

Women Readers and Female Genres in the 18th century: *The Female  
Quixote and Northanger Abbey*

By Esther Andersland



Master's Thesis

Department of Foreign Languages

University of Bergen

Spring 2023



## Abstract in Norwegian

Denne masteroppgaven tar for seg Charlotte Lennox sin *The Female Quixote* (1752), og Jane Austens *Northanger Abbey* (1817) med fokus på kvinnelige lesere og kvinnelige litterære sjangre. Mens *The Female Quixote* er en parodi på 1600-talls romanser, er *Northanger Abbey* en parodi på den gotiske romanen som blomstret den siste halvdel av 1700-tallet. I begge parodiene møter vi en såkalt «quixote»-karakter, inspirert av Miguel de Cervantes sin hovedkarakter i *Don Quixote* (1605), som forvirrer virkeligheten med verdenen presentert i bøkene de leser. Mens Arabella (fra *The Female Quixote*) forventer melodramatiske eventyr, kidnappingsforsøk og møte med prinsesser, mistenker Catherine (fra *Northanger Abbey*) at gotiske forbrytelser har blitt begått på Northanger Abbey. Ved bruken av en kvinnelig «quixote»-karakter passet parodi-sjangeren godt til å støtte den litterære diskursen på 1700-tallet som mente at kvinner var lett påvirkelige og sto i fare for å bli moralsk ødelagt av romanlesing.

Selv om *The Female Quixote* ble lest på sin samtid som en didaktisk anti-romantisk parodi, vil jeg i min masteroppgave argumentere for at Lennox forsiktig forsvaret både romanse-sjangeren og den kvinnelige leseren gjennom sin portrettering av Arabella som en moralsk konstant karakter. Jane Austen er mer åpenbar i sitt forsvar av den gotiske sjangeren og demonstrerer at Catherine sin karakter ikke er blitt påvirket av lesingen. Samtidig som begge forfattere forsvaret romanlesing, retter de det kritiske søkelyset mot kvinners skjermede oppdragelse, manglende utdanning og fraværende mentorfigurer. Dette diskuteres i det første analytiske kapittelet (kapittel to).

I kapittel tre fokuserer jeg på hvordan begge parodier gjentar heller enn å kritisere det profemunistiske budskapet som formidles i romansen og i den gotiske romanen. I *The Female Quixote* illustreres viktigheten av kvinners liv gjennom historiefortelling, i tillegg til at kvinners intellekt og autonomi blir tatt opp som tema. I *Northanger Abbey* blir det gotiske narrative rundt kvinners lidelse under den patriarkalske tyrann gjenfortalt i en mer realistisk kontekst. Kort oppsummert argumenterer jeg i min masteroppgave for at begge parodier fremmer et profemunistisk budskap omhandlende kvinners utdanning, kvinners historier, stigmatisering rundt kvinners kreative verk, samt kvinners lidelse og manglende rettigheter i det patriarkalske samfunnet.



## **Acknowledgments**

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Laura Saetveit Miles. Thank you for your clear and constructive feedback as well as your caring and attentive support during this process. Our meetings have always been motivating, and your excited interest in my topic has made the work so much more enjoyable!

I would also like to thank my friends and master-writing “colleagues” at UiB – Vilde, Martine, Kaja and Nicola – for encouraging conversations and support during the last two semesters!

Finally, I would like to thank family and friends who have been a much-needed distraction and emotional support during the last year. I could not have done it without you!

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b>	
<b>Theoretical Chapter.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
<b>Defending the Female Genre: Moral Constancy and Women’s Upbringing .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	
<b>The Symbolic Criticism in the Gothic/Romance Novel: Women’s Stories and Women’s Rights.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>104</b>



## Introduction

Towards the end of the 18th century in England, a new literary genre was developed, devoured, and heavily criticized. The gothic novel, with its haunted castles, pining lovers, and evil villains, drew upon the elements of old chivalric and sentimental romances. It was grimly suspenseful and chaotically imaginative, and it cast a dark and emotional shadow over the reason and order of the Enlightenment Era. It invited a new kind of obsessive reading, and soon the genre dominated the literary production.

Part of the reason for the genre's popularity was its fateful coincidence with the "reading revolution" (Wittmann 1999, 285). This was due to the beginning of mass print culture at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and as Gothic literature infiltrated more and more homes, the genre was eagerly condemned by critics. Part of the criticism was pointed at the Gothic's connection with women. Firstly, it was generally assumed that women were the main consumer of Gothic literature, and critics were concerned with how the novels might affect young, female readers. Several 18<sup>th</sup> century critics, like Sara Pennington and Richard Allestree, argued that women were imitative readers, "who tend to repeat in life what they read in fiction" (Uphaus 1987, 336). This claim came from the belief that women supposedly had no "moral constancy," or, as Alexander Pope wrote in "Epistle to A Lady" (1743), that "Most Women have no Character at all" (Uphaus 1987, 339). The melodramatic plots of Gothic literature as well as the underlying erotic tension was seen as threatening to a young woman's development. Secondly, many Gothic novels were written by female authors, and consequently were criticised for its poor quality. The criticism's underlying claim was that women could not write good literature. William Beckford was such a critic, and he used the Gothic parodies, *Modern Novel Writing* (1796) and *Azemias* (1797), to criticise female writing (Neill 2016, 9).

Although this criticism of the Gothic novel as a female genre developed as the Gothic genre grew, the awareness of the "dangers" of female novel reading existed before the birth of the Gothic. Already in 1752, Charlotte Lennox captured and capitalized on this fear when she wrote *The Female Quixote*, a romance parody inspired by Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605). In Cervantes' novel, Don Quixote's reality perception is distorted by his reading habits. In *The Female Quixote*, the main character is a young woman based on Cervantes' character, who is obsessed with 17<sup>th</sup> century French romances. Like the heroines she reads about, Arabella is beautiful, charming, and intelligent. She is also wealthy and high-born, as the heroines usually



are (though sometimes secretly). When Arabella's father introduces her to her cousin, Mr Glanville, as an intended husband, Arabella rebels against the notion. She is not motivated by a dislike for Mr Glanville's person, but by his disregard for the romantic procedures of courtship. Her rejection is due to her obsessive romance reading, which has altered how she sees reality: "from [the romances] she drew all her Notions and Expectations" (*TFQ*, 7). This is told to us by the narrator, and the didactic commentary continues throughout the novel as Arabella's strange, romantic behaviour is repetitively demonstrated and remarked on. When Arabella's father dies, both Mr Glanville's pursuit and Arabella's steadfast rejection continue through a series of social scenes at Arabella's country home as well as in the high society of Bath and London. Finally, Arabella is convinced by a doctor (inspired by Samuel Johnson) to forgo her romantic delusions, which leads her to accept Mr Glanville's hand in marriage. *The Female Quixote* was the first parody to feature a female quixote figure and soon many other authors were inspired to repeat Lennox's formula. One of them was Jane Austen.

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* was published in 1817. However, it was written quite a few years earlier as the author herself explains in an "Advertisement" included in Oxford Press' edition of the novel: "This little work was finished in the year 1803, and intended for immediate publication. It was disposed of to a bookseller, it was even advertised, and why the business proceeded no further the author has never been able to learn" (*NA*, 12). Consequently, *Northanger Abbey* was likely written in the late 1790s. Like *The Female Quixote*, it centres on a woman reader. Protagonist Catherine Morland loves sentimental Gothic novels, and her favourite is Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Catherine is, like Arabella, new to the social scene in Bath, and struggles to interpret the words and actions of those around her. She befriends Isabella Thorpe, a fellow reader, and develops feelings for Henry Tilney. She is soon invited by the Tilneys to their home, Northanger Abbey, which is similar to the old, Gothic houses in her novels. This similarity eventually leads her to harbour dark suspicions about the intimidating General Tilney and his late wife. Her suspicions are inspired by the tropes of her novels, involving mistreatment, entrapment and even murder. She is confronted about these suspicions by Henry, and immediately regrets her behaviour. After having been thrown out of the Abbey by the General, however, simply for being "less rich than he had supposed her to be" (*NA*, 244), Catherine concludes that she has not been far off in her estimation of the General. Like Lennox, Austen ends the novel with the marriage between the heroine, Catherine, and the hero, Henry Tilney.

I find *The Female Quixote (TFQ)* and *Northanger Abbey (NA)* relevant to discuss together for multiple reasons. Firstly, *TFQ* was a successful novel which inspired a tradition of female quixote novels, meaning Austen was in all likelihood also influenced by this parody when she wrote *NA*. Therefore, although the two novels comment on different genres – *TFQ* on French 17<sup>th</sup> century romances and *NA* on Gothic novels – the topics of female reading and the female genre are very similar. As I mentioned earlier, the genres themselves also have much in common, as the Gothic was heavily influenced by the romance genre. Secondly, both novels convey commentary on novels and female reading. My thesis will argue that both *TFQ* and *NA* defend their reading heroines by presenting them as moral being beings, thereby defending the real female readers of their times. Moreover, by echoing rather than ridiculing the proto-feminist critique of the hypogenres, both parodies convey commentary on the female experience in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, such as women’s education and upbringing, the stigmatization of women’s creative work, the silencing of women’s stories, female autonomy, as well as women’s suffering and lack of legal rights under patriarchal tyranny.

While *NA* delivers these proto-feminist messages in a (partly) direct manner, *TFQ* hides its rebellious commentary behind didactic narrator, whose commentary aligns itself with the popular discourse on female readers and novel reading. Because of this, *TFQ* was read as an anti-romance parody by its contemporary critics. Eli Løfaldli exemplifies how one critic, Henry Fielding, applauded Lennox’s use of a female quixote because she was more likely to fall victim to literary delusions:

Henry Fielding, for instance, argued that Lennox’s use of a female quixote made the plot of her novel more plausible. A young woman was a more likely quixote than a man in Fielding’s opinion; he went so far as to argue that “most young Woman of the same Vivacity [as Arabella], and of the same innocent good Disposition, in the same Situation, and with the same Studies, would be able to make a large Progress in the same Follies.” (Løfaldli 2000, 37)

To the contemporary readers, it appears, Arabella is representative of young, female readers, who, under similar circumstances, “would be able to make a large Progress in the same Follies.” Here, we see how the critics thought of the female readers as more impressionable than the male, due to their lack of “Character” (Uphaus 1987, 339).

In many ways, the author does appear to deliver this same message and promote the popular discourse on female novel reading. For example, the strong, didactic presence of the

narrator is reminiscent of the critics. In fact, during Arabella's conversion scene, many critics believe that it is Samuel Johnson, a friend and mentor of Charlotte Lennox and eager novel critic, who takes over the pen and voice of the narrator and characters. Anna Uddén refers to this discussion of who wrote Lennox's penultimate chapter in her paper on *The Female Quixote*:

Critics who for various reasons do not credit the authorial source with creative agency maintain that Lennox did not write it — or could not have written it; Samuel Johnson himself wrote it, they claim ... Ronald Paulson dismisses the penultimate chapter of Lennox's novel in an aside — an illuminating parenthesis — as written by Samuel Johnson “or some other older mentor.” (Uddén 2008, 171)

Whether or not Samuel Johnson did in fact write Lennox's penultimate chapter, it is certain that his influence is strong, since so many academics question the authorship. Given Lennox's emulation of such real, contemporary critics, it is perhaps no wonder that Henry Fielding read *The Female Quixote* as a novel-form of the popular discourse on romances and female reading.

Another way in which Lennox appears to support the popular discourse, is by linking Arabella to real-life readers. She does this by referring to real 18<sup>th</sup> century romance novels. This roots *TFQ*'s fictional world to the real 18<sup>th</sup> century world of its readers, and it also further links the narrator to the contemporary critics, like Henry Fielding. In the following passage we find examples of the sort of romance novels Arabella enjoyed. Mr Glanville has promised to read her books in order to gain her affection and she has them brought to him:

Arabella having ordered one of her Women to bring Cleopatra, Cassandra, Clelia, and the Grand Cyrus, from her Library, Glanville no sooner saw the Girl return, sinking under the Weight of those voluminous Romances. (*TFQ*, 49)

Most, if not all, of the novels mentioned above are real 17<sup>th</sup> century popular Romances. *Cassandra* was written by Gauthier de Costes and published in 1652. *Clelia*, or *Clélie*, written by Madeleine de Scudéry, was a five-part novel published between 1654 and 1650 in Paris. Madeleine de Scudéry appears to be a favourite author of Arabella's, as she also wrote *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* along with her brother Georges de Scudéry, which was a ten-part novel published between 1643-1649. *Cleopatra* was written by Gauthier de Costes de La Calprenede in 1674. Because of this, not only is the narrator who is linked to the real-life contemporary critics, but Arabella is also linked to real-life readers. Any criticism or defence

of her as reader can therefore be seen as a criticism or defence of women readers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

However, there also exists evidence in *TFQ* which contradicted the anti-romance discourse. For example, Arabella's character rebels against Alexander Pope's claim that women "have no character." Arabella's behaviour is consistent, both morally and otherwise. Especially in the comparison with other characters, we see how Lennox presents Arabella as more principled and more virtuous than her companions. Another aspect which contradicts the popular discourse is the literary context of *TFQ*. One argument which has inspired my discussion is Zak Watson's claim that when *TFQ* was written, romances were long ago out of fashion, so satirising it for didactic purposes would have made little sense: "As a satire of "those Romances," *The Female Quixote* had certainly lost its aim by 1752; as a satire of the calculating world of formal realism, its aim was true" (Watson 2011, 41). By historically contextualising the novel, Watson questions Lennox's intention behind writing it. If she meant to make a meaningful contribution to the literary conversation, criticising the literary world's obsession with realism would have made more sense.

While I consider the didactic presence Lennox allows through the narrator, I argue that there is also a rebellious undercurrent running through the novel. This undercurrent defends not only Arabella as a female reader, but also the romance novel as a genre. In the following chapters I compare how *TFQ* hides its rebellious, novel-supporting message under a didactic, obvious one, whereas *NA* is free to present boldly its message in direct speeches to the reader. One of the reasons for this is the different historical contexts of the two novels. Løfaldli notes how Lennox lives in a time when the public is more conscious of "the dangers of fiction," and therefore must present herself as a "polite female author figure," who is attentive of this danger:

Emerging in the mid-century decades, the polite female author figure was established as a contrast to the scandalous and infamous female writers of earlier years (Løfaldli 2000, 8). Lennox distances her literary work from such precursors by deriding heroic romance, and this presents herself as a polite author with an awareness of the danger immoral literature could present to its young readers (Løfaldli 2000, 37); At the time *Northanger Abbey* was written, the concern of "the dangers of fiction" had, compared with mid-century attitudes, subsided, but novels were still not exempt from a certain degree of scepticism. (Løfaldli 2000, 66)

Because Austen is not as bound by the public's heightened fear of "the dangers of fiction," she is free to be more transparent with her novel-supporting message. Lennox, however, must be aware of not only "the danger immoral literature could present to its young readers," but also of the fact that she is a woman author. She protects herself from the scrutiny that might bring by presenting herself as a "polite female author figure" and by not openly challenging the public's discourse on novel reading. Consequently, Lennox and Austen's roles as female authors are important in my discussion. While Lennox hides behind male mentor figures and popular discourse, Austen boldly defends female authors, female readers, and female genres. Still, I will attempt to argue that both novels deliver strong proto-feminist messages.

The issue with writing a thesis about the topic of female readers and female genres, and also discussing these two parodies specifically, is that there is much modern critical material on these topics. While this undoubtedly a good thing, as I rest my arguments on the shoulders of the many capable academics that have gone before me, it brings with it the difficult task of adding something new to the discussion. Many have challenged the anti-romance interpretation of *TFQ*, and many have discussed Austen's defence of novel reading. Therefore, my contribution to the discussion is to use the authors' defence of the woman reader and the female genre to discuss how the parodies criticise the patriarchal society in which they write. Again, this is not completely untouched by critics, but my thesis is arguably more focused on this precise angle than many other analyses.

In my thesis, I have two analytical chapters, and my first one (Chapter Two) is structured as the novels' response to the critics' accusation regarding how the novel might negatively influence the woman reader, allegedly making them morally corrupt and become "unsexed" and cunningly "coquettish" through the claiming of power. *TFQ* and *NA* responds by demonstrating moral constancy, artlessness, and humility in their heroines. Also, the parodies shift the critical focus from the novels their heroines read to the sheltered upbringing, failing mentor figures and lacking education of young women. In my second analytical chapter, (Chapter Three), I discuss how both parodies echo rather than ridicule the proto-feminist messages found in the romance and the Gothic novel. These messages revolve around the importance of women's stories as well as female suffering, female legal rights, and patriarchal tyranny. Additionally, the parodies present proto-feminist messages regarding autonomy, the female intellect, and stereotypical assumptions of gender.

In other words, I argue in my master thesis that both Lennox and Austen use the parody genre, which has traditionally been deployed to attack female readers, writers, and

genres, to instead reenforce the hypogenres' proto-feminist messages and criticize society's negligent and harmful treatment of women, from their faulty upbringing and education to the silencing of their stories, stigmatization of their creative work and victimization from patriarchal tyrants. Before I go into the discussion, however, I begin with a theoretical chapter which provides a foundation for my thesis. Finally, although I will be discussing how *TFQ* and *NA* defend the romance and the Gothic genre, I do not mean to argue that there is no criticism of the genres in the parodies. There exists plenty of evidence of ridicule of the genres in both parodies. However, I believe that this is an acknowledgement that there exists many terrible examples of romances and Gothic novels alongside the good ones, and that the literal interpretation of them is deserving of some criticism. However, this light-hearted mocking is less serious than the criticism directed towards society's treatment of women.

## Chapter One

### **Theoretical Chapter:**

In my theoretical chapter I seek to provide a foundation for the discussion in my thesis. I will therefore present a short introduction to the romance genre, the Gothic novel, the Gothic as a female genre, the woman reader, the Gothic parody, the parody as criticism, as well as gendered criticism in the parody.

### **The Romance**

In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, fictional prose was divided into two categories. Dieter Schultz notes that a clear distinction was made between “the realistic " novel " and the non-realistic, poetic, and mythic " romance” (Schultz 1973, 77). The romances had been around for centuries, with its melodramatic tropes of knights in shining armour and damsels in distress, and in the early 1700s they were still very much alive, receiving both praise and censure. As James Grantham Turner describes, some current critics approved of the romance and championed it for “upholding 'Heroick Love' and 'confining the Subject to strict Rules of Virtue and Honour,” while others accused it “of fostering unbridled eroticism” (Turner 2012, 59).

Arguably, the anti-romance critics were either a bigger group or shouted a little louder. Schultz quotes early 1700s letters and essays, as well as Henry Fielding’s novel *In Joseph Andrews* (1742), which all criticise the romances in various ways:

In *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708), Shaftesbury points out the pernicious influence of romances and novels ... Hume's *Essays and Political* (Edinburgh, 174 ), [romances are presented as] "false Representations of Mankind" (Schultz 1973, 82-83); In *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Fielding censures "the Authors of immense Romances, or the modern Novel and Atalantis Writers" for the improbabilities of their narratives ... The authors of " foolish Novels, and monstrous Romances" are capable of nothing more than "indecent and abusive" language; "to the Composition of Novels and Romances, nothing is necessary but Paper, Pens and Ink, with the manual Capacity of using them." (Schultz 1973, 82)

According to these contemporary critics, the romances can have a harmful effect on its readers, possibly because of “false Representations of Mankind” or the “unbridled eroticism” referred to earlier. Additionally, the language of the romances is accused of being both “incident” and of poor quality. In fact, the romances’ language was so distinct that it was one of its greatest definable features. W. Walsh wrote in 1749 that "Romances and Novels are often writ in this mixt language between Poetry and Prose; and hence it is sometimes called the Romantick style" (Schultz 1973, 82-83).

Interestingly, despite the previous distinction made between the novel and the romance, the two genres were often interchangeably referred to. Turner writes:

Prose fiction (unlike tragedy or pastoral) lacked an established generic name, and these two words competed to fill the void. Sometimes they are interchangeable, sometimes diametrically opposed. 'Novels and Romances' were contemptuously lumped together as late as the 1750s. (Turner 2012, 59)

This simultaneously synonymous and diametrically opposed relationship of the two genres can easily lead to confusion. However, *TFQ* - as well as many contemporary critics I have come across – appear to mainly mix the two genres together, sometimes referring to them as romance novels. Therefore, for the purpose of my master thesis, romances and novels refer to the same genre when I discuss *TFQ* and romances. I have also found the same tendency for the Gothic genre, as both Austen and contemporary critics use “novels” when specifically referring to the Gothic genre.

