of scissors, a bodkin, a pair of tweezers and an ivory writing tablet. Also worthy of note is the fact that Cardelia thinks the item was a bargain (a 'pen'orth'); partaking in this early consumer culture, according to

¹⁰¹ The volume and date given refer to the collection of Montagu's poetry that was edited by Horace Walpole. However the 'Eclogues' were written during the 1710s and were then pirated by Edmund Curll. 'Thursday', 'Monday' and 'Friday' appeared in his *Court Poems* (1716).

¹⁰² The word 'pen'orth' (31) has been corrected from GH, which has it as 'pen'north', based on the 1747 edition. The *OED* has 'pen'orth' and 'pen'worth' (used in Curll) as accepted versions of the word. Grundy and Halsband's source is the Harrowby Manuscript Trust, Sandon Hall (Stafford), but given its unusual form the 1747 version has been used.

¹⁰³ *The Dictionary of Fashion History*, ed. Valerie Cumming, Phillis Emily Cunnington and Cecil Willett Cunnington, 2nd edn (Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 101.



Figure One: Toilet Case with Scenes from the ‘Metamorphoses’.

Maxine Berg, meant the practice of a ‘form of enlightened knowledge.’¹⁰⁴ Whilst the satire of the poem might rely on the suggestion that these items were cheap, it also suggests how women were able to economically and aesthetically assess items in relation to the images printed thereon. That the embossed figures of Mars and Cupid ‘seem alive’ in Montagu’s poem is a key observation in terms of defining how these objects contributed to an overall sense during the eighteenth century that the classics were everywhere: it might have been Arabia that breathed from Belinda’s jewellery box in

¹⁰⁴ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 266.

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, but as pendants (the ring on top of the case implies the use of a chain) these classical curiosities also exerted a significant influence on their female owners.

The increasing availability of objects decorated with mythological scenes was matched by the increasing variety of translations that made the classics accessible. One object in particular that warrants extended consideration is the fan. Just as new print technologies meant books were cheaper, from the 1720s printed fans replaced hand-painted ones, meaning these items also became both cheaper and easily produced in large quantities.¹⁰⁵ Pope included a fan as part of the Baron's sacrifice in the early editions of *The Rape of the Lock* – the line 'A Fan, a Garter, half a Pair of Gloves' was replaced with 'There lay three Garters, half a Pair of Gloves' (II.39) from 1715 – and in his *A Key to the Lock* (1715) he explained, 'One of the Things he sacrifices is a Fan, which both for its gaudy Show and perpetual Flutt'ring, has been made the Emblem of Woman.'¹⁰⁶ Moreover Pope's 'On a Fan of the Author's Design, in which was Painted the Story of Cephalus and Procris with the Motto, *Aura Veni*', which is thought to have influenced Gay's *The Fan* (1714) and was first printed in *Spectator* 527 (1712) before being included in *The Works of Mr. Alexander Pope's Works* (1717), suggests the sexist associations of these objects.¹⁰⁷ Ovid's story from Book VII of the *Metamorphoses* explains the fatal consequences of not trusting your lover. When first published in the *Spectator*, Pope added the reason for writing the short poem: 'This History painted on a Fan, which I presented to a Lady, gave Occasion to my growing poetical'.¹⁰⁸ With this statement, the notion that Pope made the classics available to women takes on a tangible,

¹⁰⁵ Angela Rosenthal, 'Unfolding Gender: Women and the "Secret" Sign Language of Fans in Hogarth's Work', in *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, ed. Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal (Princeton: N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 120-141 (p. 123).

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Pope, *A Key to the Lock* (1715), p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ In *Imitations of English Poets* (1741), the poem was named 'Waller. On a Fan of the Author's Design, in which was Painted the Story of Cephalus and Procris with the Motto, *Aura Veni*'.

¹⁰⁸ S iv. 381.

material meaning: aside from his translations, this gift of the fan to a woman strikingly summarises Pope's role as a giver of the classics. Typically, however, this is not a simple example of gift-giving. In the poem Pope explains:

In Delia's hand this toy is fatal found,
Nor could that fabled dart more surely wound:
Both gifts destructive to the givers prove;
Alike both lovers fall by those they love.
Yet guiltless too this bright destroyer lives,
At random wounds, nor knows the wound she gives:
She views the story with attentive eyes,
And pities Procris, while her lover dies.
(ll. 7-14)

As in the battle at the end of *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope here depicts women as unable to control their own abilities in social situations. Delia is a 'bright destroyer', her 'fatal' fan here cast as the javelin that kills Procris in Ovid; moreover she is more invested in the world of classical myth than modern reality, parodying how all-encompassing the classics were for women. Pope's gift of the fan, then, whilst suggestive of the ways in which the classics were present in the material culture, also implies the ways in which the mythology of the Greek and Roman worlds could become a derogatory source of irony against those women who used these decorated items daily without an awareness of their actual implications. In the *London Tradesman* (1747) Robert Campbell considered the occupation of fan making in the following terms: 'The Fan-Maker is an humble Servant of the Ladies, and makes Sticks for Fans of Box, Ivory, etc. and puts on the Mounts after they are finished by the Painter.'¹⁰⁹ However Campbell defines a fan painter separately: 'It requires no great Fancy, or much Skill in Drawing or Painting [...] a Glare of Colours is more necessary than a polite Invention: Though now and then, if he is able to sketch out some Emblematical Figure, or some pretty quaint Whim, he has [a] Chance

¹⁰⁹ Robert Campbell, *The London Tradesman. Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, both Liberal and Mechanic, now practised in the Cities of London and Westminster* (1747), p. 211.



Figure Two: 'The Abduction of Helen', (circa 1740s).



Figure Three: Dido and Aeneas painted on an ivory fan (c. 1700).

to please better'.¹¹⁰ Yet painted fans seem to have been more in currency than Campbell's 'now and then' implies, and they were another vital object with which women may have come into contact with the ancient world. In *Spectator* 328 (1712), Richard Steele printed a letter that both extolled and decried the writer's wife's proficiency in all she does: 'tis the immoderate Fondness she has to them that I lament, and that what is only design'd for the innocent Amusement and Recreation of Life, is become the whole Business and Study of hers.'¹¹¹ John Gay's mock-epic poem, *The Fan* asks 'What Story shall the Wide Machine unfold?'¹¹² Mythological scenes and images were popular artistic subjects. Figure Two, for example, depicts the abduction of Helen, whereas in Figure Three can be found Dido and Aeneas. These fans thus exemplify the use of classical topoi throughout the period; these fans offered a wider variety of motifs and stories from the ancient world to their owners and they are suggestive of the imaginative potency of visually depicting single myths in a public way.

Yet a word of caution must attend these classically-adorned items objects, for whilst they had the potential to educate they also could be pornographic. The snuff box in Figure Four, for example, depicts Jupiter's seduction of Europa. In Robert Dodsley's play *The Toy-Shop* (1735), a young man requests a snuff-box 'with some pretty Device on the Inside of the Lid; something that may serve to joke upon, or help one to an Occasion to be witty, that is, smutty, now and then.'¹¹³ In moving from objects owned by women to those owed by men, this overt sexualising of the classics should remind us that the classics offered an opportunity to genteel men to raise questions about sexuality in daily social contexts. In this way, the man's request for something 'pretty' and 'smutty' is a reminder that this material culture does not represent a complete transference of the

¹¹⁰ Campbell, *London Tradesman*, p. 211.

¹¹¹ S iii. 205.

¹¹² John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Vinton A. Dearing, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), i. 67 (II.42).

¹¹³ Robert Dodsley, *The Toy-Shop: A Dramatick Satire* (1735), p. 23.



Figure Four: Cartouche-shaped snuffbox depicting Europa and the Bull.

classics from men to women. As explored throughout various chapters of this thesis, many of the motifs and topoi of the ancient world posed issues for women readers. The man's request in Dodsley's play suggests how the pornographic elements of classical mythology posed issues for women within this consumer culture: the classics were still part of a jocular repartee that focused on extreme forms of masculinity. More generally women had to balance the ambivalent gender associations that came with their learning of the classics: for example Carter's correspondence with Edward Cave and the series of poetic responses to her after she published 'The Riddle' and a translation of Anacreon's *Ode 30* in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1734 and 1735 recognised her transgression of gender boundaries.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ See Jennifer Wallace, 'Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations', in *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall, pp. 132-52 (pp. 137-41).

Montagu's poem identifies Charles Mathers as the creator of these small objects. Mathers owned a toyshop at Temple Bar, and his work was praised in a long letter in *The Tatler* 142 (1710), which celebrated him as 'a Person of particular Genius, the First that brought Toys in Fashion, and Bawbles to Perfection.'¹¹⁵ 'I won't pretend to furnish out an Inventory of all the valuable Commodities that are to be found at his Shop,' the letter continues; instead, it focuses on those items deemed 'most curious' by the writer, including: pocket books, whips, seals, pistols, 'incomparable' tweezer-cases, and canes.¹¹⁶ The reference to Mathers in Montagu's poem implies these mythological toothpicks and scissors were the everyday fancy of women of the period. Brief searches of other common objects – snuff boxes, jewellery cases, and, the newest addition to a woman's inventory, tweezer cases – reveal the pervasive presence of the classics in the everyday.¹¹⁷ However, it was not just the items for sale that might have posed an opportunity for women to interact with the classics. As the concept of a fixed retail shop developed during the eighteenth century, and the size of these shops also increased, there was an increased pressure on shopkeepers to ensure the interiors of these buildings were equally decorous. As explained by Clare Walsh: 'The seductive design of shops was to encourage customers to stay and look around, to see shopping as a leisurely pursuit and an exciting experience.'¹¹⁸ Much, then, might be made of Daniel Defoe's description of the expenses incurred in the 'fitting up' of modern shops in *The Compleat English Tradesman* (1727):

By fitting up, I do not mean furnishing their shops with wares and goods to sell; for in that [our ancestors] came up to us in every particular, and perhaps went beyond us too; but in painting and gilding fine shelves, shutters, boxes, glass-doors, sashes and the like,

¹¹⁵ *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), ii. 311-12.

¹¹⁶ *Tatler*, ed. Bond, ii. 312. Mathers is also referenced in *Spectator* 328 (1712), 503 (1712) and 570 (1714).

¹¹⁷ John Breval's *The Art of Dress, A Heroi-Comical Poem* (1717), p. 16 records how, 'By Faction guided, Ladies patch their Face, / And to the Watch now add the Tweezer Case.'

¹¹⁸ Clare Walsh, 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History* 8.3 (1995), 157-76 (p. 168).

in which they tell us now, 'tis a small matter to lay out two or three hundred pounds to fit up a Pastry-Cook's, or a Toy-shop.¹¹⁹

Quite what was painted and gilded on these fine shelves may not be known, yet the period's fascination with the ancient world may mean it is not unfair to suggest that myths may well have been presented to the fashionable shoppers of the period. Johnson defined a toy-shop as 'A shop where playthings and little nice manufactures are sold,' continuing the characterisation of these spaces as insubstantial and feminine from the definition of the word 'toy'.

Meanwhile in *Spectator* 10 it is explained how these spaces could be tiring: 'if [women] make an Excursion to a Mercer's or a Toy-shop, so great a Fatigue makes them unfit for anything else the Day after.'¹²⁰ The design of these shops, tiring as they were, nonetheless had the desired effect: in 'Soliloquy, on an Empty Purse', Mary Jones resolves, amidst other things, to, if 'Catch'd by the eye, no more shall stop / At Wildey's toys, or Pinchbeck's shop'.¹²¹ That Jones's poem is a 'soliloquy' implies both the private reflection of her mediation and the public world of shopping in which she engages. Jones refers to George Wildey, whose shop was found on the corner of Ludgate Street, and to Christopher Pinchbeck, who invented the alloy Pinchbeck, which is made of copper and zinc and that closely resembles gold. Like Montagu's bargain items, Jones's reference to Pinchbeck thus suggests the artificial quality of the items that may have attracted women from across the classes: gathering items embossed or gilded with classical scenes may have not been the activities solely of the upper classes. This discussion contextualises the scenes of shopping common in novels by women later in the period – for example in Sarah Fielding's *The History of Ophelia* (1760) and Frances Burney's *Evelina: Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) – that now become laden with

¹¹⁹ Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Tradesman* (1727), p. 312.

¹²⁰ S i. 46.

¹²¹ Mary Jones, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (Oxford, 1750), p. 102.

the potential that the young heroines could, in walking into a shop, learn of the ancient world. Indeed women may not have even had to enter the shop: the democratising influence of these shop designs is demonstrated in the figure of Ann Yearsley who, when asked about the classical allusions in her poetry by Hannah More, explained ‘she had taken them from little ordinary prints which hung in a shop-window.’¹²² Living in Bristol and from the working classes, Yearsley’s anecdote suggests that it was not just those living in London who might have benefitted from the consumer revolution, but indeed anyone who had access to these local shops. Moreover, the order in which women were introduced to the classics would have been ungovernable and without boundaries: myths, texts and topoi would have all meshed into part of a wider consumer experience. Melinda Alliker Rabb has recently argued that the miscellany is ‘precisely the distinguishing quality of the toy-shop’.¹²³ All manner of objects and references would have been available to women, encouraging them to make connections; equally in representing the classics on objects designated for women these items would have modelled the idea that the classics were accessible. The toy-shops of Mathers and Wildey were therefore vital forums wherein the classics could be found during the eighteenth century. Women’s interactions with these objects should therefore not be underestimated: if mock-heroic in their dimensions, these objects are representative of the ways in which women encountered the classics. Instead of understanding these objects as being light or trifling, then, they become key transmitters of the classics in their use of condensed mythologies and topoi from the ancient world. This thesis focuses on these alternative methods of reception because they suggested the ways in which women could experiment and adapt the classics themselves.

¹²² Ann Yearsley, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1785), p. x.

¹²³ Melinda Alliker Rabb, *Miniature and the English Imagination: Literature, Cognition, and Small-Scale Culture, 1650-1765* (2019), p. 113.

Moreover, to focus on how shops were designed also raises the question of how homes of the eighteenth century were decorated and furnished in a way that would enabled women of all classes to access the classics. For example, the ceiling of Lady Isabella Finch's Great Saloon (Figure Five) was adorned with 102 painted scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Although the design was by William Kent, Juliet Learmouth suggests the prominent presence of the goddess Diana – who, like Isabella Finch, never married and was a skilled huntress – implies Finch's input into the ceiling's pattern.¹²⁴ Scenes present in the ceiling's plans include: the Judgement of Paris, Daphne and Apollo and Narcissus. Again the principle of the miscellany might be said to be at work in this design as the stories of classical mythology are presented alongside one another without artistic boundaries. Whilst Isabella Finch was of the upper classes, the open presence of the classics in her home also provides the potential that servants, in spending their time amidst these objects and designs, would also be able to learn of the ancient world. Indeed, these objects would not demand literacy on the part of the viewer, thereby elevating their didactic potential. Hence, this important material culture has applicability not only to women like Isabella Finch and Montagu but also the working-class poets of the period like Yearsley or Leapor who worked in country houses. Roy Porter outlines that the increasing acquisition of shop-bought objects 'created daily delights for ordinary folks.'¹²⁵ In 'An Unanswerable Apology for the Rich', Irish writer Mary Barber describes how 'The good Castalio must provide / Brocade, and Jewels, for his Bride. / Her Toilet shines with Plate emboss'd, / What Sums her Lace, and Linen cost!'¹²⁶ It is not stated what the plate has been 'emboss'd' with, but that Barber draws our attention to it, in the

¹²⁴ Juliet Learmouth, 'The London Townhouse of Lady Isabella Finch', *The Georgian Group Journal* 25 (2017), 1-22 (p. 14).

¹²⁵ Roy Porter, 'Material Pleasures in the Consumer Society', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (Macmillan, 1996), pp. 19-35 (pp. 23-24).

¹²⁶ Barber, *Poems*, p. 18; emphasis mine.

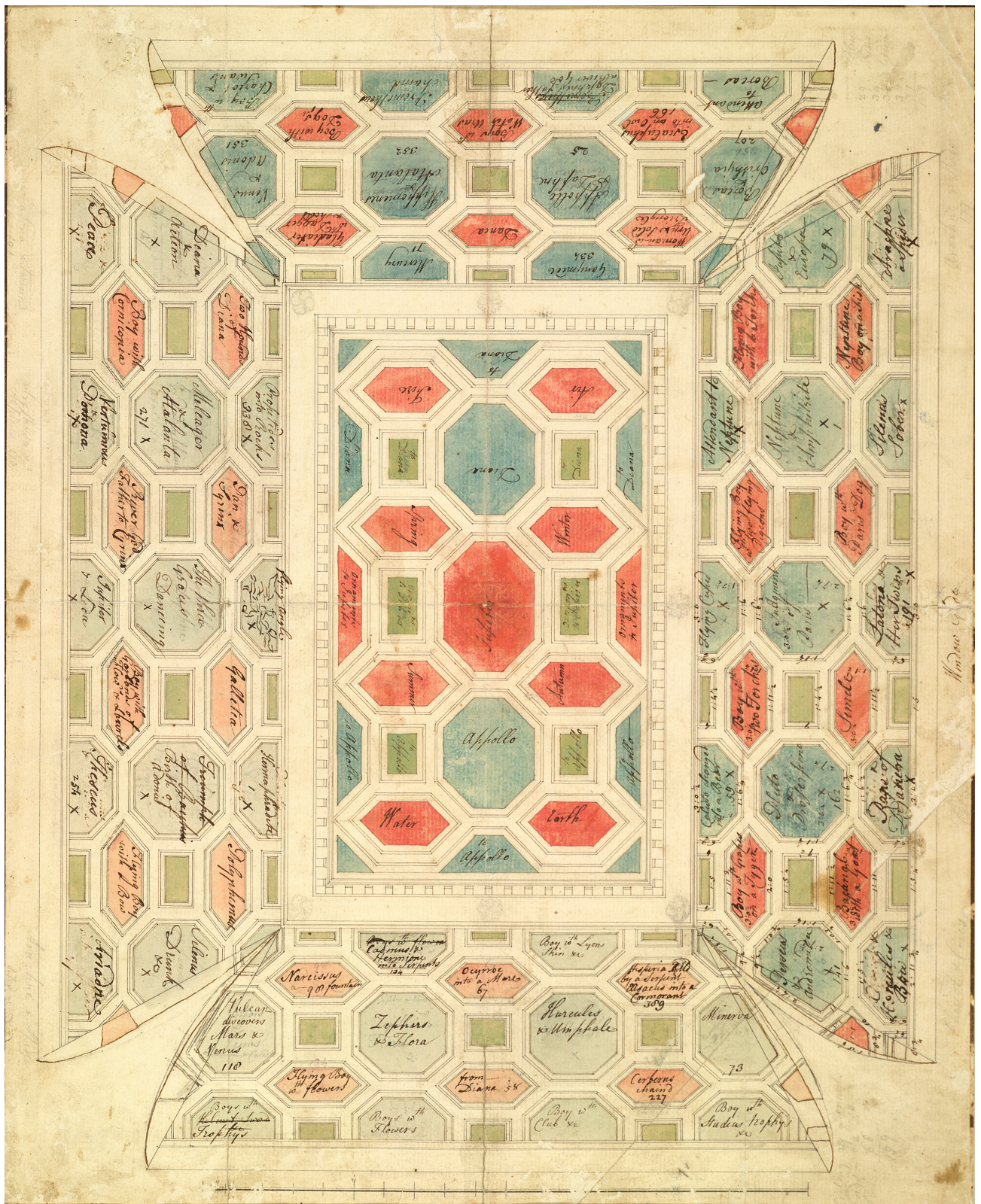


Figure Five: Designs for the saloon ceiling of 44 Berkeley Square for Lady Isabella Finch.

'Toilet' especially, emphasises how women would have had these items in their private, personal space.

Classicism was not the only decorative scheme used during the period: the hugely popular Chinoiserie craze often meant the implements of the feminine tea table were decorated with an oriental style, as referenced in Addison's *Spectator* issue on the lady's library. Nonetheless the material culture of the eighteenth century would have allowed women to learn of the myths of the ancient world. Indeed, as translation rendered the ancient authors in an accessible manner, these objects offered a mode of reception that transcends class and even literacy. Through these small objects the classics could be consumed by all, whether it be finding Jove on a pair of scissors, Europa on a snuff box, or Dido on a fan. Quite the opposite of the definitions that suggests these items were gaudy, useless and, to borrow a phrase from Johnson, 'of no importance', these items serve as a poignant reminder that women accessed the classics in various forms throughout the period. These objects both worked as a route to the classics and represent the various modes of reception that are discussed in detail throughout each chapter of this thesis: the difficulty of classical models, the freedom of the miscellany, the potency of *topoi* and the condensed mock-heroic. The classics were to be found in places both unexpected and private – it should be unsurprising therefore that women's writing of the eighteenth century drew on the stories and genres of the ancient world with a large amount of variety and ingenuity. Wilson's metaphor of the echo chamber casts contemporary life as a space wherein it would have been difficult for women not to engage with the classics. As shall be shown throughout the coming chapters, women writers often used the classics to form their own environments in which their learning became less an act of transgression and more an expression of their desire for parity. These spaces, which include a world of Horatian retirement, the mythological locales of Ovid and the epic underworld, among many others, elevated women's experiences and

poetry. The notion of a female classicism that emerges throughout this work, then, fully rejects both Sappho's connotations of inconstancy and the accusations of gaudiness levelled at Pope's Homer and the material culture of the period. Women responded to the re-evaluation of the classics that was taking place during the eighteenth century, but because of the variety with which they accessed the ancient world as discussed previously the female classicism here presented is flexible and alert to those aspects of the classical world that had perhaps been ignored or missed before. In the echo chamber, women were able to react to whatever aspects of the classics they felt that spoke to them – this thesis seeks to suggest not only what they heard but also how they replied to a world that had, until only recently, been denied to them.

Chapter I builds on Penelope Wilson's brief outline of Sappho and the muses as points of entry for women writers into the classics by offering an in-depth examination not only of these female figures from the classical world but also the major translators of the period and the ways in which they were received by women readers. Beginning with *The Nine Muses, or, Poems Written by Nine Several Ladies Upon the Death of the Late Famous John Dryden* (1700), a collection of elegies that responded to the death of Dryden, it is argued that the six women who contributed to the collection used the figure of the muse to both mourn Dryden and to revise the traditional associations of the muse as a figure that rendered them a troublesome figure for women writers. However it is suggested that the poets throughout the collection celebrate the muse's elevated position, which prepares for many of the discussions throughout this thesis that suggest the ways in which women repeatedly attempt to revise the myths, figures and spaces of the ancient world. The other point of entry discussed is that of the relationship between women readers and the male translators. It was suggested that Pope's gift of a fan on which a

mythological scene was painted more largely can be taken as an analogy for how he translated the classics into English, thus making them more accessible for women readers. Chapter I therefore also explores how the women writers of this thesis closely engaged with the various major translators that rendered the classics into English, specifically naming Dryden, Congreve, Addison and Pope. In adding these personal accounts of reception, this chapter establishes the importance of the translations and translators as providing a method of accessing the classics – the ensuing poetic experiments with these modes of writing are then explored in the following chapters.

Chapter II continues to consider the ways in which the classics were broken down by exploring the role of the fragment in Horace's reception in the eighteenth century. Horace is a constant presence in women's writing of the period: it is common that at least one of his *Odes* is translated or imitated within the pages of an individual's *Poems on Several Occasions*. However this should perhaps be unsurprising as Horace, like the other classical authors, was subjected to a process of fragmentation by the contemporary literary culture; moreover it is suggested that Horace especially was understood as a figure best suited to female readers for his affable teaching. Whilst Horace's focus on the domestic and use of motifs including retreat might have enamoured him to female readers, the fragmentation of his poetry encouraged women writers to experiment with the Horatian voice. This chapter therefore offers another point of entry women writers used to access the classics whilst also demonstrating how they adapted classical poetry in their own work to firmly suggest how the classics could be portrayed as feminine in a positive way.

The women discussed throughout Chapter III demonstrate a dark awareness of Ovid's poetry that is tied to their bodies, their social reputation and their standing as women. This chapter is again concerned with how classical authors were received through fragments in the period. Ovid's reception is akin to Horace's – fragmented but

also gathered into collaborative translations – but this chapter will instead explore how the Ovidian theme of change is represented by women writers, suggesting how their work could adopt classical topoi through this splintered process. Beginning with the *Heroides*, it shall be stressed how women writers between 1700 and 1730 recognised within the text the themes of love, sexuality and gossip, hence the popular presence of the Ovidian epistle within women’s writing that was nonetheless experimental. The second half of this chapter is concerned with the reception of the myth of Narcissus through Milton’s Eve and Pope’s Belinda, arguing that the topos of the looking glass so common to women’s writing of the period is a reflection of Ovid’s myth. Exploring classical reception through these various topoi, it shall again be demonstrated how women’s writing was intensely alert to the various fragments available to them; the poems examined suggest how women writers used Ovid’s myths to amplify their criticism of both how women were treated by men and governed by social codes that prized their beauty and little else.

Women’s involvement in the reception history of the epic genre is largely unwritten; moreover the role of eighteenth-century women writers in this history has often been missed. Chapter IV argues, however, that the mock heroic, a genre intrinsic to the period, afforded women various opportunities to engage with the epic mode. Exploring the reception of Dryden’s and Congreve’s sentimental Homeric episodes in *Examen Poeticum* in the work of Elizabeth Tollet and Sarah Fielding, the chapter suggests how women were able to access the epic genre through the margins of miscellany volumes that simultaneously implies points of entry into the classics whilst also further demarcating which parts of the genre might be applicable to women. However, with the mock heroic came the challenge of writing within a mode that simultaneously satirised women as it amplified their capabilities. This chapter will argue that women writers use the mock heroic to create their own literary worlds in which they

can write of their own histories and experiences. This will be shown predominantly through an examination of Mary Leapor's presentation of the underworld in her poetry, a space that, if brimming with mock-heroic energy, nonetheless allowed her to write of and elevate the labouring classes with the rhetoric and grandeur of the epic genre.

Having explored the ways through which women entered the classics at the margins, picking up the literary hints available to them in the echo chamber of eighteenth-century classicism, the thesis will conclude with a brief look ahead to the age of the professional classicist. Focusing predominantly on the 1750s and the early 1760s, when Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Fielding published their renowned translations of Epictetus and Xenophon respectively, the notion of what it meant for a woman to now be contributing to the echo chamber itself recognises the developments in the various ways women adapted the classics as explored throughout this thesis.

CHAPTER I

Points of Entry

As the seventeenth century moved into the eighteenth, the classics were increasingly available in translation. This impetus was matched by the increase in female literacy from one percent in 1500 to (at least) twenty-five percent in 1714.¹²⁷ Although some women could read the classics in their original languages, the increasing accessibility of the ancient world meant women from across society could engage with the classics through various points of entry. This chapter will explore two sets of figures who offered women writers ways into the classics. The first group is the muses and the second is the major translators of the period – Dryden, Congreve, Addison and Pope – who contributed to a culture that overall made the classics accessible in English. In considering how women writers engaged with these groups – the first mythological and allegorical and the second real and literal – wider themes about women and the classics emerge that are also explored throughout this thesis. The ways in which the muses are adapted under a female pen to comment on the condition of the female reader and writer has wider implications for how women more broadly conceived of their increasing access to the classics and the potential that came with this to adapt the ancient world for their own intents. Making clear the importance of these points of entry, then, helps to identify the processes used by women writers of the eighteenth century to make the classics their own.

Women and the Muses

For women writers, the muse is a troubling female figure from antiquity. Though male writers have often looked to the muses for poetic inspiration, when they refer to living

¹²⁷ Statistics are from John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Harper Collins, 1997), p. 167. Brewer does highlight, however, that the data is based on signatures being indicative of reading ability.

women as muses (a popular trope from the Renaissance onwards) they do so with what Isobel Grundy calls a ‘suspect tradition of flattery’: whilst it is a compliment, it is one that firmly differentiates the female poet from the male poet.¹²⁸ The implication of providing poetic inspiration is that the muses do not write themselves; the relationship shared between male writers and the muses for the female poet is thus, ironically, uninspiring. The muses are a vital part of poetic composition, but consequently they have been at the mercy of the male writers with whom they work: for example, in Dryden’s *The Art of Poetry* (1683), the various adjectives used to describe them – including ‘resty’ (l. 39), ‘haughty’ (l. 123), ‘aspiring’ (l. 128), ‘darling’ (l. 208), ‘sluggish’ (l. 278), ‘dexterous’ (l. 359), ‘impious’ (l. 412), ‘fustian’ (l. 744), ‘generous’ (l. 934), ‘guilty’ (l. 950), ‘sullen’ (l. 953), and ‘infant’ (l. 1085) – overall create the image of a figure at points resistant to but reliant on the men who invoke their name. Whilst some of these terms are encouraging, there is also the question of whether or not the muse’s power is their own: again in *The Art of Poetry*, Dryden suggests ‘when Apollo does your Muse inspire, / Be not impatient to expose your fire’ (ll. 906-07). As if concerned with the suggestion that the muses were the sole power behind poetry, Dryden’s translation (working through Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux’s *L’Art Poétique* (1694), itself a translation of Horace’s *Ars Poetica*) reminds us that Apollo was the mythical guardian of the muses. Though female, the muses are difficult figures whose connotations require careful navigation by those without a formal education in the classics.

Yet at the beginning of the eighteenth century a poetry collection attempted to revise this traditional, unbalanced relationship. Written to mourn the death of Dryden in 1700, *The Nine Muses, or, Poems Written by Nine Several Ladies Upon the Death of the Late Famous John Dryden* (1700) introduces the topic of how women wrote of the

¹²⁸ Isobel Grundy, ‘The Poet and Her Muse’, in *The Timeless and Temporal: Writings in Honour of John Chalker by Friends and Colleagues*, ed. Elizabeth Maslen (Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1993), pp. 173-193 (pp. 175-76).

prolific male translators of the period. Moreover, the collection actively uses the figure of the muse from the female perspective, stressing their creativity and power in influencing writers and their literary works. In the days following Dryden's death on April 30 1700 a series of poetic tributes and elegies that celebrated his life emerged; bookseller Henry Playford organized the publication of *Luctus Britannici: Or the Tears of the British Muses; For the Death of John Dryden* (1700), with contributions primarily by men but including two female poets: Sarah Fyge Egerton and Elizabeth Thomas. Egerton would also contribute to *The Nine Muses*, which appeared several months after *Luctus Britannici* and saw six female poets, many of whom were already published writers by 1700, assume the personas of the nine muses: Delarivier Manley ('Melpomene' and 'Thalia'), Egerton ('Erato', 'Euterpe', and 'Terpsichore'), Mary Pix ('Clio'), Catharine Trotter ('Calliope'), Sarah Piers ('Urania') and Susanna Centlivre ('Polimnia').¹²⁹

Scholars have generally focused on the feminist implications of assuming the muse personae: Victoria Joule explores the passivity of the role, against which *The Nine Muses* poses a direct challenge in securing a public position for female mourners, whereas Kate Lilley suggests that in linking themselves to the muses 'these women trope themselves not only as the source of their own power and voice, but as the source of all poetic power.'¹³⁰ *The Nine Muses* represents a starting point of how women adapted the classics, a process that continued throughout the first fifty years of the period.

¹²⁹ Identification from a mixture of sources. Different hands in the copy of *The Nine Muses* at the British Library marginally identify Piers, Trotter and Pix. In 1696, Manley's *The Lost Lover, or, the Jealous Husband*, her first comedy, was printed. By 1700, Trotter had anonymously published the novella *The Adventures of a Young Lady* (1693) and had three plays performed on the London stage: *Agnes de Castro* (1695), *Fatal Friendship* (1698) and *Love at a Loss* (1700). Pix had also enjoyed success on the stage, with seven plays performed on or before 1700, whilst Centlivre's contribution to *The Nine Muses* was her first foray into the published world. Meanwhile, Egerton's *The Female Advocate* had caused a scandal in its direct argument with Robert Gould's *Love Given O'er* (1682/83).

¹³⁰ See Victoria Joule, 'Feminist Foremother? The Maternal Metaphor in Feminist Literary History and Delarivier Manley's *The Nine Muses* (1700)', *Women's Writing* 20.1 (2013), 32-48; Kate Lilley, 'True state within: Women's Elegy 1640-1740', in *Women, Writing, History, 1640-1740*, ed. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 72-92 (p. 75).

Hesiod's *Theogony* LXXV contains the story of the muses' conception by Zeus and Mnemosyne, though this text would not receive a comprehensive translation in English until 1728 by William Cooke, with a few manuscripts by John Penrose dating from around the beginning of the 1720s noting a fledgling interest in the Greek poet.¹³¹ As already implied, women readers did not have to look to Hesiod to learn of the muses for they were a common part of literary practice. The revisionist intention behind *The Nine Muses* can be identified, however, in directly considering Dryden's own relationship with the muse. In his prologue for *An Evening's Love*, written in 1668, Dryden imagines being recently married to the muse. But with their honeymoon already over, Dryden goes on to metamorphose the figure into an audience for whom it has become a chore to write:

now his honeymoon is gone and past,
Yet the ungrateful drudgery must last;
And he is bound, as civil Husbands do,
To strain himself in complaisance to you:
To write in pain, and counterfeit a bliss,
Like the faint-smacking of an after-kiss.
(ll. 5-10)

Further layering the variety of interpretations and enforced postures of the muse figure, Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia observe: 'From the classical conception of them as inspired, supreme practitioners of their arts who sang and danced at the festivities of Olympians and heroes, they came to be portrayed by men as either passive inspirers, rather like an Aladdin's lamp, or teasing jilts and jades.'¹³² This very claim would be levelled at Dryden by Thomas Shadwell in *The Medal of John Bayes* (1682), in

¹³¹ For more on Hesiod's reception in the eighteenth century, see: Stuart Gillespie, 'Hesiod Goes Augustan: An Early Translation of the *Theogony*', *Translation and Literature* 17 (2008), 197-209, and Arthur Sherbo, "'Hesiod' Cooke and the Subscription Game', *Studies in Bibliography* 41 (1988), 267-270.

¹³² *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 744.

which the actress Anne Reeve became ‘His prostituted Muse’.¹³³ Shadwell’s denigration of Dryden’s muse as his whore is in line with Germaine Greer’s wider argument about the degeneration of the mythological figure as an ‘important instrument in the embarrassing of the verbalizing female.’¹³⁴ However, according to James Winn Dryden adopted and appropriated this image of the ‘prostituted Muse’ in his praise of Anne Killigrew’s purity, conceding that he (with other male poets) had ‘Made prostitute and profligate the Muse’.¹³⁵ Winn goes on to suggest that ‘one of the great unrecognized strengths of Dryden’s art is his candour, his willingness to expose himself at his most vulnerable’.¹³⁶ In this instance, Winn affirms Greer’s concerns about the use of the muse as tool for jocular repartee. Within this position as friend and teacher, and as a conduit for the classics to the women of *The Nine Muses*, Dryden’s connection with the muse sits as one defined by a playful, affable and malleable conception of the goddesses.

Women writers also have to reconcile their relationship with the muse figure within the elegiac tradition. In his comments on elegies in *The Art of Poetry*, Dryden states:

I hate those lukewarm authors whose forced fire
 In a cold style describes a hot desire;
 That sigh by rule, and raging in cold blood
 Their sluggish Muse whip to an amorous mood.
 (ll. 275-78)

If Dryden was accused of keeping the muse as his prostitute, in *The Art of Poetry* the relationship is more one of sexual coercion. The elegy has long been considered a masculine genre that excludes women who find little representation other than as muses

¹³³ Quoted in James Anderson Winn, *Love and the Arts in the Age of Dryden: “When beauty fires the blood”* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 396.

¹³⁴ Germaine Greer, *Slipshod Sibyls: Recognition, Rejection and the Women Poet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), p. 422.

¹³⁵ Winn, *Age of Dryden*, p. 396.

¹³⁶ Winn, *Age of Dryden*, p. 396.

and nymphs.¹³⁷ Anne Bradstreet, the ‘Tenth Muse’ as the title of her 1650 poetry collection termed her, wrote in her elegy for Sir Philip Sidney of the muses’ attempts to stop her from writing the poem:

The Muses aid I craved; they had no will
To give their detractor any quill;
With high disdain, they said they gave no more,
Since Sidney exhausted all their store.
They took from me the scribbling pen I had,
(I to be eased of such a task was glad)
Then to revenge this wrong, themselves engage,
And drove me from Parnassus in a rage.¹³⁸

The Nine Muses instead offers a break from this traditionally troubled relationship, rewriting Dryden’s affiliation with the muse and reclaiming the figure as an appropriate one for the six poets to use to voice their mourning. Celeste Schenck’s observations, then, about the female elegy when placed in dialogue with *The Nine Muses* become two-fold: ‘Built upon a different set of internalized relations with predecessors, the female elegy is a poem of connectedness; women inheritors seem to achieve poetic identity in relation to ancestresses, in connection to the dead, whereas male initiates need to eliminate the competition to come into their own.’¹³⁹ The ‘connectedness’ of the collection comes not only through the assumption of the collective identity of the muses, but also through their implied mutual relationships with Dryden.

The Nine Muses is the first known printed anthology of all-women authored poetry in English, and Victoria Joule suggests the editor, Delarivier Manley, is ‘constructing a place for women poets.’¹⁴⁰ Joule’s notion of a ‘place’ would not have been possible without Dryden’s translations, and the national heritage identified in *The*

¹³⁷ David Kennedy, *Elegy* (Routledge, 2007), p. 86.

¹³⁸ Anne Bradstreet, *The Tenth Muse lately sprung up in America* (1650), p. 195.

¹³⁹ Celeste M. Schenck, ‘Feminism and Deconstruction: Re-Constructing the Elegy’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 5.1 (1986), 13-27 (p. 15).

¹⁴⁰ Joule, ‘Feminist Foremother?’ *Women’s Writing* (p. 36).

Nine Muses is certainly connected with the growing corpus of translations made available by the deceased poet. Anne Kelley writes, ‘Undeniably, *The Nine Muses* represents one of the stronger bids by women writers of this period for parity and respect, and as a printed text it is a reification of ground-breaking female creative collaboration.’¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, the poems in *The Nine Muses* warrant being examined individually so as not to assume that women’s writing of the period relied on community alone. They also stress that whilst women actively read and engaged with the translations produced by male writers, these writers were engaging in poetic experiments of their own kind. Together these poets demonstrate a shared knowledge of the classical world that had for so long been the preserve of the educated. As such, as ‘Melpomene: The Tragic Muse’ Manley calls:

COME all my Sisters now in Consort join,
Each weep her Favrite’s loss with Tear Divine:
Fill all the Space with your immortal Sighs,
The vaulted Heavens return your louder Cries.
Ye Loves and Graces hang your Heads, and weep,
And every God a decent Silence keep;
That I may Grieve my fill, for Dryden’s gone,
Well may I now the mourning veil put on:
Well may I now with Cypress load my Brow,
For who like him can e’er invoke me now?¹⁴²

Whilst this invitation emphasises the communal relationship shared between the women, there is also a pressure on the individual role each woman must play. Manley’s repetition of ‘I’ alongside the question ‘For who like him can e’er invoke me now?’ raises the important recognition that each woman has produced a poem in which the separate parts of Dryden’s career can be lauded. Elizabeth Eger claims that *The Nine Muses* was an

¹⁴¹ Anne Kelley, “‘What a Pox have the Women to do with the Muses?’” *The Nine Muses* (1700): Emulation or Appropriation?, *Women’s Writing* 17.1 (2010), 8-29 (p. 24).

¹⁴² Delarivier Manley, ed., *The Nine Muses, or, Poems Written by Nine Several Ladies Upon the Death of the Late Famous John Dryden, Esq* (1700), p. 1. Subsequent line references to *The Nine Muses* are from this edition.

opportunity for the women to '[repay] a compliment' after Dryden's elegy on Anne Killigrew's death.¹⁴³ More broadly, the anthology enacts a female reclamation of the figure of the muse for both Dryden against his detractors and for women writers who were attempting to engage with the elegiac tradition. Whilst the importance of Dryden's translations for women have often been stressed, *The Nine Muses* represents how women at the beginning of the eighteenth century were beginning to redefine their relationship with the classics.

I. 'not of a piece': The Muses and Genre

Variety was a defining aspects of Dryden's work: in a letter to an unknown addressee, George Farquhar thought Dryden's funeral on 12 May 1700 was emblematic of the writer's career, stating the 'burial was the same as his life, variety and not of a piece: - the quality and mob, farce and heroicks; the sublime and ridicule mix'd in a piece; - great Cleopatra in a hackney coach.'¹⁴⁴ In presenting poems that thematically categorise Dryden's corpus the poets of *The Nine Muses* emphasise how his work was 'not of a piece'. Manley has two poems in *The Nine Muses*, posing as the antithetical 'Melpomene: The Tragic Muse' and 'Thalia: The Comick Muse'. The anthology marked the beginning of a career that often saw Manley creating a 'distinctive narrative style, which was quasi-autobiographical, quasi-political, and quasi-fictional', and often rhetorically casting herself as a character.¹⁴⁵ In 'Melpomene', having called her sister muses together, Manley appropriately writes first of Dryden's elegiac treatment of

¹⁴³ Elizabeth Eger, 'Fashioning a Female Canon: Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and the Politics of the Anthology', in *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730-1820*, ed. Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (Oxford: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 201-215 (p. 208).

¹⁴⁴ *John Dryden: The Critical Heritage*, ed. James Kinsley and Helen Kinsley (Routledge, 1971), p. 242.

¹⁴⁵ Aleksandra Hultquist and Elizabeth J. Matthews, 'Introduction: Breaking Open the Conversations on Delarivier Manley', in *New Perspectives on Delarivier Manley and Eighteenth-Century Literature: Power, Sex, and Text*, ed. Aleksandra Hultquist and Elizabeth J. Matthews (Routledge, 2017), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

Killigrew in ‘To the Pious Memory of the Accomplished Young Lady Mrs. Anne Killigrew’: ‘Who sang fair Killigrew’s untimely fall, / And more than Roman made her Funeral.’ (ll. 11-12) Manley focuses not on the tragedy of Dryden’s death explicitly but his tragic and elegiac writings that lamented the deaths of his contemporaries. Manley further relates ‘When on the Tragick Theme my Hero wrote, / I lent him all my Fire, and every Thought’ (ll. 31-32), and then focuses on three plays by Dryden: *All for Love* (‘At Cleopatra’s Grief’, also mentioned in Egerton’s ‘Erato: The Amorous Muse’), *Tyrannick Love* (‘St. Catherine’s Martyrdom has greater Charms’) and *Don Sebastian* (‘Whilst Dorax and Sebastian both content’) (ll. 36-39). Through these references Manley emphasizes and celebrates Dryden’s treatment of these women, continuing the tradition of writing Cleopatra as a figure of pathos as represented in works including Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* and Samuel Daniel’s *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*. Through these references Manley also focuses on the variety of the genres in which Dryden wrote: *Tyrannick Love* (1670) is a tragedy, *Don Sebastian* (1691) a tragicomedy, and the emphasis in *All for Love* (1678) on illicit love and the nature of kingship had a relevance to the amorous and libertine court of Charles II.¹⁴⁶ More widely, however, Manley’s assumption of the muse figure allows her to consider Dryden through a classical lens that goes beyond political allegiance: within Manley’s poem, the opposing political ideologies of Oliver Cromwell and Charles II as represented in Dryden’s ‘Heroic Stanzas Consecrated to the Glorious Memory of his most Serene and Renowned Highness Oliver’ (1658) and *Threnodia Augustalis: A Funeral-Pindarique Poem Sacred to the Happy Memory of Charles II* (1685) cohabit within his oeuvre.

Manley’s second contribution as ‘Thalia’ is structured as a pastoral dialogue between Alexis, Daphne and Aminta, with Thalia appearing to sing of Dryden’s loss.

¹⁴⁶ The dates for Dryden’s plays discussed in this section refer to their printed publication, not their first performance, as it is more likely that the women discussed here engaged with Dryden’s works in printed form.

According to Manley's Daphne, women's writing is to be soft, light and 'easy' (l. 43), necessitating her call to the muse for assistance. Nonetheless, a tone of irony attends Manley's invocation of the muse when Daphne claims 'I'de speak to all / With gushing Tears, torn Robes, and stretcht out Arms, / Invoke Melpomene with all her *doleful Charms*', after which Thalia appears (ll. 48-50; emphasis mine): the suggestion is that Melpomene has been evoked elsewhere, and as readers we are aware that the persona had already been adopted by Manley in her first poem. Added to this humour is Daphne's coy suggestion that Melpomene's poetry expresses itself through 'doleful Charms', a comic deflation of the power of tragedy. Manley reveals across her contributions a varied knowledge of Dryden's plays through the characters she mentions, including those from *All for Love*, *Tyrannick Love*, *Don Sebastian*, *Marriage-a-la-Mode* (1673) and *The Spanish Fryer* (1681). As in her treatment of Dryden's tragic works, as Thalia Manley recalls those qualities of his work wherein 'Such true delight his Comick Muse adorn, / Here you are shewn the Vices you shou'd scorn' (ll. 71-72). Manley demonstrates how the classical frame through which the elegies of *The Nine Muses* is projected transcends the political definitions that affected Dryden's immediate reception, with her reading of Dryden's social didacticism going against some of the immediate popular receptions of his dramatic works. In *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) Jeremy Collier argued '[Dryden] Questions whether Instruction has anything to do with Comedy; If it has, he is sure 'tis no more than its secondary end; For the business of the Poet is to make you laugh.'¹⁴⁷ Collier maligns Dryden's belief from *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatique Poesie* (1668) that 'I am satisfied if it cause delight: for delight is the chief, if not the only end of Poesie: instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for Poesie only instructs as it delights'.¹⁴⁸ Under the guise of the muse

¹⁴⁷ Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immortality, and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), p. 156.

¹⁴⁸ John Dryden, *Literary Criticism of John Dryden*, ed. Arthur C. Kirsch (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 73.

Manley goes against Collier's argument by suggesting that in Dryden's drama 'you are shewn the Vices you shou'd scorn'. As with her assumption of Melpomene's persona, as Thalia the implied classical hierarchy of becoming a muse allows Manley to suggest that the enduring legacy of Dryden's work lies in its didactic potential. In impersonating a muse, Manley claims a precedence and authority over male critics, elevating Dryden's reception above contemporary criticisms, thus realising the authority that the muse could have for women writers.

In accordance with the elegiac genre, Manley reveals her knowledge of Dryden's corpus. But, as Katherine Beutner summarises, 'these poems operate on two levels at once: the muses mourn together for Dryden's death, whilst the women writers embodying the muses mourn, too – but mourn by displaying their skill and their solidarity.'¹⁴⁹ Where Manley uses her poems to break Dryden's work free from its immediate, political reception, Piers's contribution as 'Urania: The Divine Muse' understands Dryden's career within a wider succession of poetic lineage and she registers his death through the repetition of 'No more', which accrues to build an elegiac understanding of the loss now suffered by the world: 'No more, to charm the list'ning World with Lays, / But fled to sing his great Creator's praise / No more with artful Numbers to bestow / An universal Influence below: / No more with all discerning Truth, to tell / How they shou'd act, and how distinguish well' (ll. 15-20). The final 'No more' confirms, as Manley's Thalia did, that Dryden's work was received by women within a didactic frame. Dryden is understood as having provided a literature for England, and the muses will mourn in keeping with his poetic legacy:

I search'd the Treasures of the Pow'rs above,
And form'd an Anthem of Seraphick Love:
New Themes we chose, not more polite than he

¹⁴⁹ Katherine Beutner, 'Delarivier Manley Understands the Ladies Better Than You: *The Female Wits*, Genre, and Feminocentric Satire', in *New Perspectives on Delarivier Manley and Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Hultquist and Matthews, pp. 153-170 (p. 154).

Has left already to Posterity;
But those for which the Island does repine,
For which they still invoke his awful Shrine,
And with transported Sorrow loudly cry,
Virgil, the Roman Eagles taught to fly,
But Dryden mounts their Pinions to the Sky!
(ll. 27-35)

Like Egerton (as 'Erato'), Piers goes to the home of the muses, Parnassus, to compose an 'Anthem of Seraphick Love' and celebrates his translations of Virgil. The issue then becomes one of Dryden's inheritance, emphasized by a series of questions: 'Who now of Heroes, or of Gods can sing! / Who their Credentials from Apollo bring! / Where shall Urania now bestow her aid! / Or who great Dryden's Province dare invade!' (ll. 61-64) When Piers asks 'Where shall Urania now bestow her aid!', readers might have thought of John Milton's *Paradise* (1667), which evoked Urania in the proem of Book VII. Yet within this context, Dryden's achievement was his bringing of the classics back to their mythical origins: in her focus on 'Heroes, or of Gods' Piers refers to Dryden's classical works, suggesting that one of his greatest achievements was making epic poetry accessible to women.

Piers and Catharine Trotter were close friends and the two share similar concerns in their elegies (though none of their extant letters discuss Dryden's death). Both show a concern with poetic lineage but in the final stanza Piers chooses to nominate Samuel Garth, 'A learned Bard, to Esculapius dear', as Dryden's successor (l. 72). Trotter's contribution as 'Calliope', however, is much more bleak in tone, focusing directly on Dryden's translations of Virgil as an epic poet, beginning with the paralysis of the Muse's power and the nullification of the traditional trope of opening an epic poem with an invocation: 'Cease all my tuneful Sisters, now restrain / Your sacred Fire, you lavish it in vain, / At least no grateful Vows I e're shall hear again. / Dryden's no more!' (ll. 1-4) If a cliché, Trotter's understanding of epic as a 'loftier flight' is lightly reminiscent of Dryden's opening line on the mode in *The Art of Poetry*: 'But the heroic claims a loftier

strain.’ (l. 587) With the heroic frame, Trotter takes Dryden’s translations of epic works as her focus, but what is uncommon about her contributions is her direct attack

against the Three
Assassins, Chapman, Hobbs and Ogilby;
The last my Virgil had defac’d in vain,
To all his Charms, by Dryden, rais’d again;
But still my mangled Homer’s Wounds remain.
(ll. 28-32)

Trotter refers to John Ogilby’s translations of Virgil (from 1649, 1654, and 1658), George Chapman’s multiple loose translations of Homeric works from 1598 into the 1620s, and Thomas Hobbes’s full translations of Homer’s work from the 1670s. Through her triplet rhyme Trotter proffers first the disappointment of Ogilby’s translation, then the hope from Dryden who ‘rais’d again’ the status of the Roman poet, but then deflates this in remembering ‘Homer’s Wounds remain’, and thus Dryden’s death becomes all the more tragic given he only translated limited parts of the *Iliad* before he died. Framed within the notion of this unholy triumvirate being ‘Assassins’, Trotter’s Calliope becomes a *femina furens*, inciting Dryden to revenge the poor translations of Homer and Virgil that she had been an integral part of as a source of inspiration. This suggestion of Dryden’s status as a translator-cum-revenge-hero is also found in the poetry of Elizabeth Thomas. In ‘On his Translation of Virgil’, which is written in heroic couplets, Thomas stresses the unimaginative and even rudimentary translations of previous poets: ‘Some mangling Pens essay’d, but try’d in vain, / Traduc’d their Authors, and were read with Pain’ implies the poor quality of these previous translations.¹⁵⁰ Instead it was Dryden’s predestined mission to translate Virgil: ‘The mighty Task was kept for him by Fate, / And none but Dryden, Virgil could translate.’¹⁵¹ Yet Trotter also stresses the role of the

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 23.

¹⁵¹ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 23.

muse in the success of Dryden's Virgil. Dryden's role in his relationship with the muse was one of amplifying Calliope's original work:

Thus lively were the Images I drew,
Thus Romans saw Old Troy in Flames a new,
Thus interested in Aeneas Fate,
Shall all the joys, or hardships, I relate:
Thus join my Battles, feel the Wounds I paint,
Thus fought my Heroes, and thus Went my Saint.
(ll. 43-48)

Through the repetition of 'I' and 'my' Trotter stresses how Dryden brought Virgil's work to new audiences but that the original material was her own. Trotter therefore re-focuses the role of the muses in epic poetry, giving Calliope an autonomy that is perhaps lacking in the traditional invocation topos.

Even before Dryden's death women were thinking of his potential to translate Homer. Thomas's 'On his Fables' opens by asking 'How long must Homer unaveng'd complain? / How long shall Albion join her Pray'rs in Vain?'¹⁵² Thomas asks Dryden to 'once more shew thy Skill, / Exert the Powers of thy wond'rous Quill; / Redeem thy passive Sire from barb'rous Style, / And gen'rously oblige thy Native Isle'.¹⁵³ In the 'Preface' to *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700) Dryden even writes of his intention to translate the entirety of the *Iliad*: 'If it shall please God to give me longer life and moderate health, my intentions are to translate the whole *Iliad* [...] And this I dare assure the world beforehand, that I have found by trial Homer a more pleasing task than Virgil (though I say not the translation will be less laborious); for the Grecian is more according to my genius than the Latin poet.'¹⁵⁴ With Dryden's death in 1700, the option of translating Homer was taken away from this avenging national son, and the consequent disappointment of women readers is seen in *The Nine Muses*: Piers's

¹⁵² Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 24.

¹⁵³ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 25.

¹⁵⁴ H v. 55-56.

‘Urania’ begs ‘Oh give us Homer yet, thou glorious Bard’ (l. 40), but uses his obvious inability to do so as an opportunity to reassert her dynastic suggestion of poetic inheritance, allowing for ‘Garth [to] inherit all thy generous Flame’ (l. 46). Given her focus on the epic genre, Trotter appropriately concludes with ‘No more their Glories I can e’re retrieve, / For Nature can no second Dryden give’ (ll. 68-69). The formulation of a ‘second Dryden’ is reminiscent of Dryden’s focus on poetic lineage in his work. In *The Art of Poetry* Dryden asks ‘But where’s a second Virgil, to rehearse / Our hero’s glories in his epic verse?’ (ll. 1058-59) Virgil’s treatment of Aeneas and Turnus in the *Aeneid* finds a Homeric parallel respectively with Paris and Achilles; in Dryden’s translation, upon hearing from Rumour that Aeneas and Dido have become a couple, Iarbas called the Trojan an ‘other Paris’ (IV.314), whilst the Sibyl’s prophecy envisages Turnus as a ‘new Achilles’ (VI.136).¹⁵⁵ This break evidently concerned Trotter, who returned to the same topic in ‘On the Death and Funerall of the incomparable Mr Dryden’, which again stresses ‘No second Dryden lives to grace thy Tomb’.¹⁵⁶ These poems by Manley and Trotter especially show how assuming the persona of an individual muse provided a general frame of reference with which women could assess Dryden’s writing; instead of being limited by the single genre of comedy or epic, however, these muses offer a re-evaluation of the ways in which Dryden’s work was seen of as important to women at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

¹⁵⁵ Parenthetical references to the *Aeneid* throughout the thesis are from Dryden’s 1697 translation: *The Works of John Dryden: Volumes V-VI: The Works of Virgil in English 1697*, ed. William Frost and Vinton A. Dearing, vols 5-6 (1987) of *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H. T. Swedenberg et al., 20 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956-2002).

¹⁵⁶ London, British Library, Add. MS 4265, fol 78^v.

II. A Mythological Exchange between Dryden and the Muses

Whilst the individual personas assigned to the six women allow them to consider different aspects of Dryden's corpus, also important are the classical personages given to the poet by these women that further reveal how he was received by female writers at the turn of the eighteenth century. Penelope Wilson writes of how 'translator-poets were often eulogized as Herculean cleansers or bringers of light out of darkness.'¹⁵⁷ As 'Clio: The Historick Muse' Mary Pix envisages Dryden 'Like Hercules', and states that 'the more his Glory grows, / And still survives the malice of his Foes; / New Labours add to his triumphant Bays' (ll. 32-34), not only understanding his work as constantly renewing itself within a poetic sphere but also engaging with the mythographic representation of Hercules as a civilizer through the destruction of allegorical monsters that represent anarchy. Here, the notions of 'Glory' and 'New Labours' are linked explicitly to 'his triumphant Bays', the Dryden-Hercules comparison implying the challenge and civilizing influence of his poetic works. Pix's Clio and Manley's Thalia both ensure the endurance of Dryden's name as being aided by their position: at the beginning of her poem the former asks Clio for inspiration so that she may 'a Requiem sing to Dryden's Name' (l. 3), whilst part of the latter's refrain emphasizes 'the Eternal Dryden's Worth I tell, / My lovely Bard that so lamented fell' (ll. 69-70), which recognises both his death and his fall from various political and religious positions in the 1690s. In both Piers and Pix Dryden also becomes Pan, a significant moniker for his invention of poetry, a story that is told in Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and that was translated by Dryden in 1692 and included in *Examen Poeticum* (1693).

Like the other poets examined, Pix praises Dryden's translation of Virgil: 'Sing their Immortal praise, from Pole to Pole, / That gave our Maro so Divine a Soul [...] Of

¹⁵⁷ Penelope Wilson, 'Poetic Translators: An Overview', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Volume 3: 1660-1790*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 96-104 (p. 96).

Love, of War, when e're his Harp he Strung, / All listen'd to the Musick of his Song' (ll. 20-21, 23-24). Instead of becoming the muse, however, Pix remains at a distance from Clio: she asks for the goddess to 'Say how you flag'd your Wings in that dark Day, / That snatch'd from Mortal Plains, your Pan away, / Say this and more, too much you cannot say [...] t' assist the Mourning Nine.' (ll. 13-17) Patsy S. Fowler compares Pix and Centlivre as dramatists, arguing that both attempt to reform society through the formation of a female-friendly culture in trying to change the established definitions of acceptable behaviour for women.¹⁵⁸ Fowler's argument of reformation through communal writing is validated by *The Nine Muses* as an anthology. Whereas Pix maintains a distance from Clio, Centlivre in 'Polimnia: Of Rhetorick' firmly inhabits her muse persona, emphasized by the recurrent and forceful use of the personal pronoun 'I'. The 'Soul Capacious of such Fire' is now extinguished and Dryden is figured as having been Polimnia's amorous companion – 'With Lovers hands, I lavish all my Charms, / Gave up my self, to his more Lovely Arms' (ll. 9-10) – and his works become the offspring of this relationship: 'his unequal'd Works so loudly Sound, / Where Energy, and Rhetorick abound, / And every Grace that's in Minerva found.' (ll. 11-13) In her realisation as the muse, Centlivre reasserts and rewrites the relationship between Dryden and the muses that had been criticised by Shadwell so that it becomes one wherein the male mortal and the female goddess are almost reliant on each other to create poetry. Centlivre's contribution is the culmination of this relationship as implied throughout *The Nine Muses*: Manley's Melpomene remembers 'when my Graces hung / On each inchanting Accent of his Tongue. / Then a whole Hecatomb of Vows he made, / And I, the Offering, gratefully repaid [...] When on the Tragick Theme my Hero wrote, / I lent him all my Fire, and every Thought' (ll. 25-28, 31-32). This reciprocated relationship, a

¹⁵⁸ Patsy S. Fowler, 'Rejecting the Status of Quo: The Attempts of Mary Pix and Susanna Centlivre to Reform Society's Patriarchal Attitudes', *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* 11.2 (1996), 49-59 (p. 49).

‘Hecatomb of Vows’ for ‘all my Fire, and every Thought’, framed within a language of sacrifice and ritual, is also present in Trotter’s ‘Calliope’: ‘Cease all my tuneful Sisters, now restrain / Your sacred Fire, you lavish it in vain, / At least no grateful Vows I e’re shall hear again’ (ll. 1-3). However, as Euterpe, Egerton provides an alternative representation of the relationship between Dryden and his muses:

When tuneful Dryden would my Aid implore,
Who with gay Transports did my Gifts employ,
And meanest Thoughts above my Notes did soar.
But strait a dismal, and unwelcome Sound,
Fill’d all th’ Aethereal Courts around,
Great Dryden is no more.
[...]
At the dread News grief all my Lustre veil’d,
I broke my harmonious Harp and Lute,
Threw by my softening ever-charming Flute
(ll. 5-10, 13-15)

Through the repetition of ‘my’, Egerton as ‘Euterpe’ first emphasizes Dryden’s desire for her to impart her ‘Aid’ and ‘Gifts’, firmly locating them as an immortal power to be bequeathed. When news of Dryden’s death passes through Parnassus, Egerton repeatedly re-emphasizes ‘my’ to signify not only the breaking of instruments as the result of his death, but also to register the suggestion that she was linked with the poet and that he was dependent on her. With his death, Euterpe’s instruments have been broken, and her power is no longer ready to be given to a suppliant mortal.

In her portrayal of an amorous relationship between Dryden and the muses, Centlivre’s poem tries to demonstrate an equal status between male and female poets. This relationship between poet and muse is figured as a mythologised material exchange in Egerton’s ‘Erato’:

Oft I for Ink did radiant Nectar bring,
And gave him Quills from Infant Cupid’s Wing,
Whose tender force did as Victorious prove,
As if they’d been the Immortal Shafts of Love;

Warm'd every Breast with a surprising Fire,
And in the Nicest softest Thoughts inspire:
Such lustre still grac'd his Magnetick Line,
It was both irresistless and Divine.

(ll. 49-56)

Egerton presents an almost domesticated image of the muse, though the consequent result of his 'Magnetick Line' and the 'Celestial cadence' in Dryden's poetry implies something of the immortal power that was attributed to his writing. However, Egerton goes on to depict Dryden as a conduit for the muse: 'Dryden, who with such ardour did invoke, / That I through him my greatest Raptures spoke, / [and] Whisper'd a thousand tender melting things' (ll. 45-47) Alongside this gentle image – of whispers and a 'thousand tender melting things' – Egerton stresses Dryden's status as a conduit for the muse's poetry also in 'Terpsichore: A Lyrick Muse': in the poet's 'vast capacious Mind, / Our utmost pow'r did fit reception find' (ll. 27-28). Whether it be through providing divine materials in return for poetry, Dryden's completion of rituals to ensure aesthetic grandeur, the more erotic relationship suggested by *Centlivre*, or Egerton's softer conduit of the gods, the poems of *The Nine Muses* ensure that Dryden's poetic effulgence is represented as an exchange between himself and the women. In doing so, the collection both repeals Shadwell's notion of the prostitute muse and shows how the muse could be an apt figure to be used by female poets in the elegiac mode.

As 'Erato', Egerton writes of the task set for her by the muse: 'But to the World my Sorrows you shall tell, / How I have griev'd since the lost Hero fell, / My Darling Dryden whom I lov'd so well.' (ll. 24-26) With Dryden's death, Erato is to be bound in a perpetual state of lamentation, and she will go into the woods and, covered by the shades of willow, cypress and yew trees,

There to my Votress Echo I'll complain,
Whose Complaisance reverberates again,
My piercing Groans through every Wood and Plain.
Thus I and She in an Eternal round,

Will my Celestial Grievs for Dryden's Death resound.
(ll. 45-49)

Egerton uses seven triplets throughout 'Erato', including when she references Echo in the quotation above, to emphasise the mournful reverberating sounds across the world.

Whilst these are personal poems, Egerton's suggestion that with her 'Votress' Echo she shall mourn 'in an Eternal round' also stresses the collection's public expression of female voices. For Egerton, Echo is not limited by her linguistic copying; instead these become an opportunity for power and defiance.

These various elements are also expressed in Egerton's 'Euterpe'. As might be expected from the lyric muse, Egerton's poem is filled with poetic clichés, for example the suggestion that she taught Dryden 'all the softer Airs of Love'; even when writing of the work that emerged from this relationship, Egerton emphasises the lyric lightness of this poetry:

With an auspicious Pride I did dispence
My mighty Favour, when He did implore,
From my pregnant unexhausted Store,
Of tuneful Fancies, and harmonious Sense.
(ll. 27-30)

The suggestion of Euterpe's 'pregnant unexhausted Store' both genders poetic capability as female and emphasises Dryden's primacy when working with the muses. Until then, her 'Store' had been left untouched. Egerton's lines might be brought into a tight contrast with the language of female subjugation Dryden used when writing of the relationship between the muse and the writer of an elegy in *The Art of Poetry*. For Egerton's Euterpe, her 'mighty Favour' was given willingly. Against this fruitful relationship, Egerton also stresses how now, instead of the muse's power being guaranteed for male writers,

If any dare on Dryden's Death to Write,
Not to express their Grief, but shew their Wit,
I the Ambitious purpose will Reverse,

Deny my Aid,
And so shall each inspiring Maid.
(ll. 89-93)

Assuming the muse persona is an opportunity for the poet to ‘shew [her] Wit’, but this statement is more generally indicative of the reassertion made throughout *The Nine Muses* that the muses (and by extension the women writers behind them) have the power to halt male creativity. The ‘Aid’, as emphasised by the rhyming couplet, comes from the ‘Maid’.

III. ‘What a Pox have the Women to do with Muses?’

Adopting the muse persona was clearly a comfortable act for some of the writers: Trotter returned to her muse in ‘Calliope’s Directions How to Deserve & Distinguish the Muses Inspirations’ having been ‘addressd from Ireland by some lovers of poetry as to a muse, desiring my inspiration.’¹⁵⁹ Where her first foray as Calliope discussed Dryden’s translations of epic works, ‘Calliope’s Directions’ confirms Trotter’s role as adjudicator of literary merit and skill in offering advice to writers that will help them achieve the muse’s support:

Attend yee numerous daring throng who strive
To gain the dangerous hill, where few arrive,
Learn how the sacred height you may attain,
And shine among the Muses fav’rite Train.¹⁶⁰

Elsewhere, less satirical and more commendatory, Pix’s dedicatory poem to Egerton’s *Poems on Several Occasions* begins by addressing the poet as ‘dear Euterpe’.¹⁶¹ Though

¹⁵⁹ British Library, Add. MS 4265, fol 58r. The next poem in the manuscript, fols 60-61, is the same poem but copied in a different, neater hand.

¹⁶⁰ From the Catharine Cockburn Papers collected by Thomas Birch. British Library, Add. MS 4265, fol 58r.

¹⁶¹ Sarah Fyge Egerton, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703), sig. [A6r].

Pix and Trotter seemed to easily assume the persona of the muse, *The Nine Muses* received some critical attention early in the 1700s that drew on the sexual implications of the figures. In the dialogue *A Comparison between the Two Stages* (1702), Chagrin the Critick vehemently asked,

I wonder in my Heart we are so lost to all Sense and Reason: What a Pox have the Women to do with the Muses? I grant you the Poets call the Nine Muses by the Names of Women, but why so? Not because the Sex had any thing to do with Poetry, but because in that Sex they're much fitter for prostitution [...] I hate these Petticoat-Authors; 'tis false Grammar, there's no Feminine for the Latin word, 'tis entirely of the Masculine Gender, and the Language won't bear such a thing as a She-author.¹⁶²

For Chagrin, the muses are synonymous with writing, which means masculinity.

Designating the muses as the 'Petticoat-Authors' extraordinaire, Chagrin locates their redundancy in the inability of the Latin language to provide a word for these 'She-Author[s]'. Yet this point draws attention to the essential culture of translation throughout the eighteenth century that meant that Latin and the ancient languages no longer dictated who was to be able to partake in the classical world. Together and separately the contributors of *The Nine Muses* reclaim the figure of the muse not only for Dryden but also for women generally. These are muses of the contemporary eighteenth century; they are not prostitutes but intellectually informed and able poets ready to adapt classical literature for their own writing. As muses and, more importantly, as women, the poets of *The Nine Muses* express their gratitude for Dryden's rendering of the classical poets with dedication, beauty and fervour (and lament that a similar favour could not have been granted to Homer) whilst simultaneously reminding readers that his ability was often granted by the goddesses themselves. In the Parnassus of *The Nine Muses*, then, women could read and approach Dryden with the knowledge that his muse was not a hussy but an equal.

¹⁶² Chagrin the Critick in *A Comparison between the Two Stages* (1702), pp. 26-27.

The muses more broadly prompt considerations of literary culture amidst women writers. Mary Leapor's 'The Muse's Embassy' opens:

The Muses, as some Authors say,
Who found their Empire much decay,
Since Prior's Lute was stopp'd by Death,
And Pope resign'd his tuneful Breath,
Fair Iris call'd, and bid her go,
And search the busy World below:

But chief among the female Kind
They bid her look, if she could find
(ll. 1-5)

On earth Iris finds 'Beyond the very Skirts of Fame, / An humble, but a fertile Dame' (ll. 13-14), with the word 'Skirts' providing a neat pun on Leapor's marginal existence, from whom works 'With Scars and Botches blemish'd o'er' (ll. 17-18) emerge. Uncertain of these mangled creations, Iris trusts Parthenissa, Leapor's poetic name for her first employer Susanna Jennens, to protect and nurture the young Leapor. The poem ends with the gods in Parnassus toasting Leapor: 'Here for ever mayst thou shine, / Beauteous Darling of the Nine!' (ll. 67-68) The deaths of Prior and Pope, much like Dryden's in 1700, prompt a wider consideration of eighteenth-century literary culture. But whereas in *The Nine Muses* Dryden's successor was largely thought to be Garth, Leapor's poem seeks to find a successor amidst 'the female Kind'; Leapor's poem, then, highlights the role of the muses in commenting on the state of the nation's poetry and registers the increasing prominence of the woman writer during the 1740s.

This is not to suggest, however, that women writers were reconciled with the muses and all their associations. Though Egerton had contributed three poems to *The Nine Muses*, in her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703) she included a 'Satyr Against the Muses', in which she wrote of how

By my abandon'd Muse, I'm not inspir'd,
Provok'd by Malice, and with Rage I'm fir'd.
Fly, fly, my Muse from my distracted Breast,
Who w'er has thee, must be with Plagues possest:
Fool that I was, e'er to sollicite you,
Who make not only Poor, but wretched too.¹⁶³

Where Elizabeth Teft's 'Orinthia reprov'd by her Muse' likewise opens with the question 'In what, Orinthia, have I injur'd thee, / That thus thou shutt'st the Door of Thought on me?', Sarah Dixon called the muse a 'Friend to my Peace, thou Object of my Love [...] My constant Solace'.¹⁶⁴ Women's relationship with the muse as a figure that could inspire evidently remained a fraught issue throughout the period, but *The Nine Muses* does demonstrate an attempt to re-claim the muses for their own use. By extension, this process is indicative of the wider attempts by women to receive and adapt the classics more broadly, the continuing ambivalence a telling sign of this newfound access.

With the death of Dryden, male and female poets flocked to share what they felt were the lasting achievements of his verse. In terms of providing a method of accessing the Parnassus of the ancient world, Dryden's translations were vital. For the poets of *The Nine Muses* to thus record their thanks with these classically-inflected voices was a highly appropriate reaction that also reclaimed the muse figure for Dryden against his detractors. Simultaneously, as with any elegiac project, the poems analysed show the extent of the female poets' learning and their rejection of the masculine tradition in which the muse had become trapped. Chagrin the Critic asked, 'What the Pox have the Women to do with the Muses?' Evidently more than he realized: *The Nine Muses* marks a significant step to reclaim the figure of the muse for women writers and demonstrates that in assuming this persona these women could display a significant knowledge of Dryden and his works.

¹⁶³ Egerton, *Poems*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁴ Dixon, *Poems*, p. 121; Teft, *Orinthia's Miscellany*, p. 18.

Women Writing about Translations and Translators

Alongside the muses, other titles or figures from antiquity were problematic for women.

For example, Dryden gave the poet Elizabeth Thomas the pseudonym ‘Corinna’ in one of his letters:

Since you do me the Favour to desire a Name from me, take that of Corinna if you please; I mean not the Lady with whom Ovid was in Love, but the famous Theban Poetess, who overcame Pindar five Times, as Historians tell us.¹⁶⁵

Although recent critics have actively attempted to dissociate Thomas from the title of ‘Corinna’ – Roger Lonsdale’s biographical sketch only but briefly mentions it and instead includes poems that emphasise her satirical depiction of lacklustre men in his anthology – it had an impact on Thomas’s reputation.¹⁶⁶ Anne McWhir suggests that Dryden’s flattery obscures the Corinna of history and in rejecting Ovid’s Corinna he draws attention to the etymology of the name, complicating the compliment.¹⁶⁷ ‘Asking for Dryden’s support’, McWhir continues, ‘Elizabeth Thomas became caught in a complicated intertextual network of compliment, condescension, and even insult’, with Dryden inadvertently enabling both Pope’s ridicule in *The Dunciad* – in which Thomas appears as ‘Curl’s Corinna’, who urinates in the street – that would define and promote her rejection as a serious poet.¹⁶⁸ Yet the relationship shared between Thomas and Dryden does demonstrate the importance of these connections between the male translators and their female readers.

¹⁶⁵ John Dryden, *The Letters of John Dryden*, ed. Charles E. Ward (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1942), p. 126.

¹⁶⁶ See *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 32-33.

¹⁶⁷ Anne McWhir, ‘Elizabeth Thomas and the Two Corinnas: Giving the Woman Writer a Bad Name’, *ELH* 62.1 (1995), 105-119 (p. 105). For the misrepresentation of Thomas in Pope, see T. R. Steiner, ‘The Misrepresentation of Elizabeth Thomas, “Curl’s Corinna”’, *Notes and Queries* 30.6 (1983), 506-508.

¹⁶⁸ See McWhir, ‘Elizabeth Thomas and the Two Corinnas’, *ELH* (p. 106).

Growing up, Thomas relied on translations to access the classics: taking the dream vision as the frame for ‘The Dream’, Thomas looks back to her childhood when she ‘read great Virgil o’er, / And sigh’d, to see the barb’rous Dress he wore’ and begs to know ‘How long? Any why / Must Virgil under English Rubbish lye?’¹⁶⁹ After falling asleep she imagines a temple to Apollo, where the gods surround her. Calliope appropriately rises and similarly decries how ‘I’ve cause to mourn / To see my Virgil’s Works thus maul’d and torn, / By French, Dutch, English and each stupid Drone, / Burlesq’d, obscur’d, and in Travesty shown.’¹⁷⁰ Alongside the burlesques and travesties in the 1660s and 1670s by writers such as Charles Cotton, the fate of Virgil’s reception is to be translated by ‘Poor mercenary Pens’ and ‘hungry Wits’; however, Apollo relates that he has a poet to ‘New polish Maro’ who will ‘honour Britain, more, than Virgil Rome: / And with the self same voice, Eternal Fame, / Dryden and Virgil’s glory shall proclaim.’¹⁷¹ Thomas awakes and goes forward to tell ‘in some Years I found the Vision true’, figuring herself in the poem’s final lines as Dryden’s student:

I fear you’ll think it Impudence to write.
 Forgive me Sir, I long’d to let you know
 How much your Pupil to your Works does owe;
 Her Muse is yours, and is at your Command,
 But envies those that in the presence stand.¹⁷²

Another letter from Dryden to Thomas sees the former becoming the latter’s teacher:

The great Desire which I observe in you to write well, and those good parts which God Almighty and Nature have bestowed on you, make me not to doubt that by Application to Study, and the Reading of the best Authors, you may be absolute Mistress of Poetry [...] I would advise you not to trust too much to Virgil’s Pastorals; for as excellent as they are, yet, Theocritus is far before him, both in Softness of Thought, and Simplicity of Expression.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 18.

¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 19.

¹⁷¹ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 20.

¹⁷² Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, p. 22.

¹⁷³ Dryden, *Letters*, ed. Ward, p. 127.

Dryden's emphasis on Thomas's need to cultivate her knowledge through 'Application to Study' and 'Reading of the best Authors' realises something of the literary relationship between the two. Yet whilst Dryden encourages Thomas to read the classics, his reasoning for recommending Theocritus over Virgil – namely the former's 'Softness' and 'Simplicity' – marks the Greek poet as applicable for a female reader. The exchange between Thomas and Dryden, as also emphasised in *The Nine Muses*, stresses the relationship between female reader and male translators. Exploring the ways in which women wrote about these figures and translations more broadly can tell us of how they conceived of their increasing access to the classics, often focusing on the clandestine nature of their search in face of gendered assumptions about the limits of their knowledge.

Writers like Dryden and later Pope – with figures like Congreve, Addison and Garth in between – were held by women writers as the bastions of eighteenth-century literary culture. For example, Dryden and Pope were essential to Laetitia Pilkington's being given permission to read, as she recalls in her *Memoirs* (1748):

I was at this Time about five Years of Age, and my Mother being one Day abroad, I had happily laid hold on *Alexander's Feast*, and found something in it so charming, that I read it aloud; - but how like a condemn'd Criminal did I look, when my Father, softly opening his Study-door, took me in the very Fact; I dropt my Books, and burst into Tears, begging Pardon, and promising never to do so again: But my Sorrow was soon dispell'd, when he bade me not be frighten'd, but read to him, which to his great Surprise, I did very distinctly, and without hurting the Beauty of the Numbers. Instead of the whipping, of which I stood in Dread, he took me up in his Arms, and kiss'd me, giving me a whole Shilling, as a Reward, and told me, "He would give me another, as soon as I got a Poem by Heart"; which he put into my Hand, and prov'd to be Mr. Pope's sacred Eclogue, which Task I performed before my Mother return'd Home.¹⁷⁴

Even from the age of five years old, the young Pilkington recognised her transgression of both reading Dryden's poem and entering her father's study, casting both as if they were

¹⁷⁴ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 13.

crimes. Instead Pilkington was rewarded both financially and with more literature, with Pope's 'sacred' text implying the hallowed status of literature for the young girl. Indeed, later in the period, Pope's famous grotto also served as a site of pseudo pilgrimage for women writers: a young Elizabeth Carter visited the garden in July in 1738 and took a sprig of laurel.¹⁷⁵ Claudia Thomas examines women's responses to the Twickenham garden and suggests that 'Pope and his garden represented the relation between artist and creative power, a vexed issue for contemporary women.'¹⁷⁶ Yet at the peak of Montagu's fraught relationship with Pope she described the Twickenham grotto as being 'Adorn'd within by Shells of small expence / (Emblems of tinsel Rhime, and trifleing Sense).' ('Her Palace plac'd beneath a muddy road', ll. 6-7) This description of the space (and, by extension, Pope) as being effeminate and superfluous, emphasised by the parenthesis that spuriously whispers the lines as if spreading gossip, offers a sharp contrast to Carter's inspiration found in the grotto. Nonetheless, to explore the relationships between the male and women writers of the eighteenth century means to understand how the latter also conceived of writing and reading as acts more broadly, as evidenced by Pilkington's fear at being caught in her father's study and Carter's light theft.

Exploring the reciprocal relationship shared between male translators and female writers thus offers a challenge to A. C. Elias's question 'Were not minor figures like [Constantia] Grierson put on earth to furnish a little background material for major ones like Swift?'¹⁷⁷ Elias's question, which comes in an article that explores Grierson's life and writing and so is more perhaps just an example of unfortunate wording, evokes the many other women of the period – including Thomas or Judith Madan, who corresponded with Pope – whose relationship with men has situated them as footnotes in literary history. Focusing on the translators and their relationships with the women of the

¹⁷⁵ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷⁶ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁷ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 42.

eighteenth century provides a series of personal and imaginative connections that can often be forgotten during examinations of their allusion-bedecked poetry. In what remains of this chapter women of various classes will be discussed, suggesting the wide-ranging impact translating the classics into English had on the period. As seen in the discussion of *The Nine Muses*, focusing on how women responded to the male translators of the period emphasises their role in dictating which aspects of the men's often-varied careers were considered worthy for reception.

I. Mary Chudleigh's Search for 'the Secrets of the infernal State'

In their prefatory remarks on Mary Chudleigh in *Poems by the Most Eminent Ladies* (1755), George Colman and Bonnell Thornton explain how 'She was acquainted with no other language than her native tongue; but her love of books, and great capacity enabled her to make a considerable figure among the Literati of her time.'¹⁷⁸ Chudleigh considers the nature of women's education through a variety of metaphors, including the labyrinth and the darkened recesses of the underworld. As indicated by the quotation above from Colman and Thornton, Chudleigh's lack of familiarity with Latin necessitated a reliance on translations by writers including Dryden, with whom she enjoyed a friendship. In turn Dryden praised her poetic thoughts on his translation of Virgil in a letter to Jacob Tonson:

You were no sooner gone, but I felt in my pocket, & found my Lady Chudleigh's verses; which this Afternoon I gave Mr Walsh to read in the Coffee house. His opinion is the same with mine, that they are better than any [which] are printed before the Book: so thinks also Mr Wycherley. I have them by me; but do not send them, till I heare from My Lord Clifford, whether My Lady will put her name to them or not. Therefore I desire they may be printed last of all the Copyes.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ *Poems by the Most Eminent Ladies*, ed. George Colman and Bonnell Thornton, 2 vols (1755), i. 180.

¹⁷⁹ Dryden, *Letters*, ed. Ward, p. 98.

Chudleigh's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703) offers an interesting introduction for how eighteenth-century women poets not only relied on translations of the classics but also how they wrote about what accessing this information meant to them. Chudleigh's *Essays Upon Several Subjects* (1710) forms a useful companion to her volume of poetry as it details a number of her thoughts on early eighteenth-century society and culture. Chudleigh begins 'Of Knowledge', which is addressed 'To the Ladies', by lamenting how,

When I look abroad into the World, and take the Survey of the Rational Nature, it grieves me to see what a vast Disproportion there is as to intellectual Endowments between the Men and Us: 'Tis a mortifying Prospect to see them exalted to such a tow'ring Height, rais'd so infinitely above the generality of our Sex.¹⁸⁰

Chudleigh, like many of her fellow female writers, realises the wrongs of female education and its marked difference to that of their male contemporaries, yet in noting the 'tow'ring Height' of her male peers she introduces the theme of height and ascent in relation to knowledge that runs throughout her poetic writing. 'Of Knowledge' continues by providing an epic-like catalogue of famous women from antiquity before setting forth the following call-to-arms:

Let us endeavour to improve those Faculties our kind Creator has given us, awaken our Understanding, and employ it about Subjects worthy of it. Would we but for some time withdraw our Eyes from outward Objects, and turn them inward, reflect seriously on our selves, pry into the secret Labyrinths, the shady, the obscure Recesses of our Souls, we should there find the Embrio's of Science, the first Rudiments of Virtue, the Beginnings of all useful Knowledge; and should hear the soft and gentle Whispers of Truth, which to every attentive List'ner, every humble Enquirer, will prove a happy Guide, a kind Director; and upon a nice Scrutiny, an exact Review, should find a Stock of our own sufficient to begin with, which, if well managed, will not fail of yielding us plentiful Returns. If to these Riches of our own we add Foreign Manufactures; if we chuse the best Books, the most instructive Conversations, and, by a due Recollection, digest and make our own, both what we read and what we hear, we shall make wonderful Progress, and prodigiously increase our Wealth.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Mary Chudleigh, *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*, ed. Margaret J. M. Ezell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 251. All subsequent parenthetical line references to Chudleigh's work are from this edition.

¹⁸¹ Chudleigh, *Poems*, ed. Ezell, pp. 254-55.

There is a 'Stock' of knowledge available to women however select books and surrounding oneself with those to enjoy amiable conversation will improve this natural ability. Indeed, where men are 'rais'd so infinitely' because of their learning, through the translations of Dryden she was able to access the 'obscure Recesses' of learning.

Chudleigh thus introduces the concept of a quest for knowledge that, epic and wondrous in its potential, could only be achieved through translations, the golden boughs needed to access the literary world.

Chudleigh enjoyed Dryden's translation of Virgil, as evident in 'To Mr. Dryden, on his excellent Translation of Virgil', the poem mentioned above in Dryden's letter to Tonson. Through Dryden, Chudleigh, like those women that would follow her, suggests Virgil has become a part of British literature:

He's now the welcome Native of our Isle,
And crowns our Hopes with an auspicious Smile;
With him we wander thro' the Depths below,
And into Nature's Close Recesses go;
View all the Secrets of th' infernal State,
And search into the dark Intrigues of Fate:
Survey the Pleasures of th' Elysian Fields,
And see what Joys the highest Region yields.

(ll. 56-63)

Echoing the 'obscure recesses' in 'Of Knowledge', it is as if Chudleigh undergoes a *katabasis* as she reads Dryden's Virgil, which enlightens the 'Close Recesses' of a world otherwise kept from her view. In Dryden's translation Chudleigh finds 'all the Secrets of th' infernal State' revealed, which can be read as an analogy for how he provides female access to the male pursuit of classical learning. Chudleigh's response to Dryden's translation reveals the truth of the work to female readers, a powerful lamp to be held in an until-now darkened library. This focus on descent is congruent with Dryden's comments in his 'Postscript to the Reader' at the end of the *Aeneid*. When Dryden

describes his status as a translator and offers some acknowledgement to those who have helped him in his work, he reverts to a scheme of reference that partly evokes the classical underworld to describe his status:

In the mean time, I am oblig'd in gratitude, to return my Thanks to many of them, who have not only distinguish'd me from others of the same Party, by a particular exception of Grace, but without considering the Man, have been Bountiful to the Poet: Have encourag'd Virgil to speak such English, as I could teach him, and rewarded his Interpreter, for the pains he has taken in bringing him over into Britain, by defraying the Charges of his Voyage. Even Cerberus, when he had receiv'd the Sop, permitted Aeneas to pass freely into Elysium.¹⁸²

In referring to Cerberus and Aeneas' journey to Pluto's realm, Dryden casts the act of translation as a form of heroic quest into a darkened world. In translating the *Aeneid*, then, Dryden becomes an agent of modernity who has 'encourag'd Virgil to speak' in the English tongue.

In the 'Preface' to her *Poems* Chudleigh has a female audience in mind and writes of the potential benefit of her collection for these readers: 'If the Ladies, for whom [the poems] are chiefly designed, and to whose Service they are intirely devoted, happen to meet with anything in them that is entertaining, I have all I am at. They were the Employment of my leisure Hours, the innocent Amusement of a solitary Life: In them they'll find a Picture of My Mind.'¹⁸³ If in part an internalisation of the low estimates of women's writing, Chudleigh's comments also register the importance of poetry and writing in her 'solitary Life'. In 'A Resolution' Chudleigh traces her impressive reading through literary history, and the emphasis on self-teaching through reading as instructed in 'Of Knowledge' is celebrated, as 'Books are the best Companions I can find, / At once they please, at once instruct the Mind.' (ll. 19-20) In a letter to Elizabeth Thomas, Chudleigh re-iterated this point: 'I find my Books and my Thoughts to be the most

¹⁸² Dryden, *The Works of Virgil in English*, ed. Frost and Dearing, vi. 808.

¹⁸³ Chudleigh, *Poems*, ed. Ezell, p. 44.

agreeable Companions, and had I not betime accustomed my selfe to their Conversation, perhaps I should have been as unhappy as any of my Sex.’¹⁸⁴ Of Virgil, Chudleigh observes how his ‘sacred Raptures fills my Mind, / In him unexhausted Treasures find’ (ll. 381-82). Throughout her poetry Chudleigh writes of the contentment and pleasure to be found from these ‘obscure Recess[es]’: in ‘Solitude’, for example, she explains: ‘Happy are they who when alone / Can with themselves converse; / Who to their Thoughts are so familiar grown, / That with Delight in some obscure Recess, / They cou’d with silent Joy think all their Hours away’ (ll. 1-5). This focus on seclusion is expressed in ‘The Happy Man’, which takes its lead from Horace’s *Epodes* II (which was translated by Dryden in *Sylvae* (1685)): ‘He is the happy Man whose constant Mind / Is to th’ Enjoyment of himself confin’d: / Who has within laid up a plenteous Store, / And is so rich that he desires no more’ (ll. 1-4). From this place, the man ‘his Friends and Books can prize’ (l. 23). Chudleigh’s love of retirement was facilitated by her upper-class status: she not only had the leisure time to write and read, but she also benefitted through the connections of her parents, ensuring that, even from a distance, she was engaged with many of the key writers of her time. From her own space of rural retirement, Ashton in Devonshire, Chudleigh invited Elizabeth Thomas (then living in London) to join her: ‘you will find us as rough and unpolished as our Country, and I am afraid will quickly be weary of living a Life so vastly different from what you have been accustomed to at London; but there is a Pleasure in Variety, and what you want in Conversation, you shall make up in Books.’¹⁸⁵ Books thus offered Chudleigh support and consolation, revealing their integral position in her life, and through which she was able to access the ‘unexhausted Treasures’ of the classics.

¹⁸⁴ Elizabeth Thomas, *Pylades and Corinna: Or, memoirs of the lives, amours, and writings of Richard Gwinnett Esq and Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas*, 2 vols (1732), ii. 252.

¹⁸⁵ Elizabeth Thomas, *Pylades to Corinna*, i. 267.

Other poems by Chudleigh offer other metaphors for her conception of learning that further focus on the darkness of the female poet's status at the beginning of the period. The final stanza of 'On the Vanities of This Life: A Pindarick Ode' details the constant pressures women faced during the period both personally and socially in their quest for knowledge:

In vain from Books we hope to gain Relief,
Knowledge does but increase our Grief:
The more we read, the more we find
Of th' unexhausted Store still left behind
To dig the wealthy Mine we try,
No Pain, no Labour spare;
But the lov'd Treasure too profound does lie,
And mocks our utmost Industry:
Like some enchanted Isle it does appear;
The pleas'd Spectator thinks it near;
But when with wide spread Sails he makes to shore,
His Hopes are lost, the Phantom's seen no more:
Asham'd and tir'd, we of Success despair,
Our fruitless Studies we repent,
And blush to see, that after all our Care,
After whole Years on tedious Volumes spent,
We only darkly understand
That which we thought we fully knew
Thro' Labyrinths we go without a Clue,
Till in the dangerous Maze our selves we lose
And neither know which Path t'avoid, or which to chuse.
(ll. 172-191)

The more Chudleigh learns the more she realises further study is needed, a sentiment seen in women's writing throughout the period regardless of class, and likewise different metaphors – the 'unexhausted Store' or an enchanted island – push themselves into the poem as a way of demonstrating the ways in which reading sparks the imagination. It is worth briefly pausing over these metaphors to demonstrate the different ways Chudleigh perceived of education and learning. Chudleigh's suggestion of the 'wealthy Mine' of learning is reminiscent of the 'unexhausted Treasures' to be found in Virgil as described above. Chudleigh used the image of the labyrinth also in *The Ladies Defence* (1701),

wherein she wishes how women would, 'Instead of novels, histories peruse, / And for their guides the wiser ancient choose; / Through all the labyrinths of learning go, / And grow more humble, as they more do know.' (ll. 557-60) In *The Ladies Defence*, a verse debate written in the spirit of Mary Astell, Chudleigh uses the figure of Melissa to argue for female education: earlier in the poem, she lamented how women were 'Debarred from knowledge, banished from the schools' (l. 514). Chudleigh uses the form of her poem to capture the structural design of the labyrinth: the opening couplets move towards an increasing variety of rhymes – including 'spare' being picked up seven and nine lines later with 'despair' and 'Care' – to create an apt description of the unpredictable and overwhelming nature of this 'dangerous Maze'.

Chudleigh describes how 'The more we read, the more we find / Of th' unexhausted Store still left behind'. The constant pressure to empty this 'Store', almost itemising the nature of knowledge, is brought into further relief when comparing Chudleigh's lines with Dryden's elegy 'To the Memory of Anne Killigrew'. Dryden celebrated Killigrew's status as a learned woman who 'So rich in treasures of her own, / She might our boasted stores defy' (ll. 73-74). Chudleigh writes of the 'stock' of potential women had available to them in 'Of Knowledge'. Dryden's description of how Killigrew's knowledge surpassed those 'boasted stores' of her male contemporaries may provide a template for Chudleigh's conception of knowledge in a similar way. In making this connection, however, the impossibility of Chudleigh's attempts to empty this store become more apparent: Dryden stresses that Killigrew's achievements (her 'treasures') were natural. Chudleigh, then, offers an insight into how women at the beginning of the eighteenth century conceived of achieving a form of access to a world that was until then guarded; her reliance on Dryden to read authors from the classical period as identified in 'A Resolution' demonstrates the significance of translations and translators for women of

the eighteenth century, whilst the other poems examined imply the pressures women faced as they slowly began to travail the path to find this hidden knowledge.

II. Sons of Dryden: The Reception of William Congreve and Joseph Addison

In *The Nine Muses*, Piers had nominated Garth to be Dryden's poetic successor. This choice was also present in *Luctus Britannici*, but when Garth's name appears in women's poetry of the period it is often within a medical context: for example, he treated Montagu when she contracted smallpox in 1715, which she recorded in 'Saturday'. In 1717 Garth presented *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Fifteen Books. Translated by the most Eminent Hands*, the influence of which on women writers shall be examined in Chapter III, and two writers who contributed to this collection were also potential successors to Dryden: Congreve and Addison. It is worth pausing over how women responded to these two writers for numerous reasons. Offering the reception of Congreve's and Addison's works as a bridge between the periods of Dryden and Pope, possibly filling the missing years of the literary canon identified by J. Paul Hunter, who highlights that the period has traditionally been split into three sections – the Restoration age of Dryden; the Augustan age of Pope; and movement of Sensibility as represented by Samuel Johnson – but who also suggests that there is no applicable figure for this period between 1700 and 1720.¹⁸⁶ In a study of reception, it is potentially impossible to use strict temporal markers: the presence and content of *The Nine Muses* alone challenges Hunter's suggestion that 'the Age of Dryden ended long before Dryden's life did.'¹⁸⁷ The reaction to Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) and the success of *The Rape of the Lock* also question the suggestion that in the 1710s there was a lacuna for an appropriate leader figure. Of Addison and

¹⁸⁶ J. Paul Hunter, 'Missing Years: On Casualties in English Literary History, Prior to Pope', *Common Knowledge* 14.3 (2008), 434-444 (p. 437).

¹⁸⁷ Hunter, 'Missing Years', *Common Knowledge* (p. 437).

Congreve, Hunter suggests that the former was the ‘most respected poet and potential leader of these years’ whilst acknowledging the latter also as an important figure (although he does temper his praise, suggesting Congreve ‘was both facile and talented, if not very dedicated to poetic pursuits’).¹⁸⁸ Although Addison and Congreve are no longer remembered for their translations specifically, with Dryden as a sort of teacher both writers contributed to the emerging number of texts translated into English, which were of use to their many women readers. Examining how women responded to the works and deaths of these sons of Dryden offers to at least fill the gap in identified by Hunter, demonstrating the wide-spread connections (literary and personal) that the women of the period shared with these writers.

A persistent question asked by women at the beginning of the eighteenth century was who would translate Homer now Dryden had died. The logical answer in 1700 would have been Congreve, who was named by Dryden as his heir in ‘To My Dear Friend Mr Congreve’: ‘Yet this I prophesy: thou shalt be seen / (Though with some short parenthesis between) / High on the throne of wit; and seated there / Not mine (that’s little) but thy laurel wear.’ (ll. 51-54) Congreve had contributed his translation of Juvenal’s Satire XI to Dryden’s *Satires of Juvenal and Persius* (1693) and had also written the dedicatory poem to the translation of Persius in the same volume. In *Examen Poeticum*, Congreve contributed three translations of Horace’s odes (two of which had appeared in Charles Gildon’s *Miscellany Poems* (1692) previously) and two episodes from Homer’s *Iliad*, whilst his translation of the third book of Ovid’s *Art of Love*, with the first and second respectively provided by Dryden and Thomas Yalden, was published in 1709 (though it was completed during the 1690s). Jennifer Brady suggests the reason Dryden so heavily recommended that Congreve translate Homer was so they could ‘have been paired as the premier translators into English verse of the two foundational Western

¹⁸⁸ Hunter, ‘Missing Years’, *Common Knowledge* (p. 438).

classical epics'.¹⁸⁹ Brady demonstrates how Congreve's career as a translator of Homer was motivated by his friendship with Dryden. The tone of Dryden's 'The Last Parting of Hector and Andromache', from Book VI of the *Iliad*, is very much similar to the two Homeric pieces Congreve translated: 'Priam's Lamentation and Petition to Achilles, For the Body of his Son Hector' and 'The Lamentations of Hecuba, Andromache, and Helen, Over the dead Body of Hector'. Dryden also praised Congreve for comparing his 1697 translation of the *Aeneid* against the Latin: 'Mr. Congreve has done me the Favour to review the *Aeneis*; and compare my Version with the Original. I shall never be ashamed to own, that this Excellent Young Man, has shew'd me many Faults, which I have endeavour'd to Correct.'¹⁹⁰ Congreve's status as Dryden's heir in the 1700s, then, seemed apparent and his earlier Homeric works had also caught the attention of Pope, who dedicated his *Iliad* to him as he wanted to

leave behind me a Memorial of my Friendship, with one of the most valuable Men as well as finest Writers, of my Age and Country: One who has try'd and knows by his own Experience, how hard an Undertaking it is to do Justice to Homer.¹⁹¹

To the women of the early eighteenth century, Congreve may have appeared to be the one destined to save Homer – he had, after all, Dryden's blessing and, had translated two episodes already. In her comments on Congreve in 'The Resolution', Chudleigh observed of these Homeric pieces:

Congreve to ev'ry Theme does Beauty give,
His fair Almeria will for ever live.
Homer looks great in his rich English Dress;
So well he Priam's Sorrow does express,
That I with him for valiant Hector grieve;
His Suff'rings on my Mind a deep Impression leave.
With sad Andromache a part I bear,

¹⁸⁹ Jennifer Brady, 'Dryden and Congreve's Collaboration in *The Double Dealer*', in *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 113-139 (p. 122).

¹⁹⁰ Dryden, *The Works of Virgil in English*, ed. Frost and Dearing, v. 337.

¹⁹¹ TE viii. 578-79.

With her in all her Lamentations share:
With Hecuba bewail a darling Son,
Who for his Country glorious Things had done
(ll. 537-46)

Dryden had written of Homer's 'manly passions' in the preface to *Examem Poeticum* and given the martial themes of the *Iliad* alongside its generally unsavoury treatment of women it is in some respects surprising that women so often desired to see Homer in English. Yet, alongside Dryden's 'The Last Parting of Hector and Andromache', Congreve's episodes had positioned him as a translator of episodes from the *Iliad* that were appropriate for women readers. It should be unsurprising, then, that women's writing of the eighteenth century engaged with the epic genre, for the work of Dryden and Congreve had suggested points of entry into the world of the hero to them, as explored fully in Chapter IV.

Despite this, reactions to Congreve's translations were ambivalent both during the period and later on, and, of course, he never translated Homer's works in their entirety. William Melmoth compared Pope's Homer to Congreve's, calling the latter's work 'languid and inelegant' and contrasting it with the 'grace and spirit' of the former.¹⁹² In terms of women responding to Congreve's work, few focus on his translations. Judith Madan's *The Progress of Poetry* focuses solely on Congreve's comedy: 'The follies of mankind he sets to view / In scenes still pleasing, and for ever new.'¹⁹³ However, Elizabeth Tollet did praise Congreve's translations in 'On Mr. Congreve's Plays and Poems'. The poem was included in the 1724 collection of her poetry and it focuses on all aspects of his work, including his translations:

The Learn'd admire the Poet, when he flies
To trace the Theban Swan amid the cloudless Skies.

¹⁹² William Congreve: *The Critical Heritage*, ed. Alexander Lindsay and Howard Erskine-Hill (Routledge, 1989), pp. 220-24.

¹⁹³ Judith Madan, in *The Flower-Piece: A Collection of Miscellany Poems. By Several Hands* (1731), p. 137.

When he translates, still faithful to the Sense,
 He copies, and improves each Excellence.
 Or when he teaches how the Rich and Great,
 And all but deathless Wit must yield to Fate
 [...]
 As Horace easy, and as Pindar strong:
 Pindar, who long like Oracles ador'd
 In rev'rend Darkness, now to light restor'd
 Shall stamp thy current Wit, and seal thy Fame's Record.¹⁹⁴

Tollet's motif of the 'Theban Swan' is indicative of Congreve's work with both Pindar and Horace: the Roman poet had adapted the other's construct of the eagle as representative of the poet to instead be a swan in *Odes* IV.ii and II.xx.¹⁹⁵ In suggesting Pindar has from 'rev'rend Darkness, now to light restor'd', Tollet re-iterates the motif of the classics being enlightened by the male writers of the period through translation, drawing particularly on Pindar's reputation for obscurity. Indeed, for all Samuel Johnson's hesitancy to commend Congreve's translations, he did praise his work on Pindar: 'Yet to him it must be confessed that we are indebted for the correction of a national error, and for the cure of our Pindarick madness.'¹⁹⁶

Tollet's 'The Triumvirate of Poets' also celebrates the increased availability of the classics through translation:

Britain with Greece and Rome contended long
 For lofty Genius and poetic Song:
 Till this Augustan Age with Three was blest,
 To fix the Prize, and finish the Contest.
 In Addison immortal Virgil reigns;
 So pure his Numbers, so refin'd his Strains:
 Of Nature full, with more impetuous Heat,
 In Prior Horace shines, sublimely great.
 Thy Country, Homer! we dispute no more;
 For Pope has fix'd it to his native Shore.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 16.

¹⁹⁵ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 16.

¹⁹⁶ Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Lonsdale, iii. 234.

¹⁹⁷ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 53.

Tollet demonstrates the variety of translators whose work was read by women. In naming Addison, Tollet introduces another son of Dryden who may have been considered to succeed him after his death in 1700. Where Dryden might be expected as the Virgilian equivalent, Addison's part rendering of *Georgic IV* first appeared in Tonson's *The Annual Miscellany: For the Year 1694 being the fourth part of Miscellany Poems* (1694) and was written with a readership who lacked a precise knowledge of classical literature as its focus.¹⁹⁸ Scott Black recently has marked Addison as an 'heir to humanism' following his claim in *Spectator* 10 (1711) to have 'brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses.'¹⁹⁹ As many of the women in this thesis were self-reliant for their literary education, Addison's open approach and mission to provide (in the *Spectator* and in his translations) for those who could not access education through the traditional locales must not be underemphasised. Mary Barber's indignation in 'Upon seeing a Raffle for Addison's Writings Unfilled' is a useful indicator of to what extent during the 1720s and 1730s this had been achieved:

Ye gentle Beaux, and thoughtless Belles,
Who gayly rove at Tunbridge-Wells,
With Pockets full, and empty Looks,
Raffling for every Toy – but Books;
Should Addison's immortal Page,
(The Glory of his Land, and Age)
Want two Subscriptions to be full,
The World will dare pronounce you dull.

Be wise – Subscribe – and shew, at least,
That you have Pretence to Taste.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Peter Smithers, *The Life of Joseph Addison* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 56.

¹⁹⁹ S i. 44; Scott Black, *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 102.

²⁰⁰ Barber, *Poems*, p. 46.

Barber suggests that the fashionable beaux and belles, who formed part of the intended audience of Addison's public work, had forgotten the importance of his writing. Addison's works – vitally, as per the poem's title, not just the *Spectator* but the entirety of his *Works*, which was published posthumously in 1721 – are the gateway to contemporary ideas of 'Taste'. Even if the vain individuals subscribe just to show a 'Pretence to Taste,' Barber's poem emphasises Addison's work as having a dual status as being both accessible and useful for all audiences. Of these works, translation was key to Addison's published writings, beginning in 'To Mr. Dryden', written at his time at Oxford and published in *Examen Poeticum*, which returns to the motif of the enlightening power of translation: 'Thy Copy casts a fairer Light on all, / And still outshines the bright Original.'²⁰¹ Considering the reception of Addison's translations extends what Lawrence Klein terms his 'significant, perhaps iconic, presence in the culture.'²⁰²

Johnson's 'Life of Addison', which is consistently balanced between praise and criticism, touches on Addison's public approach to spreading knowledge though this comes at the expense of scholarly depth. '[Addison's] translations,' Johnson writes, 'so far as I have compared them, want the exactness of a scholar. That he understood his authors cannot be doubted; but his versions will not teach others to understand them, being too licentiously paraphrastical. They are, however, for the most part smooth and easy, and, what is the first excellence of a translator, such as may be read with pleasure by those who do not know the originals.'²⁰³ Though not referring directly to women, Johnson raises an interesting dilemma for translators in the eighteenth century: should classical works be closely translated to allow those without the Latin (or Greek) knowledge to appreciate the tone and style of the original, or should they be rendered in a

²⁰¹ *Examen Poeticum: Being the Third Part of Miscellany Poems Containing Variety of New Translations of the Ancient Poets*, ed. Jacob Tonson (1693), p. 248.

²⁰² Lawrence E. Klein, 'Addisonian Afterlives: Joseph Addison in Eighteenth-Century Culture', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35.1 (2012), 101-118 (p. 102).

²⁰³ Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Lonsdale, iii. 36.

way that allows them to be ‘read with pleasure’, almost recalling Dryden’s observations on Theocritus in its suggestion of certain texts from the ancient world being more appropriate for uneducated readers? Johnson’s critique registers the emphasis in the reception of Addison’s translations not on the learned quality of his work but on his affably ‘smooth and easy’ style. After Addison died in 1719, Jane Brereton’s *An Expostulatory Epistle to Sir Richard Steele upon the Death of Mr. Addison* (1720) had also noted this distinction. Brereton begins her poem by chastising Steele for not writing a funeral elegy for Addison, leaving her to attempt to write one herself. During the poem, Brereton touches on why Addison’s work appealed to her:

How learn’d he was, O Steele, do thou declare,
For that’s a Task beyond a Woman’s Sphere.
Some Works I’ve seen, wrought up by Rules of Art,
Where poor excluded Nature had no Part;
But He, the Stagyrite’s strict Axioms knew,
Yet still to Nature, as to Art was true.
He touch’d the Heart, the Passions could command,
’Twas Nature all, but mended by his Hand.
His Style is noble, Sentiments refin’d,
Full of Benevolence to all Mankind.²⁰⁴

Brereton’s response to Steele comments on the learned quality of Addison’s work, but it also registers the gendering of knowledge in the period: is it not for her to make distinctions about academic rigour as this would be ‘a Task beyond a Woman’s Sphere’. Instead Brereton focuses on the human fortitude of Addison’s work, its ‘Nature’. Where the work of some writers is ‘wrought up by Rules of Art’, which implies an un-natural sense of restriction, Addison’s writing has a human quality to it. By extension, his willingness to write in a way that ‘touch’d the Heart’ is what made his writings more accessible to women, and hence it is this quality that Brereton can comment on. Indeed, the emotional reaction Brereton identifies following her reading of Addison’s poetry –

²⁰⁴ Jane Brereton, *An Expostulatory Epistle to Sir Richard Steele upon the Death of Mr. Addison* (1720), p. 6.

that of comfort and gratification – is similar to what Johnson identified over half a decade later. The exchange for pedantry, both Brereton and Johnson suggest, is Addison’s ‘noble’ and ‘smooth and easy’ style, which was used in the *Spectator* and evidently appealed to his women readers.

Yet Brereton’s lines do not simply internalise gendered expectations of knowledge; there is an irony in using an obscure reference to Aristotle’s philosophy (the ‘Stagyrite’s strict Axioms’) to suggest that perhaps the coded language of the classics was within a ‘Woman’s Sphere’. Brereton’s reference pointedly refers to John Dennis’s *Remarks upon Cato* (1713), which suggested Addison’s hugely successful play was deficient due to its heavy reliance on Aristotle’s unities. Dennis’s insistence on using Aristotle when assessing dramatic works was mocked in Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*: during a discussion between ‘La Mancha’s Knight’ and ‘a certain Bard’ the two ‘Discours’d in Terms as just, with Looks as Sage, / As e’er cou’d Dennis, of the Grecian Stage; / Concluding all were desp’rate Sots and Fools, / Who durst depart from Aristotle’s Rules’ (ll. 269-72). In *Spectator* 592 (1714) Addison also pushed back against those he termed ‘professed Criticks’:

The Words Unity, Action, Sentiment, and Diction, pronounced with an Air of Authority, give them a Figure among unlearned Readers, who are apt to believe they are very deep, because they are intelligible. [...] [M]ost of the Smatterers in Criticism who appear among us, make it their Business to vilify and depreciate every new Production that gains Applause, to descry imaginary Blemishes, and to prove by far-fetch’d Arguments, that what may pass for Beauties in any celebrated Piece are Faults and Errors.²⁰⁵

It would be going too far to suggest that Brereton rescues Addison from Dennis’s claims – the quotation from the *Spectator* alone makes this clear – but her reference does re-situate the criticism more widely into a debate about women’s learning and experience. Quite the opposite of Addison’s suggestion that ‘unlearned Readers’ find figures like

²⁰⁵ S v. 26-27.

Dennis ‘very deep’, Brereton at least gives the impression that she knew of Aristotle’s ‘Axioms’. Where Addison writes of the ‘Smatterers in Criticism’ who aim to ‘vilify’ and ‘descry’, Brereton focuses on Addison’s ‘Benevolence’ with the repeated emphasis on the ‘Nature’ of his writing brought into a strict contrast with the ‘Rules’ and ‘Axioms’ that bound others. Through these poems by Brereton and Barber, then, the worth of Addison’s poetry is emphasised as coming from its lighter, public emphasis, and whilst this is unsurprising, to have these records from women writers is invaluable when considering Addison’s use of the classics throughout his writing. As with Dryden and the muses, Brereton’s reference demonstrates how women readers engaged with contemporary debates surrounding male writers with the classics not only as one of their points of engagement but also, more importantly, as a scheme of reference that they use to defend those who made learning more accessible.

Focusing on how women responded to Congreve and Addison yields mixed results: although very few focus on their translations, occasional references build an appreciation of the culture of translation that was available to women readers. Judith Madan’s ‘To the Memory of Mr Hughes’ mourns John Hughes, brother of translator Jabez Hughes and friend to William and John Duncombe; in the poem, she relates how the muses gathered around the urn that encased Hughes’s ashes, equating the scene with the deaths of Homer, Virgil and, surprisingly, Addison:

Such was the scene, when, by the Gods requir’d,
Majestick Homer from the world retir’d:
Such grief the Nine on Maro’s tomb bestow’d;
For Addison, such sorrow lately flow’d.²⁰⁶

Madan’s poem was first published in a collection from 1731, but in noting ‘For Addison, such sorrow lately flow’d’ its composition can be located in the early 1720s. Given the

²⁰⁶ Madan, *The Flower-Piece*, p. 21.

poem's elegiac tone, Madan's reference to the muses mourning Virgil may well also refer to how *The Nine Muses* mourned Dryden's death twenty years previously. That Madan considers Addison's death on the same level as those of Homer and Dryden is indicative of his elevated status within the period. The brief reception histories traced above of Congreve and Addison emphasise how through these writers the classics were brought to light for a female audience. This focus on the formation of a dedicated female audience for the classics would reappear with the publication of what would become the essential translation of Homer in the early eighteenth century: though Congreve had been tipped by Dryden to provide a translation of Homer's two epics, that task remained for Alexander Pope.