## **The Gothic Novel**

The first Gothic novel is usually assumed to be Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) (Munderlein 2021, 54). Then followed a number of Gothic novels until the genre peaked in the 1790s, when Ann Radcliffe dominated the genre with novels like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). The Gothic genre elicited strong and opposing reactions. According to the contemporary narrative, at least, it was generally immensely loved by readers and equally loathed by the critics.

Gothic is by most scholars seen as a reaction to the Enlightenment era’s reason and rationality (Munderlein 2021, 53). Consequently, the Gothic focused on feeling. Life was a struggle for order in the face of chaos, and the Gothic genre was a reaction to this: “instead of



notions of order and decorum and rational judgement, it represents the darker side of awareness, the side to which sensibility and imagination belong, together with those less categorizable areas of guilt, fear and madness” (Munderlein 2021, 53). In Gothic novels, this darkness was expressed through the grim setting and the evil atrocities committed by villains. Imagination was expressed through escapist adventures, and sensibility through the romantic language as well as the heightened feelings of the characters. The rise of the Gothic novel is also connected with the drastic growth in general reading at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Reinhart Wittmann describes this period as a “reading revolution” (Wittmann 1999, 285), which can be attributed to the “the rapid expansion of the market for books which began in the 1770s” (Woodmansee 1984, 432).

Additionally, the Gothic genre can be seen a continuation and developing of the romance genre. Robert D. Hume notes that “Horace Walpole saw his novel as part of a resurgence of romance against neoclassical restrictions” (Hume 1969, 282). Hume further writes:

The early Gothic novels, to borrow Walpole's terms again, were "romances," unrestrained exercises of that imagination against whose excesses Dr. Johnson warned so sternly. Gothic and romantic writing are closely related chronologically and share some themes and characteristics ... (Hume 1969, 288)

Because the Gothic genre was built upon the romance genre, in terms of “themes and characteristics,” it makes sense that the critical reception of the Gothic was similar to that of the romances.

Two types of Gothic novels were developed: the so-called “female tradition,” inspired by Ann Radcliffe’s novels and the “male tradition,” inspired by Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) (Munderlein 2021, 56). The “female tradition” is “female” because of the women authors who followed in Radcliffe’s footsteps, while the male authors followed the “male tradition.” There may have been some gendering of the readers here as well, but this is more difficult to determine. As I will discuss in my thesis, women were in general assumed to be the main readers of all Gothic novels. Munderlein remarks that “while the female tradition was known for ‘sentimental romance,’ the male tradition was known for ‘gory extremism’” (Munderlein 2021, 56). The distinction between the two types is important, as it reveals the different expectations society had for the two gendered subgenres, as well as the different concerns expressed by them. The male authors had more leeway with dark immoral subjects,

like sexual deviation and gruesome murders. Additionally, “while male Gothic presents male protagonists trying to penetrate some form of interior, female Gothic presents female protagonists trying to escape from some form of interior” (Munderlein 2021, 59). Here, Munderlein alludes to the underlying critical symbolism found in Radcliffe’s works, which I will be discussing more in this thesis. Both the male and female tradition used the Gothic to express socio-political criticism, but the flood of “meaningless imitative works” contributed to the stigma as bad literature (Munderlein 2021, 58).

### **The Gothic as a Female Genre**

Despite this gendered division, the Gothic genre as a whole was soon associated exclusively with women. Additionally, the Gothic was seen as feminine in form, with its focus on feeling and irrationality, which were viewed as feminine qualities. Scott Mackenzie also describes the Gothic novels as “domestic”: “home is ever-present, ever-discussed, ever-sought” (Mackenzie 1999, 409), and the domestic sphere was linked with women.

It is in the criticism of the Gothic genre, however, where we find a clear narrative regarding its connections to women. The genre’s faults are many and they are mostly feminine. Firstly, the mass production, and consequent “mass-consumption,” of novels was in itself a problem, and this was blamed on women. The Gothic novel

was linked to unregulated modes of production, such as the prolific Minerva Press with its insatiable customer base in the rapidly proliferating circulating libraries, was also damning, as it played into cultural anxieties that the nation was being ruined by a female propensity for light reading. (Munderlein 2021, 56)

Moreover, even in the larger context of an increasingly capitalist society, women were seen as the *consumer*, which again strengthened their link to mass print. Interestingly,

the pursuit of profit tend[ed] to be represented not as an aggressive, thrusting, “masculine” activity, but as an innocent, gentle, civilising past time, linked to the faculties of sensibility and sociability and typically gendered “feminine” in opposition to the traditionally valorised aristocratic functions of public service and military leadership, gendered “masculine.” (Clery 1995, 102)

The growing capitalism which caused so much concern in society was consequently gendered, with women as the guilty party. In other words, the change in socio-economic culture was

seen as a “crisis of masculinity” (Clery 1995, 105). Society was undergoing a change of values, moving from the male “sublime” which represented “the principle of labour or exertion” to the female “beautiful” which represented “the excessive relaxation of the [body] and [mind]” (Clery 1995, 104). The mass “consumption” of novels or the drastic increase in *leisure reading*, apparently led by women, was seen as a representation of this. Much of the critical concern was reactions to this: “the sublime ... arrives to remedy ... the beautiful, which had threatened to end in a resistless dissolution of identity” (Clery 1995, 104). In other words, male critics had to stop women readers from reading so many novels and thus poisoning society with the leisured “beautiful” rather than the productive “sublime.”

Another criticism aimed at the Gothic novel was its Anti-Enlightenment lack of realism. After the second edition of *Otranto* was published, where it was revealed that it was in fact a modern fiction rather than a historic legend, *Monthly Review* reacted: “...a nation guided by reason, in an age of reason, will not produce modern literary works which could be mistaken for the products of the age of superstition; if such work does appear, it must not be countenanced” (Clery 1995, 55). The critics are clearly protective of society’s identity as rational, and the Gothic novels challenge this. Contemporary author-critic Samuel Johnson also added to this discourse. He criticises novels for its supernatural elements and unlikely narratives and argues that fiction must not only be realistic, but also “in pursuit of a universal conception of what reality *should be*” as the readers of such novels are typically young, ignorant, and uninformed, and will likely imitate fiction in their lives (Clery 1995, 58). Although *Otranto* was written by a man, irrationality and unrealistic narratives were in large part pinned on women, as I will soon come back to in my discussion of parodies.

### **The Woman Reader**

One of the greatest problems the contemporary critics had with the Gothic genre, was not with the novels themselves, but with their readers. The underlying assumption was that women were much more impressionable than men. Robert Uphaus discusses the contemporary sentiments that women could only possess the second order virtue “humanity,” not “generosity,” which required self-denial and self-command, because they lacked “moral constancy” (Uphaus 1987, 339). He deduces this discourse from multiple contemporary critic-authors such as Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry Into the Duty of the Female Sex* (1797), and Adam Smith, and also from Alexander Pope who wrote that “Most Women have no Character

at all," in "Epistle to A Lady" (1743). The underlying assumption that "women have no character" explains much of the hysteria regarding women reading, as he suggests that they can be easily moulded since there is no solid core, be it moral or otherwise, to withstand external influence.

Chesterfield's assertion that "Women, then, are only children of a larger growth" further substantiates this idea, as people develop when they are children (Uphaus 1987, 340). By stating that women are like children, he claims that women exist in a perpetual state of "shaping," never to reach a mature and constant state. Additionally, the comparison with children infantilizes women, suggesting that they are in continuous need of guidance and protection from corruption. Consequently, these critic-authors explain why women are more impressionable than men, and why they should be shielded from certain kinds of literature. Furthermore, these "authors subscribe to the stereotype that women lack the constancy necessary for the exertion of moral conduct" (Uphaus 1987, 340). In other words, women were supposed to be beings of sensation, not moral beings. For this reason, the assumption was that they were unable to withstand the various influences of the novel. Uphaus continues to list more 18<sup>th</sup> century critics, like Sara Pennington and Richard Allestree, who argue that women are imitative readers, "who tend to repeat in life what they read in fiction" (Uphaus 1987, 336).

The question remains, what "dangerous influences" did these author-critics fear could corrupt the young, female readers, and how were they realized in the Gothic novels? One major concern was that women might transgress their traditional feminine role, inspired by the "unsex'd" women writers. In his book on English feminists in the 1790s, William Stafford writes about how women writers were sorted into the two categories of "proper" or "radical" women (Stafford 2002, 1). This is best exemplified, he writes, in Richard Polwhele's poem *The Unsex'd Females*, Polwhele defines the radical women as "unsex'd." He is not referring to hypothetical women, summarises the names in a list of nine women writers which includes Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, and Helen Maria Williams (Stafford 2002, 2). These radical writers, Polwhele claims, are neglecting their womanly nature and smothering "their softer charms." By claiming that "defiance flashes from the arms," he is referring to how their views are transferred to the written word and conveyed to the minds of readers. Though the listed writers wrote different kinds of literature, like essays and poetry, most of them also wrote novels. The concern amongst conservative critics, like Polwhele, was the influence these writers would have on the readers. They too, the critics worried, might become "unsex'd."

Peter H. Pawlowicz notes that other critics, like Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831), a Scottish lawyer and writer, and Richard Berenger (1719-1782), an English courtier and writer, worried specifically about how novels might influence a woman to refuse or become ill-suited for marriage:

Sympathies evoked by reading were no less perilous, for they might disqualify women as wives and mothers. Henry Mackenzie summarized the problem. The “principal danger” rose from a “war of duties” ... In particular, charged Richard Berenger, novels “cheated” women of marriage. Ladies who would have been “good wives and mothers” were divorced from the proper “affections of social life” ... Together, imitation and sympathy with their threat to marriage constituted the great danger to women readers. Critics condemned the force of imitation, the inversion of sympathy, and the false expectation of romance. In doing so, they represented the subversive reader from outside, from the perspective of the patriarchal order that it challenged. (Pawlowicz 1995, 43-44)

The concern expressed by Mackenzie and Berenger was that women would essentially be tricked by novels’ “false expectation of romance” to refuse marriage. This concern is demonstrated in *TFQ*, as Arabella refuses Mr Glanville because he fails to recommend himself in the proper fashion of romantic heroes. From the perspective of these critics, this was a tragedy for the women, who were “divorced from the proper affections of social life,” but it was also a threat to the “patriarchal order” which was built upon the institution of marriage.

### **The Gothic Parody**

There were many ways in which this critical discourse was expressed, but one method was the Gothic parody. Only a few years after *Otranto* was published, the first Gothic parody was written: *Sir Bertrand* (1773) by John Aikin (Munderlein 2021, 60). It wasn’t until the late 1780s, however, when the Gothic genre was starting to really take off, that the Gothic parody became common. In her article, Neill defines the Gothic parody “a form of repetition with ironic critical difference” (Neill 2016, 190). In other words, the parodists reuse many of the elements of the Gothic novel, like narrative structure, setting and tropes, but approaches the elements in an ironical way. This was often usually done with the aid of humour and exaggeration, which then criticises the Gothic elements through ridicule.

However, Neill also points out that authors had several reasons for parodying the Gothic genre, one of which was profiting of the success of the Gothic genre as the parodies contains many of the same elements: “they critiqued the genre and sought to profit from it; they used parody as a vehicle of social satire; and they also wrote parodies simply to entertain” (Neill 2016, 200). In other words, writing Gothic parodies was a clever way of making money, as you satisfied both the readers who wanted novels with Gothic elements and the moralist critics who wanted to read about how terrible the Gothic novels were.

Interestingly, differentiating between the Gothic novel and the Gothic parody can be challenging, as the Gothic novel also includes many of the elements typical of the Gothic parody, like comedy and exaggeration (Munderlein 2021, 61). In other words, the Gothic novel actually uses the same literary devices as the Gothic parody to satirise its own elements. Ann Radcliffe, for examples, is known to do this. As Neill explains, Radcliffe parodies “her own policy of explained supernatural through the very implausibility of the ‘rational’ explanations that she provides” (Neill 2016, 189). The similarities between the Gothic novels and the Gothic parody are sometimes so great that Munderlein argues that one should look to whether or not the author has written with parodic intent (Munderlein 2021, 66). However, “parodic intent” is not always so easy to decipher, so there will often be room for some ambiguity in the interpretation of parodies – as is the case with both *TFQ* and *NA*.

My two elected works belong to a specific subgenre of the parody, namely the Quixotic tale, which parodies the reader as much as the Gothic novel. Natalie Neill notes how: “[c]oncerns about Gothic’s harmful influence on susceptible readers found expression in a large class of Gothic parodies modelled after Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605), Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752), and other works in the anti-Romance tradition” (Neill 2016, 199). Central to this parody was the quixotic protagonist, who, like Don Quixote, is obsessed with a certain kind of novel, often Gothic or sentimental, which wrongly shapes their worldview and influences their behaviour. This leads to ridicule of the protagonist and, eventually, as we find in the examples of *Northanger Abbey* and *The Female Quixote*, conversion away from such a distorted worldview.

### **The Parody as Criticism**

Neill defines the parody as a “form of literary criticism” (Neill 2016, 190), while Munderlein refers to the parody as “any cultural practice which makes a relatively polemical

allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice” (Munderlein 2021, 40). Here, they suggest that a parody is necessarily critical of the parodied text, although Munderlein more specifically argues that “all parody has the capacity to criticise a plethora of elements from a hypotext [the parodies text] without rejecting the whole, as is again visible by Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, for instance” (Munderlein 2021, 43). Moreover, she argues that the parody “far exceeds the scope of “only literature” ... since literature is inherently a reaction to reality” (Munderlein 2021, 44). According to Munderlein, the parody “adds to social and political discourses in a *different way* than its hypotext” (Munderlein 2021, 40). In other words, the Gothic parodies not only criticised the literary elements of the Gothic novel, but also its underlying social and political sentiments. As I will discuss in my thesis, however, this is where Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* stands out from other Gothic parodies, as she supports rather than criticizes her hypotext’s proto-feminist sentiments.

Munderlein introduces two kinds of criticisms to be found in the Gothic parody: the “moral-ideological criticism,” which criticises moral-ideological sentiments expressed in the parodied text, and the “literary-aesthetic” criticism, which criticises the quality of the writing in the parodied text (Munderlein 2021, 97). She further argues that these two criticisms cannot be separated, and their interdependent relationship explains the expectations contemporary critics and society at large held for novels. Specifically, a novel was “bad writing” if it expressed “bad morals,” which helps explain why the Gothic was seen as “bad literature.” Munderlein presents the example of the Gothic heroine’s behaviour, such as unchaperoned riding. This was viewed as “bad writing” by the contemporary critics because it is unrealistic that a real, young woman would do this, but also problematic morally as it would be indecent and inappropriate (Munderlein 2021, 97). This demonstrates the contemporary attitude towards literature; “good writing” was “moral writing,” which must necessarily coincide with the popular sentiment of how things, for example gender roles, should be. If a text challenged the popular view, it would be mocked as “bad literature.” One can look for this connection in the exemplified gendered criticism presented below.

### **Gendered Criticism in Parodies**

The parody was also used to criticize women writers and readers. One goal of my thesis is to demonstrate through my elected parodies the socio-political sentiments regarding women readers and novels. However, this is a two-part analysis, which must focus both on the

woman reader and on the novel, or rather, the Gothic or romance novel, which was of major concern. Interestingly, the latter part also comes back to prejudice against women, as the Gothic and romance novels were stigmatized *because* they were so often written by women. In the paragraphs below I will discuss how Gothic parodies criticized both the woman author and the woman reader.

Neill uses the example of William Beckford's Gothic parodies, *Modern Novel Writing* (1796) and *Azemia* (1797), to demonstrate how parodies criticised woman authors. Importantly, Beckford wrote the parodies under false names: *Modern Novel Writing* (1796) was written under the pen name "Lady Harriet Marlow" and *Azemia* (1797) under Jaquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks" (Neill 2016, 193). By "breaking all rules of good writing," Beckford satirized female authorship (Neill 2016, 193-194). Specifically, Beckford mocked the fictional female authors' "convoluted plotlines," "technical ineptitude" and "nonessential characters" (Neill 2016, 193) before finally listing the real-life inspirations: "At the end of *Azemia*, Jenks names the writers whom she has emulated; her list, which includes Radcliffe, Mary Robinson, Sophia Lee, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith" (Neill 2016, 193). In other words, Beckford argues that women are not skilled enough to write proper novels and the imaginative narratives are evidence of woman as unreliable narrator. These are all examples of literary-aesthetic criticism, which points out how the Gothic is "bad writing." However, Beckford does not just demonstrate that the Gothic is bad; he demonstrates that it is bad *because* women write it. Here, we see Munderlein's discussion in practice: the "literary-aesthetic" criticism cannot be separated from the "moral-ideological" criticism. Because Beckford focuses so heavily on the woman writer as a problem, one cannot help sensing the underlying socio-political claim that women should not write novels. The Gothic genre was stigmatized as literary trash *because* the critics did not approve of the authors' gender.

The Quixotic tale is an example of parodic criticism aimed at women readers, as it falls under the category of "didactic parodies." The didactic parody draws inspiration from the conduct book (Munderlein 2021, 81), and usually centres around young female readers deluded by Gothic novels and must learn to become "convention-abiding women conscious of their gender and class position" (Munderlein 2021, 71). Neill describes the elements of such Quixote parodies:

In Gothic Quixote tales, Gothic elements are removed from foreign, medieval contexts and relocated to settings more familiar to the readers. The Quixotes' book-fuelled fantasies are repeatedly contrasted against a more prosaic modern world. By



accentuating the disparity between the exotic world of Gothic fiction and the modern domestic setting, the parodists call attention to the Gothic's lack of realism. (Neill 2016, 199)

The “didactic parody” and the “Quixote tale” appear and are often used largely synonymous, but the while “didactic” simply means “intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive” according to Oxford Dictionary, the Quixote tale is specifically inspired by Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605). Consequently, the Quixote tale is not only a subgenre of the Gothic parody, but also its own parody genre. The Gothic Quixote tale is simply one of several versions of it. My two primary texts are related through this genre, as *Northanger Abbey* is an example of such a Gothic Quixote tale inspired by *The Female Quixote*.

In my theoretical chapter I have discussed how the Gothic was influenced by the romance genre, and how it was mainly criticised for its connection with women. This criticism was often expressed through parodies, and the (female) quixote parody specifically satirises the (female) obsessive reader, as is the case with my two elected parodies.

## Chapter Two

### **Defending the Female Genre:**

#### **Moral Constancy and Women's Upbringing**

In the time of *The Female Quixote*, women readers were seen by the majority of critics as impressionable “tabula rasas” due to their lack of moral constancy and were consequently in danger of literary corruption. According to Samuel Johnson, a close friend and mentor of Charlotte Lennox, fiction “threaten women more severely than they do men because women - especially unmarried women - have fewer resources for resistance and fewer engrossing alternatives to frivolity” (Spacks 1988, 540). Consequently, according to these contemporary critics, the world of the romances and Gothic novels posed a serious threat to the mind of a young female reader. In reading of the heroine's sexual attractions and the threat of “ravishers,” they might become sexually aware and morally corrupted, and in reading of heroic, powerful women, they might be inspired to claim male authority or turn into cunning “coquettes,” who seek to use their feminine sexuality to control men.

In both *The Female Quixote* and *Northanger Abbey*, the reader encounters these critics' views on women and reading. Especially in *TFQ*, Lennox allows the critic a loud voice through the didactic presence of the narrator. However, she subtly undercuts the narrator's accusations by the characterization of Arabella, defending rather than attacking the female reader and the romance novel, and instead criticising the patriarchal values of society. Austen also defends Catherine as a reader and instead criticises society's insincerity and fickleness through language. While Austen's defence is clear and direct, Lennox's defence is so subtle that contemporary critics read it as an anti-romance parody, applauding its didactic message.

In this chapter, I will argue that both parodies respond to the contemporary critics' view that young women have wrongful expectations of society due to their quixotic obsession with novels as well as their own impressionable nature. Both authors demonstrate their heroines' moral constancy, thereby countering the accusation of impressionability, and instead point to how young women are failed by their parents, mentor figures and educational system. Consequently, it is this failed upbringing, and not novel reading, which has left young women, like Arabella and Catherine, unprepared to meet society's expectations. Furthermore, both novels demonstrate how novel reading does not challenge the traditional power dynamic

between man and woman, as the critics suggest. Arabella's artless nature and principled rather than strategic behaviour suggests that she does not try to control others, and Catherine's humble awareness of her lack of knowledge makes her an eager student to Henry, thereby cementing the traditional gender roles. Instead, the novels link the controlling, "coquettish" behaviour, as found in Charlotte Glanville and Isabella Thorpe, to the patriarchal values of society. Therefore, both novels critique society rather than the romance and Gothic novel. Central to this critique is the experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society. As these novels demonstrate, women are attacked for writing novels, attacked for reading novels, attacked for being too romantic and out of touch with society, and attacked for "cunningly" meeting the expectations of society, as is the case with the coquettes. All in all, this chapter seeks to address all of the accusations made by the contemporary critics regarding novels and female readers, and present the responses as they are conveyed in *TFQ* and *NA*. By doing so, this chapter also demonstrates Lennox's and Austen's both proto-feminist criticism of society's treatment of women, from their faulty upbringing to the stigmatization of their creative work and the impossible and contradictory standards they are expected to live by.