III. Mary Leapor's Epic Translator: Mourning the Death of Alexander Pope

For a man whose writings throughout his career had prompted reactions of outrage and anger, Pope's death was quiet: Joseph Spence records, 'Mr. Pope died the thirtieth of May [1744], in the evening, but they [those watching over] did not know the exact time, for his departure was so easy that it was imperceptible even to the standers-by. May our end be like his!'²⁰⁷ Pope's *Dunciad* (1727-43) had heralded 'a new flood of vilification', though the attacks from Grub Street had come in the previous decade once the collaborative nature of the *Odyssey* (1725-26) was revealed and the editorial principles of his Shakespeare questioned.²⁰⁸ Against the consistent attacks of Grub Street writers who had criticised Pope throughout his career, the women of this thesis are for the most part highly praising of his work. The first poem in *Orintha's Miscellanies*, Elizabeth Teft's 1747 poetry collection, holds Pope as the epitome of learning, whilst in 'On the Birth-

²⁰⁷ Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. Osborn, i. 269.

²⁰⁸ *Alexander Pope: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John Barnard (Routledge, 1995), pp. 14-15.

Day of Sir ----' she compares her own work to his, implicitly casting him as a model of poetic standards: 'oh, Pope! Thy Pen, / Might give just Honour to this best of Men'.²⁰⁹ Indeed, whilst women's praise of Pope was not solely positive – with Lady Wortley Montagu's 'Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace' especially marking a personal caricature of both his physical and intellectual characteristics – there is little amongst women's writing of the period to suggest the literary fracas that emerged in response to the *Dunciad*.

Bridget Freemantle, who later ensured the posthumous publication of Mary Leapor's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748-51) across two volumes, wrote in 'To the Reader', 'Mrs. Leapor from a Child delighted in reading, and particularly Poetry, but had few Opportunities of procuring any Books of that kind. The Author she most admired was Mr. Pope, whom she chiefly endeavoured to imitate; how far she succeeded in this, or any other of her Attempts, must be left to the Judgment of the Publick.'²¹⁰ Elsewhere Freemantle wrote that 'Mrs. Leapor's whole Library consisted of about sixteen or seventeen single Volumes, among which were Part of Mr. Pope's Works, Dryden's Fables, some Volumes of Plays, &c.'²¹¹ The influence of Pope's work on the labouring-class poet Leapor has long been acknowledged: her biographer Richard Greene goes so far as to suggest that 'Pope's verse has for Leapor a significance second only to scripture.'²¹² In a letter accompanying 'The Proclamation of Apollo', a *Dunciad*-like poem wherein Apollo must rebuke the immature poets whose writings are forming an unorderly din in response to the Pope's mock-epic, Leapor describes the inspiration behind the work: 'The Occasion of this Whim was the reading of that List prefixed to Mr. Pope's *Dunciad*, which tells us the Number of his Enemies. – After having fretted at

²⁰⁹ Teft, *Orinthia's Miscellany*, p. 61.

²¹⁰ Richard Greene, *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. xli.

²¹¹ Richard Greene and Ann Messenger, 'Introduction', in *The Works of Mary Leapor*, ed. Richard Greene and Ann Messenger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xiv-xxxiv (p. xl).

²¹² Greene, *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry*, p. 182.

their Impudence, who durst scribble against my favourite Author, I began to reflect on the Stupidity of Goosequill Wars, and these Knight-Errants of Apollo.’²¹³ The status of Leapor’s ‘favourite Author’ amidst these quixotic figures begins to reveal her estimation of Pope as a literary standard-bearer for the eighteenth century. Leapor’s presence is constant throughout this thesis: as a young, female, labouring-class poet of the period, she is a prime example of the transformative potential that came with making the works of the ancient world available. Moreover, her adaptation of the classics shows that women did not simply passively receive these works but actively sought to write of them in ways so that they could be applied to their own lives. Following Pope’s death, Leapor wrote three elegiac poems: ‘On the Death of a justly admir’d Author’, ‘Damon and Strephon. A Pastoral Complaint’, and ‘The Libyan Hunter, a Fable’. In these poems Leapor reveals how she conceived of Pope as a guide for her writing, indicating that his learning, humour and moral didacticism were what she most highly praised in his work.

‘On the Death of a justly admir’d Author’ operates within a generic elegiac frame: Leapor begins the poem with references to the seasons, lists a variety of flowers, and notes how ‘Departed Sylvius shall return no more’ (l. 15). Leapor then moves on to discuss Pope’s lasting influence:

His Name shall last to warm a distant Age,
 Nor want th’ Assistance of a Title-page;
 For his bright Lines are by their Lustre known,
 Ev’n Homer shines with Beauties not his own:
 Unpolish’d Souls, like Codrus or like mine,
 Fill’d with Ideas that buy dimly shine,
 Read o’er the Charms of his instructive Pen,
 And taste of Raptures never known till then.

(ll. 21-28)

Whilst Leapor’s metaphorical language of heat and light – ‘warm’, ‘bright Lines’ and ‘shines’ – is at odds with his deceased state, it also indicates Pope’s appeal to the young

²¹³ GM 300.

poet. Leapor found a beauty to Pope's Homer and through the repetition of 'shine' first in relation to the Homer and then to her own 'Unpolish'd Soul' she portrays Pope's work as having a cultivating or even polishing effect on her writing. The absence of Pope's 'instructive Pen' therefore begs the question,

Ah! who shall now our rustick Thoughts refine,
And to grave Sense and solid Learning join
Wit ever sparkling, and the Sweets of Rhyme?
(ll. 37-39)

Whilst the poem is mostly made of couplets, Leapor here extends her lines into a triplet, aptly placing 'join' between 'refine' and 'Rhyme'. The four attributes of Pope's poetry identified by Leapor – 'Sense', 'Learning', 'Wit' and 'Rhyme' – imply the didactic provision of his writing, though his status as a 'Guide' is apparently more for those of the labouring classes with their 'rustick Thoughts' than women specifically. The other instance where Leapor extends the heroic couplet in 'On the Death of a justly Admir'd Author' is at its conclusion:

But hush, sad Muse, thy dull complaint give o'er:
Hence sigh in secret, and his Loss deplore,
Who ne'er, O ne'er, shall grace our Regions more.
(ll. 44-46)

These final lines emphasise the mournful theme of the poetry by once more returning to the elegiac topos of 'no more', which was previously rhymed above with 'o'er'. In the final line of the poem, Leapor's cry of 'O ne'er' adds to the pathos of her language, with the muses and Leapor left to pensively consider the future of poetry.

'On the Death of a justly admir'd Author' registers Leapor's sadness at Pope's death, but does so with little variety from the elegiac genre. That said, the poem's focus on class and Pope's position as a 'Guide' and improver of Leapor's work suggest the role

he had within her imagination. 'Damon and Strephon. A Pastoral Complaint' also offers an uncomplicated response to Pope's death. Strephon celebrates the poet's achievements:

None knew like him the heav'nly Notes to swell,
And moral Tales in pleasing Numbers tell.
While Sylvius sung, none thought the Day too long;
But all repin'd at the too hasty Song.
(ll. 22-25)

Leapor's poem is a pastoral elegy, with Pope's audience noted again as a community of shepherds, and in the final lines of the poem Damon says that 'pensive Swains' and 'soft-ey'd Virgins' shall mourn him (ll. 42-43). 'Damon and Strephon' continues to locate Pope's audience as those with 'rustick Thoughts' but remains, in its setting, use of elegiac topos and form, a simple elegy for the poet. However 'The Libyan Hunter', the longest poem mourning Pope's death, implies an unusual relationship between Pope and women. Pope is once more given the moniker Sylvius, as he is loved by Apollo and an esteemed hunter. That is until his fame piques the wrath of Thalia, who sends Diana to kill the young Sylvius. Apollo goes on a vengeful massacre before taking Sylvius' body up to the sky and leaving a rose in the place where he was killed. Leapor's 'The Libyan Hunter' opens with a mythological reference that also draws ironically on Pope's

Dunciad:

Old Story tells us, on an earthly Plain
Once Jove descended wrap'd in golden Rain:
But Shoals of Criticks fall in leaden Showers:
(ll. 5-7)

Though a reference to the myth of Danaë and the conception of Perseus, Pope had of course presented a different sort of 'golden Rain' in the *Dunciad* in the urination competition between Thomas Osborne and Edmund Curll. Pope's description of Osborne's efforts, 'So Jove's bright bow displays its wat'ry round', was indebted to 'the

words of Homer' (II.173) and the archery contest of the *Iliad*.²¹⁴ In providing a pseudo-mythological origin for these critics who fall from 'leaden Showers', Leapor sets the tone for her moral as one inflected by Pope's writing and influence. Caryn Chaden interprets Leapor's poem as confirming Pope's own worries in both the *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* and his Horatian imitations that he was besieged by attackers and hack writers.²¹⁵ Certainly, the suggestion that the animals who were often hunted by Sylvius celebrate his death – 'Behold the Day so oft by us desir'd, / Here lies the Swain whom lately all admir'd' (ll. 139-40) – would have found an obvious parallel in the innumerable individuals whose reputations were punctured by Pope's pen.

As noted above, Sylvius is a famed archer and hunter; when he sees an animal, his 'Hand, unerring, to the Mark in view / Sent the swift Arrow from the twanging Yew' (ll. 19-20), whilst 'A well-stor'd Quiver at his Back was ty'd, / [and] A shining Spear his better Hand supply'd' (ll. 25-26). Leapor's description of the arrow flying from the 'twanging Yew' clearly owes its influence to Pope's Homer, especially the *Odyssey*. It is tempting within this frame and given Pope's career to understand this Sylvius figure like Odysseus, no less in Book XXI of the *Odyssey* when he strings his bow before enacting revenge on the suitors with his 'well-stor'd Quiver':

Then, as some heav'nly minstrel, taught to sing
 High notes responsive to the trembling string,
 To some new strain when he adapts the lyre,
 Or the dumb lute refits with vocal wire,
 Relaxes, strains, and draws them to and fro;
 So the great Master drew the mighty bow:
 And drew with ease. One hand aloft display'd
 The bending horns, and one the string essay'd.
 From his essaying hand the string let fly
 Twang'd short and sharp, like the shrill swallow's cry.
 (XXI.440-49)

²¹⁴ Parenthetical references to *The Dunciad* throughout the thesis are from: Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, ed. Valerie Rumbold (Routledge, 1999; repr., 2009).

²¹⁵ Caryn Chaden, 'Mentored from the Page: Mary Leapor's Relationship with Alexander Pope', in *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, ed. Donald C. Mell (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), pp. 31-47 (pp. 34-35).

Leapor's Sylvius is also masterful with the bow and in singing. 'He breath'd soft Musick from his tuneful Tongue' (l. 29), prompting animals, nymphs and naiads to leave their homes to listen to his songs so that 'None guard the Flocks, nor hunt the flying Prey, / Till he had finish'd the enchanting Lay' (ll. 33-34). Even when Apollo finds his favourite poet murdered, Leapor employs a language not dissimilar to the *Odyssey* with the death of the suitors to describe those who fall to the god's vengeful arrows: 'But as all grov'ling on the Dust they lie, / His Shafts dispatch them to the darker Sky' (ll. 156-57). From this warrior-bard, then, the rustic Leapor would have found a never-ending collection of heroic tales, overlooking his excessive violence as a necessary action against the fallen 'Shoals of Criticks'.

In 'The Libyan Hunter' Leapor's muse is set against Pope: unlike *The Nine Muses*, Leapor emphasises the suggestion of a female community against the figure of Sylvius with Thalia inciting Diana to exact revenge for Pope's poetic brilliance that is distracting Apollo from their own work. Whilst perhaps surprising in the context of Pope's life, referencing Orpheus's death from the Thracian Maenads is common in the way classical literature presents women as being enraged with a Bacchic violence. During his life Pope was warned of the dangers of enraging his female readers by Anne Finch. Pope offered the manuscript of *The Rape of the Lock* to Finch for her comments and criticisms before its first publication on the 4 March 1714, and in the poem, given her own trouble with melancholy and the popular reception of her own work, she took issue with the following lines from Canto IV:²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Barbara McGovern, 'Finch, Pope, and Swift: The Bond of Displacement', in *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, ed. Mell, pp. 105-124 (p. 111).

Parent of Vapors and of Female Wit,
Who give th' *Hysteric* or *Poetic* Fit,
On various Tempers act by various ways,
Make some take Physick, others scribble Plays.

(IV.59-62)

The implied connection above between writing, gender and an affected mental illness, Barbara McGovern suggests, must have frustrated Finch and though we do not exactly know the nature of their dispute, Pope's 'Impromptu *To Lady Winchilsea*' indicates Finch's defense of women writers in general.²¹⁷ Finch's response, 'The Answer', openly allowed Pope the victory in this instance ('Disarm'd with so genteel an airs / The contest I give o'er'), but also offered a warning to her friend:

You of one Orpheus, sure have read,
Who would like you have writ,
Had he in London town been bred,
And Polish't too his wit;

But he, (poor soul) thought all was well,
And great shou'd be his Fame,
When he had left his Wife in Hell,
And Birds and Beasts cou'd tame.

Yet vent'ring then with scoffing rhymes
The Women to incense,
Resenting Heroines of those Times
Soon punish'd the offense.²¹⁸

That Orpheus is a case study Pope should be familiar with is implied with the jocular 'You of one Orpheus sure have read' but the poem's shift towards cautioning him to not anger women with 'scoffing rhymes' is underlaid with the unspoken conclusion of the myth. Although Pope 'need not fear [Orpheus's] awkward fate, / The lock won't cost the head', this brief poetic exchange suggests how women could find potential in the violent

²¹⁷ McGovern, 'Finch, Pope, and Swift', *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, ed. Mell (pp. 111-113).

²¹⁸ Finch, *Works*, ed. Keith and Kairoff, ii. 141.

episodes from classical mythology. Within the context of pastoral elegy, Orpheus's death was referenced within John Milton's *Lycidas* (1637) and thus it might not be surprising that references to avenging goddesses like Trotter's Calliope or Leapor's worshippers of Thalia are included in elegiac works. Finch's poem had warned Pope to 'have a care, / And shock the sex no more.' Acknowledging that Pope's readers were predominantly female, both Finch and Leapor re-focus the trope of uncontrollable women with murderous intentions so as to suggest the potential power of the emerging female reading audience. Leapor's desire to focus on the unsavoury aspects of classical literature (especially those that might not have been deemed appropriate for women readers) also found expression in her treatment of the underworld: as explored in Chapter IV, Leapor transformed the underworld of ancient myth so as to make it a space that elevated the power of women.

Nevertheless, with Sylvius (read: Pope) hunted and killed by a female goddess, 'The Libyan Hunter' seems a bizarre elegiac piece for a poet called 'the ladies' plaything' by his detractors, but it does reveal the impact of the poet's classical world on Leapor's imagination.²¹⁹ In the poem's final lines, Leapor provides an aetiology for roses that connects Pope with female adornment: the spot where Sylvius lies sees a tree emerge 'with slender Stems, / That breath'd Ambrosia from its op'ning Gems: / Those op'ning Gems the Virgins us'd to wear / On their fair Bosoms, and their shining Hair' (ll. 172-75). Through the suggestion of these respiring flowers that open to be used as jewels Leapor here invites a connection with Pope's 'Cosmetic Pow'rs' (l.124) and the lines that describe Belinda's heroic arming in *The Rape of the Lock*:

²¹⁹ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 20.

Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here
The various Off'rings of the World appear;
[...]
This Casket India's glowing Gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder Box.
(I.129-30, 133-34)

In evoking the language of the *Dunciad* and *The Rape of the Lock* Leapor demonstrates the varied overall impact of Pope's work on her writing, allowing these various features to sit in her poetry. Leapor's reference to *The Rape of the Lock* is indicative of how she often uses Pope's work to beautify her work; yet this is not merely a process in which references and allusion add a polished sheen to her work. Instead having found a point of entry into the classics Leapor takes these lines and adds a fresh impetus that goes back to a rural, working-class setting; this process in which Leapor uses the classics to reflect on her own experiences is explored throughout this thesis. Claudia Thomas suggests, in writing on the relationship between Leapor and Pope, that 'During her brief career, Leapor declined waiting for a muse's assistance. She endowed herself with a portion of Pope's expertise through study and imitation.'²²⁰ Leapor found in Pope a supportive literary voice whose work also enabled, along with the other writers of the period, an *ad hoc* education that she saw as refining her sensibility. As shall be examined elsewhere in this thesis, Leapor's use of loci and topoi from Pope's world extends from simple embellishment to experimentation, showing how her own 'rustick Thoughts' could be used in conjunction with the classics. For the young Leapor, in the work of her 'favourite Author' she found poetry of both pastoral retirement and urban life alongside a likeminded love of the classics.

²²⁰ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 153.

In discussing the receptions of both the muse figure and individual translators (and the act of translation) in women's writing, we have seen how women writers were beginning to conceptualise their increasing access to the classics. At the same time, the poems analysed show how women were not solely reliant on the translators; instead they imply how women could alter the immediate contemporary reception of men like Dryden, Congreve, Addison, and Pope. Whether it be Dryden's mythical inspiration from the muses, Brereton's defense of Addison or Leapor's savouring of Pope's writing, the connections discussed set the scene for the coming discussions of how these translations impacted on women's writing. For readers today, these poems can be used to tell us about what women prized and celebrated in the male writing. At the same time, however, in focusing insistently on Dryden's inability to fully translate Homer, these poems have also shown the welcome appetite for translations of classical texts (a point that, though obvious, should not be forgotten). The coming chapters turn to the receptions of Horace, Ovid, Virgil and Homer to explore the ways in which women writers of the eighteenth century, with the classics available to them, adapted the myths and literature of the ancient world for their own purposes.

CHAPTER II

Learning from ‘scraps of Horace’

In *Spectator* 618 (1714) a letter from regular contributor Ambrose Philips suggested that ‘He [who] would excel in [writing in the Horatian style] must have a good Fund of strong Masculine Sense: To this there must be joined a thorough Knowledge of Mankind, together with an Insight into the Business, and the prevailing Humours of the Age.’²²¹

Although much has been written of Horace’s reception in the eighteenth century, the role of women writers in that history has, largely, been forgotten; this chapter is interested in the ways in which women readers and writers found points of entry into Horace’s work.²²² Ellen Oliensis observes that ‘Horace has always been a poet more for men than for women’, yet Horace’s presence within the pages of the various *Poems on Several Occasions* (and variations of that title) written by women of the period cannot be ignored; it is almost a commonplace that an ode or epode by Horace (translated or imitated) will be included in those volumes.²²³ Across these examples, there is little by way of thematic similarity. This should be expected however for two reasons: firstly, variety is central to Horace’s writing, which offered readers various types of Horace – the moral teacher, the political poet, a poet of wit and retreat, among others – alongside the various forms he wrote in.²²⁴ This was facilitated by the second reason, that is that the miscellanies and anthologies that were typical to eighteenth-century print culture separated and shared Horace’s poems, accentuating his various qualities. When readers encountered these single pieces, they were receiving possibly only one or two types of

²²¹ S v. 113.

²²² An exception is Jane Stevenson, ‘Horace and Learned Ladies’, in *Perceptions of Horace: A Roman Poet and His Readers*, ed. L. B. T. Houghton and Maria Wyke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 182-199.

²²³ Ellen Oliensis, ‘Erotics and Gender’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, ed. Stephen J. Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 221-234 (p. 221).

²²⁴ For an outline of these interpretations, see Frank Stack, *Pope and Horace: Studies in Imitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 3-18.

Horatian poetry. Discussing Horace's reception in women's writing therefore means to acknowledge a vital aspect of classical reception in the eighteenth century: the role of the fragment.

Barbara Benedict situates the emergence of the literary collection within various contexts from the period: long manuscript books were replaced by shorter printed pamphlets; booksellers skirted copyright laws by printing single works within copyright with others to create a new book; established genres (including imitation, epistle and pastoral) were being re-evaluated whilst others 'took shape during the explosion of literary publication'; and these texts (alongside periodicals) found a widening urban reading audience.²²⁵ The impetus to collect literary fragments was one entirely new to the eighteenth century: the act of common-placing is one that has also been linked to the fascination with collecting objects in the *Wunderkammer* in the early modern period. Both took fragments from their original contexts. As summarised by Susan Stabile, 'Reading, therefore, was the material process of collecting and interpreting rarities. The commonplace book and the diary were the cabinets for preservation and display.'²²⁶ This ambivalence, then, should also attend Johnson's definition of 'fragment': 'A part broken from the whole; an imperfect piece.'²²⁷ The challenge, then, for understanding the processes of reception occurring in the eighteenth century is to be able to appreciate a literary culture formed of fragments and the potential these afforded to women readers. When referring to the 'literary fragment', however, I refer less to an incomplete poem, like Sappho's poetry that has survived only in an incomplete form, and more to a short, single poem removed from a collection into a miscellaneous volume, such as an ode or epode by Horace. As a result of the latter process of fragmentation the classics both

²²⁵ Barbara M. Benedict, 'The Paradox of the Anthology: Collecting and Difference in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *New Literary History* 34.2 (2003), 231-25 (pp. 233-34).

²²⁶ Susan Stabile, 'Female Curiosities: The Transatlantic Female Commonplace Book', in *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 217-43 (pp. 219-20).

²²⁷ Johnson, *Dictionary*, s. v. 'Fragment'.

became more accessible and encouraged experimentation owing to the breaking down of the boundaries of the firmly rooted classical topoi, and women responded to both of these changes.

Johnson defined an anthology as both ‘A collection of flowers’ and ‘A collection of poems.’²²⁸ Moreover, the Greek root of the word ‘miscellany’ also locates it with flower picking, as did the medieval *florilegia* (collections of literary ‘flowers’). The etymologies of the terms ‘anthology’ and ‘miscellany’ provide a rather potent motif given the myth of Persephone, who was abducted by Hades as she was picking flowers: so too were the women of the eighteenth century reading texts that drew them into a classical space filled with myths, heroes and clandestine knowledge. A careful distinction must be drawn however in acknowledging a potentially gendered characterisation of miscellanies that would be to their detriment: even if titles like *The Flowers of Parnassus: or, the Lady’s Miscellany for the year M.DCC.XXXV* (1735) imply the contents of some of these volumes were pretty, inconsequential and simply to be collected by women, there was a greater appeal than this that lay in the potentially subversive and unusual pairings made by the structure of miscellany volumes. In Johnson’s *Dictionary* a commonplace book is ‘A book in which things to be remembered are ranged under general heads’, whereas a miscellany is ‘A mass formed out of various kinds.’²²⁹ This movement from an organised text to something nebulous should not be seen as a hindrance: the reader was encouraged to make innovative connections between the individual pieces gathered together. This process was described by Dryden in his ‘Preface’ to *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700), which records how the volume emerged:

From translating the first of Homer’s *Iliads* (which I intended as an essay to the whole work), I proceeded to the translation of the Twelfth Book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,

²²⁸ Johnson, *Dictionary*, s. v. ‘Anthology’.

²²⁹ Johnson, *Dictionary*, s. v. ‘Commonplace book’.

because it contains, among other things, the causes, the beginning, and ending of the Trojan War. Here I ought in reason to have stopped, but the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses lying next in my way, I could not balk 'em. When I had compassed them, I was so taken with the former part of the Fifteenth Book (which is the masterpiece of the whole *Metamorphoses*) that I enjoyed myself the pleasing task of rendering it into English. And now I found, by the number of my verses, that they began to swell into a little volume; which gave me an occasion of looking backward on some beauties of my author in his former books.²³⁰

The passage from Dryden above is indicative of how an author can turn fragments into a text that invites its reader to form new connections, unforeseen links and various associations across the texts presented. Facing these numerous pieces on his path through the classics ('lying next in my way'), the miscellany offers the reader an exercise in establishing boundaries between the texts, encircling and questioning ('compassed') each piece both singularly and with its neighbours.

John Gay's 'On a Miscellany of Poems', printed in Bernard Lintot's *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* (1712), writes of the mode by adopting a culinary metaphor, describing how the cook (read: the compiler) 'fills each Dish with diff'rent sorts of Fare [...] To feast at once the Taste, the Smell and Sight.'²³¹ As part of these collections, Gay continues,

Translations should throughout the Work be sown,
And Homer's Godlike Muse be made our own;
Horace in useful Numbers should be Sung,
And Virgil's Thoughts adorn the British Tongue;
Let Ovid tell Corinna's hard Disdain,
And at her Door in melting Notes complain:
[...]
Let every Classick in the Volume shine,
And each contribute to thy great Design²³²

For the readers of these miscellanies, the potential harvest ('sown') is great. The likening of the classics to foodstuffs is also found in women's writing of the period. In

²³⁰ H v. 48.

²³¹ Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Dearing, i. 38.

²³² Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Dearing, i. 38-39.

acknowledging the dual process – of fragmentation as reception and the reception of the fragment – cursory details from women’s writing take on a new meaning in terms of defining the experiences of classical reception in the period. In a joint letter from Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier to their tutor James Harris on 28 December 1751, the two thanked him for sending a copy of his newly published *Hermes: or, a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and University Grammar*. Alongside their gratitude, however, also came the following caveat:

We should indeed verify the truth of Mr Popes observation that “a little Learning is a dang’rous thing” should we vainly attempt to express our approbation of your work; and by such an attempt deservedly should we incur the censure cast on those Women who, having pick’d up a few scraps of Horace, immediately imagine themselves fraught with all knowledge.²³³

The suggestion of Horatian ‘scraps’ lying around the house is indicative of the key role of the fragment in both contemporary literary culture and the classics. Whilst these ‘scraps’ are laden with the broad potential of the fragment, here Fielding and Collier frame them as the dejected remains of foodstuffs. Yet this approximation is apt given that the Greek and Latin origins of the word ‘fragment’ refer to objects, particularly pieces of food.²³⁴ However aside from the irony of Fielding and Collier’s modesty – Harris was also their tutor, so already he would have known their status as learned ladies – and its pejorative partaking in other contemporary comments on educated women (as, for example, in the work of Pope or Henry Fielding), the above remark offers a window into Horace’s reception in the eighteenth century and, more broadly, a suggestion of how miscellanies, periodicals and other texts that published translations of individual classical texts came to play a vital role in the reception of the ancient writers with women readers.

²³³ Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier, *The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*, ed. Martin C. Battestin and Clive T. Probyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 124-25.

²³⁴ See Glenn W. Most, ‘On Fragments’, in *The Fragment: An Incomplete History*, ed. William Tronzo (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2009), pp. 9-22 (pp. 10-11).

If anything, the active role the woman takes in consuming Horace ('pick'd') implies how women might have been starved of the classics previously and were left to pick at the rejected leftovers of men's dishes only.²³⁵

Fielding's and Collier's ironic assertion that women, in reading mere 'scraps' of Horace, find themselves 'fraught with all knowledge' also warrants some attention. This affable approach to receiving Horace's work ties more generally to the ways in which his work was made more open in the eighteenth century. This accessibility was due in part to what Jane Stevenson calls the 'negative virtue [in Horace's work] of being very much less indecent than that of other erotic poets such as Catullus, Propertius or Ovid'.²³⁶ Other aspects of Horace might have been gendered as feminine during the eighteenth century. Dryden's essay 'Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' (1693) is emblematic of the eighteenth-century approach to Horace in terms that might also dismissively be characterised as feminine: in comparing Horace and Persius, Dryden observes how the former 'is sometimes an Epicurean, sometimes a Stoic, sometimes an Eclectic, as his present humour leads him'.²³⁷ This suggestion of Horace as a figure of change and flexibility continues at other points of the 'Discourse': he 'is commonly in jest, and laughs while he instructs'; 'His style is constantly accommodated to his subject, either high or low.'; he '[teaches] us in every Line, and is perpetually Moral'; he is gentle and 'always on the amble'.²³⁸ Horace is flexible, charming and light. According to Claudia Thomas, the appeal of this figure to women writers is obvious: Horace's delicate satire was combined with a good-natured sociability that suited the popular image of a

²³⁵ This is partly reminiscent of James Sutherland's description of eighteenth-century poetry as a dinner party to which only men were invited: 'The poet was a member of polite society addressing himself to his equals, and though poetry was a special mode of communication it did not exempt him from all the normal usages of polite society. If you invited him to make one at a dinner-party, you expected him to write the sort of thing that the average well-educated man could understand because it came within the orbit of his own experience.' James Sutherland, *A Preface to Eighteenth-Century Poets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 105.

²³⁶ Stevenson, 'Horace and Learned Ladies', *Perceptions of Horace*, ed. Houghton and Wyke (p. 182).

²³⁷ H iii. 402.

²³⁸ See H iii. 402-13.

female, unambitious and pastoral muse.²³⁹ Alongside the general processes of fragmentation that Horace was submitted to, then, this broad characterisation of Horace with the traits that could also be considered female meant that women readers might have tuned into these latent attributes in his work.

In *Odes* III.xxv Horace pondered ‘*quibus / antris egregii Caesaris audiar / aeternum medians decus / stellis inserere et consilio Iovis?*’ [‘In what grotto shall I be heard as I practise setting the eternal glory of peerless Caesar among the stars and in the council of Jove?’]²⁴⁰ Whilst Horace’s lines refer to the space of the grotto as a place of poetic composition wherein he can compose poems about the Emperor Augustus, for the student of the eighteenth century they have an added significance given that Alexander Pope used a motto from Horace’s *Epistles* I.viii to adorn the entrance of the grotto in his garden in Twickenham: ‘*Secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae*’ [‘a secluded journey along the pathway of a life unnoticed’].²⁴¹ Pope’s choice of Horatian motto, with its focus on the supposed ingloriousness of his life and career might easily be applied to some of the women poets covered in this thesis who have until recently lived a ‘life unnoticed’ to the annalists of literary history. Dryden’s ‘Discourse’ suggests how the period defined Horace’s poetry within terms that might be defined as feminine; Pope also cultivated the Horatian theme of retirement at the end of the ‘Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot’ in a way that was gendered as female:

Me, let the tender Office long engage
To rock the Cradle of reposing Age,
With lenient Arts extend a Mother’s breath,
Make Laguour smile, and smooth the Bed of Death,
Explore the Thought, explain the asking Eye,
And keep a while one Parent from the Sky!
(ll. 408-13)

²³⁹ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 195.

²⁴⁰ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. Niall Rudd (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 202-03.

²⁴¹ Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. R. Fairclough (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 376-77.

Horatian retirement is here domestic, gentle and non-ambitious. Retirement features in much of women's poetry of the eighteenth century; it might be said that in the eighteenth century women were invited into Horace's world. Even if this domestic space was defined by traits that were stereotypically feminine, the reception of Horace's ideas and situations suggests the influence of miscellany in the reception of the classics more generally and how women could adapt classical ideas in their own writing. From within this space of retreat, they actively engaged with Horatian ideals and found ways of adapting his ideas, motifs or topoi. Sitting together with Horace, these women proved their right to a space at the table of classical learning.

Recent work by Stuart Gillespie has been keen to emphasise the place of translation in manuscripts and, as part of this, Gillespie acknowledges that the culture of translation between 1600 and 1800 'is a phenomenon we are still rediscovering'.²⁴² A distinctive feature of this 'phenomenon' was the fragmentary nature of translations in eighteenth-century culture, which gave these individual pieces a new focus within the context of the miscellany and, possibly, the complete volume. Tackling the implications of the fragment can be done by examining Horace's reception owing to his consistent and pervasive presence throughout the period: Robin Sowerby calls the English Horatianism of the long eighteenth century 'an eclectic phenomenon', offering a survey of the various translations, imitations, adaptations by some of the seminal writers of the period.²⁴³ Even 'full' translations of classical poets were miscellaneous in composition: Jacob Tonson assembled *The Odes and Satyrs of Horace that have been Done into English by the Most Eminent Hands* (1717), which included translations and imitations by Rochester, Congreve, Abraham Cowley and Dryden and wherein several poems

²⁴² *Newly Recovered English Classical Translations*, ed. Stuart Gillespie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 4.

²⁴³ Robin Sowerby, 'Horatianism', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins, pp. 255-286 (p. 255).

receive multiple interpretations by various poets. Many of the poems in the volume had appeared previously in miscellanies or personal collections: for example, Dryden's translations of *Odes* I.iii, I.ix, and III.xxix and *Epodes* II were printed in *Sylvae* (1685) and Milton's translation of *Odes* I.v was first published in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1673) alongside the Latin text.²⁴⁴ The eighteenth century has therefore been labelled as 'the Horatian age' by David Money (a replacement, Money suggests, for the tired term 'Augustan period').²⁴⁵

To discuss Horace's reception in the period in women's writing, then, means to engage in the period's literary culture and its most popular modes of publication, including the periodical or miscellany. Horace's presentation in a piecemeal form in fact enabled experimentation with the modes and motifs that occupied the Roman poet's writing. The first section of this chapter will therefore consider the tonal and situational flexibility that Horace's writing offered women by studying the individual odes by different poets alongside the various means by which women could access Horace's poetry, including periodicals, miscellanies and 'complete' translations of Horace. The second section continues this exploration of the ways in which Horace was an approachable figure for women by considering how the focus on retirement in Horace's poetry meant that women from the labouring classes could also engage with his work, often using Horatian frames and topoi to explore their desires as readers and writers. The final section focuses on Elizabeth Tollet, whose poetry frequently utilises Horace, to

²⁴⁴ Congreve's translation of *Odes* I.ix, and imitation of *Odes* II.xiv first appeared in *Miscellany Poems upon Several Occasions: Consisting of Original Poems* (1692) and Matthew Prior's imitation of *Odes* II.ii was also included in *Miscellany Poems* (1692) and his imitation of *Odes* I.xxviii, written in memory of George Villiers, was published in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1709). The publication dates provided are those of the first printing of these works, however many received multiple reprintings throughout the period. For a catalogue of many Horatian collections published during the Restoration and the eighteenth century, respectively see Robert Cummings and Stuart Gillespie, 'Translations from Greek and Latin Classics 1550-1700: A Revised Bibliography', *Translation and Literature* 18 (2009), 2-42 (pp. 19-20), and Stuart Gillespie, 'Translations from Greek and Latin Classics 1701-1800', *Translation and Literature* 18 (2009), 181-224 (pp. 196-202).

²⁴⁵ David Money, 'The Reception of Horace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, ed. Harrison, pp. 318-333 (p. 318).

demonstrate how when translated or imitated by a woman Horace's work takes on a new-found agency that insists on women's right and potential to read the classics. Yet in all of the ten women poets examined in this chapter it is as if the Horatian dictum that poetry should be sweet and useful offered them a camouflage for displaying their learning. Using the cover of Horace's domestic or unambitious voice, these women mount a strong case for their access to the classics, demonstrating the flexibility with which they use the material that goes against Philips's idea of the 'strong Masculine sense' needed to assume the Horatian voice as quoted at the beginning of this chapter. This consideration of the reception of Horace's poetry furthers the previous chapter by suggesting the ways in which women found points of entry into the classics – once this knowledge had been attained, women were able to use the changing gender associations that meant the classics were being re-defined during the eighteenth century. Buoyed by the period's own feminisation and the process of fragmentation that made the classics more attainable, the various poems here examined broadly outline the ways in which women writers, fed on 'scraps of Horace', began to offer their own condensed Horatian lessons.

Women Conversing with Horace: Imitating the *Odes*

Translations of Horace abounded for women writers and readers of the eighteenth century, and many women discussed in this thesis also often included at least one imitation of a Horatian ode in their own poetry collections. This section examines these single poems to suggest the ways in which women utilised Horace as a conduit for expressing their views about gender relations and the world around them or as a way of demonstrating their own intellectual prowess. Dryden had registered how Horace's work could be identified within terms that were generically female – considering a range of women writers identifies why there was a wide-spread interest in Horace's poetry. The

differences between the women examined include those of class, for example the working-class Mary Goddard and the upper-class Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and of geography, including the Irish Laetitia Pilkington and the Welsh Jane Brereton. There are also differences in the method of publication: Elizabeth Carter's poems were printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* whereas Eleanor Verney Bowes's imitation stayed only in manuscript. Where necessary, details about a particular ode's reception have been provided if a well-known poet of the period translated, imitated or adapted the work. These women evidently were not daunted by what D. S. Carne-Ross identifies as the *Odes*'s status of being 'so complete in their perfection as to be intimidating.'²⁴⁶ Instead, in their imitations of Horace's *Odes*, these women often use the classical mode as an opportunity to address the imbalances (social, political and educational) that faced them daily. Because of the process of fragmentation that Horace's work was subjected to, the reception of his work is varied and wide-ranging. Hence Horace emerges as both an approachable and a flexible figure whose poetry provided women with a method of expressing their marginal or oppressed situations that was from within the classics, which in turn elevated their views and experiences. It is only when taking the single poems translated by women writers of the period as a group that this Horatian chorus tellingly reveals a vital method of reception that warrants examination for the way in which it encouraged variety and ingenuity.

Few figures exemplify this method of reception better than Mary Goddard. Baptised in 1717 and living in Dublin until 1752, Goddard published her *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1748 after the death of her husband Valentine in 1745, with the preface to her *Poems* candidly acknowledging that the impulse to publish her poetry was 'To ease [the] Wants' of her children, whilst she hoped 'The Wife, the Virtuous, will

²⁴⁶ *Horace in English*, ed. D. S. Carne-Ross (Penguin, 1996), p. 13.

approve my Lays, / And not the Author, but the Mother praise.'²⁴⁷ References to classical figures are to be found throughout Goddard's collection, although they are conventional; it is her 'A Translation from a Translation of the Ninth Ode of Horace' that is here of interest. Given Goddard's absence from many studies of women's writing of the eighteenth century, it is worth quoting the poem in full:

A Translation from a Translation of the Ninth Ode of Horace.

Bellamira and Arpasia

Bell. While I remain'd the Darling of your Heart,
And no encroaching Friend cou'd claim a Part;
I envy'd not great Carolina's state,
But thought myself as happy, and more great.

Arp. While I'd your Heart, and no more happy she,
Had stole away your wand'ring Soul from me;
When Ama's Bloom cou'd not my Charms out-shine,
And gain a Conquest that before was mine;
I envy'd not the great Czarina's Fame,
Though conquer'd Nations own her awful Name.

Bell. My charming Ama now your Place supplies,
Her Wit resistless as her sparkling Eyes,
To save her Life, I with my own would part,
And freely give it, as I gave my Heart.

Arp. Ophelia, now the soft, the lovely Maid,
Loves me, and is with equal Love repaid;
If by my dying she might longer live,
I'd give two Lives, if I had two to give.

Bell. Shou'd Friendship's Goddess yet our Hearts unite,
And each of us adore what now we slight;
If Ama yet, with all her Wit shou'd yield,
And wrong'd Arpasia shou'd regain the Field.

Arp. If so, tho' you were Cruel and Unkind,
Less to be trusted than the Seas or Wind,
She much more kind, more charming and more true,
Yet shou'd my Friendship live for none but you.²⁴⁸

Goddard here adapts Horace's *Odes* III.ix, which originally enacts a dialogue between Horace and Lydia as two ex-lovers. Instead, Goddard re-works the ode as a dialogue

²⁴⁷ Mary Goddard, *Poems on Several Occasions* (Dublin, 1748), sig. [A1^v].

²⁴⁸ Goddard, *Poems*, pp. 60-61.

between two friends. The title of Goddard's poem alone not only indicates the opportunities Horace's work provided for a female writer but also demonstrates the importance of miscellanies throughout the eighteenth century to readers that did not have a knowledge of the ancient languages. The title itself self-deprecatingly acknowledges this: the 'translation' referred to in the title of Goddard's poem first appeared in Dryden and Tonson's *Miscellany Poems: Volume I* (1684) 'English'd by another Hand.'²⁴⁹ The translation of Horace's work, which closely presents the dialogue between the Augustan poet and Lydia, reappeared in later editions of *Miscellany Poems* in 1692, 1702, 1716 and 1727, and, vitally, in a 1730 reprint of Tonson's edition of *The Odes and Satyrs of Horace* in Dublin. Perhaps reading this later edition, which included three translations of the ode, with the other two by Lord Ratcliffe and the other 'Never Printed Before', prompted Goddard to pen her own version of Horace's poem from a female perspective, though she signals her debt to the 'English'd' hand by alluding directly to the first and final line of the opening stanza.²⁵⁰ Goddard's poem frequently alludes to the original, often copying the final lines of individual stanzas – for example, 'To save her Life, I with my own would part, / And freely give it, as I gave my Heart.' – and changing only the gender of the addressee. Goddard's theme of friendship is best expressed in two examples where she deviates from Horace's original poem. Firstly, in speaking of their new lover or friend respectively, Horace's poem praises how Chloe 'charms me with her Musick and her Face' where Goddard celebrates how Ama's 'Wit [is as] resistless as her sparkling Eyes', inferring a canny celebration of female intelligence, not beauty.²⁵¹ Secondly, Arpasia's new friend, Ophelia, evokes the image of Shakespeare's own lovely maid. Perhaps Ophelia is one of the most tragic of female friends, but in writing not on

²⁴⁹ *Miscellany Poems*, ed. John Dryden and Jacob Tonson (1684), p. 213-14.

²⁵⁰ Given it was probably the 1730 Dublin edition that Goddard read, quotations from the poem collected by Tonson are from: *The Odes and Satyrs of Horace, That Have Been Done Into English by the Most Eminent Hands*, ed. Jacob Tonson (Dublin, 1730), pp. 110-11.

²⁵¹ *The Odes and Satyrs of Horace*, ed. Tonson, p. 110.

love but friendship Goddard offers what could have happened had she a dedicated friend like Arpasia. The declaration of ‘If by my dying she might longer live, / I’d give two Lives, if I had two to give’ is again an allusion to Goddard’s source, but, given the Shakespearean context of Ophelia’s name, the suggestion of female support is emphasised. The dual nature of Goddard’s poem, which allows her indebtedness to the original translation through allusion whilst simultaneously marking its difference through the change in gender dynamics, is represented also in the final stanza. Where Goddard directly quotes or mirrors in the first three lines of the stanza the poem from Tonson’s collection – ending this with ‘Cruel and Unkind’, ‘the Seas or Wind’, and maintaining the ‘kind’, ‘charming’ and ‘true’ triad – in the final line she breaks away from the ‘English’d’ hand to emphasise once more the personal connections shared by women as her ‘Friendship live[s] for none but you.’

The composition date of Goddard’s poem is unknown, but given she was baptised in 1717 and the Tonson collection published in Dublin 1730, it may be the case that she was a young teenager when she first came across the translation. If written at this time, then her version of Horace’s ode may read as the somewhat naïve account of friendship. Yet the dialogue form of Horace’s *Odes* III.ix afforded other poets further opportunities to adapt and change the dynamics of the original poem. Jane Brereton keeps Horace’s conversation between two ex-lovers, but provocatively labels them as ‘He’ and ‘She’ so that the poem broadly becomes a critique of a society in which relationships mean little: as ‘She’ relates at the poem’s end, ‘Tho’ thou so rough, so pettish art, / Tho’ he so gentle, gay and trim; / So firm thou’rt fix’d in this fond Heart, / I’d die with thee, ere live with him.’²⁵² Nicholas Rowe reapplied the love dialogue to Tonson and William Congreve, whilst Lady Mary Wortley Montagu re-cast the lovers as Robert Walpole and William

²⁵² Jane Brereton, *Poems by Several Occasions: by Mrs Jane Brereton, with Letters to her Friends, and an Account of her Life* (1744), p. 19.

Pulteney.²⁵³ As Aphra Behn and Milton had done in the previous period, Montagu also imitated the ‘Fifth Ode of Horace’ and reversed the roles, presenting a betrayed woman and fickle man instead of the other way around as in the original:

Alas the poor unhappy Maid,
To what a train of ills betraid!
What fears! what pangs shall rend her Breast!
How will her eyes dissolve in Tears!
That now with glowing Joy is blest,
Charm’d with the faithless vows she hears.
(ll. 7-12)

Montagu’s imitation appeared in *The Lady’s Curiosity*, a periodical, in 1738. The influence of the mode of Ovidian epistle is felt in Montagu’s imitation, which begins by asking two questions: ‘For whom are now your Airs put on? / And what new Beauty doom’d to be undone?’ (ll. 1-2) The use of exclamations in the above inset quotation and the topic of a betrayed maid belongs to the Ovidian mode. Montagu’s ‘Fifth Ode of Horace’ demonstrates the blending of different genres and tones through her classical writing; there was evidently an intellectual and personal pleasure to be sought from imitating Horace’s odes: the use of numerous classical figures throughout Montagu’s ‘The Fourth Ode of the First Book of Horace, Imitated’ – including Venus, Vulcan, Faunus and Hades – to render the changing of the seasons evidently appealed to a mind so attuned to the ancient world both physically through her travels and intellectually through her reading. These various translations and imitations of Horace’s odes indicate that one of his most useful qualities for women writers was his focus on conversation, however women often used this opportunity to stage difficult conversations between men and women. The poems here examined revise Horace’s focus on love so that his poetry more broadly allowed women writers to contribute to conversations about their position

²⁵³ An unattributed imitation of the same ode in the May 1733 issue of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* also compared Walpole and Pulteney.

within society, whether that be as friends or to focus on how easily they are betrayed.

Horace's poetry was therefore used to elevate women's experiences and their difficulties, suggesting how the classics in part allowed women to attempt to address the disparity of their own lives and the social conventions that otherwise held them back.

That Montagu's 'Fifth Ode of Horace' appeared in a periodical introduces another type of text in which the classics could be found in a fragmentary form. Brereton published poems in Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* under the pseudonym of 'Melissa' in the mid-1730s and these literary magazines, which were integral to eighteenth-century literary culture from the 1730s onwards, often included translations of single poems. Specifically, Horace's reception has been connected to the *Gentleman's Magazine* by Penelope Wilson, who suggests the 'pervasiveness of the habit of attempting a Horatian ode or two is indicated by the translations and imitations regularly contributed to the poetry pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*'.²⁵⁴ Also included in the *Gentleman's Magazine* were poetry competitions, which created publicity for the volumes and attracted entries from Ireland and the Continent.²⁵⁵ Just as Goddard found several versions of *Odes* III.ix in Tonson's *The Odes and Satyrs of Horace*, it would not have been uncommon to find several versions of the same ode set against each other in the pages of the magazine. Cave introduced Brereton to Elizabeth Carter, and the two began a correspondence from 1738, but the *Gentleman's Magazine* also offered the young Carter an opportunity to publish her poetry.²⁵⁶ In 1734, Carter published 'A Riddle', which is full of classical references, and followed this the year after with a translation of Anacreon's *Odes* XXX.²⁵⁷ The series of poetic responses to and about Carter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in the summer of 1738, however, seems to have

²⁵⁴ Penelope Wilson, 'Lyric, Pastoral, and Elegy', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Volume 3: 1660-1790*, ed. Gillespie and Hopkins, pp. 173-190 (p. 174).

²⁵⁵ Jennifer Batt, 'Poems in Magazines', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Poetry, 1660-1800*, ed. Jack Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 55-71 (p. 64).

²⁵⁶ Carter is also on the subscription list to Brereton's *Poems*, p. xxxvii.

²⁵⁷ See *Gentleman's Magazine* 4, November 1734, p. 623, and 5, September 1735, p. 553.

dampened her spirit and these were more widely part of a general approach to her as a writer and woman. Carter's response to these poems took the form of two Horatian imitations published in the same periodical in November 1737 (*Odes* II.x) and March 1738 (*Odes* I.xxii). As would be seen again with her translation of Epictetus later on, these Horatian works are explicitly moral in their tone and approach. Extending the opening maritime image of a boat at sea from *Odes* II.x, Carter emphasises the poem's original message of moderation:²⁵⁸

A mind whose motions moderation guides,
With equal caution each extreme avoids;
Screen'd from the baseness of a sordid state,
It shuns the envy'd splendor of the great:
This guards it from the dangers of excess,
Its conduct governs, and secures its peace;
Safely thro' life a middle course it steers,
Nor raging seas nor latent quicksands fears.²⁵⁹

As Jennifer Wallace argues, Carter's removal of the gods of classical mythology from Horace's poem anticipates her later reservations about what she termed 'the whole rabble of the Greek and Roman divinities'.²⁶⁰ Wallace continues by suggesting that Carter's imitation of *Odes* I.xxii turns the poem into a 'lesson in duty and stoicism', not the love poem originally penned by Horace, which again re-iterates how women writers moved Horace away from topics that might have been traditionally gendered as feminine and that further suggests their own experimentation.²⁶¹ A brief comparison with another imitation of the same ode by Eleanor Verney Bowes, who had died in December 1724, emphasises this shift. Bowes's imitation, which was left in manuscript and never published, takes the Horatian image of being placed in a barren situation to the extreme:

²⁵⁸ Wallace, 'Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations', *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall (p. 140).

²⁵⁹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1737, p. 692.

²⁶⁰ Wallace, 'Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations', *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall (p. 141).

²⁶¹ Wallace, 'Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations', *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall (p. 141).

Place me far north, where Zephyrs never blow,
Lock'd up in ice whose rivers never flow;
Or fix me just beneath the torrid Zone,
To burn with flames more raging than my own.²⁶²

The point is, however, that amidst this lifeless area of stasis 'Sweet smiling Chloe' will still be able to provide joy, and if Bowes's speaker 'should chance to dream, / Chloe alone should fill the pleasing scene.'²⁶³ Carter maintains Horace's harsh environment, but through this solitude there is a moral to be found:

To him the gloomy waste shall seem to smile,
And conscious Virtue ev'ry care beguile;
Virtue alike its tenor can maintain,
In splendid courts, or on a barren plain.²⁶⁴

Given this impulse to moralise, it is not surprising to find that Carter also contributed a translation of 'Ode XV The Prophecy of Nereus' to William Duncombe's *The Works of Horace* (1751). With Helen stolen from Menelaus, Horace's ode has the prophet Nereus predicting the forthcoming war and the fall of Troy as a result of Paris's action. For the moralising Carter, the warnings against 'faithless Paris' would have had an obvious appeal and are congruent with the rest of her Horatian imitations.²⁶⁵ Carter succeeds in 'mak[ing] one of the most pious of Latin poets into an even more moral writer'.²⁶⁶ The highly public nature of Carter's imitations implies her confidence at entering into the man's world of classical learning, though it was obviously the didactic potential of his works that appealed the most. Carter did not necessarily make a female Horace, as had the likes of Goddard or Montagu, but she certainly suggested the ways in which he could be read by women. Moreover pairing the translations by Carter and Bowes indicates the

²⁶² Gillespie, *Newly Recovered English Classical Translations*, p. 148.

²⁶³ Gillespie, *Newly Recovered English Classical Translations*, p. 148.

²⁶⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1738, p. 159.

²⁶⁵ *The Works of Horace*, ed. William Duncombe (1751), p. 59.

²⁶⁶ Wallace, 'Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations', *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall (p. 142).

flexibility of Horatian motifs and situations for women writers – the publication of Carter’s work and the private manuscript composition of Bowes suggests how engaging with Horace was an activity to be done in both public and private spaces. In straddling these two spheres, it is unsurprising that women used Horace’s work so readily with transformative results.

The topic of competition leads to Laetitia Pilkington’s *Memoirs* (1748), in which Pilkington frames translating Horace’s work as a contest between the sexes involving herself and her husband Matthew. Pilkington records how Matthew ‘was one Winter’s Evening reading Horace, and said he would engage to write an Ode exactly in his Manner; so he directly set about it. The Fancy came into my Head to write one also, though I understood not a Word of Latin, nor knew no more of the poet than from the English Translations.’²⁶⁷ The resulting poem was ‘An Ode’, which takes the Horatian themes of rural retirement and the rejection of wealth from *Epodes* II and *Odes* II.xvi, II.xviii, and III.i:

I envy not the Proud their Wealth,
Their Equipage and State;
Give me but Innocence and Health,
I ask not to be great.

I in this sweet Retirement find
A Joy unknown to King,
For Scepters to a virtuous Mind
Seem vain and empty Things.²⁶⁸

When Pilkington showed her poem to Matthew the response was less than favourable: ‘As I had finished my Task first, I shew’d it to Mr. Pilkington, who, contrary to my Expectation (for I imagin’d he would be pleas’d), was very angry, and told me the Dean had made me mad, that the Lines were Nonsense, and that a Needle became a Woman’s

²⁶⁷ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 49.

²⁶⁸ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 49.

Hand better than a Pen and Ink.’²⁶⁹ This episode demonstrates how in spite of changing attitudes, Horace (and the classics more generally) still stood in some form as a bastion of masculinity. Matthew also uses Laetitia’s ‘Woman’s Hand’ to accuse her of madness, a classic reminder of the risks an educated woman faced should she demonstrate her ability. Yet Laetitia’s ‘An Ode’ ironically plays with these expectations, for as Pilkington renounces ambition she does so within the frame of the competition. This episode therefore might be read as staging a larger battle between men and women surrounding the issue of access to the classics in which Laetitia, in spite of her reliance on translations, makes clear how women were capable of engaging with the spirit of the classics whereas her husband comes off as petulant and foolish.

The above episode also, however, emphasises Pilkington’s reliance on translations for her knowledge of classical texts. In the famous account of her meeting with Colley Cibber, who encouraged her to write the *Memoirs*, Pilkington explains how he passed her poetry on to the Earl of Chesterfield, ‘who positively insisted on it, that I must understand Greek, and Latin, otherwise I never could write that English so well.’²⁷⁰ When Cibber questioned Pilkington about her linguistic capability, and she ‘reassured him, I was ignorant of every Language, except my Mother-tongue.’²⁷¹ Chesterfield evidently did not think the classics were a singularly masculine domain, but implicit in his comment is that they do act as a formal key to good writing. Despite professing no ability in Latin, Laetitia may have read whatever edition of Horace Matthew was reading in the above episode, enabling her to access this restricted knowledge. The sense of social transgression found above is retained in another example where Horace appears in the *Memoirs*: the first time Matthew left for London Laetitia paraphrased *Odes* III.vii, claiming a similarity between her situation and that of the poem: ‘The following Ode of

²⁶⁹ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 50.

²⁷⁰ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 60

²⁷¹ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 60.

Horace bearing some Similitude to my then present Circumstances, I took the Liberty of paraphrasing, and sent it to my Husband, notwithstanding his former Lectures.²⁷²

Pilkington's 'liberty' here is twofold: it is first of a free translation of Horace's poem, but it is also one of social freedom as she has now escaped her husband's 'lectures'. In Horace's poem, the poet speaks to two separated lovers, Asterie and Gyges, and encourages the former to not only trust her partner's constancy but also warns her to avoid the advances of her neighbour Enipeus and to herself remain true. Pilkington's paraphrase lightly changes Horace's original, though noticeably she extends the tone of threat so that it is not just Enipeus she has to fear but the world around her:

Avoid the Dusk and silent Shade,
Nor heed the plaintive Serenade;
Let Prudence, that unerring Guide,
O'er ev'ry Thought and Act preside:
So shall your faith and virtue prove
Worthy his matchless truth and love.²⁷³

These two Horatian poems were collected in Colman and Thornton's *Poems by the Most Eminent Ladies* (1755), which includes very few translations, imitations and paraphrases.

The moral message of Horace's *Odes* III.vii in relation to Pilkington's life evidently appealed to the two men, who conclude their prefatory remarks on her by observing 'it is a pity this Lady was not bless'd with discretion, and, we may add, good fortune, in some proportion to her genius.'²⁷⁴ Horace's presence in Pilkington's *Memoirs* demonstrates his entrenched status as a poetic model for men, though Laetitia emphasises that women too could work within the Horatian mode, often understanding the ways in which competition was essential to the dissemination of the odes and the poems themselves.

Pilkington's paraphrase of *Odes* III.vii may suggest that it is the lot of the wife to 'prove

²⁷² Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 62.

²⁷³ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 62.

²⁷⁴ *Poems by the Most Eminent Ladies*, ed. Colman and Thornton, i. 234.

/ Worthy' of her husband, though the tone of irony with which she introduces the poem gives the lines a pandering coyness. The Pilkingtons' marriage was far removed from the depiction of marital bliss in Horace's *Epodes* II; instead Horace was a point of contention about which the two disagreed, testing their literary abilities against each other through imitations and translations. Horace's changing reception in the eighteenth century may well then have opened his work as a site in which women could challenge the traditionally masculine status of the classics.

Warnings against inconstant lovers and betrayed women, however, were not all that the female poets of the eighteenth century could glean from Horace. Before the women writers of the eighteenth century Aphra Behn had already begun to turn Horace against his masculine protectors. Translations of *Odes* I.v and I.xi appeared in Behn's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1684). In the latter, Behn refutes the knowledge of 'Busy Gown-men' and, as argued by Elizabeth Young, the sarcastic tone of the paraphrase distances the speaker from the exclusive realms of masculine academic discourse.²⁷⁵ However Behn's evocation of the *carpe diem* motif at the end of the poem emphasises her academic transgression:

Since Life bears so uncertain Date,
With Pleasure we'll attend our Fate,
And Chearfully go meet it at the Gate.
The Brave and Witty knows no Fear or Sorrow,
Let us enjoy to day, we'll dye to Morrow.²⁷⁶

Montagu's 'Fourth Ode' called for her to 'seize the present hour' (l. 17). Elizabeth Thomas, like Behn, imitated *Odes* I.xi, imploring Cornelia to no more 'multiply the present Cares, / With Ills that are to come.'²⁷⁷ In a similar vein, Brereton imitated *Odes*

²⁷⁵ Behn, *Works*, ed. Todd, i. 99; Elizabeth V. Young, 'Aphra Behn's Horace', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700* 23.2 (1999), 76-90 (p. 85).

²⁷⁶ Behn, *Works*, ed. Todd, i. 99.

²⁷⁷ Elizabeth Thomas, *Miscellany*, pp. 109-110.

II.iii, which asks the poem's dedicatee, Nehemiah Griffith, to 'Enjoy with Thanks the present Hour!'²⁷⁸ A similar theme may be detected in the imitation of *Odes* I.xxxiii to 'Cynthio' that suggests he accepts the difficulties of unrequited love.²⁷⁹ Brereton's education was overseen by her father, who, observing her ability from a young age 'with the utmost Pleasure [...] took Care to improve it with all the necessary Instruction, being himself a Person of excellent Parts'.²⁸⁰ What is distinctive about Brereton's Horatian imitations, however, is how they engage with eighteenth-century politics. In 1716 she published the pamphlet *The Fifth Ode of the Fourth Book of Horace, Imitated: And Apply'd to the King*, which included first a translation of Horace's ode before her own imitation. Although the work is anonymous and the title page reveals the poem to be 'By a Lady', the confidence of the placement of the translation alongside the imitation demonstrates Brereton's forthright approach to imitating Horace. Sarah Prescott has called the poem 'a blatant panegyric' and suggests it is indicative more generally of the 'Hanoverian bias' throughout her poetry.²⁸¹ In 1716 Brereton put forward the notion that all the threats faced by Britain had been defeated:

Who fears the false rapacious Scot?
 The French? The Swede's Romantick Pride?
 Who dreads what Tripple Mitres plot,
 While George and Heav'n espouse our Side?²⁸²

The application of Horace's work to the praise of George I's reign appealed to Brereton, and in her later collection of poetry an imitation of Horace's *Odes* III.xiv was included that celebrated the peace of George's reign:

²⁷⁸ Brereton, *Poems*, p. 52.

²⁷⁹ Brereton, *Poems*, pp. 49-50.

²⁸⁰ Brereton, *Poems*, pp. i-ii.

²⁸¹ Sarah Prescott, 'The Cambrian Muse: Welsh Identity and Hanoverian Loyalty in the Poems of Jane Brereton (1685-1740)', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.4 (2005), 587-603 (p. 589).

²⁸² Jane Brereton, *The Fifth Ode of the Fourth Book of Horace Imitated: And Apply'd to the King* (1716), p. 7.

Oh! Happy, happy, happy we!
Blest with great George and Liberty!
In Mercy George to Britain given!
George the sov'reign Gift of Heaven!

Let all with grateful Joy abound,
With Plenty let the Board be crown'd;
Go, skim the Cream-Bowl, bring the Tea,
To Mirth we'll dedicate this Day.²⁸³

Brereton replaces the masculine bravado of Horace's original, which ends with the speaker remembering his younger years when he fought as a '*calidus iuventa*' ['hot-blooded youth'], and instead presents an image of domestic perfection and jubilation.²⁸⁴ For Brereton, Horace's odes evidently represented a mode for expressing celebration and delight, with 'grateful Joy' and 'Mirth' in abundance alongside a set table of food and drink. This is largely congruent with women's attitudes towards Horace that understand his work not as austere but as approachable and, perhaps, even comforting.

Whether it be reading Horace from miscellanies, in periodicals or something more indirect from personal collections or those of other, wealthier connections, the constant presence of these single odes in women's writing of the period suggests how Horace's changing reputation made him a much more open poet for women writers to engage with. As a result of this variety in terms of accessing Horace's work, there is no single theme or trope that connects these poems, which in itself is appropriate. Young or old, women of all ages found something slightly rebellious in Horace, the result perhaps of his not only being broken into fragments but also due to his embodiment of both masculine and feminine qualities. The poems examined in this section have shown how women were not intimidated by the *Odes* but in fact found in Horace lessons that they could apply (and, vitally, adapt) to their own lives. In considering these poems together Horace emerges as a flexible poet for women writers. As suggested by the opening

²⁸³ Brereton, *Poems*, pp. 28-29.

²⁸⁴ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. Rudd, pp. 180-81.

example of Mary Goddard, Horace was also an approachable figure for women from all social classes – hence the next section of this chapter turns to the presence of Horace in the works of two working-class poets.

A Weekend in the Country: Horace's Low Subjects in Mary Chandler and Mary Leapor

Horace's adaptability was a key aspect of his reception in the eighteenth century – this was also paired however with his approachable quality. This came, in part, from his focus on rural retirement. In willingly placing himself at the margins of society, Horace suggested a way in which those with little power could master their own apparent separation. Horace's focus on rural retreat allowed labouring-class poets of the period specially to celebrate their apparent lack of wealth with an increased sense of moral worth: for example Goddard's 'The Invitation' writes of the potential enjoyment to be found in retirement:

Come, Selima, my charming Friend, and share
With me the balmy Sweets of rural Air;
If from Elbana's high majestic Seats
To blissful Solitudes and calm Retreats:
You can retire, haste hither, and you'll find
An Entertainment gentle as thy Mind.²⁸⁵

This section will examine the work of Mary Chandler and Mary Leapor, who are connected by their reading of and experimentation with Pope's Horatian imitations from the 1730s, which also suggests another mode in which Horace was transmitted to women of the period. Dryden's version of *Epodes* II – which first appeared in *Sylvae* and was collected in Tonson's volume alongside another translation by Cowley – begins by

²⁸⁵ Goddard, *Poems*, p. 35.

exclaiming ‘How happy in his low Degree, / How rich in humble Poverty is he, / Who leads a Quiet Country Life!’ (ll. 1-3) Examining the representation of Horatian topoi of country retreat and wine, which represent fragments of writing in the mode of Horace, it will be examined how these poets used the classics to comment on their own social and economic situations and how that affected their conception of themselves as writers. These women comment on their status as readers and writers of classically-inspired material, emphasising the worth and importance of the ‘Entertainment gentle as thy Mind’ so vital to Horace’s works.

Amidst the various creative responses to the *Odes* discussed above, Mary Chandler’s poetry reminds readers of Horace’s thematic appeal to working-class poets. Born in Bath and forced to establish a milliner’s shop before the age of twenty in 1705 to help alleviate financial pressures, Chandler’s lower social and economic status is represented in her self-led education in the classics through translations.²⁸⁶ Her brother Samuel Chandler wrote an account of her life almost ten years after Mary’s death in 1745, which was published in Theophilus Cibber’s *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (1753). Samuel Chandler praised his sister’s academic ability, her proclivity for reading, and the enjoyment she gained through reading the classical authors (though he noted she had to rely on translations):

Amongst these, Horace was her favourite; and how just her sentiments were of that elegant writer, will fully appear from her own words, in a letter to an intimate friend, relating to him, in which she thus expresses herself: “I have been reading Horace this month past, in the best translation I could procure of him. O could I read his fine sentiments clothed in his own dress, what would I, what would I not give! He is more my favourite than Virgil or Homer. I like his subjects, his easy manner. It is nature within

²⁸⁶ Chandler dedicated her poetry to her brother John, an apothecarist also in Bath, commenting ‘I am far from assuming any Airs on account of this mean Performance; but would rather chuse to be taken Notice of as one that deals honestly in Trade, and behaves decently in the Relations of Life, than as a Writer; since I am conscious I have a better Right to the first, than the last Character.’ Mary Chandler, *The Description of Bath. A Poem. Humbly Inscribed To Her Royal Highness the Princess Amelia. By Mrs. Mary Chandler. The Third Edition. To which are added, Several Poems by the Same Author* (Bath, 1736), dedication ‘To Mr John Chandler’, n.p. Although *The Description of Bath* first appeared in 1733, this chapter will use the 1736 third edition of Chandler’s poetry as it included an additional eighteen poems by the poet, which are here discussed.

my view. He doth not lose me in fable, or in the clouds amidst gods and goddesses, who, more brutish than myself, demand my homage, nor hurry me into the noise and confusion of battles, nor carry me into enchanted circles, to conjure with witches in an unknown land, but places me with persons like myself, and in countries where every object is familiar to me. In short, his precepts are plain, and morals intelligible, though not always so perfect as one could have wished them. But as to this, I consider when and where he lived."²⁸⁷

In spite of the proliferation of translations of Horace during the period, Chandler does indicate the sense of disappointment faced by women writers in her letter: in spite of his wide availability, her lack of linguistic ability means she could not fully benefit from reading volumes like Pope's that placed the Latin alongside the English translation. Pope's presentation of both the Latin and English texts is infamously remembered in part because of its vitriolic treatment by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in 'Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace':

In two large Columns, on thy motly Page,
Where Roman Wit is stripe'd with English Rage;
Where Ribaldry to Satire makes pretence;
And modern Scandal rolls with ancient Sense:
Whilst on one side we see how Horace thought;
And on the other, how he never wrote:
Who can believe, who view the bad and good,
That the dull Copi'st better understood
That Spirit, he pretends to imitate,
Than heretofore that Greek he did translate?

(ll. 1-10)

Not only does Montagu turn Pope's Horace against him, presenting the two as if in opposition instead of in collaboration, but in her casting of her contemporary as the 'dull Copi'st' she recalls the *Dunciad*, for Pope has here joined the Grub Street writers that urinate in the street. Within the context of women's reception of the classics, the question of how accessible these various works would have been must be asked: these editions, as

²⁸⁷ Samuel Chandler, 'Mrs. Mary Chandler', in *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, to the time of Dean Swift. Compiled from ample materials scattered in a variety of Books*, ed. Robert Sheills and Theophilus Cibber, 5 vols. (1753), v. 345-54 (pp. 347-48).

suggested by Chandler, relied on a knowledge that was available only to a few women examined in this thesis. Montagu is able to pass comment on the quality of Pope's work because of her familiarity with the Latin language, a result of the opportunities provided to her by her aristocratic background to learn at her own leisure. Her experiences might well then be compared with the likes of Goddard, Chandler and Leapor, all working-class poets who could only use translations. Chandler's Horace is an accessible, gentle writer who forgoes the heightened world of epic for a familiar world of domestic labour – in this respect Chandler recalls how even works like Milton's *Paradise Lost* perpetuated a changing understanding of the classics. Eve's preparation for the meal for Raphael offers a Horatian episode: Horace's poems are set in the Sabine farm where he is visited by Maecenas or Augustus. This is a world of 'easy manner[s]' wherein those from the lower classes are visited by those from the upper - they exist together in an open society.

Knowing which translation Chandler was referring to in the letter, or which she relied on in general, is difficult: when she states she has been reading 'Horace this past month', it could be in any of the periodicals, single volumes or miscellanies that were available to her. Chandler praises how Horace wrote of 'countries where every object is familiar to me'. Her poem 'My Wish' reveals a Horatian vision of rural retreat:

A Fortune from Incumbrance clear,
 About a Hundred Pounds a Year;
 A House not small, built warm and neat,
 Above a Hut, below a Seat;
 With Groops of Trees beset around,
 In Prospect of the lower Ground,
 Beneath the Summit of a Hill,
 From whence the gushing Waters trill,
 In various Streams and Windings slow
 To aid a River just below;²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, pp. 65-66.

David Shuttleton, the only critic to have devoted much time to Chandler, has suggested that 'My Wish' is modelled upon Horace's *Epodes* II, a sound suggestion given both poems focus on rural retreat.²⁸⁹ However the rhetoric of Horatian retirement in Chandler's poem owes much also to Pope's translation of 'The Sixth Satire of the Second Book of Horace' (1738), which begins by stating

I've often wish'd that I had clear
For life, six hundred pounds a year,
A handsome House to lodge a Friend,
A River at my garden's end,
A Terras-walk, and half a Rood
Of Land, set out to plant a Wood.

(ll. 1-6)

Chandler's poem, by comparison to Pope's, exercises a modesty as noted through her desire to have only a hundred pounds a year versus his own six hundred (though she replicates his rhyme that connects 'clear' with 'year'). In 1770, 'My Wish' was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* accompanied with a brief comment; in the letter to Mr Urban, Chandler's work was called 'a literary curiosity' whilst the poet herself was unreservedly described as 'old and crooked'.²⁹⁰ The author of the letter tells of how Chandler refused an offer of marriage from an older man, an event that she recorded in her poem 'A True Tale'. In printing 'My Wish', which outlines Chandler's desire to live without the pressures of work or financial worries, the author of the letter hints at Horace's impressive influence on Chandler's imagination: for example, as part of Chandler's vision she describes how

My Thoughts my own, my Time I'd spend
In writing to some faithful Friend:
Or on a Bank, by purling Brook,

²⁸⁹ See David Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler's *Description of Bath* (1733): A tradeswoman Poet of the Georgian Urban Renaissance', in *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Rosemary Sweet and Penelope Lane (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 173-194 (p. 451).

²⁹⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine* 40, September 1770, p. 433. That said, Chandler candidly described herself as 'deformed and old' in 'My Own Epitaph', Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, p. 40.

Delight me with some useful Book;
Some Sage, or Bard, as Fancy led;
Then ruminare on what I'd read.²⁹¹

Again, this description finds a parallel in Pope's 'The Sixth Satire':

Oh, could I see my Country Seat!
There, leaning near a gentle Brook,
Sleep, or peruse some ancient Book,
And there in sweet oblivion drown
Those Cares that haunt the Court and Town.
(ll. 128-32)

For Chandler, Horace wrote within a topography that was familiar to her and he cannot be defined by either gender or class. The happy comfort with which Chandler evokes an image of retreat in 'My Wish' also suggests how Horace provided working-class women with an image of contentment: it is tempting to imagine that the 'useful Book' Chandler will read amidst the environment of simplicity and ease is a translation of Horace, perhaps even that by Pope.

Samuel Chandler's biography quoted above reveals that it was Horace's illusion of the disarmingly uncomplicated joy of the simpler life that appealed to Chandler. For the milliner poet forced to work due to financial necessity, Horace's *Beatus Ille* no doubt represented a lifestyle of leisurely enjoyment. Bridget Keegan writes of how time is often an issue in labouring-class poetry of the period, with these writers describing times when they were freed from manual labour.²⁹² As a poet Horace might therefore be said to offer an imaginative world in which Chandler could escape her work and sit alone or with a friend, read and think: she wishes for 'A Mind from Bus'ness free'.²⁹³ This vision might then be said to be a principal reason for why women were so attracted to Horace's work, even if Chandler's tone of longing is undercut by the repetition of 'I'd' throughout the

²⁹¹ Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, p. 66.

²⁹² Bridget Keegan, 'The Poet as Labourer', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Poetry, 1660-1800*, ed. Lynch, pp. 162-178 (p. 164).

²⁹³ Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, p. 65.

poem that sets all her desires as just being out of reach. This idea of Horace providing an alternative space for women is seen in not just labouring-class poetry. Chandler's desire is no different to that of Anne Ingram, Viscountess Irwin, who argued in 'An Epistle to Mr. Pope. Occasioned by his Characters of Women' that

A FEMALE mind like a rude fallow lies;
No seed is sown, but weeds spontaneous rise.
[...]
Culture improves all fruits, all sorts we find,
Wit, judgement, sense – fruits of the human mind.²⁹⁴

According to Ingram, women are 'Unused to books', and so she asks Pope for his support:

Would you, who can instruct as well as please,
Bestow some moments on your darling ease
To rescue women from this Gothic state,
New passions raise, their minds anew create:
Then for the Spartan virtue we might hope,
For who stands unconvinced by generous Pope?
Then would the British fair perpetual bloom,
And vie in fame with ancient Greece and Rome.²⁹⁵

Ingram's 'An Epistle to Mr Pope' was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in December 1736; the poem not only casts Pope as Horace because of his ability to 'instruct as well as please', but also publicly challenges his depiction of women in the *Epistle to a Lady* (1735). The 'British fair' are here presented as existing in a 'Gothic state' because of their lack of access to education – like Chandler, Ingram uses a Horatian frame to suggest how the classics offered women the opportunity to ponder and push against the social confines that limited their formal opportunities for education.

Horace's work implies a world in which the low and high can co-exist, which is seen in the opening of Chandler's 'A Letter to the Right Honourable the Lady Russel':

²⁹⁴ *Women Poets*, ed. Lonsdale, p. 150.

²⁹⁵ *Women Poets*, ed. Lonsdale, p. 151.

At my low Cottage, on a cheerful Morn,
 When slanting Beams did ev'ry Scene adorn;
 By Goodness prompted, native of their Breasts,
 Sir Harry and my Lady were my Guests.
 My Treat was homely, and my Table small,
 My Cloth and Dishes clean, and that was all:
 For thus it suited to my low Estate,
 'Twere insolent to imitate the Great.²⁹⁶

Chandler's insistence on her low station suggests how Horace's poetry created spaces in which the classes can mingle and converse. Aside from Horace's feminine qualities, his focus on retirement encouraged other working-class poets to write within this frame:

Chandler's focus on the 'slanting Beams' of her 'low Cottage' reminds us of the country-house genre, which was parodied by Mary Leapor in 'Crumble-Hall'. Pope's translation of *Satire II.vi* tells the fable of 'A Country Mouse, right hospitable, / [who] Receiv'd a Town Mouse at his Board, / Just as a Farmer might a Lord.' (ll. 158-60) Having been entertained by his fellow rodent, the Town Mouse invites the Country Mouse to his home near Lincoln's-Inn but during their feasting they are interrupted by a set of dogs. Having learned his lesson about the dangers of city living, the Country Mouse returns to the pleasures of his 'hollow Tree! / A Crust of Bread, and Liberty.' (ll. 220-21)

Unsurprisingly, then, in Leapor's country-house poem 'Crumble-Hall', a contribution to a genre that descends from Horace through Ben Jonson, it is described how 'Safely the Mice through yon dark Passage run, / Where the dim Windows ne'er admit the Sun.' (ll. 52-53) This light Horatian touch pays homage to the classical roots of the country-house genre, and although Leapor's poetry was arranged posthumously, that 'Crumble-Hall' was followed by 'Upon her Play being returned to her, stained with Claret' is indicative of the thematic connection between the two works.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, p. 25.

²⁹⁷ For a full discussion of Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall', see Chapter IV. Also, for Leapor's development of the country-house genre, see: Sharon Young, 'Visiting the Country House: Generic Innovation in Mary Leapor's "Crumble Hall"', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 34.1 (2015), 51-64.

Leapor's friend and patron Bridget Freemantle had encouraged the young writer to send her play *The Unhappy Father* to Colley Cibber, which the former recorded in 'To a Gentleman With a Manuscript Play'. In 'Upon her Play being returned to her, stained with Claret' Leapor addresses her manuscript, as Horace does in *Epistles XX*, beginning:

Welcome, dear Wanderer, once more!
Thrice welcome to thy native Cell!
Within this peaceful humble Door
Let Thou and I contented dwell!

But say, O whither hast thou rang'd?
Why dost thou blush a Crimson Hue?
Thy fair Complexion's greatly chang'd:
Why, I can scarce believe 'tis you.
(ll. 1-8)

Wine is a frequent topos in Horace's poetry and reception: *Odes* I.xviii and III.xxi told of the pleasures and dangers of the alcoholic beverage, whilst John Gay's 'Wine. A Poem' signalled its symbolic inspiration with a motto from Horace's *Epistles* I.xix.²⁹⁸ As with the mouse of 'Crumble-Hall', Leapor's mention of the 'Crimson Hue' that marked her play indicates the Horatian tone of her poem. But where Horace uses *Epistles XX* to express his fear that his works would become school texts, in her poem Leapor expresses a preference for rural retirement:

But now I'll keep you here secure:
No more you view the smoaky Sky:
The Court was never made (I'm sure)
For Idiots, like Thee and I.
(ll. 20-23)

Leapor's poem is stained by the city and its polluting ('smoaky') influence, and so the elegiac 'No more' of the conclusion to Leapor's poem indicates the death of her

²⁹⁸ Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Dearing, i. 21-28. For an encyclopaedic account of wine in Horace, see Arthur Patch McKinlay, 'The Wine Element in Horace', *The Classical Journal* 42.3 (1946), 161-167 and its sequel 'The Wine Element in Horace', *The Classical Journal* 42.4 (1947), 229-35.

pretensions to write for the court and city. ‘Upon her Play being returned to her, stained with Claret’ suggests the difficult realities faced by a woman writer in the eighteenth century; however Leapor, like Chandler, suggests how Horace offered a voice that encouraged women to write confidently of their own retirement and independence. The parenthetical interjection ‘I’m sure’ offers something conversational and informal that stresses her removal from the world of the court and her frustration at the idea that those in the city thought of her and her work as ‘Idiots’. Against Cibber’s careless nonchalance for the condition of Leapor’s work, Horace is affably evoked through her allusion to *Epistles XX* and the accused substance of wine. Much like Chandler’s solitary reading by the brook, Leapor finds a comfort and enjoyment in her seclusion away from ‘the smoaky Sky’ with the ‘Idiots’ of the countryside. Indeed Leapor’s love of the simplicity of the countryside is seen in poems such as ‘The Epistle of Deborah Dough’, which opens:

Dearly beloved Cousin, These
 Are sent to thank you for your Cheese:
 The Price of Oats is greatly fell:
 I hope your Children all are well
 (Likewise the Calf you take Delight in);
 As I am at this present writing.

(ll. 1-6)

Although Leapor here takes on the persona of Deborah Dough, included in the poem is a description of ‘Our Neighbour Mary’ (ll. 10), who

throws away her precious Time
 In scrawling nothing else but Rhyme;
 Of which, they say, she’s mighty proud,
 And lifts her Nose above the Croud;
 Tho’ my young Daughter Cicely
 Is taller by a Foot than she,
 And better learnt (as People say):
 [...]

Will coddle Apples nice and green,
And fry her Pancakes – like a Queen.
(ll. 17-23, 27-28)

Leapor warmly parodies both her local community and the Horatian epistle genre. Horace's poetry therefore provided an accessible rhetoric of retreat that justified and elevated working-class women's marginal status in society. Irrespective of whether or not Chandler or Leapor could actually break into the circles of the London literati, Horace's construction of retreat as a form of independence allowed these women to imagine a world in which they could move beyond class boundaries. It is unsurprising that women writers responded to Horace with the playful awareness seen in the poems here discussed: these affable spaces offered not only a break from labour but also elevated that work by celebrating its lowness so that these women could appear 'like a Queen.'

Seize the Knowledge: Elizabeth Tollet's Horatian Education

As a result in part of Horace's poetry being presented as adaptable and appealing specifically to women readers, some women writers used the Horatian frame to set forth a stronger claim to be educated in the classics. The life and work of Elizabeth Tollet exemplifies the appeal imitating Horace had for women writers of the eighteenth century. Tollet anonymously published her first collection of poems, *Poems on Several Occasions. With Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII An Epistle* (1724) – a varied selection of epitaphs, elegies, translations and imitations, and poems in praise of major writers including William Congreve and Anne Finch. After Tollet's death in 1754 her collection was re-published in 1755 with her name on the title page and including a substantial number of new poems alongside a musical drama, 'Susanna; or, Innocence Preserv'd'. The anonymous 'Preface' to the 1755 edition of Tollet's poetry lists the education she

received from her father, George Tollet: ‘She received a handsome Fortune from her Father, who observing her extraordinary Genius, gave her so excellent an Education, that besides great Skill in Music, and Drawing, she spoke fluently and correctly in the Latin, Italian, and French Languages; and well understood History, Poetry, and the Mathematicks. These Qualifications were dignified by an unfeigned Piety, and the moral Virtues, which she possessed, and practised in an eminent Degree.’²⁹⁹ The presentation of Tollet as a both learned and pious woman reappears on her epitaph – she was buried in a church in Westham – which was recorded in an 1815 issue of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*: ‘Religion, justice, and benevolence, appeared in all her actions; and her Poems, in various languages, are adorned with the most extensive learning, applied to the best purposes.’³⁰⁰ Tollet’s exposure to ‘extensive learning’, which both adorns her writing as a note of beauty and suggests how it increased the value of her work marks her as one of the more fortunate women in this thesis. As might be expected, this learning also spurred Tollet to write frequently about women’s lack of formal education opportunities more generally. At almost 200 lines, Tollet’s ‘Hypatia’ summons the shade of the Hellenist female philosopher and mathematician to argue not only for female education but also for female intellectual freedom. The opening of the poem has Tollet, who is ‘Deny’d that Fame, and rob’d of that Repose / Which Learning merits, [and] Innocence bestows,’ summoning Hypatia.³⁰¹ The shade asks, ‘What cruel Laws depress the female Kind, / To humble Cares and servile Tasks confin’d?’³⁰² Although Hypatia’s shade rises from the underworld, Tollet is careful to prevent accusations of this figure being enclosed within the archetype of the monstrous intellectual woman; there remains however something otherworldly when Hypatia describes the physical and intellectual freedom that comes with education:

²⁹⁹ Elizabeth Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), pp. i-ii.

³⁰⁰ *Gentleman’s Magazine* 85, December 1815, p. 484.

³⁰¹ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 61.

³⁰² Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 61.

Yet, as she may, her Forces she explores,
 And far above the Orb sublunar soars:
 She leaves the less'ning Earth, and upward springs,
 On purer Æther to expand her Wings;
 A nobler Pitch her bold Enquiries fly,
 Amid the Fields of her congenial Sky.
 She sees the Lights which we accuse to stray,
 In measur'd Dance pursue their certain Way:
 And thousand Stars, which scarce to us appear,
 With vivid Rays illuminate the Sphere;
 In deepen'd Spaces, and retiring Files,
 Whose Distance hence the weary Eye beguiles.
 She sees where Comets trail their fiery Hair,
 Terrific Lustre! thro' the shining Air:³⁰³

The diction of this celestial quest for female knowledge, here quite literally astronomy, is somewhat analogous to Milton's description of Satan's flight in *Paradise Lost* in its sense of movement between planets. Tollet also here works in a reference to Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, which describes the apotheosis of Belinda's lock as: 'A sudden Star, it shot thro' liquid Air, / And drew behind a radiant Trail of Hair' (IV.127-28). Through the language of light and illumination, 'Hypatia' questions the idea that a woman receiving an education is unnatural or illicit: the poem frequently asks, 'Or yet is this a Crime?' of different subjects including astronomy, mathematics and the benefits of reading.³⁰⁴ But in referencing Satan and Belinda, Tollet suggests the apparently fallen nature of a woman who has achieved knowledge; however she also situates this female quest amongst the stars, implying it is both enlightened and enlightening. Tollet's ambivalence is also seen in her hesitancy to situate herself as a learned lady during her own life: whilst her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1724) was filled with translations it also appeared anonymously.

Tollet knew what it was like to be educated – or, to borrow a phrase from 'Hypatia', to have 'sparkling Gems inclose[d]' within – but she also laments not having

³⁰³ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 65

³⁰⁴ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 63. See also Tollet's 'The Praise of Astronomy, from the first Book of Ovid's *Fasti*'.

access to the institutional opportunities offered to her brothers.³⁰⁵ Recalling Tollet's frustration in 'To my Brother at St. John's College' at the 'noisy Guards' that disrupted her study, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, the influence of these distracting forces are not overly felt in her poetry collection, which includes multiple translations of works by classical authors. Of these, Horace's is the most consistent presence in Tollet's work: there are three imitations (of *Odes* II.iii, II.x, and IV.vii) and a translation (of *Odes* I.xxiii), and numerous Horatian epigrams and mottos are used in other poems in the collection. Further imitations (of *Odes* I.xxxiix and II.xv) would appear in the 1755 edition alongside 'Horace to Leuconoe', an adaptation of *Odes* I.xi. The distaste and frustration Tollet evidently felt during her earlier years, as manifested in poems like 'Hypatia' and 'To my Brother at St. John's College', may explain the profuse presence of Horace in this early collection. Lowell Edmunds writes of how 'education is the main social mode of the reception of the odes', detailing that, until the mid-twentieth century, the teaching of Horace was the preserve of the elite.³⁰⁶ Horace's constant presence during the 1724 collection, meaning all the poems were written before Tollet was thirty, implies that alongside the devotional poems Tollet may have used the Roman poet as a way of forming her own informal literary education that would have matched that of her brothers. Whereas the previous sections have considered the fragments of Horace in women's writing, this final section shall explore the ways in which Tollet's writing adopts a Horatian frame broadly to not only to demonstrate his approachable outlook on society but also to insist on women's right to a classical education.

The translations and imitations of Horace's *Odes* throughout Tollet's earlier poetry, written when the poet was a young woman potentially watching her brother study at Cambridge and Oxford, are indicative of the appeal of the poet's voice. These works

³⁰⁵ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 64.

³⁰⁶ Lowell Edmunds, 'The Reception of Horace's Odes', in *A Companion to Horace*, ed. Gregson Davis (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 337-366 (p. 341).

imply that, alongside the culture of translation praised in ‘The Triumvirate of Poets’, Horace offered Tollet a moral and classical education. The first imitation in the 1724 collection is that of *Odes* II.x, which Tollet uses to stress the necessity of finding moderation and control in life:

Fondly, my Friend! does proud Ambition soar,
And Danger tempt with an unwearied Flight:
Fondly does Fear still keep the humble Shore,
Whom whistling Winds and beating Surges fright.

Whoever wisely keeps the golden Mean,
Nor he to smoaky Cottages retires,
Nor he in envy’d Palaces is seen:
Too low he sinks not, nor too high aspires.³⁰⁷

Tollet here chooses not Horace’s nautical focus in his opening stanza but instead, with language reminiscent of ‘Hypatia’, she presents ambition and its consequent dangers as being connected with ascension. Carter had found with her imitation of the same ode in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* that the potential for a woman to have her wings melted by male detractors because of her confidence in stepping (or, rather, flying) into their territory of the classics. This same caution is never far from Tollet’s imitation. The ‘golden Mean’ aspired to in the poem, a distinction between squalor (‘smoaky Cottages’) and affluence (‘envy’d Palaces’), becomes a necessity for the female writer. Aside from moderation, however, there is also a solace to be found in Horace’s *Odes* II.x, as captured in the final stanza:

In adverse Chance resolv’d and bold appear;
And so thou best may’st stem the Tide of Fate:
Lower thy Sail when there’s no Danger near,
And prosp’rous Gales upon thy Voyage wait.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 7.

³⁰⁸ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 8.

When imitated by a woman, the motif of a journey or quest throughout Horace's *Odes* II.x goes some way to providing an analogy for female self-education. For a young woman seeking an education, these lines advising perseverance and willpower suggest how Horace represented a conception of the world that was both optimistic and aware of the difficulties Tollet would face. Horace's optimism in both *Odes* II.x and the *carpe diem* motif evidently spoke to a period in which traditional boundaries (of gender, class, and acceptable behaviour) were changing; even if Horace was a more feminine figure in the period, Tollet's caution is also indicative of the social repercussions that awaited a woman who went too far in the demonstration of their knowledge.

Following Tollet's *Odes* II.x, there is a sequence of three Horatian poems – one translation and two imitations – that provide a 'prosp'rous Gale' of work that indicate what the Roman poet might have meant to the eighteenth-century woman. Though Tollet never married, her translation of *Odes* I.xxiii describes a coming of age that reads more as if the speaker is writing an epistle than, as in Horace's original, a direct address: 'Young Cloe flies me, as a Fawn / That seeks her Mother o'er the Lawn'.³⁰⁹ Tollet's language, of trembling, rustling and panting, although faithfully translated from the original, betrays her fear of sexual encounters. Because of Tollet's sex the Horatian ode becomes much more menacing in tone, especially in its final imperative: "'Tis Time thy Mother now to leave; / A Lover gives thee Chase.'³¹⁰ In choosing to translate the ode Tollet identifies the social pressures faced by a young woman, indicating again how adaptable Horace's work was for women of the period. Tollet's 'Imitation of Horace, Lib. IV. Ode 7' and 'Imitation of Horace, Lib. II. Ode 3', however, are more about appreciating one's lot in life. The first stanza of Tollet's imitation of *Odes* IV.vii ends with the imperative 'Enjoy the present Hour, for that alone is thine.'³¹¹ But again in being

³⁰⁹ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 9.

³¹⁰ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 9.

³¹¹ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 9.

translated by a woman Horace's poem is changed somewhat: *Odes* IV.vii's suggestion that men like Aeneas, Tullus and Ancus, known respectively for their piety, strength and wealth, could not halt the progress of time irrespective of their power here emphasises how Horace spoke to those who existed on lower planes than the heroic. This re-focusing of the poem's class is emphasised by Tollet's use of a conversational idiom: 'Say,' she asks, 'cou'd Aeneas' Piety, or Prayers, / One Moment add to his determin'd Years. / Cou'd Stregnth preserve unconquer'd Tullus' Breath?'³¹² The final poem in this sequence, an 'Imitation of Horace, Lib. II. Ode 3', continues this theme. Again Tollet reminds readers that 'Death, the great Leveller of all Degrees, / Does on Mankind without Distinction seize.'³¹³ Instead Tollet's Horace advises on the benefits of rural retreat:

let's retreat
 To some remote, some rural Seat;
 Where on the Grass reclin'd we may,
 Make ev'ry Day a Holy-day:
 Where all our Delights combine,
 With Friendship, Wit, and chearful Wine.
 [...]
 Perfumes, and Wine, and Roses bring!
 The short-liv'd Treasures of the Spring!
 While Wealth can give, or Youth can use,
 While that can purchase, this excuse,
 Let's live the present Now!³¹⁴

Here again is a world in which Horace can be gendered as female: he is a writer of transience and friendship, of delight and separation. These three poems might seem an unusual choice for a young woman to translate or imitate, but here is the Horace who sweetly instructs and who elevates the simple experiences of daily life. Tollet's Horace provided an alternative way of viewing a world that was tentatively trying to understand

³¹² Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 10.

³¹³ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 12.

³¹⁴ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), pp. 11-12.

how traditional forms of knowledge like the classics would look as they moved away from their traditionally masculine existence.

Other poems in the 1724 collection use Horatian epigraphs to indicate Horace's importance to Tollet. 'The Portrait' is bracketed by Horatian epigrams: opening with 'Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella / Vita - - -', from *Satire* II.i, and ending with 'Dulce est desipere in loco', from *Odes* IV.xii.³¹⁵ Tollet's poem begins by describing those things that she does not desire, including: a coach, 'rich Brocades', 'Brilliant in my Ear' (potentially referring to both the earrings and the useless sylphs that sit on the shoulder of Pope's Belinda), to be ferried around London or to sit at the Basset table for long periods of time. As in her imitation of *Odes* II.iii, in 'The Portrait' Tollet refuses the material and social world of the eighteenth century as satirised by Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* (and other writers), and writes instead of how, for her friends,

I'd always be at home:
My Table still shou'd cover'd be,
On this Side Books, on that Bohea;
While we sip on, and ne'er debate
Matters of Scandal, or of State.
For Horace tells us, as you know,
'Tis sweet to fool it *a propos*.³¹⁶

Jane Stevenson identifies Tollet's rejection of political matters and books 'that meddle with the Court' in 'The Portrait' as a parallel to Horace's *Odes* II.xi and III.viii.³¹⁷ But other aspects of the poem suggest its Horatian tone. Tollet's satirising of contemporary society is noted through the charming and conversational shift into French. Like Leapor's '(I'm sure)', Tollet's writing in the Horatian voice stresses his sociable, affable qualities. Tollet's declaration that she drinks 'Bohea', a low-quality Chinese tea, in its contentment

³¹⁵ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), pp. 27-28; 'So it comes that the old poet's whole life is open to view, as if painted on a votive tablet', Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. Fairclough, p. 129; 'It's nice to be silly on the right occasion', Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. Rudd, p. 253.

³¹⁶ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 28.

³¹⁷ Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 197.

with the lower quality likewise has a Horatian flavour. The opening epigram indicates the satirical tone of ‘The Portrait’; however Tollet does not complete the quotation from Horace, which ends with the word ‘*senis*’ [‘old’]: this identifier would be incongruous with her depiction of the eighteenth-century social life of a young woman. Tollet uses the Horatian quotation to attest to an openness and honesty in ‘The Portrait’, though the closing epigram from *Odes* IV.xii reminds readers of the irony that satire allows. The reference to Horace in the final line of the poem then re-affirms that women responded to his sweeter, amiable tones, which were a key part of his moral teachings; as already implied, Horace offered a sense of contentment in retirement that encouraged young women to connect with and respond to his poetry.

This suggestion of Horatian mottoes acting as poetic inspiration for Tollet are present in other poems from the collection: for example, in ‘To a Gentleman in Love’ an epigram from *Epodes* XI confirms the physical effects of love: Tollet writes of the ‘faded Cheeks and unregarding Eyes’, the ‘rising Sighs which heave his struggling Breast’, whilst Horace’s quotation likewise records how ‘*Amantem languor et silentium / arguit et latere Petitus imo spiritus.*’ [‘my listlessness and silence and the sighs fetched from the depths of my heart betrayed the man in love.’]³¹⁸ For Tollet, there is a certain amount of support and care to be found in Horace, though the satirical and moral potential never seems to have left her focus. After Tollet’s death in 1754, her poetry was republished in 1755 with her name on the title page and including numerous new poems. Two further Horatian additions are to be found in this new collection – an imitation of *Odes* II.xv and a more direct translation of *Odes* I.xxxviii – that indicate how Tollet’s use of Horace’s poetry in her later years took on a method of critiquing the period’s growing obsession with the orient. Despite the period’s wide use and importation of materials, foods and furniture from the East, in ‘The Portrait’ Tollet professed to rather drink Bohea and so

³¹⁸ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 24; Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, trans. Rudd, p. 299.

translating *Odes* I.xxxviii, which rejects ‘Persian Pride’, is apt.³¹⁹ Both poems are about the problems of luxury, although it is appropriate that Tollet chooses to functionally translate Horace’s *Odes* I.xxxviii, a poem that generally rebukes accessory and adornment, instead of the open and expansive mode of imitation, which she chooses for *Odes* II.xv. It seems that Tollet declined to collect these two poems in her earlier volume however both were included in William Duncombe’s *The Works of Horace in English Verse* (1757) and at the end of her *Odes* II.xv the date ‘1714’ is noted.³²⁰ Tollet’s *Odes* II.xv anticipates Pope’s critique of the ornateness of country houses in *The Epistle to Burlington* (1731):

Behold our airy Palaces!
 Our Palestrina and Farnese!
 How we in Fresco breath!
 Who would not think the lofty Dome
 Was lifted all entire from Rome,
 To Wasted or Blackheath?³²¹

Duncombe’s collection is designed so ‘That the Work may not swell to an unreasonable Bulk, no more than one Translation and one Imitation of the same Ode are admitted. By this rule we are obliged to exclude many excellent Pieces.’³²² Duncombe’s text offers a middle ground between a complete translation of Horace and a miscellany; in doing so, the text presumably offered many opportunities for its readers both educated and not in Horace’s work to enjoy and respond to his poetry. From a young age, Tollet clearly gleaned a lot from Horace morally, socially and intellectually, and the Roman poet’s critiques of ancient culture found a fertile application in her mind. Tollet was able to piece together the various fragments that surrounded her so that she could receive an *ad*

³¹⁹ Tollet, *Poems* (1755), p. 133. For the proliferation of Eastern materials in eighteenth-century Europe, and the importing, trading and demand for this, see Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 46-84; for tea drinking specifically, see pp. 230-31.

³²⁰ *Works of Horace*, ed. Duncombe, p. 193.

³²¹ Tollet, *Poems* (1755), p. 125.

³²² *The Works of Horace*, ed. Duncombe, pp. v-vi.

hoc education in Horace's poetics that was, if not as formal as that her brother received at university, substantial. The presence of Virgil and Ovid also throughout her work indicates her familiarity and comfort within the classical mode, but she was able through the imitations to adapt the work to comment on her own life. As we have seen already, the *carpe diem* motif is prevalent throughout not only Tollet's Horatian work but also the works of other female poets in the period, which should be unsurprising given it encourages the reader to break through traditional boundaries to achieve their goals. Tollet's 'Horace to Leuconoe' was also added to the 1755 collection and imitates *Odes* I.xi; the poem concludes:

Be wise; and pierce the gen'rous Wine:
And all thy distant Hopes resign;
When but a Moment can be thine.
And what can envious Time afford,
Which flies while we pronounce the Word?
Then seize the present while you may;
Nor trust To-morrow for a Day.³²³

Horace's enjoyment of conversation, retirement and friendship particularly enamoured him to women writers, with these features gendered as feminine in eighteenth-century society. In some cases, for example the translation of *Odes* I.xxiii, the act of being translated by a woman provides the work with a newfound urgency and social commentary. Exploring Horace's presence in Tollet's poetry reveals how a feminine Horace was perhaps little different to his more masculine existence before the eighteenth century. In this way, Horace was an ideal figure for women writers of the period to translate and imitate, for his writing provided them with situations that could be readily adapted – in this process, we can identify the ways in which the reputation of the classics was changing in the eighteenth century.

³²³ Tollet, *Poems* (1755), p. 123.

These numerous examples of Horace's presence in women's poetry of the eighteenth century suggest the ways in which women writers were beginning to converse with authors from the classical periods in their poetry. The female experimentations with the Horatian voice mirror the fragmented processes of reception that Horace was subjected to. However in being broken up Horace's work became more accessible, opening it up to be changed and adapted. This process of fragmentation was vital to eighteenth-century classicism, and the coming chapters (on the reception of Ovid and epic) will likewise track the various means by which other writers of the ancient world were received in the literary culture of the period. Where later chapters explore the use of topoi, in the case of Horace what has been evident is the focus on translation or imitation in women's poetry collections. Frances Burney's *Evelina: Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) not only coyly registers this change of Horace's status but also parodies his belonging to men of fashionable society. A brief episode set in the resort town of Hotwells sees two of the men wager their ability to drive faster in their respective coaches. Mrs. Selwyn, Evelina's London neighbour, proposes that Lord Orville and Mr Lovel compete not in a competition of skill but of mental capacity:

'I will then explain myself more fully. As I doubt not but you are both excellent classics, suppose, for the good of your own memories, and the entertainment and surprise of the company, the thousand pounds should fall to the share of him who can repeat by heart the longest ode of Horace?'

Nobody could help laughing, the two gentlemen applied to excepted; who seemed, each of them, rather at a loss in what manner to receive this unexpected proposal.

[...] 'Come, Gentlemen,' said Mrs. Selwyn, 'why do you hesitate? I am sure you cannot be afraid of a weak woman?'³²⁴

As Mrs. Selwyn herself implies, the irony that a 'weak woman' might suggest this is a task rather against what would be expected for a member of her sex. Yet within the

³²⁴ Frances Burney, *Evelina, Or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 290.

literary contexts outlined in this chapter, Selwyn's suggestion is obvious: aside perhaps from the original Latin, she had as much access to Horace as the men. The foppish Mr Lovel attempts to talk himself out of the task, to which Mrs Selwyn asks, 'to be sure, Sir, you *have* read the classics?' 'O dear, yes, Ma'am! – very often, – but not very – not very lately,' he answers.³²⁵ Burney's stuttering prose captures Lovell's inefficiency, noting how later in the period the suggestion that the classics represented a masculine ideal had eroded, and yet his hesitancy to participate does not emerge as being overly feminine because of the wry and candid Mrs. Selwyn. In a final attempt to excuse himself from the challenge, Lovell states 'Which of the odes! – Really, Ma'am, as to that, I have no very particular truth, that Horace was never a very great favourite with me.' 'In truth I believe you!' said Mrs. Selwyn, very drily.³²⁶ Mrs. Selwyn's proposition that the two men compete by reciting a Horatian ode is indicative of the changed nature of Horace's reception during the eighteenth century for women: the men might be surprised by her challenge, yet it is their own masculinity that is called into question, not Mrs. Selwyn's femininity. Burney's episode stresses the idea of Horatian competition – here between men and women, echoing Pilkington's own competition with her husband. Instead of the men openly translating an ode, it would be easy for women to open any miscellany, periodical, or even a collaborative translation of Horace and find the same ode translated by numerous people. Many of the women discussed in this chapter, like Mrs Selwyn, would no doubt have candidly smiled at those men who proclaimed a knowledge of the classics but who could not demonstrate it.

The poems here discussed show that women were more than capable of challenging men with their repositories of Horatian imitations and motifs than might be expected, which is the result of Horace's varied and wide-ranging literary reception that

³²⁵ Burney, *Evelina*, ed. Bloom, p. 290; emphasis Burney's.

³²⁶ Burney, *Evelina*, ed. Bloom, p. 290.

was accessible and integrated within the everyday literary culture of the eighteenth century. Leapor's 'Dorinda at her Glass' projects the future that awaited women who worship the dressing-room table whilst young. With faded charms and no longer besotted by suitors, Dorinda cries out to the young women reading the poem and implores them to

Hear this, ye fair Ones, that survive your Charms,
Nor reach at Folly with your aged Arms;
Thus Pope has sung, thus let Dorinda sing;
'Virtue, brave Boys, - 'tis Virtue makes a King:'
Why not a Queen?

(ll. 120-24)

The women poets discussed in this chapter, all of different ages and from a wealth of social and economic backgrounds, show that in Horace they found a figure they could talk with and a scheme of reference that allowed them to ponder their own experiences and hypothesise what their lives might have been like had they been allowed to exist outside of the social restrictions that they felt held them back. The balance of Leapor's line 'Thus Pope has sung, thus let Dorinda sing', sets the potential of women's writing in the immediate future. Just as Leapor used the frame of Horace's world to write favourably of Cicely, that 'Queen' of household chores, in quoting from Pope's Horace she implies the potential of having the classics available and openly applicable for women readers and writers. Why not a Queen indeed.

CHAPTER III

'Of bodies chang'd to various forms': Women Reflecting on Ovidian Topoi

...when we are in the *Metamorphoses*, we are walking on enchanted Ground, and see nothing but Scenes of Magick lying round us.

-Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 417 (1712)³²⁷

As a metaphor for the mythological status of the classics during the 1700s, to drink from the Heliconian spring of the *Metamorphoses* was to gain access to the mythos and culture of the ancient world. In place of the allegorical readings that dictated Ovid's reception during the medieval and renaissance periods, his work was read and enjoyed by many during the eighteenth century with his stories part of everyday culture. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writing in a letter to Alexander Pope in April 1717 from Adrianople, found parallels between the Arabic literary traditions she was encountering and those of the classical world that were familiar to English audiences: she observed how the nightingales' 'amours with roses is an Arabian fable as well known here as any part of Ovid amongst us'.³²⁸ If rather un-sanctimonious, Lydia Languish's rushing to 'cram Ovid behind the bolster' as she hides the rest of her loans from Bath's lending library – which include Tobias Smollet's *Roderick Random* (1748) and Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) – during Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) implies his status as a popular, fashionable poet.³²⁹

Continuing his issue of *Spectator* 417, Addison says that Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

has shewn us how the Imagination may be affected by what is Strange. He describes a Miracle in every Story, and always gives us the Sight of some new Creature at the end of it. His Art consists chiefly in well-timing his Description, before the first Shape is quite worn off, and the new one perfectly finish'd; so that he every where entertains us with

³²⁷ S iii. 564.

³²⁸ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. Teresa Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn (Peterborough: Broadview, 2013), pp. 122-23.

³²⁹ Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals*, ed. David A. Brewer (Peterborough: Broadview, 2012), p. 137.

something we never saw before, and shews Monster after Monster, to the end of the *Metamorphosis*.³³⁰

The never-ending variety of myths in the *Metamorphoses* may have provided a source of amusement, but from Ovid's text women derived an enhanced awareness of their bodily limitations. This constant sense of innovation may well have been thought of as a defining characteristic of Ovid that explained his appeal to women of the eighteenth century; however women writers often countered this passing sense of frivolity, showing an awareness of Ovid that is more akin to the language of monstrosity ('Creature' and 'Monster') that Addison writes of in the *Spectator*. Women use the genres and topoi from Ovid to write of the theme of change in a way that acknowledges their experiences. In this way, the influence of both the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses* can be seen, for women often evoke Ovid and more widely classical mythology as a way of expressing personal fears about the ways in which eighteenth-century society viewed gender and beauty. Certainly, for all the enchantment that awaited women when opening the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's work also provided a mythos to write about the threats (mythological and mortal) that they also had to encounter. Elizabeth Tollet opened both collections of her poetry in 1724 and 1755 with a translation of the myth of Apollo and Daphne. Through this placement, Tollet implicitly expresses a pride in her literary ability, yet the chosen myth betrays a resignation to the female experience of suffering at the hands of both ardent lovers and time. When Apollo explains to the altered Daphne that the laurel will be his favourite tree and that her leaves and branches will decorate the heads of victors, 'The grateful Laurel this allows, / And for her Head her leavey Crown she bows.'³³¹ Though Tollet manages to assign a grandeur to Daphne with the addition of 'her leavey Crown', a detail she may have extended from Arthur Golding's translation,

³³⁰ S iii. 565-66.

³³¹ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 7.

that the nymph ‘bows’ her head offers a particularly submissive reading of the Latin ‘*adnuit utque caput visa est agitasse cacumen*’ [‘and seemed to move her head-like top in full consent’].³³² As shall be shown throughout this chapter, women’s engagement with Ovid’s work often acknowledges this darker meaning.

As has been increasingly emphasised in recent scholarship, Ovid’s *Heroides* was instrumental in his reception during the Restoration and eighteenth century especially for women writers.³³³ In 1680, Jacob Tonson published *Ovid’s Epistles, Translated by Several Hands*. Those ‘several hands’ included Dryden, Nahum Tate, Thomas Otway, Samuel Butler and Aphra Behn. In the ‘Preface’ to *Ovid’s Epistles*, Dryden outlined the difficulties of translating the *Heroides*: ‘’Tis almost impossible to translate verbally and well at the same time; for the Latin (a most severe and compendious language) often expresses that in one word which either the barbarity or the narrowness of modern tongues cannot supply in more.’³³⁴ Yet within the volume of *Ovid’s Epistles* itself came a challenge to this academic concern. Behn’s ‘Oenone to Paris’ was attacked by Matthew Prior in *A Satyr on the Modern Translators* (1698) owing to her lack of knowledge of the Latin language. In Dryden’s ‘Preface’, he writes of Behn’s work: ‘I was desired to say that the author, who is of the fair sex, understood not Latin. But if she does not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be ashamed who do.’³³⁵ This ‘paraphrase’ has been

³³² Golding’s translation notes how Daphne ‘seem[ed] to condescend / By bowing of her new-made boughs and tender branches down / And wagging of her seemly top as if it were her crown.’ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding, ed. Madeleine Forey (Penguin, 2002), p. 51. Latin and translation from: Ovid, *Metamorphoses: Books 1-8*, trans. Frank J Miller (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 42-43.

³³³ See Isobel Grundy, ‘Ovid and Eighteenth-Century Divorce: An Unpublished Poem by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’, *RES* 23 (1972), 417-28, and Gillian Beer, “‘Our unnatural No-voice’: The Heroic Epistle, Pope, and Women’s Gothic”, *Yearbook of English Studies* 12 (1982), 125-51.

³³⁴ H i. 386.

³³⁵ H i. 390.

described as demonstrating a ‘thoroughly Ovidian spirit’ that was enhanced by her sex.³³⁶ Moreover, the political additions made by Behn in her epistle, which emphasises her royalist support (*Ovid’s Epistles* was first published at the height of the Exclusion Crisis), have led to the suggestion that the poem broadly served as an exemplar for how women could engage with Ovid: Katherine Heavey argues the political currents within Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s ‘The Fable of Phaeton Paraphrased from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*’ demonstrate the influence of Behn’s work, which encouraged women to write from within the forms of translation and political adaptation.³³⁷ From the second edition of *Ovid’s Epistles* in 1681, however, Behn’s freer translation was preceded by a more faithful piece by John Cooper; Susan Wiseman suggests this inclusion ‘seems to be Dryden’s response to criticism of “paraphrase”, which proved a focus for stylistic and moral criticism.’³³⁸ Heavey suggests that having two translations alongside one another enabled a reader unfamiliar with Ovid to compare the two and recognise Behn’s ‘extensive, and politically weighted, alterations’, yet the suggestion that Behn’s work was in some form vetted by Cooper’s translation cannot be ignored.³³⁹ Whilst the miscellany form would have resulted in a greater reading audience for the classics, the inclusion of Cooper’s epistle almost as a way of tempering Behn’s more expansive rendering suggest how the genre supplied readers with both traditional and more experimental forms of the classics. This sense of innovation provided women with an opportunity to adapt Ovid so that his work could articulate the experiences of his eighteenth-century female readers.

³³⁶ Sarah Annes Brown, ‘Women Translators’, in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Volume 3: 1660-1790*, ed. Gillespie and Hopkins, pp. 111-120 (p. 115).

³³⁷ Katherine Heavey, ‘Aphra Behn’s *Oenone to Paris*: Ovidian Paraphrase by Women Writers’, *Translation and Literature* 23 (2014), 303-20 (p. 320). Heavey outlines the political analogues in Behn’s poem (pp. 306-11).

³³⁸ Susan Wiseman, ‘“Perfectly Ovidian”? Dryden’s “Epistles”, Behn’s “Oenone”, Yarico’s Island’, *Renaissance Studies* 22.3 (2008), 417-433 (p. 423).