### **PART 1: *The Female Quixote***

#### **DIDACTIC COMMENTARY IN *TFQ***

In *The Female Quixote* the narrator aligns herself with contemporary critics, like Pope and Chesterfield, when she subtly adds didactic commentary to Arabella's behaviour. The direct accusations that are being made by the narrator as well as the other characters is that her reality has been distorted by her novel reading and her moral conscience has been corrupted by this distortion, as she appears to be both comfortable with murder and too aware of her sexual power over men.

In the early introduction of Arabella, the narrator makes her opinion known about Arabella's reading habits. Zak Watson writes that readers' and critics' interpretation of Arabella has been influenced by the narrator's didactic tone and that "[t]he critical distance between the narrator and Arabella is crucial to understanding her character" (Watson 2011, 38). We find an example of this in the early introduction of Arabella and her love of reading:

From her earliest Youth she had discovered a Fondness for Reading, which extremely delighted the Marquis; he permitted her therefore the Use of his Library, in which, unfortunately for her, were great Store of Romances, (*TFQ*, 7)

The quoted passage is only a small excerpt of a rather lengthy in-depth description of Arabella's person and character. Before we even "see" her in action in a scene, or "hear" her talk, the narrator has *told* rather than *shown* the reader what Arabella is like. It is not a neutral description of her, as we see in the clauses describing her reading habits as "unfortunate." Interestingly, no argument is made about why the narrator find Romance novels "unfortunate." Rather, the lack of explanation suggests an obviousness, which the reader either already is or will soon be familiar with. In other words, the narrator "speaks" as though the reader is already in accordance with the fact that romance novels are bad, and if the reader has not yet adopted this view, the narrator's confident certainty appears to be an intended source of influence.

### **Distorted Reality**

The narrator further suggests that Arabella's obsession with romances has distorted her view of reality. In the early descriptive introduction of Arabella, the narrator explains more thoroughly how the romance novels have "damaged" Arabella:

Her Ideas, from the 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. (*TFQ*, 7)

The narrator describes how Arabella expects her own world to be like the worlds of her novels. The underlying assumption of the narrator's descriptions is that Arabella is wrong and that these worlds are starkly different, which becomes clearer throughout the novel. The romances present a reality of villains and heroines, kidnap and captivity, and passion and despair, which is starkly different from Arabella's reality of manners and decorum, ballroom dancing and convenient marriages. Moreover, Arabella sees herself as a romantic heroine, and consequently expects to be treated as one. We find a clear example of Arabella's misinterpreting what is actually happening and casting herself in a common trope of her romance novels in chapter seven (Book 1), as Arabella mistakes a gardener for some lord who works incognito to win her affections. This is one of many times when Arabella misreads her

surroundings, often judging people on their accents, clothing or physical appearance and jumping to faulty conclusions. According to the narrator, the romance novels bear the full blame here. What is really happening is a failure of interpretation. Arabella reads reality like she reads her novels. Of course, as Arabella's reality (as a character) is in fact a novel, her novelistic expectations are perhaps not so misplaced. Through literary tropes such as the near-perfect heroine, the pining lover, and a violent confrontation between lover (Mr Glanville) and "villain" (Sir George) at the end of the novel, Lennox proves Arabella's "unrealistic" expectations right almost as often as she proves them wrong, thereby subtly undermining the didactic commentary which presents romance novels as an unrealistic genre.

### **Moral Corruption**

The didactic commentary woven throughout the novel, from the narrator as well as other characters, suggests moral corruption because of this distorted view of reality. One way in which Arabella's morals appear corrupted in the novel, is through her overly sexual focus. The sexual focus is subtle and indirect, and expressed through Arabella's awareness of the attraction she holds for men:

Her Glass, which she often consulted, always shewed her a Form so extremely lovely, that, not finding herself engaged in such Adventures as were common to the Heroines in the Romances she read, she often complained of the Insensibility of Mankind, upon whom her Charms seemed to have so little Influence. (*TFQ*, 7)

This excerpt is part of the narrator's lengthy description of her in the first chapter, so again, it is the narrator who informs us of Arabella's less desirable qualities. Here, her crime is vanity, which lies at the heart of her seeing herself as a heroine. More dangerously though, Arabella is aware of her sexual power over men. Because of her sexual attraction, she expects certain events to unfold. The main expectation appears to be kidnap by "Ravishers" (a word mentioned 57 times throughout the novel). Her direct talk of "ravishing" suggests at least some awareness of sex and bodily desires. The other expectation is for more virtuous "Lovers" to express their love for her. Interestingly, the second expectation does not appear more welcome than the first when it actually happens. She is just as insulted by Mr Glanville's declarations of love as she is frightened by any attempted kidnap. However, because the narrator has begun the story by informing the reader that Arabella "often complained of the Insensibility of Mankind, upon whom her Charms seemed to have so little

Influence,” her protestation to male attention comes off as insincere. Moreover, the attempted kidnaps are all imagined, which suggests that she conjures them from her desires of male attention. This is not to say that she wishes to be “Ravished.” After all, the heroines in the romances nearly are nearly always rescued at the last minute by some deserving “Lover.”

## **DEFENCE OF ARABELLA AND THE ROMANCE**

Through critical analysis, however, we find that Arabella’s morals do not really differ from the morals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Christian values of her companions. *TFQ* suggests that it is Arabella’s romantic language shaped by “bad translations” which makes her *appear* morally corrupted. Moreover, Lennox demonstrates how Arabella’s delusions are strongly aided by her isolated upbringing, lacking education, and failing mentor figures. Finally, Lennox uses ridicule and reason to demonstrate Arabella’s moral constancy, thus defending both her and her romance novels.

### **Bad Translations and Romantic Language**

Langbauer notes that “Lennox makes a point of telling us that Arabella has read romance in bad translations” (Langbauer 1984, 37). We find this point in the continuation of the quote about Arabella’s reading habits:

From her earliest Youth she had discovered a Fondness for Reading, which extremely delighted the Marquis; he permitted her therefore the Use of his Library, in which, unfortunately for her, were great Store of Romances, and, what was still more unfortunate, not in the original French, but very bad Translations. (*TFQ*, 7)

According to Lennox, the bad translation of romances is “still more unfortunate” than the romances themselves. Bad translations suggests both bad language and opportunity for bad interpretation. Because Arabella is misled to interpret the Romances in a literal manner, she expects characters to mimic exactly the behaviour of the heroes and villains of her novels. Any value or message intended by the author of the novels is overshadowed by these literal interpretations. The fault lies not with the authors, the romances, or the reader, but with bad translations and faulty interpretations.

As a consequence of the bad translations, it is Arabella's own romantic definition of words which causes misunderstandings and make her appear morally corrupted. According to Laurie Langbauer, *The Female Quixote* positions language as "most at fault in romance" (Langbauer 1984, 37). Language becomes the root of all misunderstandings, as Arabella's romantic phrases makes her unintelligible:

[Language's] effect on Arabella is to make her unintelligible; the other characters simply cannot understand what she says. Arabella, for her part, cannot make any sense of them either, and the languages of romance and the novel are so foreign to each other that Arabella and the others often mean wildly different things by the same word - words such as adventures, histories, heroes, favours, servants, fair-ones, and knights. (Langbauer 1984, 37)

Because of her romantic influence, Arabella and the other characters do not really speak the same language. That is, the same words are used, but given different meanings. Consequently, topics of custom and morals are affected, and Arabella appears to be "morally corrupted," when she is only really being misunderstood. We find an example of such a misunderstandings of words in a scene between Arabella and Miss Glanville:

Whence comes it, Cousin, added she, being so young and lovely as you are, that you, questionless, have been engaged in many Adventures, you have never reposed Trust enough in me to favour me with a Recital of them? Engaged in many Adventures, Madam! returned Miss Glanville, not liking the Phrase: I believe I have been engaged in as few as your Ladyship. (*TFQ*, 87)

Here, the two ladies' use of the word "adventure" hold very different meanings. Arabella refers to romantic tropes of danger and kidnap and other exciting events which do not in any way discredit the heroine engaging in said adventures. Meanwhile, Miss Glanville's definition of the word is corrupted with scandal, most likely of a sexual nature, which would ruin the reputation of any young lady involved. Consequently, we see how language makes Arabella appear more sexually aware than she really is.

### Isolation, Education and Failing Mentor Figures

Moreover, Arabella has led a very sheltered life, and this may have more to do with her faulty expectations of society than her romance novels, as the countess notes later in the novel:

And to abate the Keeness of their Sarcasms, acknowledg'd, that she herself had when very young, been deep read in Romances; and but for an early Acquaintance with the World, and being directed to other Studies, was likely to have been as much a Heroine as Lady *Bella*. (TFQ, 323)

The countess here makes three important points about Arabella. Firstly, Arabella has not been “directed to other Studies.” Although Arabella’s father has been meticulous about Arabella’s education, he appears ignorant of her love for romances and their effects, as he is genuinely shocked by her dismissive treatment of Mr Glanville when he arrives. Arabella’s father has failed to teach Arabella the difference between fiction and real life, and this is because of the lacking education which he has insisted on providing all on his own: “At Four Years of Age he took her from under the Direction of the Nurses and Women appointed to attend her, and permitted her to receive no Part of her Education from another, which he was capable of giving her himself” (TFQ, 6).

This leads us to the next point, though it is more implied through the countess’ presence than her words: Arabella has had no female mentor to teach her the expectations of woman in society, as she was removed from the care of the “Women appointed to attend her” and has grown up without a mother, and so the romantic heroines become natural mentors and role models. A female mentor might have shown more interest in Arabella’s reading of romances. They could have discussed their value, their possible pitfalls and how the society differs from the world of the romances. Arabella’s father has clearly not considered such “female matters” as romance novels and decorum. Had Arabella had a mother, or some other female tutor, *she* could have given her a more well-rounded education and informed her of the ways of the higher classes. This is the role the countess attempts to fill. The countess tries to make Arabella understand that she lives in a different time from when the romances were supposedly set, and that society today holds different expectations. However, before the message has fully sunk in, she is quickly removed from Arabella’s side due to “her Mother's Indisposition, which commanded her immediate Attendance” (TFQ, 330). In the total vacuum



of female mentorship, Arabella has emulated the only role models she has ever been exposed to, namely the heroines of her romance novels.

Thirdly, the countess recognizes that Arabella had been denied an “early Acquaintance with the World.” In the beginning of the novel, the narrator makes it seem as though Arabella has all the resources that she needs to be successful in the world. She has been blessed with good looks, intelligence, education, and wealth (*TFQ*, 6-7). Nevertheless, Arabella has never interacted with the society in which she is expected to take part in. Her father, who was at one point a powerful political figure at court has bitterly and intentionally retracted from the world: “he resolved to quit all Society whatever and devote the rest of his Life to Solitude and Privacy” (*TFQ*, 5). Because of her father’s choice to live secluded life, Arabella meets with society too late in life. Her world view and her values has already been formed. Had Arabella been exposed to or taught anything of society earlier, her manners might hardly have been influenced by novels at all.

The only guidance Arabella is left with, and which should prepare her for entering society, are her male mentor figures. As we have established, her father fails her through isolation and withholding her education. When he dies, she is left with Mr Glanville and Sir Charles (her uncle and Mr Glanville’s father). Although both make some attempt at persuading her away from her quixotic delusions, both fail. Mr Glanville is nonplussed by Arabella’s reading habits and though he tries to discuss with her, he is unable to “reason” with her because he does not really understand what they are talking about. To help him, Arabella offers to lend him the romances, but he only pretends to read:

... counting the Pages, he was quite terrified at the Number, and could not prevail upon himself to read them: Therefore, glancing them over, he pretended to be deeply engaged in reading ... (*TFQ*, 50)

Considering how concerned Mr Glanville is regarding Arabella’s romantic delusions, and how much they sabotage for him, it is surprising that he does not make more effort to try to understand where Arabella is coming from. The reason, however, is quite simple: “counting the Pages, he was quite terrified at the Number” - he was intimidated by how long the novels were. Mr Glanville is not a reader, like Arabella is. Arguably, he is not an intellect like her either. Apart from her beauty, Mr Glanville admires Arabella because of her “Wit” and “fine Reasoning”: “[Arabella] charmed him to the last Degree of Admiration by the agreeable Sallies of her Wit, and her fine Reasoning upon every Subject he proposed” (*TFQ*, 46).

Though his admiration suggests that he has enough intelligence to recognize hers, his constant failure to make any kind of progress during their hours of conversation suggests that his intellect does not match hers. As a mentor, therefore, he is useless to Arabella.

With Sir Charles, the problem is much the same, as he has even less intellect and tact than his son. When Sir Charles meets Arabella and realises that her peculiar delusions, he reacts with obvious surprise and condescension:

Indeed, Niece, said Sir Charles, no longer able to forbear interrupting her, these are all very improbable Tales. I remember, when I was a Boy, I was very fond of reading the History of Jack the Giant killer, and Tom Thumb; and these Stories so filled my Head, that I really thought one of those little Fellows killed Men an hundred Feet high.

*(TFQ, 62-63)*

Sir Charles compares Arabella's romance novels with the children's stories he grew up with. Moreover, he compares Arabella's belief in her romance novels as truth with his own belief in these stories as a child. By comparing Arabella to a child, he fails to see her intellect and her situation. This, of course, says more about his failing perception and his failing intellect than hers. Furthermore, what he does is also extremely tactless, as he has insulted Arabella gravely and is consequently kicked out of her apartment. From that moment on, he has lost Arabella's respect and holds no persuasive power over her. Consequently, until the countess makes a brief entrance, Arabella is alone without any mentor figure who can match her intellect, discuss romance novels, and generally prepare her to meet modern society.

### **Ridicule, Reason and Moral Constancy**

Lennox subtly conveys this defence of Arabella throughout the novel. However, about half way in the novel, something shifts, and Arabella stands out more clearly in a positive way rather than negative one due to her more good virtues. Ross argues that “[d]uring most of volume one Arabella appears ludicrous; during most of volume two, she is seen as unique, a Juvenalian norm used to measure the vices and follies of the world (often represented by Glanville's sister, Charlotte)” (Ross 1987, 466). As we have established in the previous chapter, Arabella's morals are not really in conflict with the values of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Christian England. Miss Glanville, on the other hand, though perfectly in sync with society's expectations, is often in conflict with the morals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Christian values. Lennox

consistently uses Miss Glanville to make Arabella look good and virtuous, while Miss Glanville and the society which she represents, is made to look shallow and hypocritical.

During one of the ballroom scenes in Bath, Lennox demonstrates Arabella's moral goodness by countering it with Miss Glanville's and other characters' love of scandal. Arabella naively asks one of her companions, Mr Tinsel, to relate to her the adventures of one of the guests who have caught her eye. This is common practise in her Romance novels. Mr Tinsel goes on to tell an ill-flattering tale of scandalous gossip about the selected Lady, which amuses the other companions, there among Miss Glanville. Arabella, however, is not impressed:

'Tis true, reply'd Arabella, that I did desire you to partake with me of a pleasing and rational Amusement, for such I imagin'd Mr. Tinsel's Histories might afford; far from a Detail of Vices, Follies, and Irregularities, I expected to have heard the Adventures of some illustrious Personages related; between whose Actions, and those of the Heroes and Heroines of Antiquity, I might have found some Resemblance. (*TFQ*, 277)

Despite her naivete, Arabella can tell the difference between gossip about “follies” and “irregularities” and the adventures she seeks. She does not wish to hear of a person's faults, she wishes to hear of their triumph. She does not wish to judge, but to admire. While the other characters demonstrate conceit and insecurity in their endeavour to find fault with others, Arabella demonstrates humility and confidence. More importantly, she demonstrates a moral constancy which is not so easily corrupted by the need of self-satisfaction and amusement.

Lennox further strengthens her defence of Arabella by turning on the narrator and characters who have mocked the parodic heroine, and instead criticises the mockers by appealing to the reader's reason and empathy while demonstrating both in Arabella. Through most of the novel, it seems like Lennox uses ridicule as literary device to support the narrator's didactic message. Even in the title headings of the chapters, Lennox appears to playfully mock Arabella, and she lets the reader in on the joke, as we see in the title heading of chapter 5 of Book 7: “Containing some historical Anecdotes, the Truth of which may possibly be doubted, as they are not to be found in any of the Historians” (*TFQ*, 246). She here refers to Arabella's many monologues of fictional figures which she presents as historical ones. The reader then knows to question Arabella's ramblings and side with the other characters who ridicule her. However, after indulging in this for much of the novel,

Lennox suddenly makes it clear that “[r]idicule is set up as an issue, rather than used as a tactic” (Langbauer 1984, 33) when Arabella delivers her impressive speech on raillery:

Certainly, pursued she, looking at the Beau, it is extremely unjust to railly one's Friends, and particular Acquaintance: First, choose them well, and be as nice as you please in the Choice; but when you have chosen them, by no means play upon them: 'Tis cruel and malicious, to divert one's self at the Expence of one's Friend. However, Madam, said Mr. Glanville, who was charmed to hear her talk so rationally, you may give People Leave to railly their Enemies. Truly, resumed Arabella, I cannot allow that, any more than upon Friends; for Raillery is the poorest kind of Revenge that can be taken: Methinks, it is mean to railly Persons who have a small Share of Merit ... (*TFQ*, 268)

Arabella appeals to her companions' moral conscience when she says that “'Tis cruel and malicious, to divert one's self at the Expence of one's Friend.” Even Mr Glanville does not measure up to Arabella's moral standard when he suggests that one should be able to ridicule one's enemies, but Arabella responds: “Raillery is the poorest kind of Revenge that can be taken: Methinks, it is mean to railly Persons who have a small Share of Merit...” The narrator notes that Mr Glanville is “charmed to hear her talk so rationally,” which suggests that there is some element of surprise here, clearly because he has heard so much non-rational romantic ramblings from her. However, Langbauer notes that “the unromantic Arabella turns out romantic after all; [Arabella's speech] is taken from a romance, a speech in *Artamenes*” (Langbauer 1984, 33). With this clever scene, Lennox turns the tables as she has Arabella defending herself against the other characters, the narrator and even the reader. Moreover, she also subtly defends the romance. Arabella's speech appeals to both reason and moral conscience, proving that both she and the romance is capable of both.

### **POWER, GENDER, AND THE “COQUETTE”**

In *TFQ*, power and control are central themes. The general fear among contemporary critics was that young women could be inspired by the writing of radical women writers, and consequently transgress the expectations of their gender; become “unsexed”. Moreover, the critics feared that the young female readers might consciously and strategically use their feminine sexuality to control men, or turn “coquette,” as inspired by romantic heroines. Arabella appears to claim both power and control through her romantic language, but Lennox counters this with by undercutting Arabella's power, thereby demonstrating that the critics'

fear of women readers suddenly becoming controlling heroines is irrational. Moreover, Lennox demonstrates that Arabella is not a controlling, strategic “coquette” due to her artless nature and principles rather than strategic behaviour. Rather, it is Charlotte Glanville, a representative of the 18<sup>th</sup> century patriarchal society which becomes the coquette. Lennox consequently links coquettish behaviour with patriarchal values of the “real world” rather than the romance novels.

### **Romantic Language**

Arabella’s assumed power is expressed through her romantic language. In this first excerpt, we find Arabella’s response to hearing that Mr Hervey, her first admirer, has recovered after an illness. She believes the illness to be a reaction to her refusal and even an attempt to take his own life. After sending Mr Hervey a letter where she commands him to live, he has recovered, and now Arabella hopes that he will “cease to importune” her:

If he loves me with that Purity he ought to do, pursued she, he will cease to importune me any further: And though his Passion be ever so violent, his Respect and Submission to my Commands will oblige him to Silence. The Obedience he has already shewn, in recovering at the first Intimation I gave, that it was my Will he should do so, convinces me, I need not apprehend he will renew his Follies to displease me. (*TFQ*, 18)

Arabella establishes the power balance between “lover” and “loved one” through her choice of words. Mr Hervey must show “Respect,” “Submission,” “Silence” and “Obedience” in response to her “Commands” and “Will” in order not to “displease” her. Arabella takes on a goddess-like role, while Mr Hervey is given the role as humble servant. We find a similar situation when Mr Glanville falls ill, and Arabella uses the same language when she orders him to live:

However, as I have gone thus far, I will do something more; and tell you, since I have commanded you to live, I will also permit you to love me, in order to make the Life I have bestowed on you, worthy your Acceptance. Make me no Reply, said she, putting her Hand on his Mouth; but begin from this Moment to obey me. (*TFQ*, 136)

Again, Arabella “commands,” “permits” and expects “obedience,” and again, her choice of words demonstrates her belief in her own absolute power over the men that love her. It is one

that transcends the physical laws of health, as she believes these men fall ill as a reaction to her refusal and must immediately recover when she commands them to.