³³⁹ Heavey, ‘Aphra Behn’s *Oenone to Paris*’, *Translation and Literature* (p. 315).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, then, the increasing availability of Ovid's work in a variety of literary forms led to a sense of innovation when utilising Ovidian situations. Gabrielle Starr may well suggest that Ovid's 'poetry is closely associated with the passing fancies of female frivolity' during the period, however the women discussed throughout this chapter demonstrate a much darker awareness of his poetry that is tied to their bodies and their social reputation.³⁴⁰ Increasing levels of female literacy and a social obsession with stories of seduction and abandoned women gave way to a host of Ovidian epistles by women. Owing to Ovid's meditations on sexual morality, power and status, and the 'powerful powerlessness' of the stories presented in the *Heroides*, the text has been termed by Susan Wiseman 'strangely appropriate reading for women'.³⁴¹ The first section of this chapter will examine how the various adaptations of the Ovidian epistle during the 1680s and 1690s encouraged women to adapt the genre so as to comment on love, sexuality and beauty. The impressive transmission of the *Heroides* through *Ovid's Epistles* has long been established, however this has perhaps been at the expense of recognising the influence of the reception of the *Metamorphoses* on women's writing, which provides the main focus of this chapter.

To study Ovid's reception in women's writing of the eighteenth century means to acknowledge how he was mostly received through the miscellany genre. Because Ovid's work was broken into individual episodes, it should be unsurprising that women engage with him in a way that is equally fragmented by often focusing on individual topoi. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* especially lends itself to this process of fragmentation for it is itself a miscellaneous text. Dryden had a life-long interest in Ovid that carried on throughout his career in his work on individual episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Using evidence from newspapers, private letters and Dryden's own prefatory writings,

³⁴⁰ Gabrielle Starr, 'Burney, Ovid, and the Value of the Beautiful', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24.1 (2011), 77-104 (p. 79).

³⁴¹ Susan Wiseman, "'Romes wanton Ovid": reading and writing Ovid's "Heroides" 1590-1712', *Renaissance Studies* 22.3 (2008), 295-306 (p. 301).

David Hopkins suggests that Dryden's episodic translations from the *Metamorphoses* were, at some point during the 1690s, meant to form part of a complete translation of the *Metamorphoses*.³⁴² This volume would not appear however until 1717, with Samuel Garth forming a full translation of Ovid's text with contributions by, as the title page declared, 'the most Eminent Hands' of the period, including Joseph Addison, William Congreve, and Pope. In the years between Dryden's work and 1717, however, individual translated episodes of Ovid by these writers and more had appeared throughout various miscellanies. For example, Jacob Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part* (1704) included Addison's translation of Book III of the *Metamorphoses* and his rendering of 'The Story of Phaeton' and 'Europa's Rape' (the *Annual Miscellany* in 1694 had published his 'Salmacis'). In the 'Preface' to the 1717 collaborative edition, itself a miscellany-like volume, Garth acknowledges that in the *Metamorphoses* 'there appears an infinite variety of inimitable excellencies'; later on he suggests that:

So great is the variety of this Poem, that the reader, who is never pleas'd, will appear as monstrous, as he that is always so. Here are the hurries of battels for the heroe, tender emotions of soul for lover, a search and penetration into Nature for the philosopher; fluency of numbers, and most expressive figures for the poet; morals for the serious, and plaisantries for admirers of points of wit.³⁴³

It is appropriate that Garth presents different types of reader for the *Metamorphoses*, yet the group that might be said to be missing here is that of the female reader. However according to Liz Oakley-Brown the number of female aristocratic dedicatees to Garth's 1717 Ovid shows that men considered it their imperative to translate the *Metamorphoses* for women.³⁴⁴ The work of writers like Behn, Rowe and Chudleigh from the Restoration had already begun to challenge this assumption. Pope's *Sandys's Ghost* (written in winter

³⁴² See David Hopkins, 'Dryden and the Garth-Tonson *Metamorphoses*', *RES* 39 (1988), 64-74.

³⁴³ GT xxxii. Unless otherwise stated, quotations from the *Metamorphoses* are from GT.

³⁴⁴ Liz Oakley-Brown, *Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England* (Ashgate, 2006), p. 123.

1716-17 but published in 1727) had not only attacked Garth's volume and the supposed mechanical processes of translation that had been necessary to complete the work, but it also suggested that women writers could be able volunteers for the collection:

Ye Ladies too draw forth your Pen,
I pray where can the Hurt lie?
Since you have Brains as well as Men,
As witness Lady W—l-y.

Now, Tonson, list thy Forces all,
Review them, and tell Noses;
For to poor Ovid shall befall
A strange *Metamorphosis*.

(ll. 65-72)

Pope's sentiment is two-faced: whilst he praises Montagu's ability, his suggestion that the consequent Ovid would be 'strange' diminishes his confidence in the abilities of those women who could translate the text. Yet that Pope highlighted Montagu is telling, and the second section of this chapter will examine her engagement with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Building on Montagu's imitations with the Ovidian epistle, it is argued that she uses a variety of references to the *Metamorphoses* as part of her writing on the inevitability of bodily change, a theme present throughout her writing. Pope had suggested that Montagu could have comfortably contributed to Garth's collection, and tracing the role of the *Metamorphoses* in her poetry reveals that Ovid's world of immutable change was never far from her mind.

Montagu's use of mythology also serves as an introduction to the third section, which examines the topos of the looking glass in women's poetry. The reception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in women's writing came not only from translations but also from other texts that re-used the original mythological material: Mandy Green, writing about the use of the *Metamorphoses* in *Paradise Lost* with particular reference to Eve, comments on the broad 'variety of forms ranging from the open imitation of a famous

episode or scene, direct quotation or mythological simile to the obliquely suggestive parallel' used by Milton in his epic.³⁴⁵ Green's analysis of the text finds traces of Narcissus, Pygmalion, Daphne and Pomona, among others, in Milton's Eve, who becomes almost a compendium of female mythological figures. Margaret Anne Doody explored the 'very strong interest in Ovidian narrative' in the period and the flexibility with which some writers used his work: 'The *Metamorphoses*,' Doody writes, 'is not a ceremonious dinner but a greatest disorderly feast at which one can drop in'.³⁴⁶ The third part of this chapter shall examine in particular the reception of the myth of Narcissus through the popular topos of the looking glass in eighteenth-century women's poetry. Examining both the near-mythic status achieved by the looking-glass in the early eighteenth century and the transfiguration of the figure of Narcissus through Milton's Eve and Pope's Belinda, this thematic study will suggest the ways in which women worked with myths and stories that were being rendered with a focus on femininity; unsatisfied with just repeating these new versions of ancient mythology however the women poets examined further altered the myth, suggesting the ways in which the contemporary literary culture encouraged writers to experiment and push the boundaries of what was thought of as acceptable poetic usage of the classics.

That women actively edit or re-focus classical mythology in their poetry ties them to the figure of Echo, who traditionally might be said to have a set of troubling connotations for women writers. 'Where was Echo, the woman in Narcissus's story?' asked Gayatri Spivak in 1993.³⁴⁷ Susan Fishman reads Ovid's story about the transformation of Echo as emphasising the young girl's poetic and rhetorical talents: she is able to prevent Juno from discovering Jupiter's dalliances through her oratorical ability, and therefore joins the women throughout the *Metamorphoses* who are punished

³⁴⁵ Mandy Green, *Milton's Ovidian Eve* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 8.

³⁴⁶ Margaret Anne Doody, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 85.

³⁴⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Echo', *New Literary History* 24.1 (1993), 17-43 (p. 17).

for their artistic capabilities.³⁴⁸ Addison's translation of the episode was first published in Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part* and was then edited when included in Garth's collection. Given that Addison was a writer who was particularly associated with a female readership because of his work with the *Spectator*, his choice to translate this episode is apt as Juno's curse suggests two issues that can be associated with Echo:

“That tongue, for this thy crime,
Which could so many subtle tales produce,
Shall be hereafter but of little use.”
Hence 'tis she prattles in a fainter tone,
With mimick sounds, and accents not her own.
(III.369-73)³⁴⁹

Firstly, Echo is betrayed by another woman as a result of, to continue Fishman's argument, her poetic talents, which might be taken to imply the dangers that awaited a woman who dared to tell mythical tales or express her creativity. Secondly, and more worrying, is that Echo is left by Juno as being totally dependent on others for speech. In Ovid's myth, Echo relies on Narcissus's utterances for her to speak. In this respect, the myth and punishment of Echo provides an apt analogy for how women of the eighteenth century relied on male translators to provide access to the classics.

However Echo's fragmented approach to language implies her potential. Echo's condition – ‘She can't begin, but waits for the rebound, / To catch his voice, and to return the sound’ (III.389-90) – implies that she can re-orientate the sounds she hears to her own purposes. From the perspective of reception studies, there remains a power in these returned words: as John Hollander suggests, ‘Potentially, [they] can augment and trope

³⁴⁸ Susan C. Fischman, ‘Even As We Speak: Woman's Voice and the Myth of Echo’, in *Sexuality, the Female Gaze, and the Arts: Women, The Arts, and Society* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), pp. 87-101 (pp. 87-89).

³⁴⁹ The text chosen is GT, which uses Garth's 1717 edition of the *Metamorphoses*. In this passage only one word is different from how the text first appeared in 1704, in which Echo's curse is described as to reproduce ‘With Mimick Sounds, and *Speeches* not her own.’ Emphasis mine.

the utterance it echoes, as well as reduce and ridicule'.³⁵⁰ Echo must then work through fragments in much the same way as women of the eighteenth century had to receive the classics. The poets here discussed demonstrate a remarkable proficiency in adaptation and allusion that emphasises their relationship with the translators of the period: working with the material of the ancient world, these writers, like Echo, re-orientate their original sources for their own revisionist or personal intentions. If Ovid presented women with some monstrous stories, there was still an opportunity for them to metamorphose his work so that it commented on their own lives and aspirations.

Women and the Reception of Ovid's *Heroides*, 1700-1730

Ovid's *Heroides* involves fictional verse epistles from women figures from ancient mythology – including Dido, Penelope, Helen and Medea – written to their absent lovers. In his 'Preface' to *Ovid's Epistles* Dryden calls the poems 'the most perfect piece of Ovid,' explaining 'that the style of them is tenderly passionate and courtly, two properties well agreeing with the persons which were heroines and lovers.'³⁵¹ However, that Dryden chose to use the 'Preface' of *Ovid's Epistles* to meditate not on the genre but to set out his various definitions of translation has led to recent accusations that the entire volume was commissioned as a conduit for Dryden's theory; other complaints have focused on the suggestion that the volume allowed his poetic contemporaries to display their talents, or that the volume generally worked as a commercial experiment that was, ultimately, very successful.³⁵² In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Ovid's

³⁵⁰ John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1981), p. 31.

³⁵¹ H i. 383-84.

³⁵² For the first, see Harriette Andreadis, 'The Early Modern Afterlife of Ovidian Erotics: Dryden's *Heroides*', *Renaissance Studies* 22.3 (2008), 401-416 (p. 403); for the second, see Stuart Gillespie, 'The Early Years of the Dryden-Tonson Partnership: The Background to their Complete Translations and Miscellanies of the 1680s', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, 12.1 (1988), 10-19 (pp. 11-12).

Heroides was subjected to various processes of fragmentation: from being burlesqued to ‘translated by divers hands’, the various works and collections that transmitted the work relied in some form on the distortion or adaptation of the original material. The Ovidian epistle became itself a hybrid text that invited adaptation, including by women writers. This first section will explore these experiments with the epistle form.

In the ‘Preface’ to *Ovid’s Epistles* Dryden had put forward three forms of translation: metaphrase (‘turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another’), paraphrase (‘translation with latitude’) and imitation (in which the translator ‘assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion’).³⁵³ The flexible form of paraphrase dominated the immediate reception of *Ovid’s Epistles*, as seen in the title of Matthew Stevenson’s *The Wits Paraphras’d, or, Paraphrase upon paraphrase. In a Burlesque on the Several late Translations of Ovid’s Epistles* (1680). Alexander Radcliffe’s *Ovid Travestie, A Burlesque Upon several of Ovid’s Epistles* (1680), which was printed by Tonson, writes of ‘our old Friend Ovid’ in the opening lines of the ‘Preface’, which is dedicated to *The Wits Paraphras’d*.³⁵⁴ Radcliffe’s collection relocates five epistles so that they are set in contemporary society: for example, ‘Penelope to Ulysses’ is set not in Ithaca but in Scotland, with the Greek hero leaving home to fight a rebellion. The second edition, published a year later in 1681, included ten more epistles. Together, as suggested by Henriette Andreadis, these two burlesques imply that conversations about the genre were prompted by the publication of *Ovid’s Epistles*, with topics including the practicalities of translating ancient volumes by several authors and female sexuality.³⁵⁵ The enduring popularity of *Ovid’s Epistles*, which was in print throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, combined with these mock-treatments of the form, at least implies

³⁵³ H i. 384-85.

³⁵⁴ Alexander Radcliffe, *Ovid Travestie, A Burlesque Upon several of Ovid’s Epistles* (1680), p. 1.

³⁵⁵ Andreadis, ‘The Early Modern Afterlife of Ovidian Erotics’, *Renaissance Studies* (p. 411).

the variety of sources and interpretations of the mode that women could choose between.³⁵⁶ John Oldmixon's *Amores Britannici, Epistles Historical and Gallant, in English Heroic Verse* (1703), though it did not include strict translations, is indicative of both the wide influence of the epistle form at the beginning of the eighteenth century and how it was a genre exploited for contemporary and political purposes. Oldmixon suggests that Radcliffe was 'tempted by the familiar Thoughts and Expressions he found in some of them to try how easily the rest might be turn'd into ridicule.'³⁵⁷ Alongside suggesting that the Ovidian epistle is open to satire owing to its depiction of heightened emotions, Oldmixon suggests that this very feature also must be moderated, else it might affect female readers:

These poems, may perhaps appear too Amorous in so Grave and Wise an Age as this is [...] I have taken Care, not to offend the Modesty of the Fair, and have banish'd those Sentiments which, as beautiful as they are in Ovid, wou'd be as dangerous to Manners as agreeable for their Tenderness and Passion.³⁵⁸

That Oldmixon saw fit to neuter the potential dangers posed to the 'Modesty of the Fair' by Ovid registers that the genre was re-defined with women readers particularly in mind. Of course, this was not entirely new: Wye Saltonstall's *Ovids Heroicall Epistles*, first printed in 1639 but frequently reprinted, including in 1671, 1677, 1686 and 1695, was dedicated 'To the Virtuous Ladies and Gentlewomen of England'.³⁵⁹ This cultural paradigm that transported and re-located Ovid encouraged women writers to use the language and rhetorical of the epistle form in their own way. Ovid's epistles were part of not only the formal establishment of the new wave of translation initiated by Dryden but

³⁵⁶ See Stuart Gillespie and Robert Cummings, 'A Bibliography of Ovidian Translations and Imitations in English', *Translation and Literature* 13.2 (2004), 207-218 (pp. 210-12).

³⁵⁷ John Oldmixon, *Amores Britannici, Epistles Historical and Gallant, in English Heroic Verse: From Several of the Most Illustrious Personages of Their Times* (1703), p. A11.

³⁵⁸ Oldmixon, *Amores Britannici*, p. A11.

³⁵⁹ Wye Saltonstall, *Ovid's Heroicall Epistles* (1695), p. A3. Though Saltonstall's collection was first published in 1639, this quotation is from the 1695 edition as this may be the edition women of the eighteenth century had the most access to.

also a burgeoning form of publishing translations through the miscellany form. The divergent forms of the Ovidian epistle in the eighteenth century, then, indicate not only how the classics were made more accessible in the period but also how women navigated the difficult or troubling connotations that were attached to classical genres.

The enduring popularity of the epistle during the late seventeenth and into the early eighteenth centuries led to a discussion of the form in *Spectator* 618 (1714). In this, Ambrose Philips and Thomas Tickell distinguished Ovidian epistles from the Horatian, which were defined respectively as ‘love-letters, letters of friendship, and letters upon mournful occasions’ and ‘epistles in verse as may properly be called familiar, critical, and moral’.³⁶⁰ This *Spectator* article offers an informal summary of the prefatory materials discussed above in its implicit definition of the Ovidian epistle as a feminine mode of writing. ‘He that is ambitious of succeeding in the Ovidian way,’ argued Tickell and Philips, ‘should first examine his Heart well, and feel whether his Passions (especially those of a gentler Kind) play easie, since it is not his Wit, but the Delicacy and Tenderness of his Sentiments, that will affect his Readers.’³⁶¹ By contrast, a Horatian epistle requires ‘a good Fund of strong Masculine Sense’, and the extended treatment of this form of writing over the other implies its weighted seriousness.³⁶²

Bill Overton connects the flourishing of the epistle form with what he terms the ‘constant cultural inspection’ of women’s role in society during the early eighteenth century.³⁶³ Alongside this re-evaluation the classics were increasingly being thought of within feminine terms, although in the case of the epistle this perhaps meant more that men would write as women: as Gillian Beer puts it, ‘in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it seems, the heroic epistle was seen as a woman’s genre in its subject matter

³⁶⁰ S v. 112.

³⁶¹ S v. 112-13.

³⁶² S v. 113.

³⁶³ Bill Overton, *The Eighteenth-Century British Verse Epistle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 144.

and audience, though not in its authorship.³⁶⁴ Before the eighteenth century however women writers challenged the gendered implications of the Ovidian epistle. For example, Jane Barker recognised and parodied the genre in ‘To Ovid’s HEROINES in his Epistles’ by criticising these figures who, instead of controlling their men, became themselves controlled:

Bright Shees, what Glories had your Names acquir’d,
Had you consum’d those whom your Beauties fir’d,
Had laugh’d to see them burn, and so retir’d:

Then they cou’d ne’er have glory’d in their shames,
Either to Roman, or to English Dames,
Had you but warm’d, not melted in their flames.³⁶⁵

In ‘The Resolution’, Mary Chudleigh exclaimed ‘How well does [Ovid] express unhappy Love! / Each Page does melt, and ev’ry Line does move.’ (ll. 436-37) Referencing the stories of Oenone, Hypermnestra, Laodamia and Sappho, Chudleigh laments particularly of the last heroine how Phaeon’s ‘inauspicious Flame, / Eclipse[d] the Splendor of so bright a Name.’ (ll. 452-53) Susan Staves suggests that Chudleigh writes of Sappho’s death not as an opportunity to criticise her passion but to lament the passing of a talented woman.³⁶⁶ Chudleigh calls Sappho a ‘Prodigy of Wit!’ who was set against ‘treacherous Man, who still a Riddle proves’, a slight example of how the *Heroides* were adapted to give a stronger voice to women in the eighteenth century. Chudleigh, like Barker, calls for a refocusing of the ways in which women from the ancient periods were received in the tradition of Ovidian reception; this change was facilitated by other women writers who, responding to the changing perception of the epistle form, also used it in their attempts to write about and revise women’s place both in antiquity and in

³⁶⁴ Beer, ‘The Heroic Epistle and Women’s Gothic’, *Yearbook of English Studies* (p. 142)

³⁶⁵ Jane Barker, *Poetical Recreations* (1688), pp. 28-29.

³⁶⁶ Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 133.

eighteenth-century society to create an alternative kind of womanhood that is more heroic.

The vogue for the Ovidian epistle has been seen to conclude with Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) and *Sappho to Phaon* (written in 1707, but published in 1712 in a later edition of *Ovid's Epistles*).³⁶⁷ Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* tells of the impossible love of twelfth-century star-crossed lovers Héloïse and Pierre Abélard whose letters were translated into English by John Hughes and published in 1713. The story was also recounted in Addison's *Spectator* 164 (1711). Eloisa offered a modern successor to Ovid's heroines, though Felicity Rosslyn considers that it also had a personal relation to Pope's life: as a poem of sexual frustration, she suggests, it could only be written by someone who had likewise suffered similar emotions.³⁶⁸ One of Pope's most popular poems, *Eloisa to Abelard* has been credited for creating 'a vogue for passionate heroines trapped in gloomy retreats' that continued into the emerging genre of the novel in the figure of Clarissa.³⁶⁹ Eloisa's 'gloomy' surroundings have been seen as both part of an Ovidian 'symbiosis of landscape and psychology' and as a precursor to the uncanny environments found in Gothic literature.³⁷⁰ Indeed, Claudia Thomas identifies Elizabeth Tollet's epistle 'Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII' as being inspired by Eloisa's sufferings amidst in spaces:

And whence, O sad Reverse of prosp'rous Fate!
Must these happy Lines receive their Date?
Not from fair Greenwich's ever-pleasing Bow'rs;
Not from the painted Roof of Woolsey's Tow'rs:
But from the Gothic Structures, whence on high,
Far, far Beneath I cast my distant Eye,
And see your subject River rolling by.

³⁶⁷ See William Fitzgerald, 'Augustan Gothic: Alexander Pope Reads Ovid', in *Augustan Poetry and the Irrational*, ed. Philip Hardie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 187-198 (p. 188).

³⁶⁸ Felicity Rosslyn, *Alexander Pope: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 48.

³⁶⁹ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 174.

³⁷⁰ Fitzgerald, 'Augustan Gothic', *Augustan Poetry and the Irrational*, ed. Hardie (p. 188).

Alas! how diff'rent from the shining Court
Is this Abode? debarr'd of all Resort?³⁷¹

Tollet's epistle ends with a postscript that explains the sources that inspired her poem and the general reception of the figure of Anne Boleyn; she also provides notes to 'explain some Parts of the History alluded to' in the poem.³⁷² In including the notes, Tollet signals how the Ovidian epistle might go beyond its origins as a fictionalised account of women's suffering – here Tollet uses the mode to provide a more formal document for the voice of a marginalised woman.

The gothic subtext in Tollet's poem indicates how the epistle mode could be used by women writers to flexibly respond to changes in the literary marketplace. Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* also influenced Judith Madan (née Cowper), who wrote 'Abelard to Eloisa' in 1720 (the poem was published in William Pattison's *Poetical Works* (1728)). As Ovid's *Heroides* includes examples of the men writing to the women, such as Paris to Helen or Leander to Hero, Madan's poem forms a literary companion to Pope's work and is the earliest known response to his epistle. Madan's Abélard contemplates the redundancy of his learning given Eloisa's beauty, and the poem also depicts him roving from rejection to adoration of her as he remembers her innumerable charms: 'Each weak Resistance stronger knits my Chain, / I sigh, weep, love, despair, repent in vain!'³⁷³ These lines and the poem in general would have accrued a heavier emphasis for their author in the years following an intense courtship in 1723 that ended in marriage in December; Madan's husband, Colonel Martin Madan, soon became distant and was often abroad. Yet it seems this inconstancy was known around London long before these marital woes: in October or November 1723, Montagu wrote 'Miss Cooper to –', in which Cowper reprimands her unfaithful partner. Montagu has Cowper ask:

³⁷¹ Tollet *Poems* (1724), p. 80; see Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 175.

³⁷² Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 82.

³⁷³ *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Backscheider and Ingrassia, p. 284.

For what strange Curse has Nature form'd my Mind
So different from the rest of Womankind?
Shew, Dress and Dancing are their sole delights,
In visits lose the Day, in play they waste the Nigh[ts],
But I had rather from the Croud retir'd,
Be lov'd by One, than be by all admir'd.

(ll. 63-68)

However, where Montagu's epistle may first cast Madan as a typical Ovidian heroine, crying and lamenting her lot, the poem turns to a meditation on the fickle quality of beauty: 'Take back, ye Gods, this useless pow'r to please, / It gains no Glory, and it gives no Ease! / While at my Feet neglected Lovers lie / 'Tis I that languish, and 'tis I that dye.' (ll. 35-38) Montagu's use of an Ovidian mode to critique contemporary attitudes towards beauty is characteristic of her approach to Ovid's poetry more generally, as shall be seen in the next section. Montagu's protection of Madan, however, is indicative generally of her later epistles, which focus not on mythological heroines but on women in contemporary society.

In 'Epistle from Arthur G[ray] to Mrs M[urray]' Montagu transgresses both sex and class in assuming the perspective of the footman Gray. Here Montagu relies in part on the contemporary influence of the mock-heroic, for the poem uneasily shifts between allowing a sympathy for Gray and mocking him. Grundy states: '[Montagu] has been read as presenting a common servant as aspiring and oppressed, as criticising the penal code and the class system of her day.'³⁷⁴ As with 'Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge] to her Husband', Montagu's other well-known verse epistle, 'Epistle from Arthur G[ray] to Mrs M[urray]' takes advantage of the mode's dis-engagement of traditional boundaries. The classics here operate as a forum for Montagu to engage with highly public, salacious contemporary events whilst also covertly claiming the genres of the ancient world for her own. Through her identification with both the servant Gray and the legally informed

³⁷⁴ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 228.

Yonge, Montagu pushes against the strictures that otherwise held back those in society who were thought of as being lower, whether that be defined by gender or class. As argued in ‘Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge] to her Husband’:

Too, too severely Laws of Honour bind
The Weak Submissive Sex of Woman-kind.
If sighs have gain’d or force compell’d our Hand,
Deceiv’d by Art, or urg’d by stern Command,
What ever Motive binds the fatal Tye,
The Judging World expects our Constancy.
(ll. 9-14)

Although the epistle mode was filled with clichéd behaviour, Montagu used this sense of excess to her own advantage to decry the rhetoric of abandonment traditionally associated with the *Heroides*.

Montagu’s malleable approach to the epistle form was already apparent in her juvenilia. These poems, which were composed before she turned fourteen, were written, according to Isobel Grundy, ‘under the sway of the later Dryden’.³⁷⁵ To examine these poems is to observe how the various translations, imitations and adaptations of the Ovidian epistle in the 1680s, 1690s and early 1700s shaped a young woman’s education in the classics. It can only be imagined the emotions a young Montagu experienced when first reading *Ovid’s Epistles*, a text brimming with pathos and resolve. Briefly examining extracts from the numerous epistles written in the Ovidian strain throughout her earlier manuscript collections demonstrates how Montagu not only was aware of the genre’s focus on lamentation and sadness but also how she took strength from this volume. These early poems preface the later ones, indicating how Montagu’s experimentation with Ovid was a key part of her writing throughout her life. One epistle from Statira, Queen to Alexander the Great, ends: ‘Yet know my Alexander, know that I / Without you cannot live – but I can dye, / And dye I will rather [than] share your heart / Or let the Curst

³⁷⁵ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 18.

Roxana have a part.³⁷⁶ This outward nobility is carried into another epistle from the perspective of another queen: in ‘Cleopatra to Julius Caesar’, the Egyptian monarch records her total isolation, her suffering of insomnia and the incessant reading of stories of betrayed lovers. ‘Hee has forgot his Oaths, his truth, his flame’, she laments, ‘And scarce remembers Cleopatra’s Name.’³⁷⁷ The grief felt by Montagu’s women is naturally all-encompassing: she states in ‘To Vencentia’, ‘This is not Life (for tho’ I talk and move / I doe not Live, when absent from my Love).’³⁷⁸ In ‘An Imitation of Ovid’s Epistles’, a title that in its general quality candidly reveals the over-arching impetus of the genre, Montagu asks ‘Why has the cruel Power confine’d, / To this weak clay my Warlike mind?’³⁷⁹ The female speaker embodies a martial spirit that has her wanting to join her partner, who has left supposedly to fight abroad, and ‘Fight by your side, and Fame alike persue’.³⁸⁰ Here again is not only Barker’s and Chudleigh’s desire for more powerful and confident heroines but also Montagu’s use of the mode to counter traditional expectations of gendered behaviour.

As much as Montagu might have seen the dangers of being a woman embodied in Ovid’s *Heroides*, the text also served as a point of encouragement. Montagu found the Ovidian epistle a flexible mode throughout her writing life, but of her early work only one was published and today her juvenilia is not available in a modern print edition of her poetry. ‘Julia to Ovid’, supposedly ‘Wrote at 12 Years of Age in Imitation of Ovid’s Epistles’, was copied by Montagu after 1755 and then posthumously printed in 1803. It is appropriate that ‘Julia to Ovid’ should be the poem that has enjoyed a semblance of reputation amongst Montagu’s early work given the presence of the Ovidian epistle throughout her career. There is a bizarre sense of poetic justice when Julia, through

³⁷⁶ Isobel Grundy, ‘The Verse of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: A Critical Edition’ (unpublished DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1971), p. 282.

³⁷⁷ Grundy, ‘Critical Edition’, p. 283.

³⁷⁸ Grundy, ‘Critical Edition’, p. 299.

³⁷⁹ Grundy, ‘Critical Edition’, p. 323.

³⁸⁰ Grundy, ‘Critical Edition’, p. 323.

Montagu, states 'My Fame, my Ovid, both for ever fled; / What greater Evil is there left to dread? / Yes; there is one –' (ll. 34-36) Having penned these epistles of pain and abandonment, that Ovid should be cast by Montagu as a fellow member of those groups of men who cause women this anguish suggests a coming together of all those other epistles written in her youth. However it is not that Ovid has abandoned Julia as such, for he has been exiled by Julia's father, the Emperor Augustus. The young Montagu uses the epistle form to question women's role in society:

Are Love and Power incapable to meet,
And must they all be wretched who are great?
Enslav'd by Titles, and by Forms confin'd,
For wretched Victims to the State design'd.

(ll. 1-4)

Here again Montagu's juvenilia offers an antecedent to her more mature work, and even in 'Julia to Ovid' the inversion of the form – both the man and woman are victims in the poem – shows her early experimental approach. This exploration of the Ovidian epistle's reputation broadly in the eighteenth century has suggested some of the ways in which women adapted the genre. This willingness to creatively engage with the classics is as representative of the Ovidian epistle's wide-spread fragmentation in eighteenth-century literary culture as it is of women's desire to use the classics for their revisionist purposes. In spite of the number of texts that depicted Ovid's struggling heroines, the women explored in this section indicate the ways in which a classical genre could be re-formed so that it expressed not stereotypical attitudes towards gender but a firmer sense of women's claim to both the classics and writing. Montagu candidly engaged with Ovid's troubling depiction of women in the *Heroides*, but the *Metamorphoses* was also never far from her mind. Dissatisfied with the troubling connotations Ovid's work had for women, from a young age Montagu also often revised myths from the *Metamorphoses* so that the text commented on society's focus on beauty, as shall be examined in the next section.

Adaptation and Ovidian Mythology in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Poetry

Through the numerous Ovidian epistles that appeared throughout Montagu's literary life, it is apparent that she found in the *Heroides* a genre in which she could express her fear at the constant dangers and threats a woman faced. In conversation with Joseph Spence Montagu said: 'When I was young I was a vast admirer of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that was one of the chief reasons that set me upon the thoughts of stealing the Latin language.'³⁸¹ Montagu's theft is here akin to Prometheus's stealing of fire from the gods but her comment also suggests how Ovid's mythological miscellany accessibly ignited a desire to learn about the classics in their original form. The *Metamorphoses*, a text full of transgression and innovation, had a considerable presence in Montagu's life: in the 'Catalogue [of] Lady Mary Wortley's books Packed up to be Sent Abroad July 1739', editions of the *Metamorphoses* are recorded in three languages (English, French and Latin (a Delphine edition)).³⁸² Moreover, she owned her brother's copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in French, translated by Thomas Corneille.³⁸³ Montagu was also close friends with many of the contributors of the 1717 *Metamorphoses* (including Pope, Garth, Congreve and Addison) and her teenage years and early life during the 1690s and 1700s saw the publication of many of episodes that would appear in Garth's edition in various miscellaneous volumes. Critical accounts of Montagu's engagement with Ovid have focused on her work with the *Heroides*, which has overshadowed her engagement with the *Metamorphoses*. This section aims to redress this imbalance by examining Montagu's use of Ovidian mythology throughout her career to suggest how this influence informed her treatment of change, both literary and bodily.

³⁸¹ Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. Osborn, i. 303.

³⁸² Sheffield Central Library, Wharncliffe Manuscript 135 (3).

³⁸³ Grundy, 'Books and the Woman', *English Studies in Canada* (p. 9).

The three poems that are inspired by the *Metamorphoses* that appear in Montagu's juvenilia engage with the myths of Latona, Venus and Adonis and the Golden Age. The young Montagu displays an artistic freedom in these poems and collectively they not only establish her malleable use of Ovid's work throughout her career but also offer a window into the mind of a young girl who was determined to learn about mythical worlds. The first of the three pieces is the story of Latona. Generally, the tone of the poem stylistically owes more to Ovid's *Heroides* than the *Metamorphoses*: Latona prays to Jupiter, stating that she has been 'ruin'd by thy Love'.³⁸⁴ The transformation into frogs of the people of Delos who do not allow Latona to drink from a large lake is also absent, although it is gestured towards at the end of Montagu's version: having prayed to the gods, Latona 'rais'd her eyes, and saw a Fountain near, / The', at which point the poem ends.³⁸⁵ The poem's incomplete condition is an ironically appropriate and effective way of ending the lament: Latona's suffering is left open for the readers, whose knowledge of the myth completes the work. The composition of 'The Golden Age' may have been inspired by Dryden's own translation of the myth, which first appeared in *Examem Poeticum*. Where Dryden had elaborated on Ovid's suggestion that in the Golden Age there were no threatening laws as 'Needless was written law, where none opprest: / The law of Man was written in his breast' (I.94-95), Montagu adds her own concluding line about this topic: 'Thus free and Blest with peace Live'd all man kind / Before that Laws enchain'd the Godlike mind.'³⁸⁶ Liz Oakley-Brown rightly considers the end of Montagu's poem as representing 'a time before the inscription of law and the construction of androcentric codes of conduct that determine the sexual politics of translation.'³⁸⁷ In this way, 'The Golden Age' refers back to 'Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge] to her Husband' and its questioning of those laws that otherwise hold women back. It is

³⁸⁴ Grundy, 'Critical Edition', p. 244.

³⁸⁵ Grundy, 'Critical Edition', p. 245.

³⁸⁶ Grundy, 'Critical Edition', p. 307.

³⁸⁷ Oakley-Brown, *Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation*, p. 154.

as if Ovid's focus on change encouraged Montagu to think about how her world might equally undergo a metamorphosis: 'The Golden Age' shows how the classics allowed Montagu to question the establishment of the order of the world in which she lived, her own 'Godlike mind' ready to receive Ovid's warnings.

The suggestion of female suffering and revising traditional classical narratives as seen in the story of Latona and 'The Golden Age' are also present in the final of the three juvenile pieces. 'From Ovid's Metamorphoses' uses the situation of the Venus and Adonis myth but wildly differs from it. The poem begins with the death of Adonis and Venus running through the forest. No mention is made of their courtship, nor of his change into an anemone. Instead, Venus' leg is caught by a briar, and the drops of blood that fall are said to have coloured roses red. The poem goes on to explain the connections between roses and beauty:

To Beauty t'is an everlasting Friend,
Often unforc'd to beauteous hands will bend,
If Pastorella puts them in her hair
In gratitude the[y] make her seem more fair,
Adds a fresh lustre and Vermillion grace
To all the other beauties of her Face,
Valu'd by beauties t'is to beauty Kind,
They Friends to it and it to them a Friend.³⁸⁸

Quite where Montagu got this idea of the Venus and Adonis myth providing an aetiology for roses from is unclear. Homer's bawdy Venus had transferred through texts like William Shakespeare's epyllion, *Venus and Adonis* (1593), yet these poems were rarely seen in the eighteenth century.³⁸⁹ Montagu celebrates Venus' associations with beauty and its connection with women. 'From Ovid's Metamorphoses' acts as a precursor to

³⁸⁸ Grundy, 'Critical Edition', pp. 286-87.

³⁸⁹ Shakespeare's narrative poems occupied a marginal position during the eighteenth century. For the poem's reception, see H. R. Woudhuysen and Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Later Editions' in *Shakespeare's Poems: Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece and the Shorter Poems*, 3rd edn Arden (Arden, 2007), pp. 519-20.

Montagu's later poems that often focused on female beauty. Though composed when Montagu was young, these poems reveal her strong understanding of several key Ovidian traits that include female suffering and, potentially more importantly, an open capacity for creative freedom and experimentation with myth. In these poems, which Grundy identifies as being written c. 1704/05, Montagu's early conception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* revolves around her ability to alter the myths and refocus them on women's experiences. This innovation would continue throughout Montagu's writing career.

Oakley-Brown comments that 'the juvenile poetic persona of Mary Montagu has a confidence which the adult does not appear to possess.'³⁹⁰ Certainly Montagu's juvenilia demonstrates a familiarity with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that seems missing throughout her later writings. Yet the early transgressive response to Ovid that Montagu recalls to Spence implies that the compendium had a greater impact on her work than has so far been recognised. As suggested above, Montagu's early awareness of Ovid focuses on the ways in which he wrote of and about the experiences of women. This emphasis could easily be found in translations by Montagu's friends. Where Dryden's early translations of Book I of Ovid's work evidently inspired the young Montagu, his translation of Ovid's 'Of the Pythagorean Philosophy' from Book XV describes a record of endless change. Indeed, even:

Helen wept, when her too faithful glass
Reflected to her eyes the ruins of her face;
Wondering what charms her ravishers could spy
To force her twice, or ev'n but once enjoy!
(XV.232-35)

The processes of 'devouring Time' (XV.359) described in 'Of the Pythagorean Philosophy' signals a theme prevalent throughout the writings of the literary men with

³⁹⁰ Oakley-Brown, *Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation*, p. 154.

whom she would surround herself throughout her life. Montagu's old friend Congreve had translated the third book of the *Art of Love* (1709), with Dryden and Thomas Yalden respectively translating books one and two, in which there was to be found a stark warning of the natural onset of age and the accompanying bodily changes:

Alas, how soon a clear Complexion fades!
How soon a wrinkl'd Skin plump Flesh invades!
And what avails it, tho' the Fair one swears
She from her Infancy had some grey Hairs?³⁹¹

This part of Congreve's translation caught the attention of other female writers: as part of her *Memoirs* (1748), Laetitia Pilkington recalls living alongside a woman in her lodgings in Grosvenor Square who, after two months of not leaving the house or being visited by anyone, receives a male guest that she claims to be her husband. The man enters and leaves the house under the cover of darkness. Eventually, however:

At length, the Gentleman failed in his Attendance, and the Lady said, he was gone into the Country.

*The Nightly Knocking at the Door did cease,
The noiseless Hammer rusted there in peace.*

Some Weeks past over without either a Message, or a Letter, coming from the supposed Husband, upon which she fell into a deep Melancholy; which, though she seemed to attribute to her Apprehension of the approaching Hour, I could easily perceive, had some more secret, and latent Cause.³⁹²

Pilkington's quotation lightly amends Congreve's translation of the *Art of Love*, which reads: 'Then nightly Knockings at your Door will cease, / Whose noiseless Hammer, then, may rust in Peace.'³⁹³ Ovid's fragmentation invited women writers to change his work: whereas in Ovid the motif of the quiet hammer is used to encourage women to

³⁹¹ William Congreve, *The Works of William Congreve*, ed. D. F. McKenzie, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ii. 377 and 380.

³⁹² Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 164.

³⁹³ Congreve, *Works*, ed. McKenzie, ii. 380. Reference identified in Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, ii. 547.

‘Beware of coming Age, nor waste your Time’, the rusting of the hammer in Pilkington emphasises the young woman’s abandonment.³⁹⁴ Pilkington changes Ovid’s lines so that they become less a projection of the future but more an emblem for the young woman’s betrayal. Ovid’s poems emphasise how time and change are inevitable, and their degenerating effects on a woman’s beauty are assured. Though an attractive woman, with fair skin, dark hair and sparkling eyes, Montagu’s writing would often return to the body, noting its changes over time with an Ovidian awareness that suggests that the *Metamorphoses* never left her imagination.³⁹⁵

Of all the poets covered in this thesis, the developments in ideas of beauty can be said to have influenced Montagu the most. Eighteenth-century periodicals provide a variety of different comments on women, the increasing use of cosmetics, and the perceived risks of a consumer society. Montagu (then Pierrepoint) was sent a copy of *Tatler* 143 (1710), which reproved women for their love of cosmetic luxuries, by her future husband, Edward, during their courtship.³⁹⁶ She understood and defended the metamorphosis that many women underwent in dressing for going out in public by offering a counter to Swift’s scatological ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’, in ‘The Reasons that Induced Dr S[wift] to write a Poem call’d the Lady’s Dressing Room’. The increasing sophistication of cosmetics as new items arrived from the East allowed women to not only apparently halt the visual signs of ageing but also to experiment with their appearance and respond to popular fashions.³⁹⁷ Women of the upper classes of the eighteenth century could, then, be said to go through a daily metamorphosis, although more threatening was the potential for social transgression.³⁹⁸ This focus on transgression

³⁹⁴ Congreve, *Works*, ed. McKenzie, ii. 379.

³⁹⁵ For a description of Montagu’s early looks, see Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 27.

³⁹⁶ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 33.

³⁹⁷ For the prevalence and availability of cosmetics during the eighteenth century, see Katherine Aske, ‘“Such gaudy tulips raised from dung”: Cosmetics, Disease and Morality in Jonathan Swift’s Dressing-Room Poetry’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40.4 (2017), 503-517 (pp. 504-508).

³⁹⁸ Aske, ‘Cosmetics, Disease and Morality’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (p. 505).

may be said to invest the period's persistent fascination with beauty with an Ovidian quality. Montagu equally experienced her own personal, irreversible change: in December 1715, she contracted smallpox, the disease that had killed her brother. With treatment by Garth, Richard Mead and John Woodward, on 3 and 26 January 1716 Montagu's recovery was reported.³⁹⁹ Only in her mid-twenties, she would have been left scarred, and at the very least she permanently lost her eye-lashes and suffered from recurrent inflammations of the eyes for the rest of her life.⁴⁰⁰

After all, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* begins, as translated by Dryden, with 'Of bodies changed to various forms I sing' (I.1); Dryden here both copies the beginning of Sandys' seventeenth-century translation and in its focus on 'various forms' alludes to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, overall amplifying Ovid's theme of change. These kinds of allusive play were recognised by women writers, who also adapted Ovid in their own work.⁴⁰¹ The metamorphic nature of bodies particularly emerges in an Ovidian allusion in Montagu's *Six Town Eclogues*. In 'Thursday, The Bassette Table', Cardelia and Smilinda verbally spar by discussing their addictions to gambling and love respectively. Early on the two cannot reach a conclusion, and therefore invite Betty Loveit to be their judge, for:

She all the pains of Love and Play does know,
 Deeply experienced many years ago.
 Dear Betty shall th'Important point decide,
 Betty, who oft the pains of each has try'd;
 Impartial she shall say who suffers most,
 By Cards' ill usage, or by Lovers lost.
 (ll. 22-27)

In noting how Betty 'oft the pains of each has try'd', Montagu's lines echo Addison's translation of the transformation of Tiresias, first published in Tonson's *Poetical*

³⁹⁹ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 101.

⁴⁰⁰ Grundy also notes, however, that cosmetics and wig powders also caused inflammation - see *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 100-101.

⁴⁰¹ See H iv. 230n.

Miscellanies: The Fifth Part though the work was written c. 1694/95: in the myth, a marital argument between Jupiter and Juno about sexual gratification between the sexes prompts the former to consult the Theban seer: ‘Tiresias therefore must the cause decide, / Having the Pleasure of both Sexes try’d’ (III.321-22).⁴⁰² Betty Loveit may be called to decide an equally weighty cosmological argument between Cardelia and Smilinda, but her answer to their invocation is remarkably unimpressive: ‘Tell, tell your Griefe, attentive will I stay, / Tho’ Time is precious, and I want some Tea.’ (ll. 28-29) By the end of the poem, Loveit declares ‘Cease your Contention, which has been too long, / I grow Impatient, and the Tea too strong’ (ll. 108-09). Tiresias’s judgement that Jupiter is correct for saying women derive a greater pleasure from sex prompts the goddess to blind him, but in recompense Jupiter grants him visions to see into the future. Relocating ancient myth to the woman’s gaming table, Montagu’s slight allusion to Addison’s translation of the transformation of Tiresias in ‘Thursday’ complements the connection between Ovid and changing bodies throughout her work. With Jupiter ‘quaff[ing]’ wine and mirthfully engaging with Juno (III.316), Ovid’s episode is hardly noble, and so a second transformation is also at work in this allusion: the bawdy episode is far removed from the persona of Mr Spectator that Addison developed in later years. The allusion implies Montagu’s long familiarity with Addison’s work and the latent, transformative potential in Ovid’s writing for women of the period; it also, however, affirms the ways in which miscellany culture encouraged women to adapt isolated episodes or motifs in their own work.

Though Montagu connected with the danger women were exposed to throughout the *Metamorphoses*, she also recognised Ovid’s propensity for change and play. In her rendering of ‘Apollo and Daphne’, written in the late 1730s, which does not end with either the *puella*’s rape or her metamorphosis, Montagu subjects the myth to its own

⁴⁰² Reference identified in GH 194n.

alteration, creating a bathetic Apollo and refocusing instead on Daphne's own sexual desire:

I am, cry'd Apollo, and run as he spoke
But the skittish young Damsel ne'er turn'd back to look,
I am the great God of Tenedos Adores
And Delos does also acknowledge my power.

Round my Head the Sun beams you may glittering see
And no man alive can make Ballads like me,
All Physic I know – she mended her pace
And his Godhead halfe tir'd was quitting the Chase.

Had Apollo known Women, as well as I know 'em,
He would not have talk'd of a potion or poem,
But he had appear'd in O[xenden']s Shape,
By my Soul little Daphne had suffer'd the Rape.

(ll. 1-12)

From the opening repetition of 'I am', Montagu's God of the Sun comes across as a breathless seducer. The authorial comment in the poem's final stanza also reads very much like Ovid's own interjections in the *Metamorphoses*; in this instance, the poem refers to Sir George Oxenden, whose adulterous affair with his sister-in-law Arabella Thompson was well known to Montagu. Thompson died in childbirth in October 1734, which Montagu read of in the papers, and she refers to Oxenden in other poems often to represent the potential dangers faced by a woman.⁴⁰³ Hence Montagu's fear in 'Apollo and Daphne' that, should Apollo have 'appear'd' to Daphne under the guise of Oxenden, the young nymph would have been raped, which casts the man as a metamorphic deity from Ovid's world. Alongside 'Apollo and Daphne', Montagu had also transcribed other versions of the myth by Matthew Prior and an anonymous ballad from *The Hive* (1724). Where the former source juxtaposes Apollo's heroic diction, including allusions to Dryden's translation, with Daphne's eighteenth-century vocabulary, the latter like

⁴⁰³ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 319. See Montagu's 'An Elegy on Mrs. T[hompson]n' and '1736, Address'd To -'.

Montagu did not include an account of Daphne's transformation into the laurel.⁴⁰⁴ The transcriptions demonstrate the ways in which women readers of the eighteenth century received the classics in fragmented ways. Just as Cooper's epistles being placed next to Behn's encouraged readers of *Ovid's Epistles* to compare the two, Montagu's inclusion of these two texts invites comparison to understand the ways in which she deflates the bathetic rake Apollo. Although thirty years had passed between 'From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*' and 'Apollo and Daphne', Montagu's engagement with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* continuously stresses the text's gender fluidity. From the emasculating Venus to the pathetic Apollo, and with the nonbinary Betty Loveit in between, Montagu uses mythology to de-stabilise traditional gendered boundaries of behaviour, which in turn subsumes her own transgression in accessing the classics.

Sarah Brophy's analysis of the representation of ageing and gossip in Montagu's letters suggests that during the 1750s she increasingly worried about decay.⁴⁰⁵ Writing in 1757 to her daughter that 'It is eleven Year since I have seen my Figure in a Glass', Montagu's poem "This once was me" provides an example of how Montagu uses allusion to reflect both on her younger self and on her poetry. "This once was me" was written to accompany a portrait of a younger Montagu she sent to Francesco Algarotti, a paratext that may now prompt readers to romantically assign a Dorian-Gray like association to the poem and that serves as a reminder that, during the period, all that remained to remind women of their former beauty were either portraits or complimentary poems. In "This once was me", Montagu reuses the line 'This picture which with pride I us'd to show / The lost resemblance but upbraids me now' from 'Saturday', another of her *Six Town Eclogues*.⁴⁰⁶ Jill Campbell argues that Montagu's self-allusion combines her older and younger self, although the context of the poem is no longer the

⁴⁰⁴ Grundy, 'Critical Edition', pp. 88-89.

⁴⁰⁵ Sarah Brophy, 'Women, Aging, and Gossip in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Letters of the 1720s', *The Eighteenth Century* 45.1 (2004), 1-20 (p. 2).

⁴⁰⁶ See 'Saturday The Small Pox' (ll. 45-46) and 'This once was me' (ll. 3-4).

disfigurements caused by smallpox but, more generally, the processes of ageing.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, Montagu creates an Ovidian frame in referencing the myths of Iphis and Pygmalion, although where the Gods granted those metamorphoses Montagu is left to ask ‘Will no kind power restore my charms decayed?’ (l. 10) The topic of lost beauty allows Montagu to write poems that are poetically self-reflective of both herself and her culture. The final line of “This once was me” asks for an approach to love that refuses external attraction: ‘Look on my Heart, and you’ll forget my Face.’ (l. 25) Montagu’s lines allude to Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*, in which it is observed of Belinda: ‘If to her share some Female Errors fall, / Look on her Face, and you’ll forget ’em all’ (II.17-18).⁴⁰⁸ Montagu’s allusion completely refutes Pope’s sociable world that values beauty over immoral characteristics. Much like her literary disagreement with Swift, Montagu uses the topic of women’s beauty here to register the difference between the male gaze and female interiority. Though the cosmetic world of the eighteenth century does not escape Montagu’s satiric lens, her use of references and allusions to her younger self and others creates a sense of dream-like disembodiment: Montagu, scarred by smallpox and older, contemplates what she once had, and what she is left with.

Although the influence of Ovid’s epistles in Montagu’s writing has long been recognised, that of the *Metamorphoses* has consequently been underplayed. In focusing on Montagu’s depiction of changing bodies, written with the painful recognition of personal experience, her poems on beauty can be recognised as Ovidian. In Ovid change ambivalently carries connotations that are both threatening and liberating, whilst those who suffer are given a sympathetic voice in some form. ‘Saturday: The Small-Pox’, the poem written following Montagu’s battle with the disease, opens by recording Flavia’s anti-narcissistic impulses: ‘A Glass revers’d in her right hand she bore; / For now she

⁴⁰⁷ Jill Campbell, ‘Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the “Glass Revers’d” of Female Old Age’, in *‘Defects’: Engendering the Modern Body*, ed. Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 213-252 (p. 240).

⁴⁰⁸ My thanks to John Mullan for identifying this allusion.

shunn'd the Face she sought before.' (ll. 3-4) It is now that the metamorphosis has stopped that Montagu registers her disgust. Whether it be the single episodes included in miscellanies or the larger edited collections of Ovid, Montagu was reading Ovid's myths from a young age and her poetry registers the dangers that awaited a woman from both men and time. As she aged this focus is seen in the recurrent fixation on beauty and metamorphic bodies throughout her writing. As seen across these poems, Montagu often adapted Ovid's work in a way that registers his fragmented reception in the eighteenth century. More broadly, as seen in the receptions of both the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses* so far, Ovid's mythology was used by women of the period with the effect of a funhouse mirror: elements of the epistle form or mythological references look the same, but they are distorted and changed. This simile is apt, because looking into the mirror and recording the unstoppable progress of time in particular provided a stimulus for many women of the eighteenth century. This popular poetic situation was also partly derived from a classical topos: the final section of this chapter will explore the topos of women looking in the mirror as an offshoot of the receptions of the myth of Narcissus.

Seeing Narcissus in the topos of the Looking Glass

Addison opened *Spectator* 411 (1712) with the observation 'Our Sight, is the most perfect and most delightful of all our Senses.'⁴⁰⁹ Erin Mackie argues that the *Tatler* and *Spectator* write of consumer victims to suggest that they become the objects they consume and collect.⁴¹⁰ An oft-used object, evidently, was a mirror, and an example of the satirical metamorphosis Mackie identifies can be found in 'The Transformation of Fidelio into a Looking-Glass' in *Spectator* 392 (1712). The story, signed by 'T',

⁴⁰⁹ S iii. 535.

⁴¹⁰ Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in The Tatler and The Spectator* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 55.

implying Richard Steele's authorship, opens with the Matron of an unnamed family suggesting 'that if a sincere Friend were miraculously changed into a Looking-Glass, she should not be ashamed to ask its Advice very often.'⁴¹¹ This notion takes hold in the narrator's mind, and that evening he dreams that when he looks into his mirror he sees a young man, Fidelio, who tells his story. The 'Confidant and Darling of all the Fair', Fidelio begins a relationship with Narcissa; after the young lady contracts smallpox, she stabs Fidelio when he expresses his fear and shock at 'so loathsome a Spectacle.'⁴¹² Cupid metamorphoses Fidelio into a looking-glass, 'smooth, polish'd, and bright', and he becomes the 'first Favourite of the Ladies'.⁴¹³ In this change, Steele reveals the role of the masculine gaze in judging women's appearances. Despite Narcissa's illness, when Fidelio repeats his disdain at her ruined looks she is incited further so that 'her ill-timed Passion had increased her Ugliness.'⁴¹⁴ At their worst, women who are obsessed with their looks are presented by Steele as scarred, tempestuous and dangerous; whilst women writers unsurprisingly rarely follow this model, Steele's 'Fidelio' registers the influence of the male gaze in what was thought to be a private female activity. The looking-glass was evidently becoming a fractured object.

The poetic topos of looking into the mirror corresponds to what Christopher Martin terms the 'vista of persistent, restless and resistless change' found throughout the *Metamorphoses*.⁴¹⁵ As a figure, Narcissus can be used to warn against pride and to demonstrate the consequences of gratification, two recurrent issues in the poems to be here examined.⁴¹⁶ The first of Ovid's tales to be independently published in English translation in T. H.'s fable, *Ovid Treting of Narcissus* (1560), the myth of Narcissus and

⁴¹¹ S iii. 470-47.

⁴¹² S iii. 472.

⁴¹³ S iii. 472-73.

⁴¹⁴ S iii. 472.

⁴¹⁵ *Ovid in English*, ed. Christopher Martin (Penguin, 1998), p. xx.

⁴¹⁶ Eric Langley, *Narcissism and Suicide in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 29.

Echo was among the early modern period's most prominent stimuli as a myth that could be used to display the themes of vanity, disdain and individualism.⁴¹⁷ In his notes on the myth, Sandys had observed that the myth 'instructs us, that we should not flourish too soone, or be wise too timely, nor over-love, or admire our selves: which although hatefull in all ages, in youth is intolerable.'⁴¹⁸ Yet the allegorical methods of reading Ovid's text, which had been prominent since Sandys published his complete translation of the *Metamorphoses* with the notes in 1632, were by the eighteenth century slowly dissipating: Dan Hooley argues that the steady removal of the paratextual materials in reprints of Sandys' work, which went as far as an eighth edition in 1690, implies the continuing popularity of the translation, though it acted 'less [as] the key to ancient wisdom'.⁴¹⁹ David Hopkins argues that we must be attuned to the less direct influence of Ovid throughout the eighteenth century.⁴²⁰ Indeed, the Narcissus myth provides a case in point for the sort of transformative re-writings of Ovid by women that have been discussed so far. For example, Mary Chudleigh's 'Song', which was included in her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703), retells the myth from Echo's perspective:

As vainly wishing, gazing, dying,
 The fond Narcissus lay,
 Kind Echo, to his Sighs replying,
 These words was heard to say;
 Ah! wretched Swain, by Pride betray'd:
 That Pois'ner of the Mind;
 That Voice by none but Fools obey'd,
 That Test of Souls design'd:
 That dang'rous Ill which ne'er is found,
 In such as with Minerva's Gifts are crown'd.