Furthermore, according to Eli Løfaldli, Arabella is a classic female quixote in that she is an instructor: “Instead of simply conducting their lives in accordance with their faulty framework as male quixotes are apt to do, [female quixote figures] try to persuade other characters to act in accordance with their set of beliefs” (Løfaldli 2000, 27). Mostly, Arabella instructs her servants, like her maid Lucy, but she also instructs Mr Glanville and the other characters in the ways of the romance. For example, when her uncle questions her ability to “make People sick and well” (*TFQ*, 145), Arabella explains to him the power relationship between the “lover” and “loved one”:

Really, Sir, replied Arabella, I pretend to no more Power, than what I presume all others of my Sex have upon the like Occasions; and since nothing is more common, than for a Gentleman, though ever so sick, to recover in Obedience to the Commands of that Person, who has an absolute Power over his Life. (*TFQ*, 145-146)

Arabella goes on to give numerous examples of similar circumstances from her romances, where it is a common affair for a heroine to command her “lover” to live after he has fallen seriously ill (usually from not being allowed to love her). This persuasive behaviour comes off as controlling to both the narrator and the other characters, and Arabella’s assumed power is repeatedly remarked on.

### **Traditional versus Romantic Power Dynamic Between the Genders**

For the narrator, as well as the other characters, Arabella’s assumed control is a threat to the power dynamic between the genders. The power dynamic between man and woman which Arabella presents destabilises the traditional gender roles of 18<sup>th</sup> century England, and it has its root in the romances. Laurie Langbauer notes how the romances blur the traditional gender roles with its Amazonian women going to war, Orontes dressing as a woman and Sir George swooning in an attempt at winning over Arabella through romantic behaviour (Langbauer 1984, 49). This sort of behaviour upsets the characters not used to the world of romance. In the following excerpt, Miss Glanville seeks to tease out Arabella’s romantic ramblings so that she may appear ridiculous, and she chooses the topic which she knows will shock the most:

... she very innocently asked Sir George, Whether in former times Women went to the Wars, and fought like Men? For my Cousin, added she, talks of one Thaltris, a Woman, that was as courageous as any Soldier whatever. (*TFQ*, 204)

Arabella takes the bait and speaks in length about the nation of the Amazonians and its Queen, and her uncle Sir Charles is repulsed:

You find, Miss, said Arabella, I did not attempt to impose upon you, when I told you of the admirable Valour of that beautiful Queen; which indeed was so great, that the united Princes, in whose Cause she fought, looked upon her Assistance to be equal to that of a whole Army; and they honoured her, accordingly, with the most distinguishing Marks of their Esteem and Acknowledgement, and offered her the chief Command of their Forces ...

O shameful! cried Sir Charles, offer a Woman the Command of an Army! Brave Fellows indeed, that would be commanded by a Woman! Sure you mistake, Niece; there never was such a thing heard of in the World. (*TFQ*, 205)

Arabella's admiration of the Amazonians is evident. The great Queen holds both "Valour" and beauty. She is an extraordinarily capable fighter – "equal to that of a whole Army" – and she is "honoured" for it. Arabella's understanding of man and woman has not been shaped by the dichotomy of traditional femininity and masculinity found in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. A woman can have both traditionally feminine and masculine qualities and be celebrated for it. Her uncle, however, sees man and woman as opposites. There can be no transcending the restrictive roles. The idea is not only unlikely; it is "shameful." Through these character representations, Lennox demonstrates how the contemporary critics feared that the novels might inspire young women to transcend their given gender roles and assume power.

Throughout the novel, we see how Arabella has been influenced by her romances' alternative view of gender dynamics. We often see her diverge over to the male side of the spectrum by exhibiting traditionally male qualities, as is noted by her uncle after one of her speeches. He remarks on her "Admiration of her Wit, telling her, if she had been a Man, she would have made a great Figure in Parliament, and that her Speeches might have come perhaps to be printed in time" (*TFQ*, 311). Patricia Meyer Spacks notes that "[t]his possibility, even couched in the subjunctive, epitomizes the revolutionary potential of Arabella's fantasies" (Spacks 1988, 540). In other words, the androgynous influence from her romances is something that could potentially be truly disruptive to the social order of the ideal man and woman. Spacks describes this ideal woman, as hinted at by "the wise doctor" in the final

conversion scene, as “dependent, self-effacing, needy, grateful” (Spacks 1988, 350). This description only fits Arabella after her conversion scene. In other words, it appears like *TFQ*'s didactic commentary presents Arabella as an example of warning; young, female readers must take care not to be influenced by the romances' misguiding representations of empowered women. The ideal is not only absurd and will expose the reader to ridicule, but it is also shameful and disruptive. However, as I will now go on to discuss, this open, didactic view is challenged by a rebellious undercurrent flowing through the novel which defends Arabella and the romance from the accusers through characterization and narrative.

### **Imaginary Power**

Firstly, as *The Female Quixote* proves again and again, Arabella's assumed power is both imaginary and impossible, and this makes the contemporary critics' fear of too-powerful women readers irrational. Arabella cannot make people ill or healthy by her commands, and despite her attempts, she never converts anyone to her romantic beliefs. On the contrary, it is often she who is controlled by the other characters. As Scott Paul Gordon notes, the novel positions Arabella “as a pawn in others' "Designs," a term used by each of the men who aim to possess or trade her” (Gordon 1998, 504). We find multiple examples of this throughout the novel. Even in resisting her father's will of marrying Mr Glanville, she only holds out as long as she does because he chooses not to force her. However, he does force her to sit down and write to Mr Glanville to invite him back to stay with them after she has banished him (*TFQ*, 39). This she does reluctantly and tearfully. Arabella is allowed to refuse Mr Glanville's hand in marriage for some time, but she must tolerate his company. Another example of Arabella's powerlessness is when she has escaped her house due to an imaginary kidnap, which leads her into the arms of a stranger:

The Gentleman saw there was some Mystery in her Case, which she did not choose to explain; and, being extremely glad at having so beautiful a Creature in his Power, told her she might command him in all she pleased; and, helping her into the Chaise, drove off as fast as he could ... (*TFQ*, 100)

Arabella believes she has found a protector and takes command over him like she would any servant guard. But, again, her authority is imaginary. She is the one “in his Power,” but he is happy to play along to get what he wants. This forms part of a pattern of men humouring Arabella throughout the novel. She believes herself in control, but this is always an illusion



created by whoever is trying to lure her into submission more easily. Gordon uses the examples of men controlling Arabella to prove that it is them, and not her, that are controlling, thereby clearing Arabella of the accusation of seeking to control others. This I will discuss further under the next section. However, I also believe Lennox is making another point through this pattern; namely, that a young female reader will not turn into a controlling, powerful “unsexed” woman, no matter how much she reads or how deluded she is. She will not become “unsexed” through the influence of novels because she *cannot* become “unsexed.” No matter how much Arabella believes herself to be in control, no matter how much she tries to assume power, she cannot escape the constraints of her sex and the expectations set by the male authoritative figures around her. The fears of the contemporary critics are therefore not only exaggerated, but irrational. Just like the young female reader should not expect to run into knights in shining armour, the critics should not expect the female readers to suddenly turn into ruling Cleopatras or war-mongering Amazons.

### **The Coquette**

However, there was a kind of “feminine power” more adaptable to the 18<sup>th</sup> century English society which the critics feared the young, quixotic reader might learn from the romance novel; namely, the deceptive and manipulative arts of “coquettism.” The question is whether Arabella is meant to be an example of such a “coquette” in *TFQ*. Let us first establish what a “coquette” is. Gordon defines a “coquette” as a young woman who “learn[s] how to use the “arts” of love to control others” (Gordon 1998, 502). Lennox herself was familiar with the term as she in 1747 wrote long poem “Art of Coquetry,” which ended with the couplets: “Such by these arts their empire may improve, / And unsubdu’d controul the world by love.” Gordon also remarks that Lennox wrote *The Life of Harriot Stuart* (1750), who had a “career of coquetry” (HS, p. 76) and thought herself “of prodigious importance.” (HS, p. 9) (Gordon 1998, 501). These are all examples of young women who learn to use their feminine sexuality, as exemplified in romances, to control men. In *TFQ*, we do find examples of Arabella appearing to deliberately act in a manner which will elicit some reaction from the men around her. In the following excerpt, the narrator notes that Arabella is “giving Occasion” to her many suitors to admire her, hinting that might be a “coquette”:

Accepting therefore, with great Politeness, this Help from a Stranger, who was nearest her, she mounted her Horse, giving Occasion to every one that was present, to admire the Grace with which she sat and managed him. (*TFQ*, 154)

In the phrasing of “Giving Occasion to,” the narrator suggests that Arabella is conscious of the effect she has on the men around her, and that she acts as she does because of this. In other words, it appears like Arabella is acting in a manipulative manner in order to get a certain reaction from the men. Anna Uddén argues that this phrasing reveals Arabella’s “narcissistic preoccupations” and “self-centeredness” as it conveys her “expectation to be adored” (Uddén 2008, 448).

However, I wish to argue that Arabella does not truly exhibit this “coquettish” behaviour. Firstly, Arabella’s romantic, “controlling” language is misleading; she does not really seek to manipulate others. Langbauer writes that Arabella is obsessed with the romances because “even more deeply she yearns for power” (Langbauer 1984, 45). However, I disagree. Instead, I agree with Gordon, who writes that “unlike the coquette, Arabella does not seek “Power”” (Gordon 1998, 505). I have written about how Arabella assumes power. By this I mean that she claims authority because she believes she has it as heroine. This does not mean, however, that she seeks or is motivated by power. Although I agree that the phrasing “giving Occasion to every one that was present, to admire the Grace with which she sat and managed him” suggests an “expectation to be adored,” I do not necessarily agree with Uddén that it follows that Arabella is narcissistic or self-centred; nor do I believe this is evidence of Arabella acting in a manipulative, “coquetry” manner. That Arabella should be “adored” is completely natural – she is, after all, a heroine. As I have already discussed previously in this chapter, Arabella lives in a vacuum of country living and solitude filled with romantic tales and heroines. She has had no female mentors except her fictional heroines, and her emulation of them and her expectation to be treated like them is very natural. To suggest that Arabella is a manipulative coquette or that she is self-centred or narcissistic is to suggest that she makes herself a heroine *in order to be* adored or to achieve control over others. Rather, her being adored – and her expectation of it - is just a natural consequence of her following the heroines’ example.

Secondly, Arabella’s artless nature contradicts the possibility that Arabella can be a coquette. We find evidence of Arabella’s artlessness in the following excerpt, where Miss Glanville finds that Arabella has not begun to make herself ready for their social excursion:

Don't be uneasy, said Arabella, smiling; and, going to her Toilet, I shan't make you wait long. Miss Glanville, seating herself near the Table, resolved to be present while her Cousin was dressing, that she might have an Opportunity to make some Remarks to her Disadvantage: But she was extremely mortified, to observe the Haste and Negligence she made her Women use in this important Employment; and that, notwithstanding her Indifference, nothing could appear more lovely and genteel. (*TFQ*, 83-84)

Miss Glanville expects Arabella to be vain and require a long time to get ready, but she is “extremely mortified” to find that Arabella is both quick and negligent about the process. Arabella’s delayed start and her calm reassurance that she doesn’t need much time, suggests that Arabella generally does not spend much time getting ready, and certainly less time than Miss Glanville. Whereas Miss Glanville is vain and intentional about her appearance, Arabella’s beauty appears artless.

In another excerpt, however, the narrator suggests that Arabella’s artlessness is an illusion:

Her fine black Hair hung upon her Neck in Curls, which had so much the Appearance of being artless, that all but her Maid, whose Employment it was to give them that Form, imagined they were so. (*TFQ*, 9)

Arabella’s beauty, specifically her hair, has only the “Appearance of being artless,” the narrator points out. Arabella, therefore, comes off as not only vain, but also deceitful. Zak Watson, however, makes the point that Arabella is likely included in “all but her Maid,” which makes her an innocent participant in the deception. He writes:

What others see when they look at Arabella is not what she is, at least before her cure. The injustice done to Arabella by most readers comes in assuming that she understands this dissimulation, that she is a coquette who uses her charms to manipulate the men around her ... and the narrator leads her in that direction. (Watson 2011, 39)

Watson’s argument that Arabella is unaware of the effort it takes to curate her appearance is supported by the scene with Miss Glanville. Arabella’s maids are no doubt stressing to make her look “lovely and genteel,” but Arabella does not appear to be aware of the elaborate process given how little time she allotted for it. Even though Arabella’s beauty might not be entirely artless, she still is.

Thirdly, unlike the coquette, Arabella never intentionally makes anything happen. Gordon notes that it is Arabella's delusion which moves the plot forward and that her will remains "peculiarly uninvolved in the story's events" (Gordon 1998, 507). Arabella's *will* is never expressed, either by her or the narrator, unless it is to express what she does *not* want to do, which is to marry Mr Glanville. Gordon notes that Arabella does occasionally cause things to happen, but as she herself claims, she is the "innocent Cause" (Gordon 1998, 506):

"...distinguish, I beseech you, between those Faults, which the Will, and those which Necessity makes us commit. I am the Cause, 'tis true, of thy Lover's Infidelity; but I am the innocent Cause; and would repair the Evils, my fatal Beauty gives Rise to, by any Sacrifice in my Power to make." (*TFQ*, 254)

Here, Arabella defends herself from one of Sir George's made-up previous "lovers." An indirect accusation has been made of Arabella drawing Sir George's attention towards herself, but Arabella points out that though she is "the Cause," it is her "Beauty" and not her "Will" which has caused this "Infidelity." Gordon further argues that Arabella's actions are inescapably shaped by the "Laws of Romance":

She is not, as Charlotte clearly is, using her "Beauty" as a means to an end. Arabella does not choose to follow the "Laws of Romance," which she considers inescapable, any more than we choose to follow the laws of physics; she believes she is subject to, not in control of, their operation. "The Mischief I have done . . . was not voluntary, I assure you," Arabella insists. "My Power is confined by certain unavoidable Laws" (p. 182). (Gordon 1998, 506-507)

In other words, Arabella's actions are not motivated by a desire to be admired or to control, as is the case with the coquette. Rather, Arabella strictly and conscientiously follows the "Laws of Romance" as a religious devotee might follow the laws of her holy scriptures. Therefore, excepting beauty and charm, Arabella has nothing in common with the coquette and is a poor example of the quixotic-reader-turned-coquette trope which the contemporary critics feared. Thereby, Lennox demonstrates that a quixotic, female reader influenced by the romance novel will not necessarily become a "coquette" or challenge the traditional power dynamic between man and woman in any real way.

In fact, it is Miss Glanville, and not Arabella, who better fits the description of a cunning "coquette", as she uses her charm to achieve her goal. In the following excerpt Miss

Glanville is aware of Sir George's attraction towards Arabella, and does what she can to draw his attention towards herself instead:

He therefore lengthened out his Visit, in hopes of being able to say some fine Things to her before he went away; but Miss Glanville, who strove by all the little Arts she was Mistress of, to engage his Conversation wholly to herself, out it absolutely out of his Power; so that he was obliged to take his Leave without having the Satisfaction of even pressing the fair hand of Arabella; so closely was he observed by her Cousin.  
(*TFQ*, 86-87)

Whereas Arabella is artless, Miss Glanville is certainly not. In fact, she uses "all the little Arts," probably meaning various forms of charm, to keep Sir George's focus on herself. She is very aware of his attraction to her cousin, and she is very aware of her own goal, which is to keep him to herself. This awareness of everything that is going on as well the conscious and strategic use of her own feminine charm to achieve her own goal is what defines a typical coquette.

However, Miss Glanville is not a reader of romances, but rather a representation of 18<sup>th</sup> century society, which is made clear when they go to Bath, and we meet other characters who resemble Miss Glanville in interest and style of conversation. Thereby, Austen links the coquette, not with the romance novel, but with the "real world" of 18<sup>th</sup> century society. Gordon identifies Charlotte Glanville as "Arabella's most significant "Other,"" and "The Female Quixote's coquette" (Gordon 1998, 505). Miss Glanville has a fundamentally different way of thinking from Arabella.

Miss Glanville's actions are easily recognized as means to end, as is the case with "the coquette." Her goal is to marry Sir George, possibly for economic prospects. At the end of the novel, Lennox hints that Miss Glanville may have had a more materialistic interest in Sir George rather than a romantic one, as the two are finally "only married in the common Acceptation of the Word; that is, they were privileged to join Fortunes, Equipages, Titles, and Expence" (*TFQ*, 383). However, as a woman, marriage is really her only way of ensuring financial security and social status, so her "coquettish" ways are really motivated by the patriarchal system which has left her with few options. Miss Glanville clearly believes every woman is driven by the desire to marry well. This, after all, is a proper woman's purpose – if she is not "unsexed." Miss Glanville's animosity towards Arabella is therefore easily explained by the fact that she is jealous, and that she fears that Arabella may jeopardize her

goal of marrying Sir George. When complimented by Arabella, she suspects she is being mocked, as she thinks Arabella must function the same way:

Miss Glanville, who could not think it possible, one Woman could praise another with any Sincerity, cast a Glance at the Glass, fearing it was rather because she looked but indifferently, that her Cousin was so lavish in her Praises; (*TFQ*, 91)

Consequently, she looks on every woman as competition, and expects all other women to do the same. She is especially jealous of Arabella as she is more beautiful, and as Sir George is clearly in love with her. However, Arabella is not driven by a desire to capture Sir George with her charms and secure a good marriage. Consequently, by turning Miss Glanville, the antithesis of Arabella's heroic character, into a coquette, Lennox demonstrates that it is the contemporary society's patriarchal values which inspires coquettish behaviour, not the romance novel.

## **CONCLUSION**

Lennox's critical focus on contemporary society, personified by Miss Glanville and other characters, undercuts any criticism of Arabella and romances. She allows for the presence of the didactic commentary as delivered by the narrator and presents the critics' concern of reality distortion and moral corruption as a result of novel reading. However, she counters this attack by shifting the critical focus towards bad translations, isolated upbringing, a lack of education, and failing mentor figures, thereby suggesting that these factors are more to blame for Arabella's delusions than her novel reading. Lennox also responds to the critics' accusations that female readers would become "unsexed" through claiming male authority, or else, turn into cunning "coquettes," seeking to control men with their female sexuality. Firstly, Lennox demonstrates that this is impossible for female readers to suddenly claim male authority due to the patriarchal system they live in. Secondly, through Arabella's artless nature and principled rather than strategic behaviour, she demonstrates that coquettish behaviour is not a result of romance reading, but rather, of the patriarchal values which define the 18<sup>th</sup> century English society, as represented by the true coquette, Charlotte Glanville.

## **PART 2: Northanger Abbey**

### **REALITY, NOVELS, AND LITERAL INTERPRETATION**

Catherine also struggles to read and interpret her surroundings and the people she meets, but Austen makes it very clear that this is not due to her being a novel reader. Rather, as with Arabella, it is her sheltered upbringing, lacking education and failing mentors who are to blame for her ignorance and literal interpretations. Over the following passages I will demonstrate how Catherine's sheltered country upbringing has left her unprepared to understand and relate to dubious and dishonest characters, such as Mr Thorpe and General Tilney, and how Catherine is denied proper guidance in society by the insensible Mrs Allen, the absent Mr Allen, and even the teasing Henry, who is even the one to first incite Catherine's quixotic fantasies at Northanger.

#### **Literal Interpretation**

Catherine does not confuse her reality to the same degree as Arabella, but she does struggle to interpret and understand her surroundings. Unlike Arabella, Catherine does not see herself as a heroine, and she does not expect to be kidnapped by any stranger who looks at her too long or suspect a servant to be some lord in disguise, secretly pining for her love. Nor does she expect any attractive young man to be in love with her and to intentionally or by chance appear repeatedly by her side. In the excerpt below, Catherine and Isabella discuss Catherine's pleasant meeting with Mr Tilney and whether it is likely that they should meet again:

“But you should not persuade me that I think so very much about Mr. Tilney, for perhaps I may never see him again.” “Not see him again! My dearest creature, do not talk of it. I am sure you would be miserable if you thought so!” (NA, 41)

Here, we see it is Isabella, and not Catherine, who excepts Catherine to see Mr Tilney again simply because Catherine wishes it. After all, in novels, the selected love interest must always return. Catherine, however, understands that to meet again someone she met by chance is a coincidence which might not happen, and is not more likely to happen just because she liked him. She understands, in other words, the difference between novels and real life. Catherine

does, however, occasionally struggle to correctly interpret her surroundings and the people she interacts with, an example of which we find in the scene below between John Thorpe and herself:

“A famous good thing this marrying scheme, upon my soul! A clever fancy of Morland’s and Belle’s. What do you think of it, Miss Morland? I say it is no bad notion.”

“I am sure I think it a very good one.”

“Do you? That’s honest, by heavens! I am glad you are no enemy to matrimony, however. Did you ever hear the old song “Going to one Wedding Brings on Another”? ... “And then you know” – twisting himself about and forcing a foolish laugh – “I say, then you know, we might try the truth of this same old song.”

“May we? But I never sing...” (NA, 122-123)

Here, Mr Thorpe makes a very indirect proposal of marriage to Catherine, which she does not comprehend at all. In clear speech, Mr Thorpe does nothing but speak on the concept of marriage in general and reference a song about weddings. However, the context of this speech is that Mr Thorpe’s sister, Isabella, has just been engaged to Catherine’s brother, James Morland. In the title of the wedding song - “Going to one Wedding Brings on Another” – paired with the suggestion that “we might try the truth of this same old song,” we find Thorpe making his most obvious insinuation. Namely, that he and Catherine should follow Isabella and James’ example and get married next. None of this, however, is caught by Catherine. She hears nothing but some general talk of marriage and marriage songs, which is not out of place given the news of their siblings’ announcement. Of course, Catherine has never heard a proposal quite like this before. The only proposals she has ever “heard” must have been fictional ones, written by the authors of Gothic romances, such as Ann Radcliffe. These would have been direct, elaborate, and romantic declarations of love, and there would have been no mistaking the proposer’s intentions. Had Catherine not read these fictional proposals, a contemporary critic might suggest, she might have been better prepared to understand Thorpe’s more indirect and vague declarations.

However, Løfaldli argues that Catherine’s misreading of others is not caused by her novel reading, like a contemporary critics might suggest. Rather, it is a consequence of a



literal interpretation of her surroundings and an inability to detect duplicity or hidden meanings:

Although her ways of reading both novels and people are characterised by the same literalness and inattention to multiplicity of meaning, one is not the cause of the other. They stem from the same root – the literal reading of potentially misleading signs – but her faulty interpretation of people’s intentions is not occasioned by her relationship with literature. (Løfaldli 2000, 70)

Catherine’s “inattention to multiplicity of meaning” is repeatedly exemplified in *NA*. If a character says something, Catherine believes it, and if a character says something that contradicts their actions or something they have said before, she gets confused:

But the inexplicability of the general’s conduct dwelt much on her thoughts. That he was very particular in his eating, she had, by her own unassisted observation, already discovered; but why he should say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while, was most unaccountable! How were people, at that rate, to be understood? (*NA*, 211)

In the excerpt above, Catherine is starting to notice the inconsistencies of General Tilney’s words and behaviour. The General has held a long speech, imploring his son not to make too much fuss about their coming to eat at his house, but then Mr Tilney sets off to prepare two days in advance. Mr Tilney knows that his father is very particular about the quality of his food (and everything else) and understands not to take his false civilities seriously. Catherine, however, cannot understand how a person can “say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while.”

As Løfaldli notes, her literal reading also affects her novel reading, making her believe Northanger Abbey to be a classic Gothic castle from her stories. Interestingly, it is not until Catherine comes to Northanger Abbey, that we see her quixotic tendencies manifest themselves. Possibly, the Abbey is just too similar to the setting of her novels not to trigger her imagination. It is also so different from anything she knows in her “real life” that she has no knowledge to contradict her quixotic fantasies. The same “literalness” and “inattention to multiplicity of meaning” which leads her to take the other characters’ at their words, also leads her to see Northanger Abbey as a literal manifestation of the Gothic settings.

### Catherine's Upbringing

However, Catherine's literal interpretation and quixotic tendencies is caused by her sheltered upbringing, lacking education, and the failure of her mentor figures, not by her novel reading. First of all, Catherine's parents bear much of the blame of Catherine's "literal reading of potentially misleading signs." Much like Arabella, Catherine has led a sheltered life. Catherine's case has not been quite as extreme as Arabella's since Catherine has had a mother who has taken interest in her education, and she has also interacted with a community. However, her small country village has not prepared her for the high society of Bath and the education provided by her mother has been lacking. Her family and upbringing are directly pointed out by the narrator as the cause of Catherine's confusion when she is confronted with John Thorpe's contradictory and self-flattering talk. In the excerpt below, Thorpe has just exaggeratedly talked down James' carriage, insinuating that it is about to fall apart, in order to compliment his own. This has left Catherine worried about James' safety, and she urges them to stop, but Thorpe, who does not want the trip to stop, protests that her brother is perfectly fine, and that the carriage is perfectly safe:

Catherine listed with astonishment; she knew not how to reconcile two such very different accounts of the same thing; for she had not been brought up to understand the propensities of a rattle, nor to know to how many idle assertions and impudent falsehoods the excess of vanity will lead. Her own family were plain, matter-of-fact people who seldom aimed at wit of any kind; her father, at the utmost, being contented with a pun, and her mother with a proverb; they were not in the habit therefore of telling lies to increase their importance, or of asserting at one moment what they would contradict the next. (NA, 65-66)

The narrator tells the reader that Catherine is not used to "idle assertions and impudent falsehoods" because her family are "plain, matter-of-fact people." They have no hidden intention when they communicate, like to "increase their importance," so there is no need for any "multiplicity of meaning" (Løfaldli 2000, 70). Catherine is unable to pick up on any such hidden meaning and understand Mr Thorpe's talk as empty bragging and exaggerations because "she had not been brought up to understand" it. In other words, Austen tells the reader through the narrator that it is Catherine's upbringing and family, and not her reading habits, which has left her unprepared to comprehend and relate to people that are less "plain" and "matter-of-fact" than herself.

Austen also demonstrates the culpability of Catherine's parents through the lacking advice of the mother. Although Catherine has read poetry and literature and has been mentored by a sensible mother, Mrs Morland's advice to her daughter appears insufficient as she is sent out into the world:

But Mrs Morland knew so little of lords and baronets, that she entertained no notion of their general mischievousness, and was wholly unsuspecting of danger to her daughter from their machinations. Her cautions were confined to the following points. "I beg, Catherine, you will always wrap yourself up very warm about the throat, when you come from the rooms at night; and I wish you would try to keep some account of the money you spend; I will give you this little book on the purpose. (NA, 18-19)

The narrator playfully compares Mrs Morland to the parents of the romantic heroines, who are all too aware of the dangers of the world. When we first read this, Mrs Morland appears sensible and the Gothic parents ridiculous. After all, the "general mischievousness" and "machinations" of the "lords and baronets" appear exaggerated, a humoristic wink at the unrealistic tropes of Gothic literature. However, as we read on, Catherine meets several scheming characters, like Isabella and John Thorpe as well as General Tilney and Captain Frederick Tilney. With her mother's simple advice to "wrap [herself] up very warm about the throat," Catherine is wholly unprepared to meet these characters and handle their duplicitous language and hidden meanings.

Catherine's parents' naïve attitude towards the world is again remarked on by the narrator when Catherine returns home from Northanger Abbey, and her parents reflect on what has happened:

...but it did not oppress them by any means so long; and, after a due course of useless conjecture, that "it was a strange business, and that he must be a very strange man" grew enough for all their indignation and wonder. (NA, 234)

It is only Catherine's little sister, Sarah, who truly reacts to Catherine's ill treatment, as she continues "exclaiming and conjecturing with youthful ardour" (NA, 234), and her mother responds:

"My dear, you give yourself a great deal of needless trouble," said her mother at last; "depend upon it, it is something not at all worth understanding." (NA, 234)

Here, the narrator demonstrates that Mr and Mrs Morland have little understanding of the world and morally dubious characters like General Tilney. However, she also demonstrates that they put little effort into *trying* to understand General Tilney's strange behaviour. Sarah is the only one exhibiting some curiosity, but her mother shuts her down, remarking that "it is something not at all worth understanding." The Morland children have not only been sheltered from duplicity and inconsistent behaviour; they have been taught nothing of it. This explains why Catherine, when she arrives at Bath, expects people to say what they mean and do what they say, and consequently reads her surroundings with "literalness and inattention to multiplicity of meaning" (Løfaldli 2000, 70). Considering that Austen makes this point so clearly shows that she is not attacking novel reading, nor is she attacking female impressionability or intelligence; rather, she is pointing out Catherine's lack of good mentors and attacking the faulty education of young women.

### **The Failing Mentor Figures**

Secondly, the Allens, who functions as Catherine's appointed mentors and guardians in Bath, fail to provide much guidance. Of the two, it is Mr Allen who is the "sensible, intelligent" (NA, 20) one, and who the Morlands might place their hope for some proper guidance for Catherine. However, Mr Allen is a character who is introduced, then rarely mentioned again. His absence is demonstrated at the first social function which Catherine attends with the Allens:

As for Mr Allen, he repaired directly to the card room, and left them to enjoy a mob by themselves (NA, 20); ... and when at last arrived in the tea room, she felt more the awkwardness of having no party to join, no acquittance to claim, no gentleman to assist them. They saw nothing of Mr Allen, and after looking about them in vain for a more eligible situation, were obliged to sit down at the end of a table, at which a large party were already placed ... (NA, 22)

Austen makes a point of commenting on Mr Allen's absence and the inconvenience of it; Catherine and Mrs Allen are left "to enjoy a mob by themselves" and have "no gentleman to assist them." They look for Mr Allen, but in vain. The two women are neglected, and the consequence is social misery, as Catherine is left alone with Mrs Allen. Mrs Allen is as useless then as she continues to be throughout the novel. In the scene below, Catherine is herself beginning to notice Mrs Allen's failings as mentor:

“Do you think it has an odd appearance if young ladies are frequently driven about in [carriages] by young men, to whom they are not related?”

“Yes, my dear, a very odd appearance indeed. I cannot bear to see it.”

“Dear madam,” cried Catherine, “then why did you not tell me so before? I am sure if I had known it to be improper, I would not have gone with Mr Thorpe at all; but I always hoped you would tell me, if you thought I was doing something wrong.” (NA, 104)

In the excerpt above, Catherine asks directly whether Mrs Allen thinks the carriage trips with the Thorpes are improper. When Mrs Allen replies affirmatively, Catherine accuses her of denying her proper guidance, since Mrs Allen never said anything about it before: “then why did you not tell me so before? I am sure if I had known it to be improper, I would not have gone with Mr Thorpe at all; but I always hoped you would tell me, if you thought I was doing something wrong.” Catherine is keen to what is right, and eager to be properly mentored. It is disappointing to her to find that she has been let down. By including this scene and the absent and useless Allen-characters, Austen very clearly shifts all blame away from Catherine and onto her failing mentors.

Finally, Catherine might not have expressed quixotic tendencies at Northanger Abbey at all, had she not first been teasingly encouraged to do so by Henry, another mentor-figure as well as love interest:

“And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as ‘what one reads about’ may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?” (NA, 157-158); “In repassing through the small vaulted room, however, your eyes will be attracted towards a large, old-fashioned cabinet of ebony and gold, which, though narrowly examining the furniture before, you had passed unnoticed.” (NA, 160)

Later the same night, Catherine explores her room:

...when, on giving a parting glance round the room, she was struck by the appearance of a high, old-fashioned black cabinet, which, though in a situation conspicuous enough, had never caught her notice before. Henry’s words, his description of the ebony cabinet which was to escape her observation at first, immediately rushed across her; and though there could be nothing really in it, there was something whimsical, it was certainly a very remarkable coincidence! She took her candle and looked closely at the cabinet. It was not

absolutely ebony and gold; but it was japan, black and yellow japan of the handsomest kind; and as she held her candle, the yellow had very much the effect of gold. (*NA*, 168)

In the first of the two excerpts above, Henry notes how Northanger is similar to the Gothic castles of her novels. Just like the narrator, he casts Catherine as the heroine and draws on the Gothic tropes. Henry is teasing Catherine, but like we have already established, Catherine often takes what people say literally. In the next excerpt, Catherine casts herself as heroine for the first time, but only after she has been triggered by “Henry’s words.” Henry has described “a large, old-fashioned cabinet of ebony and gold,” and when she finds something that resembles this, Catherine is submerged into the reality of Gothic romance. However, it is Henry’s imagination and not her own which first muddles the distinction between Gothic fiction and “real life” in Catherine’s mind. Henry not only fails to guide Catherine away from quixotic interpretations; he teasingly encourages it. In other words, rather than blaming Catherine’s female impressionability and her novel reading, like the critic-narrator in *TFQ* does, Austen points the blame towards Henry, another mentor who fails in his job. In fact, both Lennox and Austen surround their heroines with failing mentor figures. While Catherine’s parents, the Allens and Henry fail Catherine, Arabella is failed by her father, who has raised her in isolation and without female mentorship, her uncle and Mr Glanville, who do not even try to understand where Arabella is coming from, and even the countess, who deserts her all too soon. The argument that is subtly made in these two parodies, through narrative and characterization, is that the problem of the deluded young female reader has little to do with reading at all. Instead, it has everything to do with how poorly young women are prepared for society in the form of education and mentorship.

## **READING AND MORAL CONSTANCY**

In *NA*, Austen argues that young women will not be morally corrupted by their reading habits, as Catherine is presented as much more morally constant than the other characters. Interestingly, Catherine is not the only reader in *NA*. Henry and Isabella also read Gothic novels, while Mr Thorpe openly condemns them. Through the moral characterization of these characters, Austen establishes that there is no correlation between reading and moral behaviour. Austen also uses Catherine’s “feminine” direct and honest language which contrasts the other characters’ “masculine” indirect and duplicitous language to present Catherine as more morally constant than the other characters.

## Reading and Morality

Isabella is perhaps the most passionate reader in *NA* except for Catherine, but her immoral behaviour is not a consequence of her reading. In describing the growing friendship between Catherine and Isabella, the narrator takes care to note that the two “shut themselves up, to read novels together” (*NA*, 10). This appears to be an important cornerstone of their relationship. As in all things in the relationship between them, it is Isabella, either due to superior knowledge of novels or simply a more dominant personality, who takes the lead and introduces Catherine to the Gothic genre:

“... and when you have finished *Udolpho*, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.” (*NA*, 40)

It appears to be Isabella who incites Catherine’s Gothic infatuation, and Isabella who starts to mould Catherine into becoming an obsessive, quixotic reader, much like herself. As Hoeveler notes, one can argue that Isabella is Austen’s one true and traditional quixotic reader:

In Isabella's mind she is a heroine in a sentimental novel, penniless but deserving, the object of love and adoration from countless men who will be only too willing to lavish riches for the privilege of purchasing her. Unfortunately, she has read too many novels and imbibed from them the false belief that women can manipulate and control men in life as easily as they do in sentimental novels. (Hoeveler 1995, 13)

With Isabella’s tendency to manipulate those around her to get what she wants, Austen marks her as a morally dubious character. However, this cunning behaviour cannot only be blamed on her reading habits. Isabella is not by any means limited to her love for reading. She does not, like Arabella, live only in a world of romantic fiction. On the contrary, Isabella is very much rooted to the reality of Bath’s high society, much like Miss Glanville, which we find in the earliest conversation between Isabella and Catherine:

Their conversation turned upon those subjects, of ... dress, balls, flirtations, and quizzes. Miss Thorpe, however, being four years older than Miss Morland, and at least four years better informed, had a very decided advantage in discussing such points; she could compare the balls of Bath with those of Tunbridge, its fashions with the fashions of London; could rectify the opinions of her new friend in many articles of

tasteful attire; could discover a flirtation between any gentleman and lady who only smiled on each other; and point out a quiz through the thickness of a crowd.” (NA, 33)

Again, the narrator remarks how Isabella is taking the lead in the conversation as she has “a very decided advantage in discussing such points.” Here, we see the things which truly fascinates Isabella: balls, fashions, and flirtations. Novel reading is simply one of many sources of entertainment, and she will lose interest if something else draws her fancy.

Mr Thorpe is another character who has some relationship to Gothic novels. In a conversation with Catherine, he emulates the voice of the critics by expressing his disapproval of novels. By presenting Mr Thorpe as characterized as rude, abrasive, and “altogether completely disagreeable” (NA, 22), Austen remarks on how the absence or ignorance of novel reading certainly does not correlate with a moral character. Mr Thorpe’s villainous persona is demonstrated in the scene below:

“Catherine looked round and saw Miss Tilney leaning on her brother’s arm, walking slowly down the street. She saw them both looking back at her. “Stop, stop, Mr Thorpe,” she impatiently cried; “it is Miss Tilney; it is indeed. How could you tell me they were gone? Stop, stop, I will get out this moment and go to them.” But to what purpose did she speak? Thorpe only lashed his horse into a brisker trot; the Tilneys, who has soon ceased to look after her, were in a moment out of sight...” (NA, 87)

Catherine here accuses Mr Thorpe, quite rightly, of lying to her about the Tilneys. Because Mr Thorpe wanted Catherine to come ride in the carriage with him, he told her that he had seen the Tilneys riding past him in a carriage, suggesting that they were not intending to keep their appointment with Catherine. Aside from lying, Mr Thorpe blatantly ignores Catherine’s request, and effectively kidnaps her. By linking Mr Thorpe to the ignorant and prejudice novel critic, and then making him an immoral brute, Austen appears to be using offence as defence here. If the critics dare accuse novel writers and readers of moral corruption, then she can do the same to them.

### **Feminine Language as Expression of Moral Constancy**

In spite of her reading habits, Catherine is presented as much more morally constant than the other characters. Uphaus notes that Austen, in her writing, rejects the notion of women readers as “creatures of sensation” and “moral objects of decorum and propriety,” and



instead presents her female leads as “moral beings” (Uphaus 1987, 339), thereby establishing “a new practice of female reading and writing” (Uphaus 1987, 340). Of course, one can argue that the “new practise” is not entirely new, as Lennox approximately fifty years prior certainly writes *Arabella* as a “moral being.” As we have already established, *Arabella* demonstrates moral constancy when she acts in accordance with her virtuous (though romantic) principles. Catherine’s moral constancy is demonstrated repeatedly throughout the novel, although she follows her own conscience and the moral principles of her upbringing rather than romantic principles.

One of the ways in which Catherine’s moral purity is expressed is through her language: she is unable to speak the “masculine language” language of society; instead, she speaks the honest and direct “feminine language,” Joanne Cordón discusses how Austen employs “feminine writing,” whose goal is to “invents new systems and dismantles old structures” (Cordón 2011, 42). This “feminine writing,” Cordón claims, is expressed through Catherine’s “feminine language”: “Catherine directly voices her thoughts and feelings” (Cordón 2011, 41). Catherine’s language transgresses “[t]he linguistic rules [which] direct women to be agreeable, polite, and submissive; in practice these ideals translate into overstatement, insincerity, and flattery” (Cordón 2011, 43). Cordón also points out that *Isabella* consistently demonstrates this manner of speaking through “an almost pathological inability to say anything directly” which is “the second hallmark of “masculine” language.” (Cordón 2011, 48). “Masculine language” is the “socially sanctioned script” followed by members of society, which is exemplified both by *Isabella* and *Henry*.

When *Isabella* is first introduced, she is described by the narrator as having “great personal beauty” and that her sisters, though not quite as beautiful, became popular by imitating “her air”:

Her eldest daughter had great personal beauty, and the younger ones, by pretending to be as handsome as their sister, imitating her air, and dressing in the same style, did very well. (*NA*, 34)

In other words, the narrator introduces *Isabella* as a girl who perfectly fits society’s standard of both beauty and charm. Her speech is part of this popular charm. In the following excerpt she comments on the physical attractions of one of her friends and her “masculine,” indirect language cloaks what she is really saying:

I think her as beautiful as an angel, and I am so vexed with the men for not admiring her! I scold them all amazingly about it.” “Scold them! Do you scold them for not admiring her?” “Yes, that I do. There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves; it is not my nature. My attachments are always excessively strong. (NA, 40)

In Isabella’s speech, we find an excess of “overstatement, insincerity, and flattery.” Her friend is not only pretty, but “as beautiful as an angel.” This is both flattering and an overstatement. The overstatement goes hand in hand with the insincerity, which Isabella herself reveals when remarking that men don’t admire her. We also find both exaggeration and insincerity in her remarks about what she will do “for those who are really my friends” – because Isabella is doing just the opposite. While pretending to defend her friend for not being seen as attractive by men, she is really pointing out her unattractiveness and only flattering herself for being a so-called good friend. The whole speech comes off as mocking and cruel.