What will you do when Time decaying
 That lovely beauteous Face,

⁴¹⁷ Langley, *Narcissus and Suicide*, p. 27.

⁴¹⁸ George Sandys, *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures* (1640), p. 60.

⁴¹⁹ Dan Hooley, 'Ovid Translated: Early Modern Versions of the *Metamorphoses*', in *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. John F. Miller and Carole E. Newlands (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), ed. Miller and Newlands, pp. 339-354 (p. 345).

⁴²⁰ David Hopkins, 'Ovid', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins, pp. 197-215 (p. 210).

And you the Laws of Fate obeying,
Must to old Age give place?
Old Age, which comes with Swiftnes on:
Your hasty Minutes fly;
Some part of what you were is gone,
Deforming Death is nigh:
When Time and Pain your Charms abate,
How will you then this Chrystal Mirror hate?
(ll. 1-21)

‘Song’ is indicative more widely of how women of the eighteenth century adapted, imitated and changed the myth of Narcissus to reflect their own experiences. Across five stanzas, Chudleigh literally gives Echo a voice, admonishing vanity with a female knowingness: ‘What will you do,’ she asks Narcissus, ‘when Time decaying / That lovely beauteous Face, / And you the Laws of Fate obeying, / Must to old Age give place?’ Chudleigh does retain the allegorical reading of the myth typical of the early modern period – the poem ends with the deaths of Narcissus and Echo and the warning that ‘Both were to Folly Victims made, / She by her Fondness, he by Pride betray’d.’ (ll. 49-50) – but she focuses on Narcissus’s ‘folly’ by echoing the opening stanza in the repetition of ‘Pride betray’d.’ Elsewhere in the poem, it is Narcissus who speaks through repetition: ‘Be gone, be gone, he still replying, / Felt an inward Anguish’ (ll. 31-32), the word ‘still’ implying how he remains stuck in his obsession. In ‘Song’, Chudleigh offers an alternative version of Ovid’s myth that not only allows Echo’s knowing voice to be heard but also turns Narcissus himself into an echoing figure, and in which the constant warnings from men that women’s beauty will pass are caricatured.

Chudleigh’s ‘Song’ begins to explore the literary metamorphosis that saw Narcissus’s looking into the pond slowly become equated with the acting of using a looking-glass. As noted in Chapter I, Chudleigh relied on contemporary translations to access the classics. It is unsurprising that, like Montagu, Chudleigh openly adapts mythology in her poetry. In his history of the mirror, Mark Pendergrast begins with a description of an ape looking into a pool of water, concluding ‘such was probably the

first mirror, as humans evolved from apes and developed self-consciousness.’⁴²¹

Meanwhile Miranda Anderson suggests that ‘Even the oldest type of reflection in still water [...] is drawn upon by mirror motifs in the early modern period,’ although she does not explore how the motif became the topos in the eighteenth century.⁴²² Pendergrast’s focus on ‘Looking Glass Literature’ likewise focuses primarily on renaissance texts. Sabine Melchoir-Bonnet broadly connects Narcissus with women writers, suggesting that ‘Venus is born in the water, her first mirror. Woman awakens to life when she has access to her image;’ but this awakening is connected with a fear: ‘that she [a poet] might meet the unfortunate fate of Narcissus.’⁴²³ If, then, ‘Femininity is a creation of the mirror’, which is inspired by the myth of Narcissus, the object becomes a vital source for understanding how eighteenth-century women wrote of their struggles.⁴²⁴ Here might be recalled Steele’s *Spectator* issue and Chudleigh’s ‘Song’. In the latter, though Chudleigh gives Echo a voice underlying the act of verbalisation is also an internalisation of the various misogynistic tropes common to the period.

Chudleigh’s Echo represents the women of the eighteenth century who speak with a sadness of both the inevitable accusations and warnings they faced because of their apparent need to maintain their beauty and the consequences (social and physical) of being devoted to one’s outward looks. Chudleigh’s poem moves away from just allegorically rendering the myth of Narcissus and heads towards a more independent and innovative response that would capture the later attempts by women to re-write and re-apply Ovid’s story. This shift that can also be identified in Addison’s observations on the myth appended to his translation. Addison’s translation of the Narcissus episode was first

⁴²¹ Mark Pendergrast, *Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection* (Cambridge: Basic Books, 2004), p. 2.

⁴²² Miranda Anderson, ‘Early Modern Mirrors’, in *The Book of the Mirror: An Interdisciplinary Collection Exploring the Cultural Story of the Mirror*, ed. Miranda Anderson (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 105-120 (p. 108).

⁴²³ Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. By Katharine H. Jewett (Routledge, 2001), pp. 213-14.

⁴²⁴ Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror*, p. 214.

published in Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part* with some accompanying 'Notes' on the various translated episodes included in the volume; it was then revised for Garth's *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. In his notes, included in Tonson's volume, Addison reiterates 'a Fault [Ovid] is often tax'd with': that is, 'of not knowing when he has said enough, by his endeavouring to excel.'⁴²⁵ The problem, it seems, is that Ovid was not self-reflective in his own work. In the story of Narcissus, Addison continues, 'we can't meet with a better Instance of the Extravagance and Wantonness of Ovid's Fancy,' though he thinks having Narcissus spending eternity obsessed with his own reflection to be 'intolerably cruel and uncharitable'.⁴²⁶ These concerns about Ovid's lack of restraint and his pushing against decorum mirror many of the accusations levelled at women and their supposed obsession with beauty and cosmetics in the period. Miscellanies might have encouraged particular readings of Ovid (and, more broadly, the classics) but they also suggested the ways in which he could be accused of infelicities of tone and style. Translators producing work specifically for women were even known to alter Ovid's work so that it fit what they thought was an appropriate tone for their readers: in his dedication to Isabella FitzRoy in *The History of Love* (1685), which included the story of Narcissus and Echo and was available throughout the period through the new editions of *The Art of Love* (1709), Charles Hopkins explained how: 'I have borrowed the Examples to every Passion, from those Stories which I thought the most pleasing in Ovid, where certainly the most pleasing were to be met with: Some few places in every Story I have Translated, but for the most part, I have only kept him in View; I have gone on with him, and left him, where I thought it proper, and by that means have avoided the Absurdities of his *Metamorphoses*; save only that of Pygmalion's Statue, but that was a *Metamorphoses* that pleas'd me.'⁴²⁷ Hopkins's vetting of Ovid, choosing only episodes

⁴²⁵ *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part*, ed. Jacob Tonson (1704), p. 590.

⁴²⁶ *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part*, ed. Tonson, p. 590.

⁴²⁷ Charles Hopkins published numerous individual translated episodes from Ovid in both his *Epistolary Poems; on several occasions: with several of the choicest stories from Ovid's Metamorphoses* (1694) and

that ‘please’ him, does suggest some of the limitations for women who had to rely on translators to access the classics. In the various poems about beauty that follow, the women writers consistently prove how the only absurdity proves to be how eighteenth-century society was obsessed with outward beauty. Nonetheless, this breaking down of the formal barriers between women and the classics created a sense of accessibility; in turn women felt more encouraged to partake in this tradition through their own adaptations.

Chudleigh’s ‘Song’ and Addison’s notes together represent a shift in the reception of the myth of Narcissus, with the former also acknowledging how it was beginning to be applied to the looking glass. In *Spectator* 89 (1711), Addison had written of women, ageing, and the ‘Folly of Demurrage’.⁴²⁸ To end the issue, Addison quotes a passage from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* in which Eve’s creation is described before she is led to Adam – Eve is to act as an exemplar ‘to all her Daughters’.⁴²⁹ Eve is an important figure in the history of the reception of Narcissus as she re-gendered his situation: Addison draws particular attention to Milton’s use of this episode in the ‘Notes’ to his translation:

This passage of Narcissus probably gave Milton the Hint of applying it to Eve, tho’ I think her Surprise at the sight of her own Face in the Waters, far more just and natural than this of Narcissus. She was a raw unexperienc’d Being, just created, and therefore might easily be subjected to the Delusion; but Narcissus had been in the World sixteen years, was Brother and Son to the Water-Nymphs, and therefore to be suppos’d conversant with Fountains long before this Fatal Mistake.⁴³⁰

Although there is something jocular in Addison’s argument that given Narcissus was sixteen years old he should be ‘conversant with Fountains long before his Fatal Mistake,’

The History of Love (1695), which included selections from both the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*. Hopkins’s *The History of Love* would later be appended to *The Art of Love*, a collaborative translation of the *Ars Amatoria* by Dryden, Thomas Yalden and Congreve that went through eight editions before 1750. Charles Hopkins, *The History of Love. A Poem in a Letter to a Lady* (1695), sig. [A5^{r-v}].

⁴²⁸ S i. 378.

⁴²⁹ S i. 379.

⁴³⁰ *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part*, ed. Tonson, p. 591.

in making the connection between the two episodes Addison encouraged the readers of the miscellany to seek out their copies of Milton and compare the two passages.⁴³¹

Through Milton's account of Eve's first moments of human consciousness, women of the eighteenth century were provided with an account of the Narcissus myth that transported the myth away from Ovid's petulant young man towards an innocent young woman who is first discovering her image in a mirror:

As I bent down to look just opposite,
A shape within the watery gleam appeared
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but pleased I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love

(IV.453-58)⁴³²

Mandy Green describes this account of Eve's burgeoning consciousness as 'indisputably Ovidian', yet further argues that Milton is keen to contrast her experience with Narcissus's: she is startled but delighted, where he is tormented.⁴³³ Green also stresses the sterility of Narcissus' *locus amoenus* as expressing his enclosure, meaning that to carry the connection between the mythological figure and the first woman means to accept the former's association as a representative of destructive self-love in a sterile world.⁴³⁴ This focus on sterility can also be traced onto many of the poems by women set at the dressing table, which write of the space as one of faux-power when set against the inevitable onset of age and time.

The vital part of the Narcissus myth is when the young man looks into the water, which Addison translates as follows:

⁴³¹ Readers of the 1717 *Metamorphoses* would also have seen the influence of Milton's *Paradise Lost* on the translation: see Sarah Annes Brown, *The Metamorphosis of Ovid* (Duckworth, 2002), p. 130.

⁴³² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edn (Routledge, 1997), pp. 247-48. All parenthetical references to *Paradise Lost* are from this edition.

⁴³³ Green, *Milton's Ovidian Eve*, p. 24 and pp. 33-34. For Green's wider argument about the connection between Eve and Narcissus, see pp. 23-41.

⁴³⁴ See Green, *Milton's Ovidian Eve*, pp. 39-41.

For as his own bright Image he survey'd,
 He fell in Love with the fantastick Shade;
 And o'er the Fair Resemblance hung unmov'd,
 Nor knew, fond Youth! it was himself he lov'd.
 The well-turn'd Neck and Shoulders he descries,
 The spacious Forehead, and the sparkling Eyes;
 The Hands that Bacchus might not scorn to show,
 And Hair that round Apollo's Head might flow;
 With all the Purple Youthfulness of Face,
 That gently blushes in the wat'ry Glass.
 By his own Flames consum'd the Lover lyes,
 And gives himself the Wound by which he dies.

(III.415-426)

But Narcissus is not the epitome of beauty alone. Ovid, within the context of the mirror gaze, continues also to depict the demise of his beauty: 'And now with lovely Face but half appears, / O'er-run with Wrinkles, and deform'd with Tears' (III.476-77). Overall, however, when beauty is found to exist for its own sake, it quickly deteriorates:

The glowing Beauties of his Breast he spies,
 And with a new redoubled Passion dies.
 As Wax dissolves, as Ice begins to run,
 And trickle into Drops before the Sun;
 So melts the Youth, and languishes away,
 His Beauty withers, and his Limbs decay;
 And none of those attractive Charms remain,
 To which the slighted Echo su'd in vain.

(III.486-93)

The gender reversal of the Narcissus episode in Milton's epic must not be undervalued; however, as demonstrated in the Introduction to this thesis, women broadly responded negatively to Eve, with her first transgression often cited as a reason for why her daughters in the eighteenth century were not allowed access to the book of learning. But a more contemporary literary figure was available who provided an alternative model – Pope's Belinda. If Milton's Eve resituated the Narcissus episode to the female experience, then the poems by women of the eighteenth century that lament looking in the glass continue Ovid's focus on sterility and bodily change, taking the topos into the

private, domestic space of a lady's toilette that was far from Edenic. In one of the most famous examples of eighteenth-century beautifying, Pope describes Belinda arming herself in the first canto of *The Rape of the Lock*:

Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms;
The Fair each moment rises in her Charms,
Repairs her Smiles, awakens ev'ry Grace,
And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face
(I.139-42)

In its classical parallel, Achilles's glorious armour draws opponents to the battlefield, and it is worth reiterating the paradox that Pope implies in this description: as Belinda bedecks herself in her 'Arms', a method of defence, in its invocation of 'ev'ry Grace' this 'awful Beauty' will attract more suitors, thereby putting her further at risk. Nonetheless, and like Achilles, Belinda cannot not go out to fight because she must secure a suitor whilst her beauty is at its most powerful. Many poems by female poets that are set at a lady's dressing table describe the space as one of impotent love and faux glamour. Mary Monck's 'On Marinda's Toilette' echoes Pope's sentiment above: 'Hence vulgar Beauties take their pow'rful Arms, / And from their Toilette borrow all their Charms'.⁴³⁵ Pope's lines inadvertently provide a window into conceptions of beauty in the eighteenth century that were in a constant state of contradictory movement: natural paleness defined a woman's beauty, but to be beautiful meant being a sexual object, whilst those not naturally beautiful had to apply cosmetics, prompting claims of deception.⁴³⁶ The processes of ageing are often startlingly rendered in women's poetry of the period with the focus on sterility and malleable bodies offering a stark contrast to Pope's bedecked Belinda. No longer attractive, the almost-asexual condition of the

⁴³⁵ Monck, *Marinda*, p. 112.

⁴³⁶ Aske, 'Cosmetics, Disease and Morality', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (p. 504).

elderly women throughout these poems contributes to the redefinition of traditional methods of locating femininity within classical tropes and topoi like the looking glass.

Whilst miscellanies may have encouraged readers to compare separate translations of the same episodes within its covers, the prevalence of Ovidian myths and stories in personal poetry collections and miscellanies alongside their adaptation in works like Milton's *Paradise Lost* meant that women had ample opportunities to gain what may have been felt to be a relatively comprehensive knowledge of the classics. The result of these various influences is shown in Judith Madan's 'The Story of Narcissus', a manuscript poem that is neither a translation or an imitation but more a composite re-telling of the mythological episode that employs various contemporary sources.⁴³⁷ Take, for example, the moment when Madan's Narcissus looks into the water:

Amaz'd the Youth beholds, with ardent Eyes,
A Heav'nly Image on the Fountain rise.
He gaz'd – he sigh'd – he lov'd with wild Desire;
His Eyes drank in their own reflected Fire.
His erring Heart a new Invader feels,
Through all his Veins the soft Infection steals,
O'er the clear Stream the Youth enamour'd hung,
His soul, thus artless, melted from his Tongue.⁴³⁸

Madan avoids the typical blazon that describes Narcissus's ivory neck, dimpled faced and flowing hair; instead she alludes to Pope's Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock* who, before adorning herself with the 'Cosmetic Pow'rs', sees 'A heav'nly Image in the Glass' (I.124-25).⁴³⁹ Madan uses a single line imbued with an allusion to conflate the myth of Narcissus with the topos of the looking glass. This re-gendering of Narcissus

⁴³⁷ Madan's poem has recently been published in the online *Annexe* of Stuart Gillespie's *Newly Recovered English Classical Translations, 1600-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); the *Annexe* PDF continues the pagination of the primary publication. Judith Madan, 'The Story of Narcissus', in *Newly Recovered English Classical Translations, 1600-1800: Annexe*, ed. Stuart Gillespie <<https://www.nrect.gla.ac.uk/files/NRECT-Annexe.pdf>> [accessed 08 March 2021]

⁴³⁸ Madan, *Annexe*, p. 670.

⁴³⁹ As part of his translation of Narcissus's blazon, Sandys described Narcissus's 'heavenly face'. Sandys, *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished* p. 90.

continues in the additions of ‘a new Invader’ and ‘soft Infection’ to describe the young man’s infatuation, which might be likened to generic phrases that describe how a young woman might feel upon first meeting a potential suitor or lover. Showing an awareness of *The Rape of the Lock*, in which sight can become the means by which beaux are killed and revived, Madan frequently focuses on Narcissus’s eyes as a way of capturing the highly visual element of the myth. When Narcissus asks his reflection what he is, ‘The charming Phantom smiles’ and ‘each sparkling Eye / With killing lustre darts a kind Reply’.⁴⁴⁰ Madan’s lines are reminiscent of Chloe’s eyes in *The Rape of the Lock*: ‘When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down, / Chloe stept in, and kill’d him with a Frown; / She smil’d to see the doughty Hero slain, / But at her Smile, the Beau reviv’d again.’ (V.67-90) Alongside referencing figures from contemporary works, Madan’s poem also alludes to Addison’s translation, suggesting the ways in which her poem is a composite re-telling of the myth that relies on the generic fluidity fostered in eighteenth-century literary miscellanies. Describing how the stream keeps Narcissus from his reflection, Madan explains how:

No foreign Coasts the lovely Fair detain,
 No bulwark’d City, nor no distant Plain:
 Nought veils the beauteous youth, each Charm is seen,
 No Mountains swell, nor Oceans heave between;
 A shallow Wave alone eludes my Joy:
 A slender Stream floats o’er the charming Boy.⁴⁴¹

Similarities between the above passage can be identified with Addison’s translation:

And yet no bulwark’d town, nor distant coast,
 Preserves the beauteous youth from being seen,
 No mountains rise, nor oceans flow between.
 A shallow water hinders my embrace
 (III.344-47)

⁴⁴⁰ Madan, *Annexe*, p. 670.

⁴⁴¹ Madan, *Annexe*, p. 671.

Madan's focus on 'A slender Stream' might also show a debt to Charles Hopkins's rendering of the episode, which has 'Only a slender, Silver Stream destroys / And casts the Bar between our sundered Joys.'⁴⁴² Yet the similarity of the 'slender Stream' also serves to highlight a difference between the two versions: where Hopkins stresses the violence of this stream ('destroys' and 'sundered'), Madan is noticeably gentler – the water but only 'floats' over the reflection – which casts the tender Narcissus as feminine.

Madan's poem does not include the section of the myth where Narcissus beats himself to the point of drawing blood, and her willingness to depart from the myth is also suggested in the poem's closing simile. Ovid's simile, in Addison's translation, describes Narcissus's decay: 'As wax dissolves, as ice begins to run, / And trickle into drops before the sun; / So melts the youth, and languishes away' (III.488-89). Madan, however, chooses a different simile:

As blooming Roses annually decline,
And all their breathing Fragrances resign,
So fades the Youth – faint roll his languid Eyes,
And from his Cheek the glowing Vermil flies.⁴⁴³

The mixed set of influences on Madan's poem are indicative of not only the wider number and types of sources women of the eighteenth century could access but also the flexibility of literary topos as a way of receiving the classics. In parts a translation, in others an original poem, 'The Story of Narcissus' becomes almost a pastiche of gendered behaviour: alongside the allusions to Pope, this expiring figure is somewhat gentler than his usual, Ovidian self. However through the allusions to *The Rape of the Lock* Madan's Narcissus is closer to Pope's worldly Belinda than Milton's innocent Eve. The myth therefore becomes a reflection in part on cosmopolitan beauty, which inevitably 'fades'. Although it is unlikely that Madan would have been familiar with Montagu's 'From

⁴⁴² Hopkins, *The History of Love*, p. 96.

⁴⁴³ Madan, *Annexe*, p. 671.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, that both poets adapted their respective myths to include roses suggests how women readily saw Ovid's focus on both beauty and change as a license to, in turn, propose their own metamorphoses to the source material. In this way, Narcissus's looking into the pool of water becomes a recognisable antecedent to the topos of the looking glass that is so common in women's poetry of the period; likewise other poems by women that engage with beauty, as shown in the previous section on Montagu, may thus be conceived of as engaging with this story from classical mythology.

Equally important to this topos, as suggested by Madan, was Pope's *Belinda*. Where Milton's Eve looked into a pool of water in a pastoral idyll, *Belinda* exists in the modish world of eighteenth-century London. Mary Goddard's 'On *Belinda*'s Picture' suggests the figure had a universal appeal as one of those ladies of leisure who had time to spend time on their appearance. Bath poet Mary Chandler wrote of *Belinda*'s universally acknowledged beauty:

I'll not fatigue *Belinda*'s Ear
With telling her, "She's fair;"
Those Sounds so often she must hear
Of Shape, and Face, and Air.⁴⁴⁴

Like Ovid and Narcissus, Chandler emphasises that *Belinda* would know of her own beauty in a way that suggests the praise almost becomes sterile. Though complimentary of *Belinda*'s looks, there is an understated pathos in the way Chandler focuses on *Belinda*'s beauty given the poet's own apparent lack of beauty: in her praise of *Belinda*, Chandler observed 'What her Glass tells her, she must know,' though sadly the very same could be said of the poet herself: in 'My Own Epitaph' she had described herself as 'a true Maid, deformed and old'.⁴⁴⁵ Linda Troost reads Chandler's depiction of pools of water (including rivers, fountains and streams) as feminine because they are both

⁴⁴⁴ Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, p. 48.

⁴⁴⁵ Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, p. 40 and p. 48.

contained and 'do not surge mightily as they do for male poets'.⁴⁴⁶ With Chandler's awareness of her lack of beauty, it is possible to view these pools as analogous with the mirror glass as part of the transference of the Narcissus myth into the eighteenth century. Chandler's poem shows the influence of Pope's Belinda who, as foretold at the end of *The Rape of the Lock*, became an almost mythical representative literary figure for the standards of beauty during the period.

Mary Leapor, another labouring-class poet, was also fascinated by the processes of ageing and strongly influenced by Pope's writing. Leapor's death aged twenty-four from measles in 1746 poses an interesting subtext for 'Dorinda at her Glass', in which Leapor imagines an older, Belinda-like figure going to her dressing table. Leapor's poem feels like the opening of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* – both characters stay in bed despite the rising Sol – yet the distinction between Belinda and Dorinda is clear from the beginning: where the former is greeted by 'A heav'nly Image' (l.25), the latter 'shun'd the Relicks of her Pride' and 'To her lov'd Glass repair'd [...] And with a Sigh address'd the alter'd Shade.' (ll. 31-33) 'Dorinda at her Glass' exposes 'Deceitful Beauty – false as thou art gay' (l. 52) with the hope of warning the younger women around her of the woes of ageing: 'But hear, my Sisters – Hear an ancient Maid, / Too long by Folly, and her Arts betray'd' (ll. 71-72). Leapor's couplet toys with the shadow of the romance narrative of a 'betray'd' 'Maid', although here she is undone by both her age and looks. It is sadly ironic that Leapor seems to have been so concerned with the effects of passing time given that she died so young; it is through writing about fallen beauty that Leapor manages to address her own social exclusion, however, as with much of Leapor's poetry, readers can identify an attempt to form a female community, the suggestion of 'my Sisters' calling to mind a group of elderly muses. Elsewhere, Leapor uses the genre of

⁴⁴⁶ Linda Veronika Troost, 'Geography and Gender: Mary Chandler and Alexander Pope', in *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, ed. Mell, pp. 67-86 (p. 78).

the anti-blazon in 'Mira's Picture' to attack the aristocratic conventions that define labouring-class women as disgusting.⁴⁴⁷ A similar effect is achieved in 'Dorinda at her Glass': Leapor's use of the conventional topos of the toilette and looking-glass allows her to reflect Dorinda's situation back towards the traditions with which she is engaging. No longer can 'magick Baths' or the now redundant 'Phials on her Table' (ll. 27-28) help Dorinda; she is left instead to engage with her reflection, melancholically lamenting the passing of her former beauty.

As with Mandy Green's account of Milton's environment surrounding the Eve-Narcissus episode, the poems from the eighteenth-century that have been analysed consistently reveal the contaminated undertones of being beautiful, with the *locus amoenus* of the original myth now transferred to the gaunt modishness of a dressing table. Moving through Milton's Eve to Pope's Belinda reveals that the frequent topos of the looking-glass poem owes much to both the myth of Narcissus and the literary culture of the eighteenth century. Across these texts individual stories from Ovid's work were isolated and adapted, thus encouraging further experimentation and change by women writers. Yet, as with much of the poetry examined in this thesis, these poems describe women who did not consider themselves beautiful like Belinda, for example Chandler writing from personal experience or Leapor who projected what she saw in her late teenage years as the inevitable fate for any woman. This tone of inescapable change is itself distinctly Ovidian: aside from the opening of the *Metamorphoses*, multiple myths throughout the collection (including the description of the Sibyl's withered body) write of the transformations that come with ageing. Looking into the mirror affirms the appeal of the narcissistic gaze whilst simultaneously rendering it fixed and sterile: as Eric Langley writes in his study of Narcissus in the early-modern period, 'a mirror condemns

⁴⁴⁷ Laura Mandell, 'Demystifying (with) the Repugnant Female Body: Mary Leapor and Feminist Literary History', *Criticism* 38.4 (1996), 551-582 (p. 554).

a mirror'.⁴⁴⁸ Yet through these changes, whether they be at the hands of time or lustful gods, Ovid was able to display a sympathy for women and gave them a voice to express their suffering. These poems by women of the eighteenth century reflect and refract the obsession with beauty so it itself becomes in some places terrifying and in others upsetting – this willingness to translate and metamorphose the body and the surrounding definitions of beauty with an awareness of the unstoppable passage of time was, in its essence and literary origins, Ovidian.

It is appropriate that the poet who writes so often about change was himself subjected to the same process by women of the eighteenth century; the mythology of Ovid's work proved a potent source for women to express their concerns about the ways in which eighteenth-century society viewed and treated them. This chapter suggested the ways in which Ovid's work was made more accessible by writers like Milton and Pope, and these figures were also vital to the reception of the epic genre in the eighteenth century. Both Ovid and epic poetry provided a compendium of mythological characters, situations and references for women readers. For example, Mary Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' describes the difficulty when dusting the entrance hall due to its enormous size:

The Roof – no *Cyclops* e'er could reach so high:
Not *Polypheme*, tho' form'd for dreadful Harms,
The Top could measure with extended Arms.
Here the pleas'd Spider plants her peaceful Loom:
Here weaves secure, nor dreads the hated Broom.
(ll. 43-45)

Leapor juxtaposes scales of size between the giant and spider, but in alluding to Polyphemus, she draws on two traditions: it may be the Polyphemus from Book XIII of

⁴⁴⁸ Langley, *Narcissism and Suicide*, p. 42.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was translated by Dryden (in *Examen Poeticum*), or it might be the Polyphemus who appears in Book IX of Homer's *Odyssey*, translated by Leapor's favourite poet, Pope. Leapor's use of the Polyphemus reference is discussed in further detail in the following chapter however it is indicative of how women writers actively took advantage of the tension caused by the changing status of the classics to reposition the ancient world in a way that was individually suited to their class and gender. Leapor's poem, like the spider's webs, is 'secure' in telling the alternative story of the country house that was so common during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The 'enchanted Ground' of Ovid's poetry evidently enabled women to stage their own metamorphosis of the classics.

Both Ovidian and epic qualities are reflected in looking-glass poetry but the latter come in mock-heroic form. Sarah Dixon, who found Eve an unsatisfactory model, as discussed in the Introduction, often writes of women's attitudes towards beauty and its effect on women. Despite Dixon's claims of rural retirement and leisurely writing in the preface to her poetry collection, her poems show the cosmopolitan concerns of her female colleagues. Yet her poem 'The Looking Glass' entertains the notion of a supernatural entity within the object. In Dixon's poem Evadne, though 'once a flaming Toast, / Perceiv'd her Power decay' and she attempts to move her glass 'from Side to Side' to find a more flattering angle.⁴⁴⁹ Finding no relief, Evadne decides to break the mirror 'By way of Punishment'; yet, in a direct reference to the world of *The Rape of the Lock*, what emerges is a 'Guardian Silph, who lay conceal'd / Within the Mirror's Frame'.⁴⁵⁰ The sylph then accosts the older woman:

Evadne! darling of my Care,
Your Anger is in vain;
The innocent Reflector spare,
Of what do'st thou complain?

⁴⁴⁹ Dixon, *Poems*, p. 15.

⁴⁵⁰ Dixon, *Poems*, p. 16.

Was not an early Homage paid
Those Charms you now deplore?
Remember, thou ungrateful Maid,
Thy past despotick Power.

Art thou, Evadne, yet to learn
There is no second Spring,
For that which gives thee this Concern,
And all this Trifling.⁴⁵¹

Dixon's poems reinforce the fairy-like quality of Pope's sylphs to emphasise the damaging and uncanny nature of beauty itself. However, unlike those sylphs that guard Belinda with zeal and passion, albeit unsuccessfully, Evadne's sylph speaks with a moralising frankness that encourages her to consider all the 'Trifling' behaviours that have dictated her life. The overall effect of the sylph's words is an acceptance of the onset of time and bodily change, and the immediacy with which Evadne abandons the worldview of the glass implies her forlorn attitude: having heard the sylph speak, she bids Jane to 'bring my Night-Dress [...] And set the Glass aside; / When once a Woman's Beauty's gone, / How needless is her Pride?'⁴⁵²

The tone of this poem and others by Dixon that focus on beauty – such as 'To the Fair Injur'd Celia', which opens by asking 'Beauty! thou soft Intruder to the Heart, / Where is thy Triumph?' – implies that the social impulse to make oneself attractive will only be rewarded with a pyrrhic victory.⁴⁵³ Quite literally embodying the mirror, the sylph becomes the ideal commentator on eighteenth-century conceptions of beauty, indicating the near-mythical status the looking glass had achieved during the period. Where Pope's sylphs prove little more than 'airy substance', Dixon's sylph acts much more firmly as a divine guardian despite its harsh words for the aged Evadne. Dixon therefore uses the frame of the mock-heroic to reverse the significance of Pope's sylphs,

⁴⁵¹ Dixon, *Poems*, p. 17.

⁴⁵² Dixon, *Poems*, p. 18.

⁴⁵³ Dixon, *Poems*, p. 45.

taking them away from parody and more towards the didactic angel figure as seen in Milton's Raphael. In doing so, Dixon gives Pope's otherwise useless guardians a direct use for women, a technique that has been seen elsewhere in this chapter for example in the allusions to *The Rape of the Lock* by both Montagu and Madan. As suggested by Dixon, as the classics were removed from their traditional boundaries women attempted new experiments with these figures and topoi that both played with and broke away from the expectations of what might be expressed with the heightened mode of allusion. These experiments extended more broadly towards the pinnacle of literary achievement, the epic genre, as will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

'old Master Homer was Beggar and Blind': Women and Epic

'Arms, and the Man I sing'
John Dryden, Virgil's *Aeneid* I.1 (1697)

'Achilles' Wrath, to Greece the direful Spring
Of Woes unnumber'd, heav'nly Goddess, sing!
Alexander Pope, Homer's *Iliad* I.1-2 (1715-20)

'Ye sacred nine, your mighty aid impart,
Assist my numbers, and enlarge my heart!
Direct my lyre, and tune each trembling string,
While POETRY's exalted charms I sing'
Judith Madan, *The Progress of Poetry* (1721)⁴⁵⁴

'FRIENDSHIP! the heav'nly Theme I sing'
Mary Chandler, 'To Mrs Moor, A Poem on Friendship' (1733)⁴⁵⁵

The beginnings of epic poems like the *Aeneid* and *Iliad* constitute some of the most recognisable lines in world literature. However the quotations from Judith Madan and Mary Chandler suggest how in the eighteenth century the muse was being asked by women for assistance to detail subjects high and low. This re-evaluation of the epic genre had begun before the eighteenth century: although John Milton had written 'Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree' (I.1-2) in *Paradise Lost* (1667), his focus on the domestic lives of Adam and Eve and the proem to Book IX had introduced familial concerns to the grand frame of the epic genre. Traditional accounts of the reception of the epic genre have often seen the mode as in decline following *Paradise Lost*.⁴⁵⁶ In its place emerged the mock-heroic, through which poets sung of medical dispensaries, cut locks of hair and encroaching lands of darkness and stupidity, for

⁴⁵⁴ Madan, *The Flower-Piece*, p. 130.

⁴⁵⁵ Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, p. 60.

⁴⁵⁶ See, for example, Thomas Kaminski, 'Neoclassicism', in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Craig Kallendorf (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 57-71 (pp. 62-63).

example.⁴⁵⁷ Yet, the importance of these poems for women in aiding their understanding of the epic genre must not be under-emphasised: perhaps in becoming a pastiche of the features (poetic, linguistic, and structural) of the genre, the mock-heroic distilled what was essential for it. It is therefore unsurprising that women from a variety of social classes all engage with the mode in some form. Alongside the development of the mock-heroic, the publication of complete translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (1725-26) by Alexander Pope (with William Broome and Elijah Fenton in the case of the latter) meant that women had access to the Greek bard's works in texts that were targeted at them. Much was made in Chapter I of the consistent references throughout *The Nine Muses* that emphasised the disappointment that Dryden had not lived to fully translate Homer as he had done with Virgil. Thanks to Pope, with Homer and Virgil both now available to them women writers began to experiment with the epic mode.

Before Pope, only four complete English translations of the *Iliad* were completed: those of Chapman, Ogilby, and Hobbes, already discussed in Chapter I, and John Ozell's English translation of Anne Dacier's prose *Iliad* (originally published in 1699 in French) of 1712. In his first reflection on the sources that Pope used in his notes, Johnson concedes 'Something might be gathered from Dacier; but no man loves to be indebted to his contemporaries, and Dacier was accessible to common readers.'⁴⁵⁸ Where Pope disagreed with Dacier in his notes, she retaliated in 1719 by adding her *Reflexions* on Pope's Homer to the second edition of her *Iliad*, which was then published by Edmund Curll as *Madam Dacier's Remarks upon Mr. Pope's Account of Homer, Prefixed to his Translation of the Iliad* (1724) as translated by Thomas Parnell. In her *Reflexions*, Dacier

⁴⁵⁷ Referring, of course, to Samuel Garth's *The Dispensary* (1699) and Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714-15) and *The Dunciad* (1727-43), arguably the most famous examples of the genre. For a reading that sees *Paradise Lost* as anticipating Pope's work and the mock-heroic mode see: Claude Rawson, 'Mock-Heroic and English Poetry', in *The Cambridge Companion to Epic*, ed. Catherine Bates (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 167-192.

⁴⁵⁸ Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Lonsdale, iv. 15.

accused Pope of ignorance and using her work without attribution.⁴⁵⁹ Overall, Pope responded to Dacier in the ‘Postscript’ to his *Odyssey*, where, Howard Weinbrot argues, he suggested Dacier was the better scholar but he had the stronger poetic understanding and ‘moderately but sternly’ rejected her suggestion he had obscured the finish of Homer.⁴⁶⁰ At points, Pope’s invocation of Dacier as a scholarly voice is gendered: who better to defend the female goddesses in *Iliad* I, which Pope points out Dryden had translated ‘with the utmost Severity upon the Ladies, and spirited the whole with satirical Additions of his own’, than Dacier, who ‘has not taken the least notice of this general Defection from Complaisance in all the Commentators’?⁴⁶¹ Likewise, Dacier again is singularly tasked with exploring the ‘Panegyrick’ upon Helen’s Beauty in Book III.⁴⁶² In ‘Mr. Pope’s Welcome from Greece’, Pope’s friend John Gay celebrated that the ‘Six Years toil, / Thy daily labours, and thy night’s annoy’ had finished.⁴⁶³ In the poem, Gay describes those on the shore awaiting Pope’s return, including a group ‘Of goodly Dames, and courteous Knights’ including Montagu and the Blount sisters.⁴⁶⁴ Here are Pope’s readers, ready to learn from the notes on Homer’s geography, history, customs and morals that occupied so many hours of study during the day.⁴⁶⁵ Commenting on the cumulative effect of the notes, Weinbrot suggests the ‘legion of references [...] creates a narrator whose learning and fairness we come to trust and whose character we come to admire.’⁴⁶⁶ Of the notes, Johnson observed that ‘though they were undoubtedly written to swell the volumes, [they] ought not to pass without praise’; however, he still

⁴⁵⁹ Howard D. Weinbrot, ‘Alexander Pope and Madame Dacier’s Homer: Conjectures concerning Cardinal Dubois, Sir Luke Schaub, and Samuel Buckley’, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62.1/2 (1999), 1-23 (p. 2).

⁴⁶⁰ Howard D. Weinbrot, “‘What Must the World Think of Me?’” Pope, Madame Dacier, and Homer – The Anatomy of a Quarrel’, in *Eighteenth-Century Contexts: Historical Inquiries in Honour of Philip Harth*, ed. Howard D. Weinbrot, Peter J. Schakel and Stephen E. Karian (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 183-206 (pp. 193-94).

⁴⁶¹ TE vii. 121.

⁴⁶² TE vii. 201.

⁴⁶³ Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Dearing, i. 254.

⁴⁶⁴ Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Dearing, i. 256.

⁴⁶⁵ Rosslyn, *Alexander Pope*, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁶⁶ Howard D. Weinbrot, ‘Annotating a Career: From Pope’s *Homer* to *The Dunciad*: From Madame Dacier to Madame Dacier by Way of Swift’, *Philological Quarterly* 79.4 (2000), 459-482 (p. 460).

recapitulates three common charges against them: that they include ‘too much of unseasonable levity and affected gaiety’, that ‘too many appeals are made to the Ladies’, and ‘the ease which is so carefully preserved is sometimes the ease of a trifler.’⁴⁶⁷ Pope described the period in which he worked on his Homer as his ‘lying in’, which affirms Johnson’s suggestion that the notes ‘swell’ the volume.⁴⁶⁸ With these connotations of pregnancy, the notes become the feminine offspring of the Homeric translations.

As outlined in the Introduction, Pope’s Homer was thought of as a feminine text that was ideal for the fashionable reading public. Andromache’s headdress is described in Book XXII and in the accompanying note Pope implies his ‘female Readers’ would have trivial intentions when reading the work: he conjectures ‘The Ladies cannot but be pleas’d to see so much Learning and Greek upon this important Subject’.⁴⁶⁹ Montagu inadvertently confirmed this appeal in a letter sent to Pope from Adrianople on 1 April 1717, which recorded her excitement at the depiction of clothing and dress in Pope’s *Iliad*:

I read over your Homer here with an infinite pleasure and find several little passages explained that I did not before entirely comprehend the beauty of, many of the customs and much of the dress then in fashion being yet retained, and I don’t wonder to find more remains here of an age so distant than is to be found in any other country [...] It would be too tedious to you to point out all the passages that relate to present customs, but I can assure you that the princesses and great ladies pass their time at their looms, embroidering veils and robes, surrounded by their maids, which are always very numerous, in the same manner as we find Andromache and Helen described.⁴⁷⁰

Given Montagu’s letter is dated to April 1717, she would have been reading either the first or second volume of Pope’s *Iliad*, published in June 1715 and March 1716 respectively, which would have provided her with up to Book VIII of the epic. Book

⁴⁶⁷ Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Lonsdale, iv. 74.

⁴⁶⁸ Pope to Caryll and Martha Blount in June 1715. See *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), i. 292-93.

⁴⁶⁹ TE viii. 481.

⁴⁷⁰ Montagu, *Embassy Letters*, ed. Heffernan and O’Quinn, p. 119.

XXII, by contrast, was first published in 1720. Montagu's reading of the *Iliad* was no doubt inflected by her immersion in Turkish culture, but her response is also a parody of what women would typically be thought to have been interested in. Where Gay imagined Pope returning from Greece as a metaphor for the completion of his *Iliad*, Montagu actually visited some of the sites that, in the eighteenth century, were thought to have been where Troy once stood, although she also records a hesitancy about this: 'All that is now left of Troy is the ground on which it stood, for I am firmly persuaded whatever pieces of antiquity may be found round it, are much more modern [...] However there is some pleasure in seeing the valley where I imagined the famous duel of Menelaus and Paris had been fought'.⁴⁷¹ As exceptional as Montagu's position is as a female member of the aristocracy who was able to execute her own equivalent of the Grand Tour, her response is indicative of the wider cultural tendency (of both men and women) to read Homer as a repository of antique customs.

Claudia Thomas reads 'If my Author had the Wits of After Ages for his Defenders, his Translator has had the Beauties of the Present for his Advocates', which was later added to the 'Preface' of the *Iliad* translation, as not only Pope flattering his women readers but also confirming his work as a cultural monument.⁴⁷² Vital to this conceptualisation were Pope's notes and his sentimentalising of the text that elicited feelings of pity towards the characters. Looking at Pope's notes on Juno's preparations to seduce Zeus in Book XIV – a passage that Pope specifically suggests 'may be of Consideration to the Ladies' – Thomas argues that the low episode becomes an allegory of practical instruction.⁴⁷³ Other brief examples from Pope's paratextual materials amplify Thomas's reading. For example, when Hector is first introduced in Book III in his note Pope offers the 'several Reasons which render Hector a favourite Character with

⁴⁷¹ Montagu, *Embassy Letters*, ed. Heffernan and O'Quinn, p. 185.

⁴⁷² TE vii. 25; Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 22.

⁴⁷³ Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, p. 38; TE vii. 168.

every Reader', the notion of a 'favourite' implying a popular readership.⁴⁷⁴ In the 'Essay on Homer's Battles', Pope stresses the means by which Homer 'has been careful to contrive such Reliefs and Pause as might divert the Mind' away from 'the perpetual Horror of Combates' and the 'Succession of Images of Death', which includes the 'many pathetick Circumstances about the Deaths of Heroes' that evoke 'Compassion and Pity' from the reader.⁴⁷⁵ The implicit target of these remarks, one feels, are women, to whom the descriptions of battle and bloodshed might have been deemed inappropriate. Finally, in the 'Observations on the Shield of Achilles', Pope's over-arching argument that readers 'consider this Piece as a complete Idea of Painting, and a Sketch for what may call a universal Picture,' a supposedly so-far neglected suggestion, likewise manages to make the object that is essential to both warfare and the epic tradition (as seen in the *Aeneid* when Aeneas is also presented with a shield) more agreeable to his female readers in particular.⁴⁷⁶

Pope overall created a text that could heavily influence the lives of his female readers. For example, although Catharine Cockburn enjoyed early success as a dramatist – *Agnes de Castro* (1695), her first play, was performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and *Fatal Friendship* (1698) at Lincoln's Inn Fields – after she married the Reverend Patrick Cockburn she was, according to Thomas Birch, 'intirely diverted from her studies for many years, by attending upon the duties of a wife and a mother, and by the ordinary cares of an increasing family, and the additional ones arising from the reduced circumstances of her husband.'⁴⁷⁷ However, in a letter that was printed in Birch's *The Works of Mrs Catharine Cockburn* (1751) Cockburn wrote to Pope; calling herself a stranger, she relates that after her marriage she:

⁴⁷⁴ TE vii. 191.

⁴⁷⁵ TE vii. 254-55.

⁴⁷⁶ TE viii. 363.

⁴⁷⁷ Catharine Cockburn, *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn, Theological, Moral, Dramatic and Poetic*, ed. Thomas Birch, 2 vols (1751), i. xxxv.

bid adieu to the muses, and so wholly gave myself up to the cares of a family, and the education of my children, that I scarce knew, whether there was any such thing as books, plays, or poems stirring in Great Britain. However after some years, your *Essay on Criticism*, and *Rape of the Lock*, broke in Upon me. I rejoyced, that so bright a genius was rising on our isle; but thought no more about you, till my young family was grown up to have less need of my assistance; and beginning to have some taste of polite literature, my inclination revived with my leisure, to enquire after what had been most celebrated in that kind. I then read your Homer, and was charmed with the humanity of your remarks on some instances of shocking cruelty and revenge.⁴⁷⁸

Cockburn refers to Pope's notes, which transform the *Iliad*'s brutal scenes of warfare so that in the text could be found 'charm' and 'humanity'. Cockburn's letter suggests how Pope's notes served as a method of entering ancient epic in its most masculine form at the margins, making even the scenes of warfare that might have been thought of as unsavoury for women seem accessible and appropriate. Cockburn's letter is made all the more significant, however, in remembering that in *The Nine Muses* she wrote of Homer's 'wounds' as inflicted by Ogilby, Hobbes and Chapman. Now, just as Odysseus returns to bury Elpenor's body, Pope had ensured that Homer received a worthy translation.

In *Spectator* 160 (1711), Addison recapitulated the popular view that 'Homer has innumerable Flights that Virgil was not able to reach'.⁴⁷⁹ Meanwhile, in his early *Essay on Criticism* (1711), Pope had implored

Be Homer's works your study and delight,
Read them by day, and meditate by night;
Thence form your judgement, thence your maxims bring,
And trace the Muses upwards to their spring;
Stil with itself compar'd, his text peruse;
And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.
(ll. 124-129)

Pope here suggests that Virgil ('the Mantuan Muse') can be used as a glossary for studying Homer. Anna Foy argues that Homer's central position to the *Querelle des*

⁴⁷⁸ Cockburn, *Works*, ed. Birch, i. xl.

⁴⁷⁹ S ii. 127.

Anciens et des Modernes is indicated by the pair of duelling translations – those of Dacier and Antoine Houdar de la Motte (whose *Iliad* was published in 1714), and those of Pope and Thomas Tickell’s unfinished 1712 translation – that imply the *Iliad* as the defining epic of the period.⁴⁸⁰ Nonetheless, given the martial themes of the *Iliad* and the generally unsavoury treatment of women in both epics, it is in some respects surprising that women so desired to see the texts in English. Even in Pope’s sentimental translation, Achilles’s threat that Chryseis’ future will see her ‘In daily Labours of the Loom employ’d, / Or doom’d to deck the Bed she once enjoy’d’ (I.41-46) offers little solace. However, to write of the reception of Homer and Virgil in women’s poetry solely with reference to Pope’s and Dryden’s respective translations would be to ignore the process of fragmentation that both epic works underwent during the period. Twenty years before Pope’s *Iliad*, in *Examen Poeticum* (1693) Dryden had said of Homer: ‘Yet I must needs say this in reference to Homer, that he is much more capable of exciting the manly passions than those of grief and purity.’⁴⁸¹ As representative of the scenes of ‘grief and purity’, Dryden included a translation of ‘The Last Parting of Hector and Andromache’ in *Examen Poeticum*, with Congreve also translating ‘Priam’s Lamentation and Petition to Achilles’ and ‘The Lamentations of Hecuba, Andromache and ‘Helen’ in the same volume. Miscellanies allowed writers like Dryden to specify marginal aspects of texts that went against the traditionally hyper masculine aspects of the classics, amplifying instead scenes of ‘grief and purity’. The miscellany genre was again integral to the reception of the epic genre in women’s writing for it encouraged a direct method of access to the marginal episodes of the classical world of the hero that would typically have been considered inappropriate to female readers. Instead, as with Pope’s notes, the margins of Homer’s texts were highlighted, perhaps almost celebrated (as in Dryden), as

⁴⁸⁰ Anna M. Foy, ‘Epic’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Poetry, 1660-1800*, ed. Lynch, pp. 473-494 (p. 489).

⁴⁸¹ H iv. 224.

moments wherein an alternative vision of the ancient world could be glimpsed. Certain miscellanies included these episodes specifically for young people: James Greenwood's *The Virgin Muse* (1717), which included Knightly Chetwood's 'The Parting of Hector with his princess Andromache', was, as per the title page, 'Designed for the Use of Young Gentlemen and Ladies' in schools.⁴⁸² Chantel M. Lavoie goes further by arguing that Greenwood's use of extracts from Milton's *Paradise Lost* re-contextualises the epic specifically for women readers.⁴⁸³ As explored throughout this chapter, various women writers were able to further accentuate the themes and characters highlighted through these episodes in their own writing.

Even Pope's translations of Homer were subjected to a process of fragmentation: Pope invited subscriptions for his Homer from 1715, and the work was then published across five volumes by Bernard Lintot between 1715 and 1720. The effect of having Homer rendered in almost-annual sections emphasises that Homer's reception in the period must be understood as continuing in the fragmentary approach seen in *Examen Poeticum*. Mary Leapor wrote to Bridget Freemantle requesting her to 'send me the rest of the *Odyssey*, for I long to know the End of the Fable, and I have Leisure To-day from dirty Work. O law! how the Word *dirty* looks in this sublime Letter!'⁴⁸⁴ The final volume of Pope's *Odyssey* included the events of Books XX-XXIV – meaning both the destruction of the suitors and Odysseus being reunited with Penelope – which are very different from, for example, the Wanderings of Books IX-XII or the Phaeacian court of Books VI-VIII. As with the miscellanies, the impact of separating Homer's text into sections may well have encouraged the young Leapor to focus on different aspects of the work, as shall be explored later in this chapter.

⁴⁸² *The Virgin Muse. Being a Collection of Poems from our Most Celebrated English Poets* (1717), title page.

⁴⁸³ Chantel M. Lavoie, *Collecting Women: Poetry and Lives, 1700–1780* (Cranbury: Rosemont, 2009), p. 91.

⁴⁸⁴ GM 305; emphasis Leapor's.

The changing definition of epic was tied to the developing presence of the classics in everyday culture. As outlined in the Introduction, much of the material culture of the eighteenth century was embossed with motifs and designs from the ancient world; these objects often used the juxtaposition of the mock-heroic (that of high culture in miniature) for effect. A similar contrast might also be said to attend the dramatic performances of epic stories on the stage. Burlesques of ancient material were common: of the genre Dryden observed in *The Art of Poetry*: ‘The dull burlesque appeared with impudence, / And pleased by novelty, in spite of sense. / All except trivial points grew out of date, / Parnassus spoke the cant of Billingsgate: / Boundless and mad disordered rhyme was seen, / Disguised Apollo changed to harlequin’ (ll. 81-86). Dryden’s poem refers to these works as a ‘plague, which first in country towns began, / Cities and kingdoms quickly overran’ (ll. 87-88); examples of the burlesque Dryden refers to include Charles Cotton’s *Scarronides* (1670), a parody of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and Alexander Radcliffe’s *Ovid Travestie* (1680). By the eighteenth century burlesques moved closer in spirit towards the mock-heroic, as seen in works like Thomas Parnell’s *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice* (1717), a translation of the *Batrachomyomachia*. Other dramatic genres also engaged with epic subject matter in miniature: Edith Hall has suggested that Elkanah Settle’s *The Siege of Troy*, a fairground droll about the siege of Troy that was depicted in Hogarth’s *Southwark Fair* (1735-5), in its inclusion of numerous speaking parts for the ‘Mob’ (which encouraged audience participation) is ‘a complex metatheatrical response to the elite connotations of the classical material in a cross-class context.’⁴⁸⁵ Aside from indicating the pervasive presence of the classics in everyday life, these performative works are indicative of the shifting status of epic in the period that leans towards the mock-heroic. Moreover, they offered a democratic mode of reception – those from across

⁴⁸⁵ Edith Hall, ‘Classical Epic and the London Fairs, 1697-1734’, in *Epic Performances from the Middle Ages into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Fiona Macintosh, Justine McConnell, Stephen Harrison, Claire Kenward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 439-60 (pp. 447).

the classes could enjoy the puppet show – and it was not just London that exhibited these productions: Dryden’s *The Art of Poetry* emphasises how the work was spread across the country. Mary Barber records in ‘Written at Tunbridge-Wells, To the Right Honourable the Lady Barbara North, occasion’d by some of the Company’s saying they would go to Fainty-Fair, and act a Play’:

In some few Hours we must repair
To act, like Thespis, in the Fair:
And, as our Stage is of a Piece
With that transmitted down from Greece,
Some Power Cælestial must unfold
Our Fable, too obscurely told;
And, since it helps the Poet’s Art,
When Actors speak and look their Part;
Wonder not, Fair One, that we sue,
The Goddess may be plaid by you.⁴⁸⁶

That these performances encouraged women and were evidently part of fashionable society implies the ways in which the classics were part of the everyday. These dramatic episodes, then, together indicate the changing attitude towards epic literature during the period and represent another form through which women could encounter the classics.

However there were some anxieties that women expressed surrounding their understanding of women’s role in epic poetry: Anne Dacier, in an annotation to her translation of Homer’s *Iliad* VI, explains how she is ‘rather afraid that many people, reading this work and finding it far above my capacity, will send me back to my distaff and spindles.’⁴⁸⁷ Instead of fearing their interactions with the epic genre however women writers of the eighteenth century show an increasingly confidence in employing the mock-heroic as a way of writing within the frame of epic. The popularity of Homer in the

⁴⁸⁶ Barber, *Poems*, p. 45.

⁴⁸⁷ Translated by Rosie Wyles in ‘Ménage’s Learned Ladies: Anne Dacier (1647-1720) and Anna Maria von Schurman (1607-1678),’ in *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall, pp. 61-77 (pp. 74-75).

period can be seen in 'Poet Humdrum', a brief poem by Sarah Dixon, which presents a poverty-stricken writer whose verse only he can understand:

He was writing Heroicks, and calling to Mind,
That his old Master Homer was Beggar and Blind,
He invok'd the Nine Muses, and spur'd up his Jade,
(For his Landlady swore she must quickly be paid;)⁴⁸⁸

The poem's playful treatment of the commercialisation of poetry and hack writers is tonally very much of the eighteenth century, as is Dixon's emphasis on Homer's mendicant status. Dixon's Homer bridges the space between high and low literary culture, evoking the power of the mock heroic. As Pope's hugely popular mock-heroic works *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad* took hold of the public imagination in the first decades of the eighteenth century, reprints of *Examen Poeticum* in 1706, 1716 and 1727 (alongside other miscellany volumes) continued to provide women with episodes from ancient epic that were seen as appropriate for their sensibility. Tied more generally with the representation of the classics in everyday culture, the typically masculine associations of the epic genre were thus being challenged. Unsurprisingly, women writers took advantage of the diminution of the traditional boundaries that held epic poetry as the pinnacle of literary achievement and began to experiment themselves with the worlds of Homer and Virgil.

This chapter shall consider the ways in which women engaged with the epic genre in two sections. The first shall explore two vital questions regarding the reception of epic poetry in women's writing of the period: firstly, whether epic literature is a masculine province that could only be entered at the margins; secondly, whether the mock-heroic offered women any opportunity to go beyond the triviality that attended contemporary works by male writers in the mode. It shall be argued that women

⁴⁸⁸ Dixon, *Poems*, p. 141.

questioned epic's masculinist associations and began to alter the contexts in which they might appear useful. This process continues in women's use of the mock-heroic: using Montagu's poetry as a study, it shall be argued that women use the genre's triviality as a way of both expressing their familiarity with the epic genre and elevating the experiences they write about. It is unsurprising, then, that Mary Leapor uses the mock-heroic as a method of writing about the working-classes, which is explored in the second half of the chapter. This re-evaluation of how women engage with the mock-heroic thus contributes to discussion of the ways in which the mock-heroic operated as an independent genre in the period, arguing that Leapor's poetry offers the best example of a woman writer in the eighteenth century exploring the epic voice.