The fact that Catherine is unable to understand Isabella’s “masculine speech” demonstrates that she is incapable of “overstatement, insincerity, and flattery” due to her morally constant nature:

She liked him the better for being a clergyman, “for she must confess herself very partial to the profession”; and something like a sigh escaped her as she said it. Perhaps Catherine was wrong in not demanding the cause of that gentle emotion—but she was not experienced enough in the finesse of love, or the duties of friendship, to know when delicate raillery was properly called for, or when a confidence should be forced. (NA, 36)

Catherine does not understand that Isabella is really hinting that she is interested in her brother, who is a clergyman. Nor does Catherine understand that she is meant to enquire or “force” Isabella to confide in her. The “masculine” language of subtle hints and hidden messages is beyond Catherine. Consequently, Austen demonstrates Catherine’s pure and honest nature, and of course, her moral constancy.

Even though Henry is a satirist of society, he also speaks society’s masculine language of elegant indirectness, often used for playful and patronizing ridicule of others. By countering him with Catherine’s honest and clear communication, Austen not only defends Catherine and the Gothic novel, but also uses her parody to critique the modern language, and consequently the modern values, of late 18<sup>th</sup> century society. In the very early conversations

between Henry and Catherine, Mrs Allen is a part of the discussion, which gives Henry an excellent opportunity to ridicule simple minds of high-society ladies. Mrs Allen only enjoys talking of fashion and Henry indulges her:

“Do you understand muslin, sir?” “Particularly well; I always buy my own cravats, and am allowed to be an excellent judge; and my sister has often trusted me in the choice of a gown. I bought one for her the other day and it was pronounced to be a prodigious bargain by every lady who saw it. I gave but five shillings a yard for it, and a true Indian muslin.” (NA, 28).

Here, Henry appears to see Mrs Allen as a caricature of all women and a representation of the materialistic, fashion-obsessed minds of high society. After all, “every lady” who saw his sister’s dress were enthusiastically impressed by the bargain. While he pretends to be part of this dress-frenzy, it is clear through exaggeration and the general unlikeliness of the scenario, that he is being playful and patronizing. Even Catherine picks up on this tone, and she silently judges his mocking of Mrs Allen: “Catherine feared, as she listened to their discourse, that he indulged himself a little too much with the foibles of others” (NA, 29). Through this indulgence of the “foibles of others,” Henry positions himself as spectator of society; one that analyses and judges but does not partake.

Ironically though, through his exaggerated and multi-layered talk, Henry “speaks the “masculine” language of society of saying one thing and meaning another” (Cordón 2011, 49). Just as with Isabella, there is a dishonesty and even cruelty to this form of communication, which Catherine, who is so in tune with her moral conscience, picks up on. Henry, however, recognises the faults with the masculine language and the purity of Catherine’s more feminine language when Catherine remarks on her inability to speak like him: “... I cannot speak well enough to be unintelligible.” “Bravo! An excellent satire on the modern language” (NA, 133). Catherine has not understood some of the multi-layered things Henry has said, and remarks that she does not speak “well enough” for people not to understand her. Although this is probably meant, considering Catherine’s character, as a self-criticism, Henry hears the inadvertent accusation and playfully sees it as “a satire on the modern language.” Without meaning to, Catherine criticises the masculine language, accusing it of being unintelligible. The accusation is quite potent, as language, after all, is a tool for communication. If it is unintelligible, it is not doing its job very well. Moreover, the masculine language is often used a tool for dishonesty, mockery, and self-flattery. Catherine’s

plain language does not allow for any of this and becomes only a tool for Catherine's plain and honest communication.

Consequently, Austen uses language not to criticise the quixotic reader, as the narrator does in *TFQ*, but to criticise society's self-flattery, insincerity, and mockery – or, in other words, moral inconstancy. It is not the quixotic reader, ignorant of the ways of society, who is morally inconstant, Austen demonstrates, but the ones who are fully immersed in modern society. Catherine, Isabella, John Thorpe, and Henry Tilney are all readers of the Gothic genre to different degrees. Isabella and John both demonstrate the most extreme cases of moral inconstancies society has to offer, while Henry is flawed but generally good. It is only Catherine, however, who has been spared the scheming ways of high society, who is completely in touch with her moral conscience. While this is something that makes Henry admire her, she does not fully benefit from this, as her purity makes it difficult for her to relate to and communicate with those around her. The important lesson which Catherine learns at the end of the novel, is not the difference between fiction and reality, but rather the existence of duplicitous and dishonest behaviour found in normal people and everyday life.

## **READING AND GENDER ROLES**

In *TFQ*, we have discussed how Arabella's assumed (but imaginary) power, a result of her romance reading, appears to challenge the traditional power dynamic between man and woman, as was the fear of the contemporary critics. However, we have also established how Lennox undercuts this message through Arabella's artlessness, her principled rather than strategic behaviour, and her general dependence on the men around her. In *NA*, Austen delivers a similar counter message, as she demonstrates that Catherine's reading habits do not influence her to challenge traditional gender roles and claim "ill-befitting" power. Rather, Catherine's humble nature and awareness of her own lacking knowledge makes her an eager student, which allows for Henry to become a teacher and mentor-figure, thereby cementing the traditional gender roles. However, by ridiculing the male mentor figure instead of the instructive female quixote figure, Austen playfully and subtly criticises the traditional power dynamic between man and woman. Moreover, by presenting Isabella Thorpe as *NA*'s coquette, Austen, like Lennox, links strategic coquettism with the late 18<sup>th</sup> century society, and not with novel reading. By this, she not only defends the quixotic reader, but also criticises the patriarchal system which forces women into the role of the coquette as marriage

becomes her only a means of survival, only to then punish women for this coquettish behaviour.

Firstly, Catherine stands out from other female quixote figures in that she “resist[s] a classification as instructor,” and thereby “inhabits an even more stereotypically feminine position, since her wish to conform brings about a strong desire to be instructed rather than a tendency to instruct others” (Løfaldli 2000, 27). With this, Austen firstly demonstrates that reading does not automatically lead to controlling, instructive behaviour in young women. Secondly, by making her female quixote figure someone who is often instructed, especially by her love interest, Henry, Austen shifts her critical focus toward the instructive male mentor figure. In the relationship with Henry, we see how Catherine is eager “to be instructed,” and just as interestingly, how Henry is eager to instruct. In the following excerpt, Catherine is conscious of her ignorance of “the picturesque” and confesses her “want of knowledge” to Henry:

In the present instance, she confessed and lamented her want of knowledge, declared that she would give anything in the world to be able to draw; and a lecture on the picturesque immediately followed, in which his instructions were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him. (NA, 111)

Henry is clearly as eager to teach as Catherine is to learn, as “a lecture on the picturesque immediately followed.” The “immediacy” with which Henry responds is not arbitrary; the narrator is pointing out how Henry, much like the more traditional female quixote figures, likes to instruct. In fact, the narrator gives a direct speech to the reader, reminiscent of the one earlier in the story on novel reading, on how attractive an ignorant woman is to a man:

A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can. ...But Catherine did not know her own advantages—did not know that a good-looking girl, with an affectionate heart and a very ignorant mind, cannot fail of attracting a clever young man, unless circumstances are particularly untoward. (NA, 111)

There is a distinct playfulness in the narrator’s tone here, which suggests that a joke is being made and someone or something must be the butt of it. The phrasing about a woman having the “*misfortune of knowing anything*” is comical because it both subverts expectations and exaggerates: a woman should not know only a little, she should not know anything at all. The statement “that a good-looking girl, with ... a very ignorant mind, cannot fail of attracting a

clever young man” has the same comical exaggeration. The girl should not only have “an ignorant mind,” but a “a *very* ignorant mind.” The comical exaggeration of these claims suggests ridicule. Therefore, the narrator is not really giving her own opinion, but mimicking someone else’s. Because the narrator is speaking in such general terms, referring to “a woman” and “a clever young man,” she is speaking of general views of society, which consists of preferring ignorant to intelligent women. Because she clearly finds this view laughable, she is ridiculing “the clever young man” who finds ignorance in women attractive. Henry, who “immediately” gives Catherine a lecture, clearly falls into this category. Therefore, instead of criticising the female quixote figure for her need to instruct, she ridicules the male mentor figure for the same reason. She thereby points to the hypocrisy of judging intelligent, instructive women, both as a literary practice and in real life. All in all, Austen takes her societal criticism one step further than Lennox. While Lennox defends her instructive quixotic figure, subtly demonstrating that she is not as controlling as she seems, Austen criticises the whole attack on intelligent, instructive women and instead ridicules the male mentor figure, whose authority is left unchallenged by society.

Secondly, much like Lennox, Austen demonstrates that controlling, “coquettish” behaviour has little to do with literary quixotism and more to do with the patriarchal values society. Just like Miss Glanville functions as the representative of contemporary society in *TFQ*, Isabella Thorpe does the same in *NA*. Of course, Isabella Thorpe is a reader, but as we have established earlier in this chapter, she is just as interested, if not more, in the “real world” of high society than of the fictional one of Gothic novels. Glock argues that Isabella’s interest in both these worlds, there is something disingenuous and “unreal”:

Catherine attempting to emulate Emily St. Aubert is no less absurd, but much less dangerous, than Isabella, wrapped in the shimmering gown of romantic illusion, betraying James Morland for Captain Tilney ... Isabella's role-playing is as unreal as her appreciation and understanding of good novels. She has not read Sir Charles Grandison, " 'an amazing horrid book' " (pp. 41-2) which she considers a subject of less importance than the clothes she is going to wear... (Glock 1978, 38)

Glock points out that Isabella’s interest in novels is limited and “unreal.” Interestingly, this superficial, limited interest in novels mirrors the fake and disingenuous relationships she cultivates with those around her, especially the men; her “role-playing,” as Glock calls it. This “role-playing” reminds us of Miss Glanville’s self-conscious and strategic charms, or “little Arts,” to deflect attention away from Arabella and secure the match with Sir George for

herself. In Isabella's case, we can also analyse her what motivate her strategic "role-playing." Aside from the many little displays of dishonesty and fickleness, Isabella first reveals her reasons for wanting to marry James Morland when she learns of how little his father will be able to pay them:

It is not on my own account I wish for more; but I cannot bear to be the means of injuring me dear Morland, making him sit down upon an income hardly enough to find one in the common necessities of life. For myself, it is nothing; I never think of myself ... Nobody can think better of Mr Morland than I do, I am sure. But everybody has their failing, you know, and everybody has a right to do what they like with their own money. (NA, 135-136)

Despite Isabella's protestations and declarations of selflessness, it is clear to everyone but Catherine that she is very disappointed in the small living Morland's father will be able to provide for them. She had clearly expected more than this, and as James Morland is described as neither very handsome nor very intelligent or charming, the imagined financial prospects might have been her chief incentive for pursuing him. After this, we see how Isabella's interest for James begin to dwindle and the wealthier and handsomer Frederick Tilney gains more of her attention, which eventually culminates in infidelity and betrayal. While Lennox allows Miss Glanville to achieve a convenient, apparently loveless marriage, Austen condemns Isabella to complete failure, leaving her with no man and no economic prospects at the end of the novel. Both authors thereby demonstrate that reducing marriage only to convenience, social status, and financial security – and removing the romance and the love story as presented by the romantic novels - is what motivates strategic, coquettish behaviour in young women – not novel reading.

Although these novels' coquettes, Charlotte Glanville and Isabella Thorpe, are the ones punished in the novels, one cannot help noticing that it is mainly financial position and sheer luck which really separate the heroines' fates from that of the coquettes. From a narrative point of view, Arabella and Catherine are rewarded for their virtue and artlessness, but they are also the winners of happy circumstances – Arabella of birth and Catherine of a lucky Cinderella-scenario. Miss Glanville and Isabella, however, represent the less lucky women, whose lives and financial position might depend on a convenient marriage. For these less lucky, perhaps more "real" women, "coquettism" is not just an expression of crude ambition, but of survival. What both novels subtly demonstrate is how the accusation of coquettism towards women is unfair. Coquettism is not a result of obsessive reading and

romantic delusions, but of an acute awareness of how the world actually works. Whereas Arabella and Catherine are true heroines, untouched by the world through circumstance and luck, the “real women” must navigate the “real world” and ensure their own survival. For this, they are punished. In other words, *TFQ* and *NA* do not only present a defence of the heroine and the romantic world she inhabits, but also of the coquette who cannot escape the patriarchal society of the “real world” which *she* inhabits.

## CONCLUSION

Austen both directly and subtly defends Catherine and her novel reading. Catherine’s delusions as expressed in *Northanger* is to be blamed on a sheltered upbringing, lacking education, and failing mentor figures, not on her Gothic novels. Austen presents Catherine’s moral constancy through her language and contrasts her with other fickle characters’ superficial language. Austen thereby criticises contemporary society’s fickleness and superficiality, while defending Catherine. However, Catherine’s superiority is not shaped by her reading. Catherine, nor any other character, has been influenced by novel reading. Instead, Catherine’s moral constancy is shaped by an absence of societal exposure. Moreover, Austen demonstrates that novel reading does not challenge the traditional power dynamic between man and woman, as the contemporary critics suggest, and also that strategic, coquettish behaviour is not a result of novel reading, but of the patriarchal values of society. Not only does Austen reject these critical tropes found in traditional quixotic parodies; she also criticizes hypocritical judging of an intelligent, instructive woman as well as the unfair attack on real, “coquettish” women, trying to ensure financial stability for themselves.

While there are some similarities in Austen and Lennox’s defence of the romance/Gothic novel, the defences are essentially very different. While Lennox’s defence is more subtle, hidden under a thick layer of didactic commentary and ridicule, Austen’s defence is more direct. Moreover, Lennox allows Arabella to be influenced by her reading, as it affects her language and societal expectations, even if it does not morally corrupt her. By legitimising Arabella’s romantic thinking, Lennox criticises contemporary society’s scheming, patriarchal ways and calls for an inclusion of the romance’s values of virtue and moral goodness. Austen, however, does not let Catherine’s identity be influenced by her reading at all, and this is Austen’s defence. It is not the novels that fail young women and make them unprepared for society; it is their mentors and educators. To this, of course, Lennox would agree; both Catherine and Arabella have been set up to fail by their patriarchal



authorities, and both eventually achieve some success in spite of the education and support they never received.

### Chapter Three

#### **The Symbolic Criticism in the Gothic/Romance Novel:**

#### **Women's Stories and Women's Rights**

In my previous chapter, I briefly discuss language as a barrier which disrupts Arabella's understanding of reality, and which misleadingly suggests her moral corruption. However, the linguistic disconnect between Arabella and the other characters is also symbolic of the characters' - as well as real literary critics' - inability to understand romances. Langbauer notes that "Lennox makes a point of telling us that Arabella has read romance in bad translations" (Langbauer 1984, 37). We find this point in the narrator's description of Arabella's reading habits:

From her earliest Youth she had discovered a Fondness for Reading, which extremely delighted the Marquis; he permitted her therefore the Use of his Library, in which, unfortunately for her, were great Store of Romances, and, what was still more unfortunate, not in the original French, but very bad Translations. (*TFQ*, 7)

According to Lennox, the bad translation of romances is also hinder Arabella's ability to express the true essence of the romances. By making this point so clearly, Lennox suggests that there may lay something valuable hidden in the romances, behind bad translations and bad interpretations. If the romances had been all terrible, the bad translations would not matter. In other words, from early on in the novel, Lennox suggests that someone is misreading the romances and misinterpreting the message. One might think the obvious answer here is Arabella, since she is the one reading them. However, it may also be the other characters as well as the narrator (who represents the real-life critics), who misread and misjudge the romance. This challenges the interpretation of *The Female Quixote* as an anti-romance novel and creates an ambivalent message with Arabella's love of romances on one side and the narrator's ridicule of them on the other. In this chapter I will argue that Arabella and Catherine both grasp the redeeming values of the romance and Gothic novels, while society and critics are the ones reading and interpreting the novels too literally and superficially.

Many critics have already analysed *The Female Quixote* and challenged its anti-romance message as it was read by many when it was first released. In many ways, I am building upon their arguments. My thesis, and particularly this chapter, will arguably stand

out in that I claim more boldly that *TFQ* delivers a strong, though subtle, proto-feminist message of female suppression, as echoed by the proto-feminist message found in Arabella's romances. Furthermore, my discussion will be based upon an analysis of women's stories, the female intellect, and autonomy, as presented in *TFQ*. I will then present a similar analysis of Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, which has also been done by several other critics. However, my focus is directed more towards Austen's attack of the novel critics' motivations as well as her resituating of the Gothic heroine and the Gothic narrative to a more realist literary context, thereby echoing the Gothic feminism of the Radcliffian Gothic and delivering a critical message of female suffering, women's restrictive legal rights and patriarchal tyranny.

### **PART 1: *The Female Quixote***

In this first part of the chapter, I will discuss how Lennox uses *TFQ* not only to defend the romance and female reader, but also to criticise the patriarchal society in which she writes and subtly deliver a proto feminist message. Firstly, Lennox uses storytelling to demonstrate how women's stories are often ignored or distorted. Secondly, Lennox echoes the romance's image of the intelligent and resourceful woman. Thirdly, Lennox provides Arabella with temporary autonomy, as claimed by the traditional heroines, which can read as a proto-feminist fantasy. Finally, Lennox allows all romantic and proto-feminist fantasies to be crushed by a patriarchal figure. By this, Lennox demonstrates the almost overwhelming struggle a woman faces in the search for relevance, respect, and autonomy.

### **A WOMAN'S STORY: *Telling and Interpreting***

Arabella's identifying as a heroine and general focus on women's stories can be seen a genuine expression of frustration of the lacking importance and relevance placed upon the female experience in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. In her novel, Lennox focus is both on the telling of a woman's story and interpreting of a woman's story, both of which demonstrate how women are either ignored or unfairly judged by patriarchal society.

### **The Telling of a Woman's Story**

All of Arabella's romances centre the story on a heroine, which suggests a focus on the importance of women's lives and stories, as it is seen by Arabella. The heroine's stories function as examples of behaviour which Arabella repetitiously refers to with almost religious veneration. Arabella repeatedly compares herself to the heroines' manners and circumstance:

Then ransacking her Memory for Instances in her Romances of Ladies equally unfortunate with herself, she would sometimes compare herself to one Lady, sometimes to another, adapting their Sentiments, and making Use of their Language in her Complaints. (*TFQ*, 355)

By "adapting their Sentiments, and making Use of their Language," it is clear that Arabella aspires to be a real romantic heroine, and this reveals an obsessive admiration. Something about these romances speaks to Arabella. She relates to the heroines, who share her "Beauty," "Strength of her Understanding," "lively Wit" and "Sweetness of ... Temper" (*TFQ*, 116-117), and so she naturally enjoys reading about their lives, their struggles, and their victories. Their importance and relevance, demonstrated in the romances, suggests her own importance and relevance. Even though Arabella lives a lonely, secluded life, hidden away from society and hindered from being a figure of much influence, as was the fate of many women in her time, *TFQ* suggests through female storytelling that her life is still important. In other words, the story valorises the lived experience of the woman.

Within these romances, the heroine's "Adventures" are related to other characters, making *TFQ* not only a story of stories, but story of stories of stories. This suggests that not only are women's lives and stories important; they must also be told. Furthermore, the story must be told truthfully, by themselves or by someone who knows them very well. Mr Glanville ridicules the heroines' need to have their stories told, but Arabella defends a woman's right to tell their own stories.

And may I not be carried into Macedonia by a Similitude of Destiny with that of a great many beautiful Princesses, who, though born in the most distant Quarters of the World, chanced to meet at one time in the City of Alexandria, and related their miraculous Adventures to each other? And it was for that very Purpose they met, Madam, said Mr. Glanville, smiling. (*TFQ*, 261)

When Mr Glanville humorously suggests that the “beautiful Princesses” came to Alexandria for the “very Purpose” of telling their own stories, he remarks on the absurdity of chance that this happened (in real life or fictitiously). However, there is also an undertone of condemnation here. That these women should have considered themselves with so much importance to travel to a city only to tell their story to other people, is evidence of a narcissistic nature which must overshadow any other description of virtue. Mr Glanville’s reaction aligns itself with the didactic narrator’s condemnation of Arabella’s need to relate her story to the other characters. This need is evidence of a narcissistic streak, which is ill-befitting the humble ideal of woman, the narrator suggests.