Epic 'apply'd': Dignity and the Mock Heroic

In Sarah Fielding's prose pamphlet *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749), a group of men and women discuss Samuel Richardson's novel and its heroine. As part of this, Miss Gibson argues for the legitimacy of Clarissa's fainting, arguing that with Lovelace's threat the 'Terrors raised in her Mind':

For the Truth of this, I appeal to that charming painted Scene, where the Reader's Mind shares Clarissa's Terror, and is kept in one continued Tumult til.

The Steeds are smote, the rapid Chariot flies,
The sudden Clouds of circling Dust arise.

She was vexed to her soul afterwards to find she was tricked, as she calls it out of herself⁴⁸⁹

Fielding's allusion, noted by a footnote as from 'Pope's Homer', comes from Book XXII of the *Iliad* after Achilles has killed Hector. Having strapped the Trojan's heels to his

⁴⁸⁹ Sarah Fielding, *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749), pp. 16-17.

chariot, Achilles has his horses charge around the walls of Troy, defiling the body.

Fielding uses the lines quoted from Homer to imply the intangible confusion in Clarissa's mind at Lovelace's advance, yet in contextualising the quotation in the *Iliad* the comment more broadly becomes about the marks her body have sustained. Hector's body is 'Deform'd, dishonour'd, in his native Land!' (XXII.508), just as Clarissa found herself once she regained consciousness following her rape by Lovelace. It is telling that Fielding has a young female character quote Pope's Homer: amidst the battles and heroics of the *Iliad*, it is apparent that women found opportunities in the text beyond a supposedly innate interest in Andromache's headdress. Fielding's de-contextualisation of Pope's Homer is indicative of a literary culture in which classical texts were broken and fragmented, with the pathways into the genre widened for women readers.

Elsewhere Fielding shows the ways in which eighteenth-century readers were broken into distinct groups. In her 'Preface' to *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), Fielding outlines what various readers of the *Aeneid* will understand from the text: for example, young beaux will look to the tragedy of Dido, proud fathers and sons will sympathise with Aeneas carrying his father from the burning Troy, and friends will look to Nisus and Euryalus. Women are also listed as readers of the *Aeneid*, but they have specific responses to the work: a 'fond Mother' shall 'feel by Sympathy every Pang' of the mother of Euryalus, and widows will lament alongside Andromache, 'Sigh for Sigh'.⁴⁹⁰ Fielding's depiction of sentimental readers is typical of a culture that enabled women's access to the classics but almost only within a certain frame of reference. In this world the traditional readers looking for epic's celebration of masculinity and strength exist alongside newer, less conventional readers:

That the Story of Dido, in the Fourth Book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, hath the Leaves generally most soiled in the Closets of young Gentlemen and Ladies, who will have no other Employment but that of seeking after Pleasure, is an Observation that I am not singular

⁴⁹⁰ Sarah Fielding, *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*, 2 vols (1759), i. xxxviii.

in; but have often heard it remarked also by others; and have looked with an Eye of Compassion on the Parents of such Sons and Daughters, as could find nothing in Virgil but that Story (excellent as it is in its Kind) on which they could fix their Thoughts, or employ their Imaginations; whilst, on the other hand, I rejoiced in my Heart over the Son of a Friend, whom it was impossible, with the utmost Art, whilst the Conversation ran on Virgil, to keep long from turning his Thoughts with Admiration on Æneas, when he was bearing his old Father through the raging Flames.⁴⁹¹

Of these two readings, Fielding contrasts ideas of public and private: the young couple, arguably also the readers of *Examen Poeticum* and Addison's *Spectator* issues, read the text in their 'Closets' whilst the young man engages in 'Conversation' about Virgil. Nonetheless, Fielding shows how the epic genre was fragmented into different 'Kind[s]'; despite her hesitancy to write this preface – she wrote to Samuel Richardson (who printed the novel) of 'the Great Mouth of the Press' and observed 'if it is necessary I must write a small Preface but I had rather not for I am quite weary' – it serves as useful evidence of the condition of the epic genre in the eighteenth century'.⁴⁹² Even though these readers are split into separate groups, Fielding's readers all respond broadly within an expression appropriate to the cult of sensibility: they weep, they sigh and they fear for these characters. They are all emotionally invested in these individual episodes. Fielding's preface thus shows the ways in which the epic genre was accessed from the margins in a way that made these responses more natural. Opposed to solely responding to the masculine bravado of the epic genre, these readers together imply how a more feminine way of responding to the text, which was first fostered by the miscellany translations of Dryden and Congreve, was becoming acceptable in eighteenth-century culture.

In Elizabeth Tollet's 'Reflections on the Origin of the World', a poem that rebukes the supposed narrow-mindedness of atheists, Homer's 'lofty page' achieves a status second to Nature's in his ability to teach through 'Ulysses' toils, or stern Achilles'

⁴⁹¹ Fielding, *Dellwyn*, i. xxxv-xxxvi.

⁴⁹² Sarah Fielding, *The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*, ed. Battestin and Probyn, p. 149.

Rage, / The Grecian Glories, and the Trojan Woes'.⁴⁹³ The increasing accessibility of Homer's work, both through miscellanies and then through Pope's translations, enabled women to learn of these stories. Tollet's four-line poem 'On Mr. Pope's Homer', which was published in her 1724 collection of poetry and is in praise of his *Iliad*, shows the importance of translation to accessing these works:

The Samian Sage, whose venerable Breast
Euphorbus' transmigrating Soul possest,
Cou'd he revive again, wou'd joy to see
That Homer's Spirit is transfus'd to thee.⁴⁹⁴

Tollet's short poem praises Pope (and his translation) through a reference to Pythagoras, who claimed to be a reincarnation of Euphorbus, a Trojan hero.⁴⁹⁵ The reference to the 'Samian Sage' in 'On Mr. Pope's Homer', although slight, does reveal a trend in Tollet's treatment of epic literature that generally combines qualities from both Homer and Virgil. This method is seen explicitly in 'From Virgil' which first presents the Latin of Book III of the *Aeneid*, a translation of these lines (apparently by Tollet), and then a meditation on the theme of the passage. Given this unusual organisation, the entire work is here quoted:

*O Felix una ante alias Priameia virgo,
Hostilem ad tumulum Trojae sub moenibus altis
Jussa mori, quae sortitus non pertulit ullos,
Nec victoris eri tetigit captiva cubile!*

O happy she alone of Priam's Race;
Who, free from servile Bonds and dire Disgrace,
Beneath the Walls of ruin'd Ilium bled,
A Victim to th' inexorable Dead:
Exempt from hateful Lots, nor doom'd to know
The lordly Bed of a vicious Foe.

⁴⁹³ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 45.

⁴⁹⁴ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), p. 52.

⁴⁹⁵ This belief was explained in Book XV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was translated by Dryden, first for *Fables* and then included in Garth's 1717 edition: 'Ev'n I, who these mysterious truths declare, / Was once Euphorbus in the Trojan war; / My name, and lineage I remember well, / And how in fight by Sparta's king I fell.' GT XV.155-58.

The foregoing Lines apply'd.
 How hard a Fate enthral's the wretched Maid
 By Tyrant Kindred barter'd and betray'd!
 Whose Beauty, Youth, and Innocence are sold,
 For shining Equipage, or Heaps of Gold:
 Condemn'd to drag an odious Chain for Life;
 A living Victim and a captive Wife!
 More happy She, and less severe her Doom,
 Who falls in all the Pride of early Bloom,
 And Virgin Honours dress her peaceful Tomb!⁴⁹⁶

What is immediately apparent about this poem is how Tollet uses Andromache to comment on the unjust treatment of women not only at the time of the Trojan War but also throughout time.⁴⁹⁷ Despite being 'From Virgil', Tollet's poem and the translation have mixed literary sources: that Andromache was 'free from servile bonds' may be an allusion to Dryden's translation of 'The First Book of Homer's Iliad', which was first published in *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700), for when Chryseis is returned 'to her father's hands, / [he] glad received her, free from servile bands' (ll. 610-11). Through this allusion, Tollet emphasises Andromache's fortunate position by evoking the shade of the young girl who so nearly spent her life as Achilles' slave. With this allusion, however, it might also be observed that the softness of Pope's Homeric translation – which translated the lines as 'At this, the Sire embrac'd the Maid again, / So sadly lost, so lately sought in vain' (l. 582-83) – proved unsatisfactory for Tollet's own poetic desire to register the unfair treatment of women in the ancient world and in the eighteenth century.

Tollet's 'application' of Virgil's lines also finds a Homeric parallel at the end of the *Iliad*, when Andromache mourns the death of Hector. Congreve, whom Tollet

⁴⁹⁶ Tollet, *Poems* (1724), pp. 56-57.

⁴⁹⁷ For an introductory discussion on the roles female characters play in epic works, see: Helene P. Foley, 'Women in Ancient Epic', in *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, ed. John Miles Foley (Blackwell, 2009), pp. 105-118.

praised, had translated 'The Lamentations of Hecuba, Andromache, and Helen, over the Dead Body of Hector'. In this episode, Andromache predicted how

Soon will the Grecians, now, insulting come,
And bear us Captives to their distant Home;
I, with my Child, must the same Fortune share,
And all alike, be Pris'ners of the War.⁴⁹⁸

At the end of Dryden's own 'The Last Parting of Hector and Andromache' Hector had worried about how his wife would be 'Led hence a slave to some insulting sword, / Forlorn and trembling at a foreign lord' (ll. 126-27). The parts of 'From Virgil' together form a compendium of the experiences of women across the ancient world, with Andromache, who was first taken by Pyrrhus from Troy and then married to Helenus, one of Priam's sons, by the time of the narrative of the *Aeneid*, embodying the mistreatment of women across the epic tradition. It is worth re-quoting the lines from Mary Chudleigh's 'The Resolution' that praised Congreve's Homeric translations:

Homer looks great in his rich English Dress;
So well he Priam's Sorrow does express,
That I with him for valiant Hector grieve;
His Suff'rings on my Mind a deep Impression leave.
With sad Andromache a part I bear,
With her in all her Lamentations share:
With Hecuba bewail a darling Son,
Who for his Country glorious Things had done
(ll. 539-46)

Chudleigh's repetition of 'With' stresses how, upon reading Congreve's episodes, she found a way of engaging with Homer's heroines. Tollet's 'From Virgil' goes further however by mediating more on the themes offered to women readers by epic poetry. Yet in singling out an individual quotation from Homer, Tollet's poem is more broadly indicative of how the definitions surrounding epic poetry were changing. Instead of

⁴⁹⁸ Congreve, *Works*, ed. McKenzie, ii. 309.

diminishing the grandeur of the genre, however, in drawing on a variety of other translations Tollet shows the latent potential within the epic genre to comment on the lives of women. Although miscellanies arguably added a stronger sense of demarcation between those episodes that were appropriate for men and women, they also provided women writers with the opportunity to offer their own comments on the ancient world. Dacier's earlier fear of being sent back to her loom is replaced in Tollet's poem with an assurance of her understanding of the text, hence the quotation in Latin, a translation and then the application of the passage. Tollet therefore shows the ways in which the solely masculine quality of epic was being questioned. Amidst this uncertainty and transformation, it should be unsurprising that other women of all social classes were able to think of the ways in which the world of the hero could be 'apply'd'.

Whilst the fragmentation of epic poetry enabled a greater access to a genre that was traditionally thought of as not applicable to women, the eighteenth century's obsession with the mock-heroic also led to women seeing their contemporary lives written about with the style and power of epic. Fred Parker writes that the potency of the mock-heroic genre comes 'through the irony inherent in [the genre's] combination of an elevated manner with a seemingly trivial subject matter.'⁴⁹⁹ When women were written about by men within the frame of the mock-heroic they were simultaneously turned into heroines and marked as the topic of sub-epic triviality. Edmund Curll's *The Ladies' Miscellany* (1718) collected other mock-heroic treatments of the items that were owned by women, including Joseph Gay's 'The Petticoat: An Heroi-Comical Poem', Francis Atterbury's 'The Fan' and 'Dress. A Poem,' which, though not attributed in the text, was by John Breval. As suggested by Joanna Fowler, the trifling content of the mock-heroic

⁴⁹⁹ Fred Parker, 'Travesty and Mock-Heroic', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, ed. Martindale and Hopkins, pp. 323-360 (p. 324).

meant it was a genre that women could write in despite its elevated style.⁵⁰⁰ For example, Elizabeth Teft framed the tea-table with the rhetoric of the mock-heroic, beginning first with an evocation of the muse ('My Muse I must employ thee, but in what? / Suppose it be in Tea-Table chit chat') before describing the filling of the teapot in 'Tea-table Conversation': 'Water newly drawn, brought Boiling in: / The Crystal Stream, while thus severely hot, / Runs murm'ring from the Kettle to the Pot; / Soon as receiv'd, 'tis chang'd in Quality, / From simple water to celestial Tea'.⁵⁰¹ Fuelled by a domesticated Xanthus, the women in Teft's poem converse at the tea-table before finishing with a discussion of literature: 'On Pope, on Swift, on Addison, on Gay, / They all Comment, justly I ought to say'.⁵⁰² Teft's choice of writers suggesting the popular nature of their conversation. Women practitioners of the mock-heroic actively sought to exist within the mode's trivial hinterland as it enabled them to use the rhetoric from the world of the epic hero (trivial or not) to write about and aggrandise their own lives.

Yet there is a second use of the mock-heroic at work in women's poetry of the period. Parker highlights a 'sharper' definition of the genre as poems that 'model themselves on classical epic [...] in ways that combine a degree of irony with a degree of genuine engagement'.⁵⁰³ This is a contrast to those works included, for example, in Curll's *The Ladies' Miscellany*, which engage just in contemporary satire. But the mock-heroic poetry of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Leapor belongs to the former definition. In this way, the mock-heroic becomes a covert, acceptable mode of reception for women writers that plays into ideas of triviality whilst enabling a process of dignification of the subject matter through the references to the epic genre. Montagu's

⁵⁰⁰ Joanna Fowler, 'Women Poets and the Mock-Heroic Elegy', in *Voice and Context in Eighteenth-Century Verse: Order in Variety*, ed. Joanna Fowler and Allan Ingram (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 197-208 (p. 191).

⁵⁰¹ See Teft, *Orinthia's Miscellany*, pp. 112-117.

⁵⁰² Teft, *Orinthia's Miscellany*, p. 117.

⁵⁰³ Parker, 'Travesty and Mock-Heroic', *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, Vol. 3, ed. Martindale and Hopkins (p. 323).

poetry shall be here examined first as representative of this method of writing; her mock-heroic work is in line with what Claude Rawson defines as ‘the first mock-heroic moment, when, perhaps for the only time in history, some of the best poets devoted some of their strongest energies to a hybrid genre that parodied the epic but did not satirise it. Their style, though seemingly designed to deflate, was protective of the old epics, and, by retaining and even absorbing some of the primary majesties it was travestyng, actually aspired in its way to emulating them’.⁵⁰⁴ The prevalence of the mock-heroic led in some part to a re-evaluation of the epic genre, part of which included a re-consideration of the roles that men and women played within these pieces: in 1716 Richard Blackmore thought that epic need not be ‘restrain’d to a Hero; since no Reason [...] can be assign’d, why a Heroine may not be the principal person of an Epick.’⁵⁰⁵ Moving away from the masculinist use of the mock-heroic as a way of trivialising women, Montagu’s and Leapor’s poetry in fact suggests the ways in which women from all social classes could indeed become the ‘Heroine’ of epic literature.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Montagu uses allusions to the classics as a method of expressing her own changing beauty. Likewise she attributes a mock-heroic tone in her writings surrounding the effects of time in a letter to her sister, written when Montagu was thirty-five:

if Life could always be what it is, I believe I have so much Humility in my temper, I could be contented without any thing better this two or three hundred years, but alas!

Dullness and wrinkles and disease must come,
And Age and Death’s irrevocable Doom.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Rawson, ‘Mock-heroic and English poetry’, *Cambridge Companion to Epic*, ed. Bates (p. 167).

⁵⁰⁵ Richard Blackmore, *Essays Upon Several Subjects*, 2 vols (1716-17), i. 88-89.

⁵⁰⁶ *Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Halsband, ii. 45; allusion identified by Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 246.

Montagu's quotation comes from Pope's *Iliad* XII, when Sarpedon encourages Glaucus and the Trojan warriors to fight and justifies the higher position of the hero within society:

But since, alas! Inexorable Age must come,
Disease, and Death's inexorable Doom;
The Life which others pay, let us bestow,
And give to Fame what we to Nature owe;
Brave tho' we fall, and honour'd if we live,
Or let us Glory gain, or Glory give!
(XII.391-96)

Pope's *Episode of Sarpedon* was first published in Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies: The Sixth Part* (1709) before being revised for the *Iliad*; however Pope had also used these lines in Clarissa's speech to Belinda in Canto IV of *The Rape of the Lock*. Although Montagu quotes Pope's Homer, this literary context cannot be ignored, for Montagu talks about her 'temper' just as Clarissa does. As Clarissa reminded Belinda that her beauty was transient, warning 'frail beauty must decay / Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey' (V.25-26), Montagu again admits the 'irrevocable Doom' of aging, a topic that, as discussed in Chapter III, heavily occupied her poetry and seemingly guided her reading of the classics. Pope parodied Sarpedon's speech in *The Rape of the Lock*, and a similar tone can be identified in Montagu's use of the quotation; however, underneath Montagu's hyperbole can be detected Clarissa's warning and Belinda's experience with Sarpedon's encouragement. Montagu's quotation straddles these various intertexts, transferring Sarpedon's heroic quality to her own life and the lives of all women for whom the loss of beauty (or at least the threat of it) signified the death of their power and status.

Elsewhere Montagu alludes to epic works in a style that aligns her poetry with the earlier version of the mock-heroic mode. In 'Monday. Roxana. Or the Drawing-Room', Montagu describes how the woman of the poem's title 'Sigh'd her soft sorrows at St.

James's Gate; / Such heavy thoughts lay brooding in her Breast / Not her own Chairmen with more weight oppress'd' (ll. 3-4)). Montagu echoes both Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (as Belinda travels to Hampton Court, Ariel is 'With careful Thoughts opprest, / Th'impending Woe sate heavy on his Breast (ll.53-54) and his *Iliad* (at the beginning of Book X Agamemnon cannot sleep, for 'with various Thoughts opprest, / His country's Cares lay rowling in his Breast' (X.3-4)). This dual reference to both epic and mock-heroic poems again reveals the way in which the latter genre acted as a veneer behind which women hide social commentary in their poetry. Although Montagu pokes fun at Roxana's weight, the allusion to Agamemnon provides some grandeur to her situation: now older, Roxana finds herself no longer the darling of the court in spite of her best efforts. She has gone to licentious plays and has 'sacrificed both modesty and ease' (l. 15) in order to please Princess Caroline of Wales. Roxana then declares:

Alas how chang'd! With the same sermon meen
That once I pray'd, the What d'ee callt I've seen.
Ah cruel Princesse! for thy sake I've lost
That reputation which so dear had cost.
(ll. 25-28)

To signal Roxana's loss of virtue, Montagu uses a so-called Alexandrian footnote to connect her with other heroes of the epic genre.⁵⁰⁷ Montagu again alludes simultaneously to two texts: to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. At the beginning of Milton's epic, Satan laments 'oh how fallen! how changed / From him, who in the happy realms of light / Clothed with the transcendent brightness didst outshine / Myriads though bright' (l.84-87); however Milton was in turn alluding to the visitation of Hector's bloodied corpse to Aeneas in Book II of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas observes 'quantum mutatus

⁵⁰⁷ Stephen Hinds, building on David Ross's label, defines the Alexandrian footnote as: 'the signalling of [a] specific allusion by a poet through seemingly general appeals to tradition'. Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-2.

ab illo' ['how am I changed?']'.⁵⁰⁸ Within these two quotations, to be 'changed' is to exist in a world of darkness; the loss of a woman's virtue in Montagu's poem becomes, as in Fielding, something akin to physical mutilation.

This layering of the importance of Satan's lines to Montagu, however, continued, for after she had written 'Monday' she contracted smallpox. In 'Saturday. The Small Pox. Flavia', a poem modelled on Montagu's experiences, she both parodies a world obsessed with beauty and laments that she can no longer participate in that world. Looking into the mirror, Montagu laments: 'Ah Faithless Glass, my wonted bloom restore! / Alas, I rave! that bloom is now no more!' (ll. 13-14) The loss of Montagu's beauty is represented as a form of death through the use of the elegiac trope of 'no more!', however this is taken to the mock extreme at the poem's conclusion when it is in fact the speaker's social life that has died with Flavia's beauty: 'Ye Operas, Circles, I no more must view! / My Toilette, Patches, all the World Adieu!' (ll. 95-96) As noted by the exaggeration that permeates the poem, Montagu mourns the loss of her beauty within a mock frame, yet in doing so her outward appearance is equated with the fall of an empire. Indeed, Montagu signals this mock tone through the same Alexandrian footnote: 'How am I chang'd!', she observes, 'how am I grown / A frightful Spectre to my selfe unknown!' (ll. 5-6) Grundy has suggested that Montagu uses Virgil for extreme moments of emotion.⁵⁰⁹ For Montagu, her 'Empire [is] now no more!' (l. 64), assigning an epic grandeur to her now-faded looks. Through this Alexandrian footnote, Montagu reflects on those heroes from Virgil and Milton to elevate her own situation, using the heightened, masculine mode of the classics to register her change in appearance. Montagu shows how women utilised the mock-heroic frame as a way to elevate the experiences women faced daily, a theme explored to a greater extent in Leapor's poetry.

⁵⁰⁸ Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics and Aeneid, Books 1-6*, ed. H. R. Fairclough and G. P. Goold (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 334.

⁵⁰⁹ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 136.

In Dryden's translation of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas asks Hector's ghost 'What new Disgrace / Deforms the Manly Features of thy Face?' (II.375-76) – through the Alexandrian footnote, Montagu forms a liminal space in which deformity becomes a concern for both the epic hero and the cosmopolitan woman, elevating her condition without losing sight of the mock-genre to which the poems belong. Montagu takes the topic of women's beauty, a theme typical to mock-heroic works of the period, and simultaneously panders to the contemporary depictions whilst also moving away from them, in the process elevating her experiences and those of other women whose reputation was so easily lost.

Montagu also used the mock-heroic as a tool in her infamous argument with Pope. In focusing on how Montagu engaged with Pope through her pastiches of his own pastiche mode throughout the *Dunciad*, the mock-heroic becomes a battleground (both ideological and literary), an apt metaphor for a discussion of the epic genre. Pope lightly veiled his initial attack on Montagu in the first version of the *Dunciad*: Dulness advises her son on blaming others, arguing that, because bawds masquerade as great ladies, their disgruntled and infected customers can blame 'Duchesses and Lady Mary's' (II.136). Who would accuse these women? Pope suggested a 'hapless Monsieur' in Paris, with the implied figure being Nicolas-François Rémond, who occupied Montagu's attention, alongside campaigning for smallpox inoculation, during the early 1720s following his loss of investments as a result of the South Sea stock crash in September 1720.⁵¹⁰ With the help of her cousin Henry Fielding, Montagu retaliated against Pope's *Dunciad* in two untitled poems in 1729, the opening lines of which were 'Her Palace placed beneath a muddy road' and 'Now with fresh vigour Morn her Light displays'. Grundy suggests that these two poems were meant to be part of a larger work with Henry Fielding that remained uncompleted.⁵¹¹ The works by both Montagu and Henry Fielding (three cantos

⁵¹⁰ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 277; for the story between Montagu and Rémond, see pp. 203-210.

⁵¹¹ Isobel Grundy, 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Six Town Eclogues* and Other Poems', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christine Gerrard (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 184-196 (p. 191).

of his contribution survive) remind readers of Homer, but inevitably burlesque Virgil also.⁵¹² In both poems Montagu takes Pope's original concept of Dulness' encroaching influence and turns it against him, casting him as the goddess's champion with the likes of John Gay and Jonathan Swift as his allies.

The setting of the first poem is indicative of the pair's tone, locating Dulness' lair in Pope's famous Twickenham grotto:

Her Palace placed beneath a muddy road
And such the Influence of the dull Abode,
The Carrier's Horse above can scarcely drag his Load.
Here chose the Goddess her below'd Retreat
Which Phoebus tries in vain to penetrate,
Adorn'd within by Shells of small expence
(Emblems of tinsel Rhime, and triffling Sense),
Perpetual fogs enclose the sacred Cave,
The neighbouring Sinks their fragrant Odours gave.
(ll. 1-9)

In its lethargy, Montagu creates a world distinctly influenced by the *Dunciad*, yet the suggestion that 'Perpetual fogs enclose the sacred Cave' also invites a comparison to the land of the Cimmerians that Odysseus sails past on his way to the underworld. Another Homeric parallel might also be identified in Neptune's underwater palace in *Iliad* XVIII:

Far in the deep Abysses of the Main,
With hoary Nereus, and the watry Train,
The Mother Goddess from her crystal Throne
Heard his loud Cries, and answer'd Groan for Groan.
[...]
All these, and all that deep in Ocean held
Their sacred Seats, the glimmr'ing Grotto fill'd;
Each beat her Iv'ry Breast with silent Woe,
Till Thetis' Sorrows thus began to flow.
(XVIII.41-44, 65-68)

⁵¹² Isobel Grundy, 'New Verse by Henry Fielding', *PMLA* 87.2 (1972), 213-245 (p. 213); Martin C. Battestin and Ruthe R. Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (Routledge, 1989), pp. 78-79.

As in Montagu's poem, Neptune's 'glimm'ring Grotto' is characterised as feminine. As discussed in Chapter I, the legend of Pope's grotto occupied the imagination of many women. Yet Montagu's reversal of the space represents a personal attack against Pope, who had described his grotto and the accompanying land at Twickenham to John Gay in 1720:

In vain my structures rise, my gardens grow,
In vain fair Thames reflects the double scenes
Of hanging mountains, and of sloping greens:
Joy lives not here; to happier seats it flies,
And only dwells where WORTLEY casts her eyes.

(‘To Mr. Gay, Who wrote him a congratulatory
Letter on the finishing his house’, ll. 2-6)

Montagu quoted these lines as part of a letter to her sister, Lady Mar, in April 1722, which also related how: ‘I see sometimes Mr. Congreve and very seldom Mr Pope, who continues to embellish his house at Twickenham. He has made a subterranean grotto, which he has furnished with looking-glasses, and they tell me it has a very good effect.’⁵¹³ Though in 1722 the trinkets bedecking Pope's grotto were said to have ‘a very good effect’, Montagu's later suggestion of these ‘trifleing’ decorations emasculates both the poet and the space. From the beginning of these pieces, then, Montagu signals how they will reflect and refract the values and topoi of the epic genre for her own satirical purposes in a way that is intimate with Pope's life and work.

The council that gathers in Dulness's lair include Prophanation and Obscenity, a parody of the councils of the gods in the *Iliad* (Henry Fielding's fragments would also include a council of the Greeks, as in *Iliad* I). Although her chieftains are gathered, Dulness sits with ‘pensive thoughts’, thinking about a prophecy that spelled her downfall:

⁵¹³ *Collected Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Halsband, ii. 15-16.

Learning shall be born,
 Slowly in Strength the infant shall improve
 The parents glory and its Country's love,
 Free from the thralldom of Monastic Rhimes,
 In bright progression bless succeeding Times,
 Milton free Poetry from the Monkish Chain,
 And Addison that Milton shall explain,
 Point out the Beauties of each living Page,
 Reform the taste of a degenerate Age,
 Shew that True Wit disdains all little Art
 And can at once engage, and mend the Heart
 (ll. 36-46)

Montagu puts Addison forward as the saviour from Pope's world of satirical inertia before casting the latter as the 'darling Son' (l. 68) of Prophanation and the 'Champion of [his] Cause' (l. 70). Of Pope, Dulness comments 'Long have I watch'd this Genius yet unknown, / Inspir'd his Rhime and mark'd him for my own' (ll. 112-13); we learn that 'Milton he scorns' (l. 117), drawing Pope into contrast with Addison's *Spectator* issues on *Paradise Lost* that began in January 1712. Addison's status in Montagu's poem is that of translator, teacher and hero for and of the modern world. This is furthered by Dulness' telling of how 'public Rumour now aloud proclaims / At Universal Monarchy he [Addison] aims.' (ll. 53-54) Pope's own careful characterisation of Agamemnon and Achilles in his translation of the *Iliad* means that no political ideology can be easily attributed to the text: Jack Lynch argues that the text is 'neither Whig nor Tory propaganda, and in most ideological danger areas Pope steers a path between the extremes, sometimes, indeed, risking self-contradiction.'⁵¹⁴ In Montagu's poem, however, Addison becomes cast as an Achilles, fighting against a monarch who keeps captive not a young maiden but the world's natural interest and intuitiveness.

The companion to 'Her Palace placed beneath a muddy road', 'Now with fresh vigour Morn her Light displays', is likewise an exemplary example of epic pastiche.

⁵¹⁴ Jack Lynch, 'Political Ideology in Translations of the *Iliad*, 1660-1715', *Translation and Literature* 7.1 (1998), 23-41 (p. 28).

‘Now with fresh vigour Morn her Light displays’ begins with the epic motif of dawn rising and Dulness has left the grotto to walk among the surface world. With her coming, however, ‘Phœbus retir’d’, the flowers droop and ‘the aerial music ceas’d’ (ll. 7-8) – Dulness, and all she represents, is therefore seen to negate one of the most typical features of epic poetry. Nonetheless, impressed by her own power, Dulness asks

Shall A[d]dison my Empire here dispute,
So justly founded, lov’d, and Absolute?
Explode my Children, Ribaldry and Rhime,
Rever’d from Chaucer down to Dryden’s Time,
Distinguish twixt false humour and the true
And Wit make Lovely to the vulgar View?
(ll. 13-18)

Once more, Addison is placed in direct antipathy against the forces of Dulness. Dulness assumes the guise of Henry ‘Duke’ Disney and she visits Henry Bolingbroke – as the two talk, the latter admits ‘I see a Master line [in Addison’s work], / I feel, and I Confess the power divine’ (ll. 77-78), at which Dulness reveals her true state and rebukes her supposed follower, imploring him to ‘Read thy own Verse, consider well each line, / In each Dull page, how palpably I shine, / ’Tis me that to thy Eloquence affords’ (ll. 95-97). Given Addison’s central position in these poems, it is certainly tempting to imagine how the prophetic themes here discussed would fit within a larger work. If these poems are indicative of a wider narrative, perhaps Addison would have gone on to conquer the world of Dulness, which is already fraught with men ready to betray the goddess, ushering in a new period of learning; within this traditional epic paradigm of migrating empires, Pope and his world would be defeated. Montagu therefore uses the mock-heroic to reflect Pope’s world of Dulness back on himself, again demonstrating the potential of the genre as a way for women to engage with the epic genre.

In the fragments available Montagu manages to subtly use the tone and atmosphere of the mock-epic genre alongside features of epic literature against Pope.

This is seen succinctly in the final lines of Montagu's 'Now with fresh vigour Morn her Light displays'. Dulness, having finished talking, reveals her true state to Bolingbroke: 'turning shew'd her wrinkled neck / In scales and colour like a Roaches back.' (ll. 107-08) The motif of a goddess revealing herself is specific to neither Homer or Virgil: in the openings of the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* Athene reveals herself to Telemachus and Venus to Aeneas respectively. However, in the first of Henry Fielding's three 'canto' extracts that pair with Montagu's poems, these same lines appear at the end of a conversation between Dulness and Pope ('Codrus'):

She said and turning shew'd her wrinkled Neck
In Scales and Colour like a Roach's Back
Forth from her greezy Locks such odours flow
As those who've smelt Dutch-Coffee-houses know
Above her knees, her Petticoats were rear'd
And the true Slattern in her Gate appear'd.⁵¹⁵

Henry K. Miller noted how the first couplet in Fielding's poem above is the same as the one Montagu uses to conclude her piece.⁵¹⁶ The classical origins of this episode were signalled in Fielding's publication of these lines as 'A Parody, from the first *Aeneid*' in the first part of his *Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq* (1743).

Therefore, Montagu's lines not only burlesque Pope's literary world, but also symbolically enact a turn away from his Homeric works towards Virgil and, probably, Dryden. These poems demonstrate the flexibility and changing nature of the epic genre during the eighteenth century; the battlegrounds had moved from the Trojan plains and Italian shores to a land of potential darkness. Montagu's poems emphasise that the mock-heroic mode provided women writers with a space to do battle, and in which the values

⁵¹⁵ Grundy, 'New Verses', *PMLA* (p. 222).

⁵¹⁶ See Henry K. Miller, 'Fielding and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: A Parallel', *Notes and Queries* 203 (1958), 442-43.

of masculinity, heroism and freedom could be examined, even if, as Montagu's Dulness proved, this meant presenting an image of a grotesque goddess.

In also being fragments, however, these poems demonstrate a wider consistency with both Dryden's translation miscellanies and the methods in which women of the eighteenth century broadly engaged with the classical world. Because of this fragmentary approach, which is as elusive as Venus or Dulness herself, literary allegiances shift quickly between Homer and Virgil (and, by extension, Pope and Dryden respectively). This mixing should be unsurprising, as the allusive nature of the mock-heroic genre offered writers the opportunity to integrate references from across the classical canon in a process that classicists now call *contaminatio*.⁵¹⁷ This literary pliability is also seen in the poetry of Leapor, a poet who was in many respects the opposite of Montagu but who nonetheless used the mock-heroic with impressive results. Where Montagu enjoyed the lifestyle of the upper classes and lived in Turkey and Italy, Leapor was a kitchen maid and the daughter of a gardener who stayed in the same area of Northamptonshire for her entire life. And where Montagu lived until the age of seventy-three, having survived smallpox in 1715-16, Leapor would die aged twenty-four from measles. Yet across the work of the young Leapor multiple attempts to engage with the qualities of the epic genre can be detected, often from a feminine perspective and with a recognisable mock-heroic inflection. The discussion of the works of Tollet, Montagu and Sarah Fielding suggests that women inevitably had to adopt an experimental or indirect approach to the intimidating epic genre with its strongly masculine associations. Yet the process of *contaminatio* again suggests how women were creating their own composite version of epic poetry by combining those aspects of the genre that they felt were particularly relevant to them. In turn, these fragments of epic come together to elevate the female

⁵¹⁷ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth and Esther Eidinow, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 369.

subjects explored in women's poetry of the period. It is even unsurprising that a working-class woman poet could use the features of the epic mode to depict back her life of labour, which is also the result of works such as Pope's *Iliad* re-considering what was thought to be relevant for the epic genre. To return to Blackmore's quotation about why there should not be a heroine of epic poetry, it is indeed possible go further: why might a woman not be the writer of an epic poem? Unlikely as it may seem, Leapor, whom Susanna Jennens, her employer, called the 'Successor of Pope', was apparently inclined to try.⁵¹⁸

Mary Leapor's Epic Fragments

Although the translations and mock-epic works made the epic genre more accessible, writing in the mode was still intimidating for some. Hence the Dublin milliner poet Mary Goddard wishes she had the ability to write of the success of the battle of Dettingen:

Cou'd I like Homer or like Virgil pen,
Immortal Verses for immortal Men,
Charm'd with Great Britain's King I'd tune my Lyre,
To sing his calm Command amidst the Fire⁵¹⁹

Various references to *The Rape of the Lock* throughout Goddard's poetry suggest her familiarity with Pope's work, but still remains the suggestion that epic was an unattainable mode for her write in. Goddard's poem forms a neat introduction to Leapor, who likewise was from the working classes and who wrote under Pope's influence. In issue 40 of *The Freeholder*, Addison, in an attempt to placate Pope's hostility towards him following his support of Tickell's *Iliad* and his criticism of Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, had thought 'The illiterate among our Countrymen, may learn to judge from

⁵¹⁸ Jennens's 'Parthenissa's Answer to the Pocket-Book's Soliloquy is included in GM 199-200.

⁵¹⁹ Goddard, *Poems*, p. 64.

Dryden's Virgil, of the most perfect Epic Performance: And those Parts of Homer, which have already been published by Mr. Pope, give us reason to think that the *Iliad* will appear in English with as little Disadvantage to that immortal Poem.'⁵²⁰ Leapor cannot be included in the 'illiterate among our Countrymen', yet Addison's note emphasises the role of Dryden's Virgil and Pope's Homer for those not exposed to the education of a gentleman. Re-evaluating Leapor's poetry as being indicative of the epic style is congruent with the critical commonplace that the mock-heroic was an extension of the epic mode. Moreover, to focus on Leapor's own experiments with the mode supports the revisionist project pioneered by Bernard Schweizer that emphasises the need to see which texts by women can 'reasonably be identified as being aligned with the ethic and the aesthetic of epic.'⁵²¹ Yet even this idea of 'the ethic and the aesthetic' of epic is not fully at home with either Leapor's focus on domestic work or with the eighteenth-century interest in and anxiety about the more mundane elements of Homer's epics. Pope's note to the first description of a feast in Homer's *Iliad* I explains how 'If we consider this Passage, it is not made to shine in Poetry [...] But if we take it in another Light, and as a Piece of Learning, it is valuable for being the most exact Account of the ancient Sacrifices any where left us.'⁵²² Sara Pennell takes issue with the popular and academic assumption that the kitchen was an inherently female (and therefore we might think simple) space, arguing instead, like Leapor, that this area was more a place for the demonstration of a different type of knowledge: women had both 'the technical know-how' and an 'expertise in choosing and maintaining' the plethora of equipment around them.⁵²³ Just as Pope focuses on the *Iliad* as in part a text brimming with information about antiquity, Leapor uses the rhetoric of the epic genre to celebrate and elevate the

⁵²⁰ Joseph Addison, *The Freeholder*, ed. James Leheny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 217.

⁵²¹ Bernard Schweizer, 'Introduction: Muses with Pens', in *Approaches to the Anglo and American Female Epic, 1621-1982*, ed. Bernard Schweizer (Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-16 (p. 2).

⁵²² TE vii. 116.

⁵²³ Sara Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen, 1660-1850* (Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 129-132.

knowledge she acquired as a kitchen maid. Leapor's poetry thrives in its depiction of the everyday, her epic writing relying on her lived experiences and those of her colleagues who daily completed household chores.

The descent to the underworld is, by tradition, a heroic one that changes and invigorates the protagonist. In the case of Leapor, the classics were above her in terms of both gender and class; to transcend this, Leapor had to descend to the underworld. This section will explore the topos of the underworld throughout Leapor's poetry, suggesting how the young poet wrote of this most classical of spaces from her labouring perspective. In exploring some of Leapor's minor poems alongside her 'Crumble-Hall', her mock country-house poem for which she is best known today, this chapter will argue that the qualities of the epic genre – including epic catalogues, *katabasis* and an invocation to the muse – are used by Leapor to write not of heroes but women and servants. Pope's translations of Homer might here have provided further inspiration for Leapor: in contrast to the acts of warriors, princes and kings in the *Iliad*, in the *Odyssey* there is a focus on servants that is connected to the theme of hospitality. In the *Odyssey* Leapor may have found a particular affinity with its labouring characters, which reminded her of the possibility that these figures could people her own epic imagination and world. The loyalty of Eumaeus and Eurycleia, and even the monstrous husbandry of Polyphemus, may well have provided Leapor with a sense of pride in seeing those from her class represented in the greatest poetic genre of the ancient world. Leapor's 'On Winter' remind readers of her familiarity with horticulture: Leapor's father, Philip Leapor, had worked as a gardener for Sir John Blencowe before he opened a nursery garden in Brackley in 1726, and her dying wish was that Freemantle would 'endeavour to promote a Subscription [of the former's poetry] for his Benefit'.⁵²⁴ In the figure of Laertes, then,

⁵²⁴ Information about Philip Leapor from Greene and Messenger, 'Introduction', *Works of Mary Leapor* (p. xxxix).

Leapor might have found a parallel with her father, especially at the beginning of Book XXIV:

His head, that bow'd with many a pensive care,
Fenc'd with a double cap of goatskin hair:
His buskins old, in former service torn,
But well repair'd; and gloves against the thorn.
In this array the kingly Gard'ner stood,
And clear'd a Plant, encumber'd with its wood.
[...]
Great is thy skill, oh father! great thy toil,
Thy careful hand is stamp'd on all the soil,
Thy squadron'd vineyards well thy art declare,
The olive green, blue fig, and pendent pear;
And not one empty spot escapes thy care.
On ev'ry plant and tree thy cares are shown,
Nothing neglected, but thy self alone.

(XXIV.261-68, 87-93)

The garden of Alcinous may have also have been a particularly resonant part of Leapor's reading of the *Odyssey*; at the least it seems to have inspired Mary Chandler in 'To Mrs. Boeler, A Description of Her Garden'.⁵²⁵ Otherwise, Pope's simile that Homer's work 'Tis like a copious Nursery which contains the Seeds and first Productions of every kind, out of which those who follow'd him have but selected some particular Plants, each according to his Fancy, to cultivate and beautify' might have inspired Leapor.⁵²⁶ As suggested in Chapter I, with Homer's work translated and annotated, in the spirit of Pope's suggestion above, Leapor was able to pick and choose elements of these narratives to 'cultivate' her own work.

Split into four parts, this section will first focus on Leapor's use of the frame of dreaming in her work to establish a liminal setting that allows her to transcend her menial work before examining the sources that might have inspired her with a special focus on Pope. It will then be argued that Mira, the poetic persona Leapor adopts in her writing,

⁵²⁵ See Chandler, *The Description of Bath*, pp. 28-31.

⁵²⁶ TE vii. 3.

represents a mock-epic *vates*, whilst the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the portrayal of cooking in Leapor's poetry and her creation of powerful female characters within her immortal kitchen. In the ancient world, Homer's audiences would have heard *A-idēs* for the name 'Hades', quite literally 'the invisible one'.⁵²⁷ Leapor turns classical spaces into arenas in which her unexpected learning is naturalised, finding refuge in a place from which she should have been excluded by definition of her gender and class. From her chthonic country house, Leapor makes a claim to be considered as an essential part of the history of women and the epic genre – it is time this story is rendered visible.

Given how many translations and adaptations of descents to the underworld in classical poetry were available to Leapor, it should be unsurprising that her depiction of the underworld is detailed and varied: she had access to Pope's works, which had a demonstrable impact upon her depiction of this integral classical landscape. In Leapor's 'An Epistle to a Lady' she imagines books instead of her chores ('To sweep her Kitchen, and to mend her Clothes' (l. 32)) and she formulates a coveted space wherein a dream vision allows learning to be the pinnacle of achievement and to transcend boundaries. Bridget Keegan has discussed the importance of time to labouring-class poets, both suggesting how the prefaces and introductions of these writers emphasise how the composition of poetry often occurred to the detriment of their menial tasks and discussing the representation of moments in these poems that provided respite from their menial tasks, for example evenings and holidays.⁵²⁸ That Leapor writes of these descents through the dream-vision mode furthers this importance of time, for sleep can be added to Keegan's list as an opportunity for the worker to metaphorically dream of a better life, as in 'An Epistle to a Lady'. Throughout the poems to be discussed, Leapor often uses dream visions, dreams or dreaming as a way of rendering a topography similar to the

⁵²⁷ George Alexander Gazis, *Homer and the Poetics of Hades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 14.

⁵²⁸ Keegan, 'The Poet as Labourer', *Oxford Handbook of British Poetry*, ed. Lynch (pp. 163-64).

underworld. Analysing medieval dream poetry, Peter Brown writes that ‘a dreamer is by definition alone, solitary and separated from social activity’, with solitude also implying that during sleep the soul leaves its bodily boundaries to enter an other-world.⁵²⁹ As a frame, dream visions allow the disparate and incongruous to cohabit, encourage memorable images, cover a variety of subjects and, perhaps most importantly in the context of women’s writing, provide the author with a method of working within a tradition supposedly denied to them.⁵³⁰

In the literary context of the classical underworld, Virgil intimately connected this space with sleep in the beguiling end to Book VI of his *Aeneid*, here provided from Dryden’s translation:

Two Gates the silent House of Sleep adorn;
Of polish’d Iv’ry this, that of transparent Horn:
True Visions through transparent Horn arise;
Through polish’d Iv’ry pass deluding Lyes.
[...]
Then, through the Gate of Iv’ry, he dismiss’d
His valiant Offspring, and Divining Guest.
(VI.1235-42)

Though bewildering in terms of the political undercurrent of Book VI and what it means for Aeneas to walk through this gate of ‘deluding Lyes’, the Gates of Sleep are defined by Nicholas Horsfall as ‘unproblematically Homeric’.⁵³¹ In Pope’s translation of Homer’s *Odyssey* XIX, Penelope talks of how ‘within the silent bow’r of *Sleep*, / Two portals firm the various phantoms keep: / Of iv’ry one; when flit to mock the brain, / Of winged Lies a light fantastic train’ (X.227-28), and many of the poems that Leapor sets in the underworld are set through the frame of a dream vision. Leapor’s poetry often references

⁵²⁹ Peter Brown, ‘On the Borders of Middle English Dream Visions’, in *Reading Dreams: The Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 22-50 (pp. 28-29).

⁵³⁰ Brown, ‘On the Borders of Middle English Dream Visions’, *Reading Dreams*, ed. Brown (p. 25).

⁵³¹ Nicholas Horsfall, ‘Poets and Poetry in Virgil’s Underworld’, *Vergilius* 59 (2013), 23-28 (p. 23).

the iconography and tropes of the underworld, including a reference to the ‘Gate of Iv’ry’ in ‘An Essay on Hope’, which also shows how the poet takes motifs from the classical texts and applies them to women and their experiences.⁵³² In the poem, the married Cecilia, whose features are ‘beauteous [but] in Decline’ (l. 42), has a prolonged desire to be ‘the Conquest of a thousand Hearts.’ (l. 44) She lies on a couch and ignores her motherly duties, choosing instead to imagine ‘Knights, Peers, and Garters’ (l. 50). These lethargic longings are soon dismissed when ‘her charm’d Senses will contain no more; / Then flies the Vision through its Iv’ry Door.’ (ll. 53-54) Though slight, Leapor’s usage of the underworld topography here reveals an essential quality about her manipulation of the locus: her indebtedness to Pope’s works. The above quotation is much closer in lexis, syntax and situation to the end of Book III of Pope’s *Dunciad*: ‘Enough! enough! the raptur’d Monarch cries; / And thro’ the Iv’ry Gate the Vision flies.’ (III.339-40) Virgil’s Aeneas, by contrast, simply and calmly walks through the gate. Leapor’s rewriting of the underworld as a setting is often used primarily in relation to the female characters that inhabit her poetry, in which a debt to Pope’s ‘Cave of Spleen’ can be identified. However, Leapor not only neatly assimilates the epic tradition and Pope’s own playful manipulations but adds her perspective from the lower social classes. In the poems to be analysed, a recurrent focus on female characters and cooking exposes Leapor’s underworld to be a transformative style of classical allusion.

In his opening footnote to his translation of Book XI of the *Odyssey*, William Broome, Pope’s collaborator, gives credit to some of the problems of the Homeric descent: where in Virgil a ‘magnificent description of the descent and entrance into Hell’ is provided, ‘in *Homer* there is nothing so noble, we scarce are able to discover the place where the Poet lays his scene, or whether *Ulysses* continues below or above the

⁵³² Elsewhere, Leapor’s ‘Song to Cloe, playing on her Spinnet’ contrasts Cloe’s musical ability with that of Orpheus.

ground.⁵³³ Consequently Broome introduces a possible alternative for Virgil's source: 'In short, *Fraguier* is of the opinion, that *Virgil* profited more by the *Frogs* of *Aristophanes* than by *Homer*'.⁵³⁴ Compared to the effusive reception histories of Virgil and Homer, Aristophanes stands as a markedly diminished classical source for the eighteenth century. Despite a stronger presence in the seventeenth century in works by dramatists including Thomas Randolph, William Davenant and Edward Howard, the commercial disaster of a production of Terence's *Eunuchus* at Drury Lane in 1716-17 meant productions or adaptations of Aristophanes were unlikely.⁵³⁵ The exception to this, however, was Henry Fielding's *The Pleasures of the Town*, a frame play within *The Author's Farce* (1730), which adapted Aristophanes' *Frogs* through a bathetic lens, displacing the traditionally dark and didactic Hades of Homer and Virgil to a new environment that offered a comic potential for writers of the period. Whether Leapor was familiar with the work of either Fielding or Aristophanes is unknown, yet she shares with both the rendering of the underworld with an alternative, often comic, focus.

Before launching into a full discussion of Leapor's appropriation of the underworld topos, it is important to note some key features of Pope's own manipulation of the realm. The underworld features little in Homer's *Iliad*, yet in his translation Pope stylises the realm of Hades in Agamemnon's contrast of what he shall offer Achilles against the redundancy of trying to placate the God of Death through sacrifices:

Pluto, the grizly God who never spares,
 Who feels no Mercy, and who hears no Pray'rs,
 Lives dark and dreadful in deep Hell's Abodes,
 And Mortals hate him, as the worst of Gods.
 (IX.209-12)

⁵³³ TE ix. 378. For Broome's role in the *Odyssey* translation, see Johnson's 'Life' and Lonsdale's accompanying notes: Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Lonsdale iii. 215-16. In Pope's 'Life', when discussing the *Odyssey*, Johnson writes 'the notes were written wholly by Broome, who was not over-liberally rewarded.' Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Lonsdale, iv. 30.

⁵³⁴ TE ix. 378.

⁵³⁵ Edith Hall, 'The English-Speaking Aristophanes, 1650-1914', in *Aristophanes in Performance, 421 BC-AD 2007*, ed. Edith Hall and Amanda Wrigley (LEGENDA, 2007), pp. 66-92 (pp. 67-70).

Pope's couplets allow an ironic rhyme between 'spares' and 'pray'rs', highlighting the redundancy of the latter against Pluto's ambivalence towards any form of offering. Moreover, the alliterative 'd' sound pushes against the formal constraints of the triplet 'dark and dreadful in deep', bleeding into the next line a faint echo that taints the celestial notion of the 'Gods', inflecting them in turn with the chthonic feel of these 'Abodes'. Yet elsewhere in the *Iliad*, Pope's understanding of the underworld is not as menacing: one verbal connection between Pope and Leapor is the use of the adjective 'gloomy' in both their works, which the latter seems to have picked up from her favourite author. For instance, in Book VIII of the *Iliad*, Zeus, having chastised Juno and Athena, describes the realm of his brother, Pluto: 'within the Steams of Hell; / No Sun e'er glids the gloomy Horrors there, / No chearful Gales refresh the lazy Air' (VIII.600-02).⁵³⁶ Pope's lines introduce another aspect of Leapor's underworld: that is, her focus on vapours, the 'Steams of Hell', which she will appropriate for her own culinary needs throughout her underworld poetry.

Leapor's 'The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness' offers a useful example to introduce Pope's influence on her conception of the underworld whilst also allowing for Dryden's presence. The only example of blank verse in her collection, the poem depicts both sides of the classical underworld, starting with the monstrous horrors and various personifications in Hades before describing an arcadian Elysium, a topography that Broome specifically associates with Virgil.⁵³⁷ Dryden's translation offers an obvious source for Leapor's poem, yet another source to which she may have had access included 'Æneas his Meeting with Dido in the Elyzian Fields. Being a Translation of Part of the

⁵³⁶ Other references to 'gloomy' in Pope's translation of the *Iliad* include when 'the Night extends her gloomy Shade' to end the single combat between Ajax and Hector (VIII.341) and Hector is described as 'gloomy as Night!' at the end of Book XII (XII.554).

⁵³⁷ The opening note to Book XI compares how in Homer 'the good and the bad seem all in the same condition: Whereas Virgil has a Hell for the wicked, and an Elysium for the just.' TE ix. 379.

Sixth Book of Virgil's *Æneid*, beginning at *Hic quoque durus Amor &c.*' by Robert Wolseley, which was collected in the 1716 reprint of *Examen Poeticum* to which Leapor had access through Weston Hall's library.⁵³⁸ As a source for the underworld, Wolseley's translation emphasises Dido's power and influence over Aeneas. Alongside the episodes of Homer previously discussed, this translation may have suggested to Leapor ways of gendering the underworld space (and epic literature more generally) as feminine, a recurrent motif throughout her poetry. Like Virgil Leapor includes various personifications outside her underworld:

This solitary *Vista* op'ning wide,
 Disclos'd the Palace of its mournful Queen:
 Before the Gate was plac'd a frightful Guard,
 Who serv'd as Porters to the gloomy Dome:
 Here, stretch'd upon a miserable Couch,
 Lay pining Sickness with continual Groans
 (ll. 51-56)

Yet in this description Leapor shows a clearer allegiance to Pope's 'Cave of Spleen' in *The Rape of the Lock*, which is visited by Umbriel at the beginning of Canto IV: 'Swift on his sooty pinions flits the gnome, / And in a vapour reached the *dismal dome*.' (IV.17-18) Between Leapor and Pope, there are three similarities in their depictions of the underworld. Firstly, Leapor's definition of the space visited by Mira as a 'gloomy dome' echoes Pope's own formulation of the space in both of his translations of Homer: in the *Iliad*, before leaving to reclaim Hector's body from Achilles, Priam declares to the Trojan people, 'Oh send me, Gods! e'er that sad Day shall come, / A willing Ghost to Pluto's *dreary Dome!*' (XXIV.307-08), whereas Odysseus describes those that inhabit the underworld as 'ten thousand thousand spectres stand / Thro' the wide *dome of Dis*, a trembling band.' (XI.699-700) in the *Odyssey* (emphasis mine). Secondly, both depict a

⁵³⁸ 'The Library at Weston Hall: A Catalogue' (2002), p. 16. My thanks to Richard Greene and William Sitwell for providing a copy of the catalogue, which is not formally published in any public versions.

lethargic female ruler of this space: though where Leapor's treatment remains serious as she writes of 'a subterraneous Cell, / Where the sad Empress *Melancholy* reign'd; / The musing Matron sat upon a Throne' (ll. 78-80), Pope's goddess Spleen is described within a mock-heroic frame: 'in a Grotto, sheltered close from Air, / And screened in Shades from Day's detested Glare, / She sighs for ever on her pensive Bed' (IV.21-23). In 'The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness' Leapor, like Pope in his *The Rape of the Lock*, focuses explicitly on the notion of a female ruler of the underworld and their third shared similarity is that their queens are waited on by two aides: Leapor's 'Two mournful Maids, Dejection and Despair' (l. 89) are reminiscent of Pope's Ill-nature and Affectation. Thus, Leapor maintains the tradition of Virgil's philosophical and topographical underworld but subtly renders it through a Popean lens. This technique will be more fully explicated in the discussion of 'Crumble-Hall', but in its vaporous encapsulation and feminine rulers 'The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness' neatly introduces Leapor's blending of tones and adoption of traditional images of the underworld that was informed primarily by Pope's translation.

In the second half of 'The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness', Mira turns to the antithesis of what she had seen before:

Our Path grew smooth and widen'd to the view,
 Until it open'd on a spacious Field;
 A Field whose Charms no Painter e'er cou'd reach,
 Though he shou'd borrow from the Poet's Heav'n;
 The Clime was temp'rate and the Air was still,
 The sprouting Turf was of a beauteous Green,
 Speckled with Flow'rs of a delicious Dye.

(ll. 106-12)

The structure of 'The Fields of Mourning and Chearfulness' mirrors that of Aeneas's descent to the underworld in the *Aeneid*, moving from Tartarus into Elysium. Moving away from the classical and towards romance, in Leapor's mirror-image of the

underworld ‘upon an Iv’ry Throne / Sat Chearfulness, the Genius of the Place: Her Mien was graceful and her Features fair [...] Her Hair was bound beneath a shining Crown, / Her Robes were Azure bright with golden Stars’ (ll. 131-38) and she is flanked by Content and Innocence. In this *locus amoenus* exist the figures of Prosperity, Wealth and Health; yet that this is a realm in which the ruler sits upon an ‘Iv’ry throne’ implies that to Leapor all the attributes ascribed to Chearfulness and her followers are unattainable and transient, a telling detail given the poet’s class. The poem swiftly ends with Mira waking from her dream: ‘I awoke: And thus / Their Glories vanish’d, and were seen no more.’ (ll. 172-73) The details of a person falling asleep and waking authenticate the vision and, in the medieval context, invest them with significance.⁵³⁹ In ‘The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness’ Leapor uses the dream vision, which Donna Landry suggests she knew through Pope’s *Temple of Fame*, as a way of exploring both sides of the classical underworld, possibly with Dryden’s translations.⁵⁴⁰ Dryden’s ‘Ceyx and Alcyone’ appears as part of a sequence of visions and dreams in *Fables*, which Freemantle identifies as having been owned by Leapor, and in this collection, the Ovidian tale is bracketed by adaptations of Boccaccio and Chaucer that teach readers how to interpret these visions and to question the types of knowledge that come from these phantasmal visitations.⁵⁴¹ Pope’s translation of *The Odyssey* also connects the concept of dreams with the underworld at the moment when Odysseus tries to embrace Anticleia, imbuing the space with an intangibility: ‘Thrice in my arms I strove her shade to bind, / Thrice thro’ my arms she slipt like empty wind, / Or dreams, the vain illusions of the mind.’ (XI.248-50) In his repetition of ‘Thrice’ Pope intimates that the third line of this triplet would begin with the same word and yet, appropriately for a moment of pathos, this sense of poetic order and expectation is proven to be as transparent as

⁵³⁹ Brown, ‘On the Borders of Middle English Dream Visions’, *Reading Dreams*, ed. Brown (p. 26).

⁵⁴⁰ Landry, *The Muses of Resistance*, p. 87.

⁵⁴¹ GM xl; David Gelineau, ‘Dryden’s ‘Ceyx and Alcyone’: Metamorphosing Ovid’, *Philological Quarterly* 86.1/2 (2007), 123-141 (p. 126).

Anticleia herself. Leapor's 'The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness' shows how her use of the underworld space amalgamates traditional accounts from Homer and Virgil with other mock-heroic treatments. Given the fragmented reception of epic through miscellanies, translations and the mock-heroic, this should be unsurprising; it is in between the gaps of these various influences that Leapor manages to bring her own imagination to the fore.

In 'Crumble-Hall', Leapor uses humour in her rendering of the underworld, which shows a debt to Pope's translations and his 'Cave of Spleen' from *The Rape of the Lock*. The germ of the idea of 'Crumble-Hall' can be detected in both 'The Fields of Melancholy and Chearfulness' and 'The Ten-Penny Nail', which respectively refer to a 'horrid Mansion' (l. 101) and a 'Gloomy-Hall' (l. 40). 'Crumble-Hall' represents the climax of a chthonic project in Leapor's poetry that sought to combine her own working-class perspective with the classical locus. In his translation of 'Ceyx and Alcyone', a text Pope alludes to in *The Rape of the Lock*, Dryden also describes the house of Somnus as a 'gloomy mansion' (l. 207), adding a further layer of influence on Leapor's poetry. In the *Odyssey*, Pope's translation describes 'the black palace of eternal Night' (XI.185) and when Odysseus relates his Wanderings to Penelope he describes his time in 'the doleful mansions' (XXIII.349). Richard Terry writes that mock-heroic 'is a literary genre dedicated to the marriage of opposites: the trivial hitched to the solemn, the prostrate coupled with the elevated', and in these 'complex, inscrutable interactions between the rich and poor, the small and the vast, are the material of an essentially mock-heroic irony.'⁵⁴² Terry continues: 'heroi-comical poems bring together an ornamentation of the material and the linguistic: the insistent prankings of mock-heroic style are at home in a material world in which true value is seen as inhering in adornment and

⁵⁴² Richard Terry, *Mock-Heroic from Butler to Cowper: An English Genre and Discourse* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 99 and p. 103.

accessorisation.’⁵⁴³ This combining of the commercial world and an elevated style pertaining to epic is perfectly captured in ‘Crumble-Hall’ in its reference to the muse:

And who so frolick as the Muse and I?
We sing once more, obedient to her Call;
Once more we sing; and ’tis of *Crumble-Hall*;
That *Crumble-Hall*, whose hospitable Door
Has fed the Stranger, and reliev’d the Poor
[...]
Tell how the Building spreads on either Hand,
And two grim Giants o’er the Portals stand
(ll. 10-14, 31-32; emphasis Leapor’s)

The light implications of Mira and her Muse ‘frolick[ing]’ together frames the tone of the poem before it goes on to detail the house itself. The poem is placed within the wider context of Leapor’s career: she is to sing ‘Once more’. Susan Staves has written briefly about Leapor’s use of ‘formal features of the epic language’ and its appropriation of the mock-heroic form in ‘Crumble-Hall’ as a way of showing ‘an affection for the low’ whilst also posing a challenge to ‘the literary conventions that ban the low from serious representation.’⁵⁴⁴ However, Staves does not offer a thorough analysis of these epic qualities of the poem, which in its own descent refocuses the underworlds of Homer, Virgil and Pope, emphasising and inflating the lower status of the women to be found in ‘Crumble-Hall’. Leapor’s poetry is also more than the passive demonstration of ‘affection’ Staves suggests. Focusing primarily on ‘Crumble-Hall’, the rest of this chapter will demonstrate how Leapor complicates Howard D. Weinbrot’s assertion (and masculinist terminology) that by the mid-eighteenth century the underworld was a ‘gallant’ and ‘almost amiable’ place through the formation of a female, lower-class underworld.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ Terry, *Mock-Heroic from Butler to Cowper*, p. 89.

⁵⁴⁴ Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain*, pp. 260-261.

⁵⁴⁵ Howard D. Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 82.

David Fairer observes that in Leapor's detailed portrayal of the building 'Her meanings tend to be literal ones, readings of the surface that leave symbolic interpretations alone.'⁵⁴⁶ A central part of 'Crumble-Hall' is that Mira leads the reader through the building, and whilst she fulfils the role of lowly housemaid, revealing the intricacies of the house to the reader, an equally appropriate label for Leapor's persona within the classical tradition of *katabasis* is as the guide through the underworld. As Circe tells Odysseus how to communicate with the ghosts during the *Nékyia*, or like Virgil's Sibyl physically guiding Aeneas through the underworld, Mira takes the speaker through Crumble Hall as an ersatz *vates*. What renders Leapor's reworking of the underworld locus as mock-epic in 'Crumble-Hall' is – as suggested in Brean Hammond's comment that the 'mock-epic in its very nature works with produced spaces' – how it layers new or unseen details over both the building it describes and the country-house genre to which the poem belongs.⁵⁴⁷ This process can be seen in Leapor's description of the entrance hall:

The Roof – no *Cyclops* e'er could reach so high:
 Not *Polypheme*, tho' form'd for dreadful Harms,
 The Top could measure with extended Arms.
 Here the pleas'd Spider plants her peaceful Loom:
 Here weaves secure, nor dreads the hated Broom.
 [...]
 Safely the Mice through yon dark Passage run,
 Where the dim Windows ne'er admit the Sun.
 Along each Wall the Stranger blindly feels;
 And (trembling) dreads a Spectre at his Heels.

(ll. 43-47, 52-55; emphasis Leapor's)

There is an irony in using Polyphemus as the measure of the hall's height given the cyclops' actions towards Odysseus, which are set throughout the *Odyssey* as an example

⁵⁴⁶ David Fairer, 'Mary Leapor, "Crumble-Hall"', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Gerrard, pp. 223-236 (p. 229).

⁵⁴⁷ Brean Hammond, 'London and Poetry to 1750', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of London*, ed. Lawrence Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 67-84 (p. 79).

of bad hospitality. The land of the cyclops is described as being ‘Nor tam’d by manners, nor by laws confin’d’ (IX.120), however Polyphemus is also a domestic labourer. Pope’s translation describes his ‘bending shelves with loads of cheeses’, and the repetition of how the giant ‘to the mother’s teats submits the lambs’ (IX.291, IX.367) emphasises his skill and the routine quality of his labour. As a *vates*, Mira’s lines draw a sharp contrast with those of the Sibyl to Aeneas as they approach, in Dryden’s translation, ‘Pluto’s Golden Palace’ (VI.727), the gates of which ‘On Anvils labour’d by the Cyclops Hands’ were made (VI.858). The reference to Polyphemus thus indicates the mythologizing process at work in ‘Crumble-Hall’, which often balances darker, unnatural or even monstrous mythological figures with a focus on the working classes. In her juxtaposition of size and scale, Leapor firmly plays with notions of tangibility: the spider’s web, though delicate, is secure from a zealous cleaner’s broom, whilst ‘dim Windows’ offer the intense possibility of ghosts floating around the house, emphasised by the parenthetical ‘trembling’ that affirms a spectral addition to the line.

Bruce Loudon identifies three genres of myth in Book XI of Homer’s *Odyssey*: descent, consultation with a shade and the vision, the third of which is defined as ‘a genre of myth in which the protagonist is removed from the mortal plane, accompanied by an otherworldly guide, who reveals to him a large truth’.⁵⁴⁸ Instead of escorting a hero to learn of the future of the Roman race, Leapor’s ‘otherworldly guide’ remains the local maid, and the ‘large truth’ she uncovers is the comic redundancy of what lies throughout the country house:

Would you go farther? – Stay a little then:
 Back thro’ the Passage – down the Steps again;
 Thro’ yon dark Room – Be careful how you tread
 Up these steep Stairs – or you may break your Head.
 These Rooms are furnish’d amiably, and full:
 Old Shoes, and Sheep-ticks bred in Stacks of Wool;

⁵⁴⁸ Bruce Loudon, *Homer’s Odyssey and the Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 197-198.

Grey *Dobbin's* Gears, and Drenching-Horns enow;
Wheel-spokes – the Irons of a tatter'd Plough.
(ll. 94-101)

Commenting on 'Crumble-Hall' and its playful manipulation of the country-house genre, Sharon Young writes that, at its simplest, the genre 'presents the estate, its owning dynasty, its architecture, its designed landscape, and its offer of hospitality as models for the state at large.'⁵⁴⁹ Leapor's poem, however, manipulates the 'model offered by [other] poems' of the genre, which are 'built on a myth'.⁵⁵⁰ Young's comments identify the 'particular brand of irony' that Terry suggests is integral to the mock-heroic mode.⁵⁵¹ This focus, however, is in lieu of providing an ekphrastic description of 'Gay China Bowls [that] o'er the broad chimney shine, / Whose long Description would be too sublime: / And much might of the Tapestry be sung: / But we're content to say, The Parlour's hung.' (ll. 68-71) Passing by China bowls and rich tapestries, objects used to display the wealth and status of the country house's owner, Leapor's Mira records a bored fascination with these items that she regularly cleans. This is not to say, however, that Mira forgoes her role as a guide. She asks, 'Would you go farther?', which itself implies a heroic quest, and Leapor breaks the lines into short phrases to create a conversational, relaxed idiom, which in turn gives a jaunty tone to these utterances. Leapor's guide, therefore, has a spontaneity that promotes a feeling of security from the speaker who nonchalantly knows every projecting beam in the house. What is found in the rooms 'furnish'd amiably', however, is the bric-a-brac collected over generations, including the farming equipment used by the old horse Dobbin, which is haunted by the shades of previous use. In some respects, it is a disappointing reward for travelling up the

⁵⁴⁹ Young, 'Visiting the Country House', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* (p. 52).

⁵⁵⁰ Young, 'Visiting the Country House', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* (p. 52).

⁵⁵¹ Terry, *Mock-Heroic from Butler to Cowper*, p. 12.

house, yet it simultaneously again reveals Mira to be the mock-epic equivalent of Homer's Circe and Virgil's Sibyl; a *vates*, ultimately, of the labouring class.

In line with this alternative perspective on the underworld, other poems by Leapor emphasise a culinary focus that reconfigures this classical space with the knowledge of a kitchen maid. Leapor's 'The Sacrifice. An Epistle to Celia' furthers the connotations of cooking with the underworld in describing the process of creating a viand – made of 'Juices drawn from magick Weeds, / And Pith of certain Indian Reeds' (ll. 41-42) – that, when given to a group of priestesses, turns them each into a *vates*:

And with the od'rous Steam ascend:
Each fair One now a Sibyl grows,
And ev'ry Cheek with Ardour glows,
And (tho' not quite beside their Wits)
Are seiz'd with deep prophetick Fits
(ll. 46-50)

Manipulating the Sibyl from Virgil's *Aeneid* and the contortions she goes through as she becomes a conduit for Apollo, Leapor's poem once more offers a traditional aspect of the underworld but refocuses the locus so that it revolves around food. The making of an immortal potion is again present in 'Proserpine's Ragout', in which Leapor adds to the traditionally morose underworld both comedy and cooking. Travelling in Pluto's 'royal Wheels, / O'er the large Confines of the Stygian Fields', the 'Empress of the Shades' is affected by 'a sulph'rous Mist' (ll. 2-6) that rises from the surrounding lakes. In her description of Proserpine's chariot and the poem's situation, Leapor offers a comic inversion of the description of Juno's chariot in Pope's *Iliad* that relieves the Greek soldiers:

Of Air condens'd a Vapor circumfus'd:
For these, impregnate with Celestial Dew
On Simois' Bring Ambrosial Herbage grew.

Thence, to relieve the fainting Argive Throng,
Smooth as the sailing Doves they glide along.

(V.967-71)

Where Juno's chariot exudes the vapours that revive the soldiers, Leapor's Proserpine is struck by the dampness of her deathly environment. Having entered a state of lethargy, Proserpine's cure is provided by Mercury – in his traditional status as transcender of boundaries of the living and the dead – who collects England's problems to make a 'frothy Dish' as a 'proper Viand for his sickly Queen' (ll. 35-36).

Richard Greene identifies 'Proserpine's Ragout' within a tradition of Lucianic poetry, putting forward Edward Ward and William King as potential models.⁵⁵² However Greene does not fully grant Leapor's autonomy from and manipulation of the male tradition. Leapor's focus on phantasmal cooking is reminiscent of how in Pope's 'Cave of Spleen' 'A constant vapour o'er the palace flies; / Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise' (IV.39-40). Moreover, in Pope's *Iliad* he described 'the sav'ry Vapours' of sacrifices, suggesting again that there was more for women in the epic that might be first thought, whilst the *Dunciad* similarly provided an account of the Thames that likened it to the rivers of the underworld: 'A branch of Styx here rises from the Shades, / That tinctur'd as it runs with Lethe's streams, / And wafting Vapours from the Land of dreams' (see II.338-49). Yet these references often stand as individual situational or topographical markers in Pope's poetry: the quotation from the *Iliad* represents a formulation of the numerous sacrifices made during the epic whilst the latter offers a layering of mythology onto a geographical place to emphasise the apocalyptic and dirty nature of Pope's dull London. For Leapor, there is a greater process of assimilation at work that renders the environment that she was familiar with as a servant through the

⁵⁵² Greene, *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry*, pp. 176-177.

lens of the underworld, combining and developing those qualities of the space she learnt through Pope's poetry.

With the relationship between the underworld and cooking in Leapor's poetry more firmly established, it is worth returning 'once more' to 'Crumble-Hall'. Mira's first fleeting glance into the kitchen describes the space with a nightmarish tone:

The sav'ry Kitchen much Attention calls:
Westphalia Hams adorn the sable Walls:
The Fires blaze; the greasy Pavements fry;
And steaming Odours from the Kettles fly.
(ll. 56-59)

In its emphasis on vapours and fire, Leapor's kitchen has an oneiric transparency. Yet in the localised details of black walls (with 'sable' describing the space through the rhetoric of epic), hanging meat and open fires, the space retains a nightmarish realism, with the notion of how 'the greasy Pavements fry' reminiscent of Pope's Tartarean beverages in the Cave of Spleen that Ariel uses to threaten any unattending sylph: 'Or as Ixion fix'd, the Wretch shall feel / The giddy Motion of the whirling Mill, / In Fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow, / And tremble at the Sea that froaths below!' (II.133-36)

Leapor's focus throughout 'Crumble-Hall' is to demonstrate the alternative perspective of the house and those that manage it, peopling her classical kitchen with those from the lower classes who did not feature in Pope's work. Mira returns to the space of the kitchen by offering a brief view of an Arcadia before being thrust socially, metaphorically and physically, back down to the lower levels of the house in a mock-epic *katabasis*:

At yon small Door you'll find the Beams of Day,
While the hot Leads return to scorching Ray.
Here a gay Prospect meets the ravish'd Eye:
Meads, Fields, and Groves, in beauteous Order lie.
From hence the Muse precipitant is hurl'd,
And drags down Mira to the nether World.

Thus far the Palace – Yet there still remain
 Unsung the Gardens, and the menial Train.
 Its Groves anon – its People first we sing:
 Hear, *Artemisia*, hear the Song we bring.
 [...]
 O'er the warm Kettles, and the sav'ry Steams,
 Grave *Colinettus* of his Oxen dreams
 (ll. 104-12, 121-22)

Leapor's descent might seem sudden, and when the Muse is 'hurl'd' to the 'nether World' readers might compare the ease (if somewhat violent) with which she descends with the difficulty and portents-laden methods that the heroes of Homer and Virgil must face, indicating her familiarity with running up and down the house to attend to its cleaning needs. As with the previous discussion of 'The Fields of Melancholy and Cheerfulness' and the traced importance of the term 'gloomy', Leapor connects this description with her first foray into the kitchen by repeating the term 'sav'ry', maintaining her odorous topographical markers. Leapor delights in the ambiguity of the underworld, in which she finds the potential for an uncomfortable, ironic humour. Valerie Rumbold attributes the 'quirkiness' of Leapor's poetry to her 'acute ear for rhythm and expressive emphasis.'⁵⁵³ In this chthonic kitchen, Leapor's pairing of the phrases 'sav'ry Steams' with Colinettus' 'Oxen dreams' within a heroic couplet creates a hazy environment indicative of the underworld.

'Crumble-Hall' reveals a notably Popean vision of the underworld's mistress in both its focus on vapours but also its formation of a female space. Leapor emphasises the connection between the underworld and cooking, which is aided innumerable by the inhabitants of her space, furthering the culinary conceit of Pope's 'Receipt to make an Epick Poem'. By contrast to the lethargy of both Pope's and Dryden's 'Caves' of Spleen and Sleep respectively, Leapor's rendition of her 'nether World' in 'Crumble-Hall'

⁵⁵³ Valerie Rumbold, 'Mary Leapor (1722-46): Menial Labour and Poetic Aspiration', in *Women and Poetry*, ed. Prescott and Shuttleton, pp. 88-95 (p. 88).

focuses on the flurry of female activity. Leapor asserts that of the ‘People first we sing’, reminiscent of the catalogues of soldiers in *Iliad* II and *Aeneid* VII; however, the connection is more with the pageant of women in *Odyssey* XI, in which Anticleia ‘Her race recounts, and their illustrious deeds.’ (280) Leapor sings also of those ‘heroine shades’, to borrow a phrase from Pope’s translation, but instead of choosing queens she focuses on the labouring staff of the country house. Through the mock-heroic mode, Leapor elevates her women in rewriting the traditional myths of the underworld. A recent study by George Alexander Gazis argues that Homer’s Hades is a revisionist poetic space wherein the stories of the Trojan heroes emphasise not Iliadic glory but personal loss. Though Gazis’ study focuses exclusively on Homer’s presentation of Hades, he does offer the space as a more general arena for alternative poetics: ‘Dark and murky as it might be, Hades is nevertheless full of stories waiting to be told. Those stories, however, are not like those that unfold under the Homeric sun.’⁵⁵⁴ It is ironic that in the poem preceding ‘Crumble-Hall’ in the posthumously arranged and published *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (1752), ‘Mira to Octavia’, Leapor sets forth an epic invocation to tell the stories of women from the past:

But round us first an Audience let me call:
 Draw near, and listen, O ye Maidens all.
 Of Wives I sing, and Husbands, not a few:
 Examples rare! some fictious, and some true.
 (ll. 26-29)

Leapor’s theme is marriage: Octavia is to marry ‘poor and gay’ Philander, but Mira’s catalogue warns of those ‘less sagacious Virgins [who] often take / Nonsense for Wit, and rue the dire Mistake.’ (ll. 32-33) More than describing heroes, ‘Mira to Octavia’ recalls the underworld pageant of Homer in its focus on women and their lives. Mira implores Octavia to ‘be the charming Mistress of thy Gold; / While young, admir’d; and

⁵⁵⁴ Gazis, *Homer and the Poetics of Hades*, p. 14.

rev'renc'd, when you're Old.' (ll. 158-59) In her own mock descent into the underworld, Leapor will tell more of these women, enabling a female audience to hear of female narratives within a classical space.

Of these women, Sophronia receives the most attention:

Sophronia first in Verse shall learn to chime,
And keep her Station, tho' in *Mira's* Rhyme;
Sophronia sage! whose learned Knuckles know
To form round Cheese-cakes of the pliant Dough;
To bruise the Curd, and thro' her Fingers squeeze
Ambrosial Butter with the temper'd Cheese:
Sweet Tarts and Pudden, too, her Skill declare;
And the soft Jellies, hid from baneful Air.
(ll. 113-20)

'Crumble-Hall' reveals a constant fascination with creation, whether that be in the description of the building itself or the recurrent focus on different objects, for example a spider's web or 'Cheese-cakes', facilitated by the heroic couplet form: in her use of couplets Leapor connects Sophronia's actions with the food she makes. Leapor's reference to 'Ambrosial butter' is charged with multiple connotations from classical mythology, which include Thetis' method of preserving Patroclus' body during Homer's *Iliad*, or the point when Venus leaves Aeneas in Book I of Dryden's translation of Virgil: 'flowing from her Shoulders, reach'd the Ground, / And widely spread Ambrosial Scents around' (I.558-59). In Pope's translation of the *Odyssey* especially it is likened to a solid food: Calypso lays out 'Ambrosial cates' for Hermes' visit in Book V (118). Within the context of the epic genre, eating and food, as argued by Henry Power, are presented in a 'highly ritualised manner'.⁵⁵⁵ Because mock-epic relies on the 'gulf between contemptible subject matter [...] and the dignity inherent in epic poetry', Power shows that food is well-placed within the genre, with epic diction being used humorously in

⁵⁵⁵ Henry Power, *Epic Into Novel: Henry Fielding, Scriblerian Satire, and the Consumption of Classical Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 9.

relation to culinary terminology.⁵⁵⁶ Cooking and eating are associated with the world of the hero, and yet Leapor's cook finds a few female models from epic works. For example, when Telemachus visits Menelaus in Book IV of the *Odyssey*, Homer describes how

Bright Helen mix'd a mirth-inspiring bowl:
Temper'd with drugs of sov'reign use, t'assuage
The boiling bosom of tumultuous Rage;
To clear the cloudy front of wrinkled Care,
And dry the tearful sluices of Despair
[...]
These drugs, so friendly to the joys of life,
Bright Helen learn'd from Thone's imperial wife
(IV.302-06,315-16)

'Crumble-Hall' is filled with unconscious characters – Biron, Colinettus and an 'Unwieldy Roger' that 'on the Table lies' – and so Sophronia, a figure that creates, forms and moulds, becomes a mythical and threatening figure. Where Virgil's Sibyl feeds Cerberus a sop to allow Aeneas to enter into the underworld, these women have a power akin more to the likes of Homer's Helen or Circe, who can transform and enchant the men around them.

The posture of Leapor's Sophronia, however, connects her to another female character from the epic genre: Milton's Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Upon seeing the portents anticipating Raphael's arrival in Eden, with 'hospitable thoughts' (V.332) Eve prepares food for the angel:

fruit of all kinds
She gathers, tribute large, and on the board
Heaps with unsparing hand; for drink the grape
She crushes, inoffensive must, and meaths
From many a berry, and from sweet kernels pressed
She tempers dulcet creams, nor these to hold

⁵⁵⁶ Power, *Epic Into Novel*, p. 6.

Wants her fit vessels pure, then strews the ground
With rose and odours from the shrub unfumed.
(V.332, 341-49)

Adopting a posture that is reminiscent of but also contrasting with Milton's Eve, Sophronia stands at 'her Station', her 'learned' knuckles contrasting with the former's pre-lapsarian state. Both 'temper' food, but there is also a ruggedness in Eve's actions: she 'Heaps with unsparing hand' and 'crushes' the grapes. Milton even suggests that Eden can be like Enna, where Proserpine was abducted, thereby suggesting how the innocent can be abducted by the power of the underworld:

Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers
Herself a fairer flow'r by gloomy Dis
Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world; nor that sweet grove
Of Daphne by Orontes, and the inspired
Castalian spring, might with this Paradise
Of Eden strive
(IV.268-75)

Mandy Green goes further in suggesting that the connections between Eve and Proserpina are indicated in their fallen states, which are used by Milton and Ovid respectively as an aetiology of the seasons.⁵⁵⁷ In this connection, Leapor encourages us to think of a tangible, practical and tactile underworld, which stands in contrast to the recurrent motif in both Homer and Virgil of Odysseus and Aeneas respectively being unable to embrace their spectral mother or father.

Before the attempted embrace, Dryden writes of when Anchises first sees Aeneas: 'Welcome, he said, the Gods undoubted Race, / O long expected, to my dear Embrace; / Once more 'tis given me to behold your Face' (VI.931-33). Positioning 'Embrace' at the end of the second line, Dryden allows the word to be subsumed within a

⁵⁵⁷ Green, *Milton's Ovidian Eve*, pp. 83-89.

triplet, cruelly anticipating the immediate impossibility of their real encounter. Dryden's translation then records how Aeneas 'said; and falling Tears his Face bedew; / Then thrice, around his Neck, his Arms he threw; / And thrice the flitting Shadow slip'd away; / Like Winds, or empty Dreams that fly the Day.' (IV.949-52) In the transience of the simile, the disappointed repetition of 'Thrice' and split across two heroic couplets, Dryden forms a poetics of separation that fully manipulates the emotional situation. Leapor has dealt throughout her underworld poetry in vapours and intangibility, but in connecting cooking with the 'nether World' in 'Crumble-Hall' Leapor rewrites another female figure from the epic genre and elevates the status of those women that work. To borrow a phrase from Milton, working within the subterranean 'Plutonian hall' (X.444) of the country house proves an opportune moment for Leapor to explicate on the theme of female community seen throughout her poetry, which was presented within the features of the epic mode.

In the underworld of 'Crumble-Hall', then, Leapor seems to have taken to heart the Miltonic imperative expressed by Satan to 'intend at home, / While here shall be our home [...] [to] render Hell / More tolerable', comically forming her own 'ill mansion' (I.457-60). Claude Rawson writes that mock-heroic is 'the product of a state of mind that could no longer write epic straight but would not leave it alone', the result of realising an inability to write in that particular mode.⁵⁵⁸ In taking the mock-heroic as her mode of transmission to display the underworld, Leapor reveals how the mode was analogous with female classicism and enabled an indirect access to the classics. Whilst social constrictions and premature death may have denied Leapor the chance of ever actually writing an epic poem, her manipulation of the conventions of the genre – including

⁵⁵⁸ Rawson, 'Mock-heroic and English poetry', *Cambridge Companion to Epic*, ed. Bates (p. 170).

descent narratives, epic catalogues, invocations to the muse and an awareness of ekphrasis – reveals a deep fascination with the mode of writing. Leapor manages to portray the grandeur and significance of the traditional epic descent with a jovial guide and bathetic environment, her hybrid ‘nether World’ a space that elevates and prizes female productivity and local knowledge. Leapor rewrites many of the traditional descent narratives that had often depicted regal or heroic characters and emphasises a female underworld populated by women who, though from a lower social class, in their technical capabilities to create the most basic of human sustenance were perhaps more unnerving than some of the monstrous inhabitants of the classical underworld.

In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf argued ‘There is no reason to think that the form of the epic or of the poetic play suit a woman any more than the sentence suits her. But all the older forms of literature were hardened and set by the time she became a writer. The novel alone was young enough to be soft in her hands’.⁵⁵⁹ Woolf argues that the ‘shape’ of literature was set ‘by men out of their own needs for their own uses’, yet this rhetoric of tangibility (‘soft’, ‘hardened’, ‘set’) again reminds us of Sophronia’s ‘learned knuckles’. To focus explicitly on this tactile approach draws Sophronia into a sharp contrast with the presentation of male learning in the sleeping Biron, already described by the point of descent, therefore elevating the knowledge of her kitchen maid: ‘with Books encircled round; / And him you’d guess a Student most profound. / Not so – in Form the dusty Volumes stand: / There’s few that wear the Mark of Biron’s Hand.’ (ll. 90-93) Biron’s books may well sit covered in dust, but the same could not be said of Leapor’s well-thumbed volumes of Dryden and Pope that she read whilst savoury odours were emitted from simmering pots. Dryden’s translation of the *Aeneid* might have described the ‘mighty Labour’ that awaited anyone who wanted to

⁵⁵⁹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Anna Snaith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 58.

descend into the underworld, but it is clear that Leapor found this space in her daily environment. From her kitchen, Leapor could mould the classics for her own delight and consumption.

Women continued to read Pope's Homer from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, and the opening out of the classics for women from all classes continued to have an influence: Esther Easton, the wife of a Jedburgh gardener, was said by Robert Burns to be able to quote Pope's Homer from beginning to end.⁵⁶⁰ The epic genre, as seen earlier in Goddard, still exerted an imposing influence on women's writing, but this chapter has explored some of the brief flashes of the mode across several writers to provide a so-far unacknowledged part of the reception history of epic. It has also contributed to the re-evaluation of the critical stance that the epic genre was in decline following Milton by acknowledging the importance of both the mock-heroic mode and translations in the eighteenth century. In focusing on Leapor, it reminds us today of the creative potential of women writers of the eighteenth century. The way women accessed the epic – through translations, miscellanies, topoi and the mock-heroic – is symptomatic of the ways in which they received a knowledge of the classics generally: the fragmentary approach to epic enabled women readers and writers the opportunity to re-contextualise a world that, traditionally, was seen as not being specifically for them. Nonetheless, the poets here explored have demonstrated not only the ways in which the masculine nature of epic was challenged but also how the mock-heroic afforded opportunities for women to reverse a mode that aesthetically served to belittle and diminish them. The amalgamation of influences present in Leapor's underworld poetry especially is indicative of how the various features of the epic genre could be re-forged by women writers in a way that enabled them to write of their own concerns. As with

⁵⁶⁰ Edith Hall and Henry Stead, *A People's History of Classics: Class and Greco-Roman Antiquity in Britain and Ireland 1689-1939* (Routledge, 2020), pp. 4-5.

each reception history presented throughout this thesis, there is little of the gaudy showiness that was thought by Leapor's contemporaries to be associated with a female classicism. The first fifty years of the eighteenth century saw a widening out of the classics, with certain ancient authors being re-evaluated through the emerging contemporary literary forms of the miscellany and periodical and being made more applicable to women readers. Nonetheless, the majority of these authors continued to be translated by male writers, with Dryden, Addison and Pope especially having a lasting influence. This thesis has predominantly relied on piecing together individual poems by women writers who were separated by class and geography, suggesting how women's manipulations of the classics refuted the connotations of trifling vacuity that attended the suggestion of a feminine classicism. However in the 1750s the publication of translations by Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Fielding of Epictetus and Xenophon respectively alongside the formation of the Bluestocking mythos established the idea of the professional female translator. Until this point, women had entered the classics at the margins, picking up hints wherever possible in the echo chamber of the eighteenth century; now, however, women were confidently contributing their own translations to the public forum of classicism, as will briefly be explored in the conclusion to this thesis.

CONCLUSION

PROFESSIONAL WOMEN CLASSICISTS

As the status of the woman writer rose throughout the eighteenth century so too was the reputation of the classics as a masculine preserve weakening. This correlation should not be ignored. Nor should the idea of the pervasive presence of the classics throughout the literary culture and its consequent fragmentation lead to the suggestion that the female classicism that emerged from this period was lacking or inadequate. Instead, the achievements of the women poets with classical forms, as discussed throughout this thesis, should be celebrated. These women showed how others could overcome obstacles of gender (and sometimes class) to adapt and make the traditions that made the canon their own. This recognition was somewhat captured in the period by the several mid-eighteenth-century anthologies of women writers that imply not only their position within the literary world but also a contemporary desire to explore the idea of the female writer. From around the mid-point of the eighteenth century, this awareness of women's collective achievements began to be publicly celebrated. This thesis deliberately ends just as this interest begins because the nature of women's access to the classics also shifted during this later period, transitioning from a reliance on fragmentary pieces split across various print forms (miscellanies and periodicals) towards a larger, public acceptance of women's learning that no-longer necessitated the covert or experimental means to receive the ancient world explored throughout this work. George Colman and Bonnell Thornton's two-volume *Poems by the Most Eminent Ladies* (1755) hoped the work would be 'perhaps the most solid compliment that can possibly be paid to the Fair Sex. They are a standing proof that great abilities are not confined to the men, and that genius often glows with equal warmth, and perhaps with more delicacy, in the breast of a

female.⁵⁶¹ John Duncombe's *Feminead* (1754), a gynaecium, or a published catalogue celebrating women, related how

Our British Nymphs with happier Omens rove,
At Freedom's Call, thro' Wisdom's Sacred Grove,
And, as with lavish Hand each Sister Grace
Shapes the fair Form and regulates the Face,
Each Sister Muse, in blissful Union join'd,
Adorns, improves, and beautifies the mind.⁵⁶²

Also indicative is 'A Catalogue of Ladies famous for their Writings, or skill in the Learned Languages', which is part of Thomas Birch's manuscripts at the British Library and might be dated around the 1740s or 1750s, which lists various women writers – including Finch, Susanna Centlivre, Constantia Grierson, Leapor and Pilkington – alongside other women from history like Margery Kempe and Jane Seymour.⁵⁶³ These catalogues and lists all imply a markedly different literary culture to that described by Finch, who complained in the poem 'The Introduction' of the lack of histories of women writers. By the 1750s, it seems that many were beginning to appreciate the successes of the various women writers of the late Restoration and early eighteenth century. The 1750s marked a watershed in the history of women's classicism for it was during this decade that Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Fielding produced their celebrated translations of Epictetus and Xenophon respectively. The 1750s largely can be taken as marking the end of the period studied in this thesis when women's access to the classical poetry was characterized by struggle and generally took experimental or provisional form. Having explored the ways through which women entered the classics at the margins and picked up the literary hints available to them in the echo chamber of eighteenth-century

⁵⁶¹ *Poems by the Most Eminent Ladies*, ed. Colman and Thornton, i. A2.

⁵⁶² John Duncombe, *The Feminead; or, Female Genius, a Poem* (1754), pp. 6-7.

⁵⁶³ See London, British Library Add. MS 4244, fols 21-24.

classicism throughout this thesis, this conclusion will briefly look ahead to the age of the professional female classicist.

During the eighteenth century the figure of the female writer was still being defined; unsurprisingly, few of the poets examined throughout this thesis may be considered ‘professional classicists’ despite the variety of experiments with classical literature to be found within their poetry. Perhaps only two figures could tentatively be grouped in that category. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was a known learned lady. Nonetheless Montagu recognised the dangers of the title, writing in a letter to Gilbert Burnet in July 1710: ‘There is hardly a character in the World more Despicable or more liable to universal ridicule than that of a Learned Woman. The words imply, according to the receiv’d sense, a tatling, impertinent, vain, and Conceited Creature.’⁵⁶⁴ As we have seen, classical mythology, topoi and allusions can be found throughout Montagu’s work but her internalisation of how contemporary society dehumanised female learning might explain why she never fully published a full translation of any classical writer (a translation from Epictetus’s *Enchiridion* was attached with the letter to Burnet).⁵⁶⁵ Montagu’s class and status afforded her the leisure to devote time to study and the opportunities to travel as the result of her husband’s positions abroad meant that she completed an equivalent of the Grand Tour, but her hesitancy to identify herself as a professional woman writer suggests how the public nature of the role was seen as a hindrance more than a benefit. As explored previously, Montagu’s public engagement with the classics in the form of being labelled ‘Sappho’ by Pope left her with accusations against her personality. If full translations are used as a marker of a professional classicist’s linguistic prowess, then perhaps only one woman before 1750 fits within that title fully, indicating how the markers of what defined women’s engagement with the

⁵⁶⁴ *Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Halsband, i. 45.

⁵⁶⁵ See *Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Halsband, i. 44.

classics were incredibly different between the first and second halves of the eighteenth century. Constantia Grierson (née Crawley) was born in Kilkenny, Ireland, around 1704; she called her parents ‘poor illiterate Country People’ in conversation with Laetitia Pilkington and was educated by the minister of her parish.⁵⁶⁶ Some of Grierson’s poems were included in Mary Barber’s *Poems on Several Occasions* (1734) and in her ‘Preface’ to this volume Barber describes how her friend was proficient in many fields of study: ‘She died in the Year 1733, at the Age of 27, and was allow’d, long before, to be an excellent Scholar, not only in Greek and Roman Literature, but in History, Divinity, Philosophy, and Mathematicks. She gave a Proof of her Knowledge in the Latin Tongue, by her Dedication of her Dublin Edition of Tacitus [...] and by that of Terence’.⁵⁶⁷ ‘What makes her Character the more remarkable,’ according to Barber, is ‘that she rose to this Eminence in Learning merely by the Force of her own Genius, and continual Application.’⁵⁶⁸

After moving to Dublin at the age of eighteen Constantia met and later married George Grierson, a publisher. Throughout the 1720s she worked on various editions of classical authors, including: the works of Virgil (*P. Virgilii Maronis opera. Nunc emendatiora* (1724)), the comedies of Terence (*Publii Terentii Afri comoediae ad optimorum exemplarium fidem recensitae* (1727)) and the works of Tacitus (*C. Cornelii Taciti opera quae exstant ex recensione et cum animadversionibus Theodori Ryckii* (1730)). When she died in 1732 she was working on an edition of Sallust’s poetry that has not been traced. Of Grierson’s work Pilkington observed that ‘her Learning appeared like the Gift poured out on the Apostles, of speaking all Languages, without the pains of Study; or, like the intuitive Knowledge of Angels’, whilst in a letter to Pope on 6 February 1730 Swift commented ‘She is a very good Latin and Greek scholar, and hath

⁵⁶⁶ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 17.

⁵⁶⁷ Barber, *Poems*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

⁵⁶⁸ Barber, *Poems*, p. xxix.

lately published a fine edition of Tacitus'.⁵⁶⁹ Grierson received wider recognition, according to D. Ben Rees, with the publication of George Ballard's *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain, who have been Celebrated for their Writings or Still in the Learned Languages, Arts and Sciences* (1752), which predominantly copied Barber's previously published remarks on her friend.⁵⁷⁰ Montagu and Grierson might have the best claim to the title of professional classicists during the first fifty years of the eighteenth century, but they did not fully receive this recognition. The wide distance between Montagu's and Grierson's class however stands as a testimony to the effects of the cultural obsession with translation that began in the seventeenth century. That Grierson achieved this reputation (at least in Ireland) in spite of her class implies that the general opening out of the classics in the eighteenth century contributed in some way to making the study of the classics at least an acceptable exercise and finally even an actual profession for women; it would be in the 1750s, however, that the professional female translator would receive her fullest recognition yet.

In the formal professionalisation of women's engagement with the classics two figures stand out: Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Fielding respectively published *All the Works of Epictetus which are Now Extant* (1758) and *Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates. With the Defence of Socrates, Before His Judges. Translated from the Original Greek. By Sarah Fielding* (1762). A letter from Fielding to her tutor James Harris in September 1758 reveals the beginning of the Xenophon translation project:

I am much obliged to you for the Favour of yours, and am very glad you have found your Xenophon [...] [and] shall be very thankfull [*sic*] for it, and more especially as in my present State of Doubt, whether it is possible at my Time of Life, to make any thing of the Greek Language; I dont love to enquire for greek [*sic*] Books; but it has always been my Maxim to have the least Fear of Ridicule wherever real Knowledge dwells, which directed me to mention this Affair only to you.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁹ Pilkington, *Memoirs*, ed. Elias, i. 17; *Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. William, iii. 369.

⁵⁷⁰ D. Ben Rees, 'Grierson [née Crawley], Constantia (1704/5-1732), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://www-oxforddnb-com>> [accessed 17 March 2021]

⁵⁷¹ Fielding, *The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*, ed. Battestin and Probyn, p. 141.

During the work, these hesitations did not disappear: in a letter to James Harris in January 1760 Fielding explained: ‘the simple truth is that I have attempted an Undertaking in which I am very unwilling to expose myself, for tho [*sic*] [...] to publish abroad Ignorance together with a pretence of Knowledge is deservedly contemptible [*sic*]’.⁵⁷² This expression of modesty was conventional for a woman taking on an intellectual challenge traditionally seen as a preserve of men, and indeed Fielding had received ridicule from her own brother, Henry, for her scholarship. An undated letter from Hester Lynch Piozzi records:

I have heard Doctor Collier say that Henry Fielding quite doated on his Sister Sally till she had made herself through his – Dr Collier’s – Assistance, a competent Scholar, & could construe the 6th Book of Virgil: he then began to joke, & afterwards to taunt her, as a literary Lady &c. till she resolved on Study – and became eminent in her Knowledge of the Greek Language, after which her Brother never more could perswade himself to endure her Company with Civility –⁵⁷³

As outlined in Chapter II, Carter had also suffered a backlash in her early publications in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*. Samuel Johnson famously remarked of Carter ‘A man is in general better pleased when he has a good dinner upon the table than when his wife talks Greek. My old friend, Mrs Carter, could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus.’⁵⁷⁴ Although Roger Lonsdale thought Carter would be ‘perhaps doomed to be best remembered’ for this observation, we have seen that for eighteenth-century women the domestic and the classical were not always antithetical opposites.⁵⁷⁵ The women writers between 1700 and 1750 showed how the classics could indeed be used to write about subjects that might not have first seemed appropriate for this higher mode of

⁵⁷² Fielding, *The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*, ed. Battestin and Probyn, pp. 159-160.

⁵⁷³ Quoted in Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 241.

⁵⁷⁴ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, 6 vols (Oxford, 1887), i. 122-23.

⁵⁷⁵ *Women Poets*, ed. Lonsdale, p. 167.

expression. Both Fielding's and Carter's translations were published by subscription. Fielding's project had support from a wide social range: 611 subscribers are listed, including Harris, Samuel Richardson (although he died in 1761 before the work was released), Elizabeth Montagu, Carter and 207 other female patrons.⁵⁷⁶ Carter's Epictetus, however, was subscribed to by over 1,000 patrons. Although many of the most popular works by women of the second half of the period were published anonymously – for example Francis Burney's *Evelina: Or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance Into the World* (1778) – the two translations by Carter and Fielding proudly printed their names on the title pages. If, as Gérard Genette suggests, 'the better known the author, the more space his name takes up', then it is fascinating that both names are given greater prominence than the text's original language.⁵⁷⁷ Edith Hall suggests that the influence of Carter's translation of Epictetus on Fielding's Xenophon is clear, with Fielding quoting her translation in her own notes.⁵⁷⁸ Yet the title page of Carter's translation adds a higher prominence to the translator than the fact the work is a translation; Fielding's name is likewise larger than 'Translated from the Original Greek', which implies that her academic achievement is more significant than her sex.⁵⁷⁹

Reviews of both translations were complimentary. Praise of Carter's translation in *The Monthly Review* connected her with Dacier, suggesting that 'France can no longer boast of her *Dacier*, but must be compelled to own that our women excel theirs in Sense and Genius, as far as they surpass them in Modesty and Beauty'.⁵⁸⁰ *The Monthly Review* wrote of Fielding's *Xenophon*: 'Those who are best acquainted with Xenophon's

⁵⁷⁶ Elizabeth Montagu and the ladies of the Bluestocking Circle often performed the traditional function of patrons. The number 207 assumes none of the anonymous entries are women. For women as patrons in the eighteenth century, see Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 190-191.

⁵⁷⁷ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 39.

⁵⁷⁸ Edith Hall, 'Intellectual Pleasure and the Woman Translator in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth- Century England', in *Women Classical Scholars*, ed. Wyles and Hall, pp. 103-131 (p. 128).

⁵⁷⁹ Sarah Fielding, trans., *Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates. With the Defence of Socrates, Before His Judges. Translated from the Original Greek* (1762), title page.

⁵⁸⁰ *Monthly Review* 18, June 1758, p. 588.

writings, are most sensible of preserving, in a translation, that elegant simplicity which is his distinguishing excellence [...] [Fielding] having executed her task in a manner that does her honour.⁵⁸¹ Yet the *Critical Review*, equally lavish in its praise, introduced a small caveat: ‘we think Mrs. Fielding has happily imitated the easy and unaffected elegance of the Greek original, though, in some places, she may be suspected of having copied from a translation.’⁵⁸² Given that many male writers consulted translations as they wrote their own, this cautious critique of Fielding’s work seems somewhat hypocritical. This dubious approach to Fielding’s gender continued: ‘we are satisfied with discovering numberless beauties greatly superior to what we could expect from the narrow superficial education of the fair sex.’⁵⁸³ A ‘mere grammarian’ would be frustrated at the ‘few liberties’ taken by Fielding, yet ‘every reader of sentiment’ will ‘observe how happily she has fallen into the taste and manner of her admirable original.’⁵⁸⁴ The implication is that female readers cannot be expected to achieve academic rigour because of their reading habits and education however that is not necessarily a bad thing: Fielding’s reviewer appreciates the free translation as being alert to Xenophon’s ‘taste and manner’, as opposed to her being solely occupied by a pedantic scholarship. This review indicates how the changing status of the classics earlier in the eighteenth century led to a re-evaluation of the nature of classical scholarship, paving the way for more formal women classicists to emerge in the 1750s onwards. Following from Dryden’s sentimental episodes and Pope’s feminine Homer, this re-consideration enabled women writers because the origins of their own exposure to the classics relied on the de-stabilisation of the formal academic boundaries that held them back from accessing the classics. Now the alternative ways in which women confronted the classics were not accused of being

⁵⁸¹ *Monthly Review* 27, September 1762, p. 171.

⁵⁸² *Critical Review* 13, March 1762, p. 177.

⁵⁸³ *Critical Review* 13, March 1762, p. 177.

⁵⁸⁴ *Critical Review* 13, March 1762, p. 177.

derivative or incomplete but praised for their responsiveness to the classical texts in hand.

Carter became acquainted with Elizabeth Montagu through the Epictetus translation. Alongside Carter's and Fielding's translations, the other enduring legacy of female learning in the eighteenth century is the Bluestocking circle, which extended across two generations of members (the first included women including Elizabeth Montagu, Carter, Hester Chapone and Catherine Talbot, whilst the second included Hester Thrale, Burney and Hannah More). The defining features of the Bluestocking group that facilitated their learning were precisely those that the women poets of the first half of the century studied in this thesis lacked: the close communities, networks and salon culture that are characteristic of Bluestocking circles are at a far remove from the isolation experienced by many of the previous generation of women readers of the classics.⁵⁸⁵ This extends also to issues of class: the literary culture of the early 1700s dissolved the boundaries between the classics and the public and enabled those of the working class like Leapor or Chandler to engage in the ancient world just like the aristocratic Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, which offers a contrast to the Bluestockings, who were formed by new connections between the gentry and the professional working classes.

The issues surrounding women and reading arguably never dissipated however as the eighteenth century moved into its second half the focus changed somewhat from learning in general to sentimentalism and the effect of romance novels. As parodied in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752), reading these types of fiction promotes 'The bad Effects of a whimsical Study'; the heroine of the novel is so affected by her voracious reading of romance novels that 'Her ideas, from the

⁵⁸⁵ For book sharing and borrowing networks, see Susan Staves, "'Books without which I cannot write': How Did Eighteenth-Century Women Writers Get the Books They Read?", in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (Routledge, 2007), pp. 192-211 (pp. 202-03).

Manner of her Life, and the Objects around her, had taken a romantic Turn; and, supposing Romances were real Pictures of Life, from them she drew all her Notions and Expectations.’⁵⁸⁶ Carter’s and Fielding’s translations and the advent of Bluestocking culture did not absolutely transform social attitudes towards the ways in which women’s engagement with the classics was socially received and the learned lady continued to be an easy target for satire: Frances Burney satirised Bluestocking culture in her unpublished play *The Witlings* (1779) in the figure of Lady Smatter, the judgmental leader of the ‘Esprit Party’. However Burney’s derision is complicated by her own self-association with the group: the full title of Burney’s play is *The Witlings, A Comedy, By A Sister of the Order*. Nonetheless, the full translations of Epictetus and Xenophon stand in marked contrast to the individual Horatian odes or minor epic episodes that were to be found in women’s *Poems on Several Occasions* between 1700 and 1750. Writers like Dryden, Addison, Pope, Montagu, Grierson, Tollet and Leapor among many others had all shown that the classics were relevant to women in ways both expected and not. Instead of relying on the subtle power of allusion, the inverted elevation of the mock-heroic or the distilled presence of classical topoi, in the 1750s women directly made clear that their claim to education was founded on ability. Whilst Carter, Fielding and their Bluestocking sisters might be exceptional examples, the public nature of their associations with knowledge suggests a significant step forward from the turn of the eighteenth century when only the pathetic episodes in classical verse were felt to be appropriate for women. Where at the beginning of the eighteenth century women relied on male translators to make the classics accessible, by the late 1750s male readers were starting to read classical texts in editions produced by women. This move, from consumer to producer, is a vital step in the history of women’s classical education.

⁵⁸⁶ Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote; or, the Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5 and p. 7. This concern was also seen on stage: see, for example, George Colman’s *Polly Honeycombe* (1760).

For those women who did not receive an education in the classics, however, the idea of a feminine classicism that emerged later on in the eighteenth century continued to be carefully controlled. In the 'Preface' to *Poems for Young Ladies* (1767), a miscellany compiled by Oliver Goldsmith, it is observed that 'In the following compilation care has been taken to select, not only such pieces as innocence may read without a blush, but such as will even tend to strengthen that innocence. In this little work a lady may find the most exquisite pleasure, while she is at the same time learning the duties of life; and, while she courts only entertainment, be deceived into wisdom.'⁵⁸⁷ It was previously discussed how women often wrote of Eve with difficulty because they identified her actions as the cause for their own inability to access knowledge in the same way that men did. Whilst there may here be overtones of Satan, who likewise deceived Eve into wisdom, this miscellany is also cast as representing the Horatian dictum of combining instruction with delight. The miscellany is split into three sections: devotional, moral and entertaining. Some of the 'entertaining' pieces include: Pope's translation of the parting of Hector and Andromache, Dryden's translations of the death of Dido and Ovid's tale of Ceyx and Alcyone, Addison's translation of the Narcissus episode and Swift's imitation of the story of Baucis and Philemon. The reception of some of these episodes – from Homer, Virgil and Addison's Narcissus – in women's writing has been explored throughout this thesis. As shown, the miscellany was a key genre in mediating a knowledge of the classics that was, if fragmented, acceptable to women; where the writer of the preface of *Poems for Young Ladies* assumes young women might only have been interested in certain expected parts of the classics (for example the sentimental episodes from Homer), this thesis has shown in each chapter how women went beyond just reading these works. In fact women throughout the first fifty years of the period used the

⁵⁸⁷ *Poems for Young Ladies. In three parts. Devotional, Moral, and Entertaining. The being a collection of the best pieces in our Language* (1767), p. iii.

classics in increasingly experimental ways and with a revisionist intent that has so far not been fully recognised. If there is the suggestion in *Poems for Young Ladies* that the readers of the miscellany were just that, readers, almost unaware of the potential of these fragments from the ancient world, then this thesis has shown how actively women capitalised on the opportunities offered by the miscellaneous mode of their classical formation. More than just unconsciously receiving the classics, these women, buoyed by their increasing access, in fact made the classics their own in ways that went beyond simply learning which parts of the classics were ‘for’ them.

The ‘entertaining’ section of *Poems for Young Ladies* concludes with Addison’s ‘A Letter from Italy’, in which he wrote of how during his Grand Tour ‘wheresoe’er I turn my ravish’d eyes, / Gay gilded scenes and shining prospects rise, / Poetic fields encompass me around, / And still I seem to tread on classic ground’.⁵⁸⁸ As shown throughout this thesis, during the early eighteenth century the classics were made available in forms both literary and material. In turn, this led to women of all social classes reading and engaging in the mythos of the ancient world. But even if the classics became more accessible for women during the first half of the eighteenth century, some of the gendered approaches to the classics remained well into the second half of the period. In ‘To my Friend Mrs. ---. On her holding an Argument in Favour of the Natural Equality of both the Sexes. Written in the Year MDCCLVI’ Clara Reeve compares how ‘Some among the men we find / Effeminate in form and mind, / Some women masculine are seen / In mind, behaviour, and in mein’.⁵⁸⁹ Reeve also records how ‘Those talents, that were once my pride, / I find it requisite to hide; / For what in man is most respected, / In woman’s form shall be rejected.’⁵⁹⁰ Throughout this thesis it has been noted how women from across the classes had received much of their knowledge of the classics in a

⁵⁸⁸ See *Poems for Young Ladies*, p. 242.

⁵⁸⁹ *Women Poets*, ed. Lonsdale, p. 248.

⁵⁹⁰ *Women Poets*, ed. Lonsdale, p. 249.

clandestine form, whether it be Chudleigh's descent into an intellectual underworld, Montagu's 'stealing' of the Latin language or Leapor's taking time from her work to read and write. This remained the case for some women in the second half of the eighteenth century; for Reeve, the challenge was to hide her knowledge for fear of social rebuke and isolation.

When considering women's relationship with the classics in the eighteenth century, it has become commonplace to think of the Bluestockings and the achievements of writers like Carter in the second half of the century as typical of how eighteenth-century women publicly demonstrated not only their knowledge of the classics but also their learning more generally. This thesis has explored the fifty years that preceded this period, outlining both the challenges that women faced, the alternative means by which they achieved a knowledge of the classics and the ways in which they constructed spaces wherein they could demonstrate their learning. The ways in which women engaged with the classics that have been explored have been as miscellaneous as the fragmentary forms in which the ancient world generally reached them. Unsurprisingly, the concept of a female classicism in the first fifty years of the eighteenth century is elusive, relying often on the metamorphosis of genres and topoi, on the adaptation of single episodes, on allusions and echoes to various translations, and on the continuation of works by writers like Dryden and Pope that made the classics more accessible. That women engaged with the classical world in this period can no longer be in question, but the scale of their interaction has yet to be fully recognised. More work – on the fabular tradition, on the reception of Greek fragments, and on the reception of other writers from the classical world – is needed to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of these moments of contact. As the history of female classicism becomes better understood, it is hoped that further studies like this one will ensure that the experiences of eighteenth-century women and their consequent experiments are not ignored. The women discussed

throughout these pages help us realise that, regardless of gender or class, the classics can speak to everyone – all we have to do is listen.

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