However, Arabella responds to Mr Glanville’s accusation, claiming the importance of women telling their own stories:

Why, truly, said Arabella, it happened very luckily for each of them, that they were brought into a Place where they found so many illustrious Companions in Misfortune, to whom they might freely communicate their Adventures, which otherwise might, haply, have been concealed, or, at least, have been imperfectly delivered down to us. (*TFQ*, 261)

By arguing that the Princesses’ stories’ might “been concealed, or, at least, have been imperfectly delivered down to us,” Arabella remarks, quite rightly, that women’s lives and stories have often been ignored in history. Arabella might also therefore be conscious of the fact that a woman’s life and story might be ignored in the present time as well, which is perhaps why she is so keen to have her own story told. In the excerpt below, Arabella asks her maid, Lucy, to relate all her “Adventures” to her cousins and Sir George:

All you have to do is to relate them as exactly as possible. You have lived with me from my Childhood, and are instructed in all my Adventures; so that you must be certainly very capable of executing the Task I have honoured you with. (*TFQ*, 121)

Arabella explains why Lucy is “capable of executing the Task.” It is because she has lived in Arabella “from ... Childhood” and is “instructed in all [her] Adventures.” Because of Lucy’s intimate familiarity with Arabella, there is no danger of her story being “imperfectly delivered.” Her story will be told accurately and truthfully. Her character will not be misrepresented or distorted.

Langbauer notes that Lennox supports Arabella's sentiment and argues for the value of the Princesses' narrative exchanges:

the conventions of romance are important because they allow women to tell their stories, which otherwise might be lost or altered. Beautiful princesses come together in Alexandria, spinning tales-with this image of a convention establishing itself right at antiquity's library, Lennox suggests how the collusion of romance and women can be a generative one, providing a meeting-place for women, a ground from which to speak. (Langbauer 1984, 44)

In Lennox's mind, a woman's story, and consequently, a woman's life, is not unimportant. This is the undercurrent which rebels against the narrator's didactic and mocking condemnation of Arabella's obsession with the romances. I earlier wrote that Arabella's obsession with romances "could be seen a genuine expression of frustration of the lacking importance and relevance placed upon the female experience in 18<sup>th</sup> century England." However, these frustrations are not necessarily Arabella's frustrations. She wants her story told because she imagines herself as a heroine, and therefore expects to be treated like one. Instead, the "frustrations of the lacking importance and relevance placed upon the female experience" can be perceived as Lennox's frustrations. Lennox is the author who positions Arabella against the didactic narrator and undercuts the narrator's mocking tone with Arabella's clever arguments. While mimicking and allowing ample space for the contemporary critic to speak in her novel, Lennox gives Arabella what she expects as heroine and what Lennox herself desires; a voice and a story to be told.

### **The Interpreting of a Woman's Story**

In the example of Miss Grove's, we find Arabella's concerns regarding "imperfectly delivered" stories of women realized through the narrating of a representative of patriarchal society. In chapter 4 Book 1, Arabella invites Miss Groves, and her companion in service, Mrs Morris, to her home. True to the tradition of her romances, Arabella asks Mrs Morris to relate to her the history of Miss Groves (while Miss Groves is not in the room). Unlike Lucy, Mrs Morris is not well suited to tell Miss Groves' story, as she has very recently been employed by Miss Grove and has only heard the tale from a former employee. Not only does Mrs Morris not really hold the facts, but she also has no loyalty towards Miss Groves. Mrs Morris only obliges Arabella in the hopes that she might recommend herself to her, as she is

of higher rank and wealthier than Miss Groves. Mrs Morris tells the story of Miss Groves as a young, unruly girl of modest birth who joins a high-ranking family through the marriage of her mother:

Miss Groves, Madam, was then about twelve Years old, and was educated with the Duke's Daughters, who, in a little time, became quite disgusted with their new Sister; for Miss Groves, who inherited her Mother's Pride, tho' not her Understanding, in all things affected an Equality with those young Ladies, who, conscious of the Superiority of their Birth, could but ill bear with her Insolence and Presumption. As they grew older, the Difference of their Inclinations caused perpetual Quarrels amongst them; for his Grace's Daughters were serious, reserved, and pious. Miss Groves affected noisy Mirth, was a great Romp, and delighted in masculine Exercises. (*TFQ*, 71)

Mrs Morris clearly does not care much for Miss Groves, freely listing her negative traits; “Pride,” lacking “Understanding” and “Insolence and Presumption.” Moreover, she appears to side with Miss Groves’ stepsisters rather than with Miss Groves herself, apparently due to their “Superiority of their Birth.” After this, Mrs Morris holds nothing back as she goes on to relate Miss Groves’ many more serious crimes, such as being seduced by “the Person who taught her to Write” (*TFQ*, 71), as well as other men, which leaves her pregnant and shunned by society. Miss Groves clearly fails to be all that a woman should be in 18<sup>th</sup> century society. She is not feminine, delighting in “masculine Exercises” and she is not humble. And as Mrs Morris will go on to explain, she is also not sufficiently chaste.

Arabella interprets women’s stories differently from society, here represented by Mrs Morris and the narrator. While the narrator and Mrs Morris judges Miss Groves’ actions through a patriarchal lens, Arabella interprets the story through the perspective of Miss Grove, empathising with the feelings and reasoning which informed her decisions:

Mrs. Morris ending her Narration, Arabella, who had not been able to restrain her Tears at some Parts of it, thanked her for the Trouble she had been at; and assured her of her Secrecy: Your Lady's Case, said she, is much to be lamented; and greatly resembles the unfortunate Cleopatra's, whom Julius Caesar privately marrying, with a Promise to own her for his Wife, when he should be peaceable Master of the Roman Empire, left that great Queen big with Child, and, never intending to perform his Promise, suffered her to be exposed to the Censures the World has so freely cast upon her; and which she so little deserved. (*TFQ*, 77)

In Arabella's mind, Miss Groves is, like Arabella herself, a heroine. As a heroine, Miss Groves is not the perpetrator but the victim. Like Cleopatra, she was betrayed by men who promised her love and she should therefore be "lamented," not judged. To some extent, Mrs Morris narration supports this view of the story: "Miss Groves protested to her Friends, That he had promised her Marriage; but Mr. L— constantly denied it" (*TFQ*, 75). And yet, Mrs Morris clearly disagrees with Arabella's view of Miss Groves, which the narrator takes care to include: "Mrs. Morris, seeing the favourable Light in which Arabella viewed the Actions of her Lady, did not think proper to say any thing to undeceive her" (*TFQ*, 77). Arabella's comparisons between Miss Groves and romantic heroines are meant to be absurd, as the narrator is careful to buttress with comments about Mrs Morris' reaction to them: "Indeed, Madam, said Mrs. Morris, whom this Speech of Arabella had extremely surprised" (*TFQ*, 72).

In the example of Miss Groves, we find Lennox operating somewhere between the didactic tone of the narrator and the rebellious undercurrent; she warns the female reader to be careful and follow the strict and chaste demands set by society while still wistfully acknowledging the unfairness of the situation. Deborah Ross discusses how *TFQ*, and therefore also Lennox, takes a stance against "the unfairness" of the treatment of women who did not fit the norm of the ideal woman:

*The Female Quixote* ... stresses the unfairness of the punishments visited on women who lack self-restraint. Part of Arabella's education in the way of the world comes from the history of the fallen Miss Groves, whose brazenness has been her undoing. ... Unfortunately, Arabella cannot learn much from this harrowing story, because her romantic delusions make her believe Miss Groves is chaste but misunderstood, like Scudery's "unfortunate Cleopatra." But the female reader learns to fear the consequences of free behavior without forfeiting her awareness that if Miss Groves is bad, her cruel, hypocritical lover is much worse. (Ross 1987, 465)

Ross argues that it is the female reader who is meant to learn and be wary of Miss Groves' example. However, she notes that there is another side to Lennox's lesson. Miss Groves, though faulty and brazen, is not the real villain in the story. Ross claims that "Mr L-", Miss Groves' "cruel, hypocritical lover is much worse" than Miss Groves. In fact, Arabella's comparison between Miss Groves who was betrayed by Mr L- and Cleopatra who was fooled by Julius Caesar is perhaps not absurd after all. With Arabella's comparison, I believe Lennox's makes another couple of points. Firstly, there certainly exists villainous men in the "real world," just like in the romances. Secondly, it is women and not men who will be



punished for their sins. Both Julius Caesar and the mysterious Mr L- have carelessly ruined their partners' lives by either lying or going back on their promise. Their actions were clearly motivated by lust, and they betray the women they strategically pretended to love. After, Mr L- arrogantly boasts to his friends that "he found Miss Groves too easy a Conquest to make any Perjury necessary" (*TFQ*, 76). Consequently, the women are left disgraced and shunned by society, while the men's actions are not much dwelt upon.

To conclude, Lennox illustrates in her novel how a woman's experience is valorised through her story and through the telling of this story. The need to tell one's story is felt deeply by Arabella, and possibly also by Lennox, who is, after all, an author telling a woman's story. Likewise, Lennox illustrates how patriarchal society rejects and ridicules the telling of a woman's story, and thereby rejects the importance of a woman's life. Moreover, Lennox demonstrates how a woman's story is often misinterpreted by patriarchal society. A woman's actions will be unfairly judged, and she will be held accountable for more than just her own. Therefore, her story might easily be distorted, and her character condemned. Whether this is meant to be a didactic warning to the reader, or a wistful, proto feminist sigh, Lennox demonstrates the complicated relationship between women and storytelling in 18<sup>th</sup> century England.

## **THE FEMALE INTELLECT**

As I have explored in my theoretical chapter, there existed within the world of literary critics a link between novels and women, and the supposedly bad quality of the novels were connected to the alleged simpler intellect of the women. However, in Arabella's romances the women are resourceful. Cleopatra is ruler of Egypt and Thelastris, Queen of the Amazon, was a capable of warrior, whose assistance in the battlefield was considered to be "Equal to that of a whole Army" (*TFQ*, 205). Likewise, in *TFQ*, there are more examples of intelligent, resourceful women than of men, suggesting that Lennox supports rather than challenges the romance novels' view of women.

By positioning Arabella as the winning party over certain male characters in *TFQ*, Lennox supports and defends the female intellect, which has traditionally been under attack in critical discourse of the time. "Interestingly, the greatest ignoramuses ... are male. Lennox takes the old fop and pedant, familiar since the days of Jacobean drama, and adapts them to her feminist purpose by enlisting them on the losing side of the battle of the sexes" Ross

writes (Ross 1987, 466). As Arabella “innocently exposes their folly,” Lennox assures the reader that the heroine's absurdity is “nothing to theirs.” (Ross 1987, 466). A good example of this is Arabella’s meeting with Mr Selvin, who the narrator describes as a rather ignorant, pompous character:

Mr. Selvin, so was the other Gentleman called, was of a much graver Cast: He affected to be thought deepread in History, and never failed to take all Opportunities of displaying his Knowledge of Antiquity, which was indeed but very superficial; but having some few Anecdotes by Heart, which he would take Occasion to introduce as often as he could. (*TFQ*, 264)

Lennox makes it clear that even though Mr Selvin is well-read in history, his knowledge is “very superficial.” He is still keen though to demonstrate the little knowledge he has by performing rehearsed “Anecdotes.” His strategic demonstration of his “knowledge” is also a futile attempt at appearing intelligent. When he meets Arabella, however, he is embarrassed by her seemingly superior knowledge:

The Shame he conceived at seeing himself posed by a Girl, in a Matter which so immediately belonged to him, made him resolve to draw himself out of this Dilemma at any Rate. (*TFQ*, 265)

In this scene, Arabella has informed Mr Selvin and the other characters that Bath reminds her of the ancient Greek “Springs of Thermopylae” (*TFQ*, 265). As the reader by now should be aware, through the persistent nudges of the didactic narrator and the protestations of the other characters, Arabella’s many references to her romances are not to be taken as serious history, no matter how she portrays them. Here, the reader should chuckle at the expense of Arabella, as she has been encouraged to do up to this point. However, because Mr Selvin himself is so ignorant, he is fooled by Arabella’s confidence. Because he has never heard of these famous springs, he is confused, but also threatened by Arabella’s seemingly superior knowledge. He fears, perhaps, that she might usurp his position as “the historian,” which leaves him without much of a role in his social circles.

The experience is particularly humiliating because he is “posed by a Girl.” Interestingly, because of Mr Selvin’s ignorance and desire to impress, Arabella comes out victorious despite of her delusions. This portrayal of male characters as less intelligent makes it clear to the reader that *TFQ* is not an anti-romance set out to discredit female intellect in favour of the male. Both genders are ridiculed and both genders are commended. On the “ridiculed” side,

we have Mr Selvin, Sir George, occasionally Charles Glanville (Mr Glanville's father), and possibly even Arabella's father, who has failed to prepare Arabella for society. On the more sensible side we have only Mr Glanville. Among the women, Miss Glanville is on the "ridiculed"-side, while the countess is definitely portrayed as sensible and wise. Apart from her delusions, Arabella is consistently portrayed as sensible and virtuous. Counting the scores, we find that "in the battle of the sexes" Lennox position the men as the losers and the women as winners, and she uses what on first glance appears to be an anti-romance to defend rather than attack the female intellect which is so intrinsically connected to the romance.

### **ARABELLA'S AUTONOMY AS A FEMINIST FANTASY**

As with the case of intellect, Lennox echoes the perseverance of autonomy found in the romance novels. After all, it is the heroine's right to choose, especially who to love, which inspires Arabella to decline Mr Glanville. Like the heroines, Arabella also protects her personal space and time, which gives room for independence of thought. Though this can be read as part of Arabella's "ridiculous" emulation of the romantic heroines, and it was probably read as such by the contemporary critics, it can also be read as a wistful, proto feminist fantasy.

Lennox continues to subtly convey a proto-feminist message through providing her heroine with some autonomy. Like we have established, Arabella does not seek to control others. She does, however, hold some limited control over her own life through her persistent refusal of Mr Glanville's hand in marriage. In the following excerpt, Mr Glanville attempts to order Arabella's women away, so that they speak in private:

I beseech you, Cousin, said he, let me have the Pleasure of walking with you alone: What Necessity is there for always having so many Witnesses of our Conversation? You may retire, said he, speaking to Lucy, and the other Woman; I have something to say to your Lady in private. Stay, I command you, said Arabella, blushing at an Insolence so uncommon, and take Orders from no one but myself. — I pray you, Sir, pursued she frowning, What Intercourse of Secrets is there between you and me, that you expect I should favour you with a private Conversation? (*TFQ*, 31)

Mr Glanville here attempts to take control and challenge Arabella's autonomy. Firstly, he speaks directly to Arabella's servants, ordering them away. To this, Arabella quickly urges

her women to “take Orders from no one but [herself].” Her control of her own servants is clearly important to her, and she experiences Mr Glanville’s words as a trespassing of authority, which greatly insults her. Secondly, Mr Glanville’s “beseeching” is not really a question as much as a demand, especially after he spoken directly to her women. This blunt disregard of Arabella’s will is an “Insolence” to her. She, like her women, takes orders only from herself.

Arabella autonomy is also manifested through how she protects her personal space, as she limits the entrance of her own apartments and values time to herself.

...since I am not in an Humour to suffer them, don't take it ill, if I intreat you to leave me to myself ... What, said he, to Mr. Glanville, does she so little understand the Respect that is due to me as her Uncle, that she, so peremptorily, desired me to leave her Room? (*TFQ*, 63)

Arabella’s uncle, Charles Glanville, is horrified that she asks them “to leave her Room.” In his opinion, she has no right to her own personal space and her own time within it. Requiring this is to “little understand the Respect” she owes him. Løfaldli notes how this tendency towards individuality is seen as “unwomanly”:

Arabella values individuality higher than communal concerns, and this is among the manifestations of her social transgression. Her preference for solitude to interaction is, by eighteenth-century standards, unwomanly, since it prevents her from fulfilling her familiar responsibilities ... Arabella constantly withdraws to her apartment, where few other characters are permitted ... Arabella’s chamber and closet constitutes a territory over which she has absolute control. (Løfaldli 2000, 55)

Here, we see how Arabella’s autonomy, her choice of space and time to herself, is seen as a “social transgression” because it is in conflict with the expectations of womanhood. As a woman, she should be available to the social needs of others. Moreover, in this space and time for herself, her autonomy is greater than ever. She can do as she pleases with herself; she is free and independent of the demands and wishes of others. In fact, within the protective walls of her own apartments, with only servants to boss around, Arabella comes closer than ever to being a real romantic heroine. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, Arabella’s assumed power is often only illusionary, but within these walls, she truly is in control of her own life. However, the autonomy, much like her power over others, is limited. Her apartment is only so big, and her control over her own life is forgone in the final pages of the book. Still,

for a constricted period of time and space, Arabella's autonomy shines like a beacon of hope to the female reader, and perhaps even to the author herself.

If we assume that there is a rebellious undercurrent running through *TFQ*, which counters the didactic message of anti-romance discourse, Arabella's autonomy might have a deeper significance than simply another symptom of romantic delusion. It may, in fact, be a proto feminist-fantasy. Hidden under layers of didactic commentary and ridicule, we may find what Lennox most admires about the romance novels; namely, the autonomy which its heroines experience: the freedom from male authority and male guidance, which Lennox herself was so heavily bound through her tight bond with mentor figures like Samuel Johnson. Had Lennox achieved the same level of autonomy which Arabella temporarily gains; her proto-feminist messages might not have been so well cloaked by the popular literary discourse. However, this level of autonomy is out of reach. At the end of the novel, Arabella gives all control of herself and her life over to her future husband, and Lennox allegedly gives the pen over to Samuel Johnson. Arabella wakes up from her romantic dream, but Lennox's dream remains hidden in the pages of her novel.

### **CONVERSION: *The Feminist and the Realist***

In the final chapters of the novel Arabella is both humbled and converted by the wise doctor, and by allowing Arabella's "feminist" delusions to crumble, Lennox wistfully reminds us that they are just that – delusional hopes, not reality. Throughout the novel, Arabella follows the example of strong, virtuous, and autonomous heroines and stays true to her inner romantic convictions rather than be influenced by the male authoritative figures around her. She refuses Mr Glanville hand in marriage because she believes it to be right, and she protects her right to make her own virtuous and romantic choices. In the last scenes with the doctor, however, this romantic and feminist fantasy is crushed, and Arabella is abruptly converted from her quixotic tendencies during the course of one conversation.

Interestingly, the doctor is not the first person who has attempted to persuade Arabella away from her romantic notions. Lennox could have let Arabella be persuaded by the countess, who is, after all, best suited to talk "sense" into Arabella, having been in the exact same position. Langbauer remarks on the value of the relationship between Arabella and the countess:

She and the Countess can understand each other because they have both read romance; it gives them a common language. In this bond between Arabella and the Countess, Lennox's mockery of romance disappears; for a moment she explicitly values it: Arabella and the Countess, alike because they have read romance, are also paragons of virtue. Those outside romance's influence, like Miss Glanville, the women of London, are empty-headed, selfish, and ordinary. (Langbauer 1984, 47-48)

In the relation between Arabella and the countess, the romance is to some extent valued. It represents virtue, wit, and intellect, like the women who embody the genre. The “real world” around them, as represented by the Miss Glanville, is shallow in pale in comparison. The countess exemplifies the best from the romance:

This Lady, who among her own Sex had no Superior in Wit, Elegance, and Ease, was inferior to very few of the other in Sense, Learning, and Judgment. Her Skill in Poetry, Painting, and Musick, tho' incontestably great, was number'd among the least of her Accomplishments. Her Candour, her Sweetness, her Modesty and Benevolence, while they secur'd her from the Darts of Envy, render'd her superior to Praise, and made the one as unnecessary as the other ineffectual. (*TFQ*, 322-323)

The description of the countess is very similar to that of Arabella. Arabella is often praised for her “Wit” and “Sweetness,” and she is consistently demonstrating her “Learning” and “Benevolence” which is so starkly contrasted with Miss Glanville’s lack of both. By presenting the countess’ character, Lennox reminds us of Arabella’s virtues. Moreover, by linking both women to romance reading, these virtues also become associated with the books. Consequently, our perspective shifts. Instead of the romances being the source of Arabella’s corruption, Lennox argues that Arabella has been positively influenced by the romances. Arabella’s virtues, wit and sweetness are direct influences of her reading.

Unlike other mentor figures who have tried to convert Arabella from her quixotic delusions, the countess is able to understand Arabella’s obsession and her misbeliefs about the world. Through reasonable discussion, the countess gently explains that the novels are fiction and not history, and attempts to resituate Arabella to “modern day”:

And when one reflects upon the dangerous Adventures to which Persons of their Quality were expos'd in those Times, one cannot help rejoicing that we live in an Age in which the Customs, Manners, Habits, and Inclinations differ so widely from theirs, that 'tis impossible such Adventures should even happen. (*TFQ*, 326)

But Custom, Madam, said Arabella, cannot possibly change the Nature of Virtue or Vice: And since Virtue is the chief Characteristic of a Hero, a Hero in the last Age will be a Hero in this — Tho' the Natures of Virtue or Vice cannot be changed, replied the Countess, yet they may be mistaken; and different Principles, Customs, and Education, may probably change their Names, if not their Natures. (*TFQ*, 328)

The countess here reminds Arabella that “Customs, Manners, Habits, and Inclinations” have changed so much that one cannot use the romances directly as conduct books, which were so common during this era. Even “Virtue” is not unchangeable as it is decided by the “Principles, Customs, and Education” of its time. The countess also tries to explain to Arabella the fictionality of the romances as “’tis impossible such Adventures should even happen.” The countess does not condemn the romances, nor does she implore Arabella to stop reading them. Rather, she is the first to understand the root of Arabella’s problem: that she believes them to be real history, that she uses them as conduct books and that she expects the people around her to also do so. No other character has been able to deliver such guidance and constructive criticism to Arabella. They have reacted with laughter and mockery, or else with shock and outrage. They have not tried to speak to Arabella in a rational manner, either because they have mistakenly believed her to not be capable of rational discussion or they have been unable to match Arabella’s intellect. The countess, however, appeals to Arabella’s sense and makes her points clearly.

However, Lennox instead allows the wise doctor, a representation of patriarchal discourse and Samuel Johnson himself (Lennox’s mentor), to crush Arabella’s fantasies. After Arabella has thrown herself the Thames River to escape imagined ravishers, inspired by the heroine Clelia who did the same by jumping into the river Tyber (*TFQ*, 363), she is slowly recovering in her bed. A doctor is called upon and he is explained Arabella’s quixotic tendencies by Mr Glanville:

Mr. Glanville taking him into his own Apartment, explain'd the Nature of that seeming Inconsistency, and expatiated at large upon the Disorders Romances had occasion'd in her Imagination; several Instances of which he recounted, and fill'd the Doctor with the greatest Astonishment and Concern. He lamented pathetically the Ruin such a ridiculous Study had brought on so noble a Mind; and assur'd Mr. Glanville, he would spare no Endeavours to rescue it from so shocking a Delusion. (*TFQ*, 367)

Mr Glanville defines Arabella's romantic notions as "Disorders" which "Romances had occasion'd in her Imagination." The doctor does not protest at this definition but supports it through his reaction of "the greatest Astonishment and Concern," names it a "Ruin" on "so noble a Mind" and a "shocking ... Delusion." By introducing a doctor and using the word "Disorders," Arabella's romantic notions are now portrayed as a sickness which must be cured. Unlike the countess, the doctor exhibits no understanding, only shock. The romances have not influenced Arabella in any positive way. They have endangered her health, both mentally and physically.

Because the diagnosis of Arabella's delusions is so serious, the expulsion of the disease must be absolute. After another long conversation with the doctor, Arabella is converted. She now sees herself through the lens of the characters around her, and experiences nothing but shame and self-contempt in remembering:

[Arabella] continued for near two Hours afterwards wholly absorb'd in the most disagreeable Reflections on the Absurdity of her past Behaviour, and the Contempt and Ridicule to which she now saw plainly she had exposed herself. (*TFQ*, 383)

Arabella takes full responsibility for how her delusions have affected those around her:

I tremble indeed to think how nearly I have approached the Brink of Murder, when I thought myself only consulting my own Glory; but whatever I suffer, I will never more demand or instigate Vengeance, nor consider my Punctilios as important enough to be ballanced against Life. (*TFQ*, 381)

Under the doctor's influence, the romances have become exclusively bad and have only led to "Absurdity" of behaviour, as well as "Contempt" and "Ridicule" from others. Moreover, she has been on the "Brink of Murder." Arabella is probably referring to when she encouraged Mr Glanville to kill her imagined kidnapper, as well as when her delusions led to the violent conflict between Mr Glanville and Sir George. She takes full responsibility for the near tragedy her reading habits has led to, and it is unlikely that she will ever pick up another romance novel again. Had the countess been the one given enough time to "convert" Arabella, the process might have been gentler, and some romance might have survived. The virtue and sweetness of the heroine, the principled rather than strategic behaviour, might have persevered Arabella's transition into the "real world."



Instead, all her pride and defence of autonomy shatter, and as she humbly accepts Mr Glanville's hand in marriage, the traditional power dynamic between man and woman is restored:

...turning to Mr. Glanville, whom she beheld with a Look of mingled Tenderness and Modesty, To give you myself, with all my remaining Imperfections, is making you but a poor Present in return for the Obligations your generous Affection has laid me under to you; yet since I am so happy as to be desired for a Partner for Life by a Man of your Sense and Honour, I will endeavour to make myself as worthy as I am able of such a favourable Distinction. (*TFQ*, 383)

Here we see how all of Arabella's pride is gone. She has been properly humbled and is fully aware of her "remaining Imperfections." She appears to see Mr Glanville as a superior, as a "Man of ... Sense and Honour," and she must "endeavour to make [herself] as worthy" to deserve him. Her previous power dynamic of submissive "lover" and exalted "loved one" has shifted. Now, she gratefully accepts Mr Glanville's "generous Affection" which "has laid [her] under to [him]." In this wording it is clear that she places herself below him. She also gives herself to him ("To give you myself") as a desired object. As part of Arabella's cure, she has become submissive.

By allowing Arabella's "feminist" delusions to crumble, Lennox reminds us that they are just that – delusional hopes, not reality. Arabella's humbling quixotic conversion suggests Lennox's two sides; her "feminist" side which champions the autonomy of the heroines and mourns the unjust treatment of women – and her more realistic side, which strategically shelters under the mentorship of male writer-critics. What Arabella and Lennox have in common is that they both live in a man's world, and they must both adapt to it. Langbauer discusses how close Lennox's relationship was to writer-critic Samuel Johnson and how integrated she was into the "fraternity" of writing:

The most complete story we have of her relation to Johnson is from Sir John Hawkins's *Life*, and concerns expressly her relation to writing as a male institution. After the publication of her first novel, Johnson held a party for Lennox, in which he initiated her into the fraternity of male letters by crowning her with laurel. (Langbauer 1984, 42)

This not only suggests that Lennox was tightly connected to the male-writer community, but also that she should be heavily influenced by it. Their opinions should be hers, and they are certainly represented in *TFQ* through the presence of the didactic narrator. Langbauer even

speculates, as many modern-day critics have, whether it is Samuel Johnson who writes the conversion chapter and speaks with the voice of the persuasive doctor (Langbauer 1984, 43). As I have previously discussed in this chapter, Arabella too is surrounded by men. The female mentor figure of the countess is only temporary. In the end, it is the male authority of the doctor/Johnson which takes over, and this is what Arabella finally surrenders to. It is no wonder perhaps that the voice of the didactic narrator is so strong, and the defence of Arabella and the romance is so subtle. To the world, Lennox represents and champions the post-conversion Arabella. However, I hope that through my discussions I have proved that Lennox also understands - and to some extent champions - the pre-conversion Arabella.

After all, Lennox does leave Arabella with some romantic victory – Arabella and Glanville are truly happy in marriage, in contrast to Miss Glanville and Sir George, who represent marriage as a strategic, patriarchal institution. In the end, this is all they are left with. Arabella and Glanville, however, are in love:

We chuse, Reader, to express this Circumstance, though the same, in different Words, as well to avoid Repetition, as to intimate that the first mentioned Pair were indeed only married in the common Acceptation of the Word; that is, they were privileged to join Fortunes, Equipages, Titles, and Expence; while Mr. Glanville and Arabella were united, as well in these, as in every Virtue and laudable Affection of the Mind. (*TFQ*, 383)

Sir George and Miss Glanville are “only married in the common Acceptation of the Word,” which is reduced to “Fortunes, Equipages, Titles, and Expence.” Meanwhile, Mr Glanville and Arabella are “united” in “every Virtue and laudable Affection of the Mind.” Though Lennox speaks of the “Mind” here, and not the heart, she does speak of “Affection.” Especially in comparison with Sir George and Miss Glanville’s materialistic and strategic union, Arabella and Glanville’s marriage is perfectly blissful. In a way, their marriage is a coming together of the rational and the romantic. In other words, this little piece of romance which Lennox manages to squeeze into the “real world.” On some level, therefore, romance wins, while the strategic marriage of 18<sup>th</sup> society is condemned to marital misery, or at best, indifference.

To conclude, Lennox’s inclusion of the conversion scene suggests an acute awareness of the popular literary discourse as well as of the expectations of her male mentor figures. The pleasing of these parties might have been fuelled by a wish for critical acclaim as well as a need for financial survival. An obvious defence of the romance novel and the woman reader

might have killed her career. In other words, Lennox demonstrates her realist side in the final pages of her novel. After all, the taming of the wilful and deluded Arabella is more realistic than the triumph of the romantic heroine, who is celebrated for her strong-willed and virtuous nature. After all, a real young woman, a contemporary reader of *TFQ*, will likely meet a world more similar to the “real world” Arabella meets; they will be ridiculed and exhorted until they too fit the mould of society’s expectations of young women. Still, Lennox’s rebellion is the wistful sigh and the hopeless dream expressed secretly between the lines of her novel.

## CONCLUSION

In this first part of the chapter, I have discussed how Lennox criticises the patriarchal society in which she writes and subtly delivers a proto-feminist message. Through her focus on the telling of women’s stories, Lennox demonstrates the valorising power of storytelling as well as the innate need women have to have their stories told. Through her focus on the interpreting of women’s stories, Lennox demonstrates how society distorts and unfairly judges the stories of women. Through her celebration of the female intellect and resourcefulness, Lennox demonstrates the empowering force of the romance novel, and echoes this force in her own novel. Through her celebration of Arabella’s temporary autonomy, Lennox presents a proto-feminist fantasy of freedom and independence. Finally, through her inclusion of the harsh conversion scene, Lennox demonstrates that she is a realist and that the romance novel does in fact exist far from the reality she knows. Still, her subtle rebellion might be a sign of more than just a tragic fantasy; it might even read as hope.

## **PART 2: *Northanger Abbey***

In *NA*, we also find evidence of a proto feminist message. Like Lennox, Austen appears aware of the indirect attack on the female intellect through the condemnation of the novel. Austen defends the feminine genre - the Gothic novel - by attacking the motivations of the critics as well as the critics' male genres, such as history. Furthermore, Austen echoes the proto-feminist message of the Radcliffian Gothic by resituating the Gothic heroine and the critical commentary on women's legal rights to a more realist setting. While Catherine is rid of the superficial qualities of the Gothic heroine and *NA* is rid of the flowery language and melodramatic tropes, Austen preserves the Gothic feminism of the virtuous, suffering heroine and the patriarchal tyrant.

### **DEFENDING THE WOMAN'S GENRE:**

Early in *NA*, Austen directly defends the novel genre in a monologue by the narrator to the reader. She then throughout *NA* continues to subtly counter any attack made on the novel through dialog and characterization. Her defence suggests an awareness of the link between novels and women, and she attacks sexist prejudice as she encourages female authors to band together and be proud of their creative intellect and the fiction they produce.

In chapter five, Catherine picks up a novel, which leads Austen to momentarily step out of *NA*'s fictional reality, approach the reader directly and begin to defend her heroine for her reading habits:

Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers. (*NA*, 37)

By using "we," Austen refers to herself as well as other authors of novels. Moreover, she speaks of a community; a "body" of authors. She then delves into the unfair criticism the novelists have endured. As Munderlein notes, the criticism concerned itself with the novels' "lack of morality," a topic which I have discussed in my previous chapter, as well as its "feminine form" (Munderlein 2021, 56). Over the following paragraphs, I will discuss how the novels' "feminine form" can be understood through Henry's characterization of feminine writing. Through Henry's descriptions, Austen demonstrates an awareness of the critics'

concerns. Instead of just defending the genre, however, Austen gives a very brief analysis of what motivates the critics' condemnation. It is not superior intellect or objective understanding which has caused of the popular censure of the novel genre. Rather, the critics' opinions have been shaped by "pride, ignorance, or fashion," meaning their own male "pride," their "ignorance" of the novel genre, and the "fashion" of literary society, which I will discuss further over the following paragraphs. By this counterattack, Austen invalidates the critics' criticism, suggesting that it is their own personal and collective bias which is the cause of the condemning discourse on the novel genre.

### **Pride**

Although Henry generally comes off as a sympathetic and charming character, he often playfully criticises the female gender, signifying a pride of his own, thereby exemplifying the critics' "pride" in their own gendered genres which is challenged by the female author's writing. In the following excerpt, Henry compliments women's letter writing ability, before it is revealed that it is only a cover for condescending criticism towards female writing:

"Everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature must have done something, but I am sure it must be essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal." ... "As far as I have had opportunity of judging, it appears to me that the usual style of letter-writing among women is faultless, except in three particulars..." "A general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and very frequent ignorance of grammar." (NA, 27)

Henry's reflections on female letter-writing are easily comparable to the critics' sentiments of female novel writing. Henry claims that women must write better letters because of "the practice of keeping a journal." This implies that they write a lot, which was generally assumption of female novelists. Munderlein notes that the novel "was linked to unregulated modes of production, such as the prolific Minerva Press with its insatiable customer base in the rapidly proliferating circulating libraries" (Munderlein 2021, 56). Next, Henry here points to the specific problems with female writing. Firstly, women's writing is grammatically of very bad quality. Bad language was another criticism often directed towards women's novels. Natalie Neill references William Beckford's *Azemia* (1797), which was written under his

authorial personae Jacquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks, to point out the critical awareness of poor female writing:

The ‘author,’ Jacquetta Jenks, explains that from the adjacent courtyard the ‘awful summits of the neighbouring chemineés [are visible] and beyond, ... the wild shores of the Thames.’ She remarks in an aside: ‘Some little variation of spelling may be allowed where dignity is to be given to a subject—Chemineés is certainly better than chimneys, as being more like Pyrenées’. (Neill, 9)

“Jenks” is here attempting to “frenchify” the proper English spelling of “chimneys”. By using a female authorial personae and then remarking on the complete, even conscious, disregard of rules of spelling, Beckford accuses female authors of not only literary incompetence, but also intentional negligence (or even anti-patriotism). Henry’s remark on female letter writing might similarly be suggestive of both incompetence and intentional disregard.

Secondly, female writing suffers from “general deficiency of subject.” Preceding this excerpt, Henry has teased Catherine about everything she will write down in her journal later that night. Even after Catherine protests that she does not keep a journal, Henry keeps on insisting:

“How are the civilities and compliments of every day to be related as they ought to be, unless noted down every evening in a journal? How are your various dresses to be remembered, and the particular state of your complexion, and curl of your hair to be described in all their diversities, without having constant recourse to a journal?” (NA, 27)

Here, Henry exemplifies what a “general deficiency of subject” means. He has a clearly defined expectations of what women are concerned with and therefore what they write down, and it does not qualify as “subject.” In other words, descriptions of civilities, compliments, dresses, and hair, are so inconsequential, so mundane and so silly that they should not be transferred to the written word. Of course, Henry does appear to be encouraging Catherine do just that – to write down every single thought of complexion, hair, and clothing. However, Henry is teasing. He uses the same playful, condescending tone here as he used with Mrs Allen regarding dresses. It does not mean that he finds the subject matter worth reading, especially not worth publishing. Likewise, the literary critics, like Beckford, found female written novels to ponder on without much content or story structure:

In *Modern Novel Writing*, absurd plot developments reveal the capriciousness and technical ineptitude of the putative author, Harriet Marlow, who is evidently making up the story as she goes along. In one episode, ruffians kidnap one of the heroines and spirit her away to a Gothic castle; yet her jailor, a marchioness, releases her a few days later so that she may attend a water party (Beckford 2008: 133-5). No explanation is ever given for the abduction. (Neill 2016, 9)

*Modern Novel Writing* (1796) is another of Beckford's parodies which satirically demonstrates the poor writing skills of female authors, here through the author personae of Harriet Marlow. Through the nonsensical plots, Beckford demonstrates that female authors have nothing of interest to convey. Through Henry's descriptions of female letter writing, he too demonstrates the nonsensical and uninteresting content women write about.

However, Austen does not leave Henry's accusations unchallenged. For one, Catherine does not keep a journal. This disproves Henry's theory of how much and of what women write. Catherine also calls Henry out on his condescending criticism: "Upon my word! I need not have been afraid of disclaiming the compliment. You do not think too highly of us in that way" (NA, 27). Catherine's reaction appears to make Henry reflect: "I should no more lay it down as a general rule that women write better letters than men, than they sing better duets ... In every power, of which taste is the foundation, excellence is pretty fairly divided between the sexes" (NA, 28). In admitting that "excellence is pretty fairly divided between the sexes," he is really admitting that women can be just as good at writing as men. After being confronted about the crassness of his teasing by Catherine, Henry admits that he has been generalizing. He has reduced women to stereotypes, as found in the literary critical discourse, but he now has a real and honest woman in front of him, which makes him see women in a more complex manner. Thereby, Austen defeats male pride - and prejudice towards female writing - by challenging it with a true representation of a woman.

### **Ignorance**

Furthermore, Mr Thorpe's ignorance and prejudice of the genre demonstrates Austen's view on the Gothic's critics as ignorant of the novel genre. In a conversation with Catherine, he reveals his contradictory views on the genre:

“Have you ever read *Udolpho*, Mr. Thorpe?” “*Udolpho*! Oh, Lord! Not I; I never read novels; I have something else to do.” Catherine, humbled and ashamed, was going to apologize for her question, but he prevented her by saying, “Novels are all so full of nonsense and stuff; there has not been a tolerably decent one come out since *Tom Jones*, except *The Monk*; I read that t’other day; but as for all the others, they are the stupidest things in creation.” “I think you must like *Udolpho*, if you were to read it; it is so very interesting.” “Not I, faith! No, if I read any, it shall be Mrs. Radcliffe’s; her novels are amusing enough; they are worth reading; some fun and nature in them.” “*Udolpho* was written by Mrs. Radcliffe,” said Catherine, with some hesitation, from the fear of mortifying him. (NA, 48-49)

Mr Thorpe first responds to Catherine’s questions with the dismissive view of the contemporary critics: “Not I; I never read novels; I have something else to do.” Catherine’s reaction to this – “humbled and ashamed” – reveals that she is well aware of the widespread negative attitude towards novels. However, Thorpe soon contradicts his statement and reveals that he has in fact read *Tom Jones* (by Henry Fielding) and *The Monk* (by Matthew Lewis) and he also enjoys novels by Radcliffe: “No, if I read any, it shall be Mrs. Radcliffe’s.” Since *Udolpho* was written by Radcliffe, the last part is particularly contradictory to his dismissive respond to Catherine’s question, as Catherine herself timidly remarks on. Additionally, Mr Thorpe reveals his prejudice towards novels when he says that “Novels are all so full of nonsense and stuff.” The sentence sounds like something repeated; something he knows is the general view – especially as he goes on to list several Gothic novels that he has enjoyed. By casting Thorpe as a critic who considers novels to be “the stupidest things in creation,” and then exposing his ignorance and prejudice through his contradictions, Austen here criticises the ignorance and prejudice of the real contemporary novel critics, like Beckford, who were critical of the novel.

### **Fashion**

Finally, Austen argues that criticising novels is simply in “fashion” among male critics, and she thereby invalidates the negative hype. Jodi Wyatt supports the claim that denouncing novels was popular, as she notes that “anti-novel discourse was so widespread by the end of the eighteenth century as to be a cliché” (Wyatt 2015, 261). Austen begins this



argument with the narrator's comparison between the acceptable and celebrated history with the disgraced novel. In the monologue, she writes:

And while the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the Spectator, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens—there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. (NA, 37)

History, as well as republished work of poetry, is “eulogized by a thousand pens,” while “the labour of the novelist” is undervalued and slighted. The narrator is clear to include that it is a “man” who collects and publishes old work of poetry and who is celebrated for it, while novelists, often women, receive only criticism for their *original* work; for their hard “labour” and for their “genius, wit, and taste.” The link between gender and genre is therefore important. One gender legitimises the genre, the other derogates it.

Additionally, what the narrator is pointing out here is that while novels are fashionable to hate, history and poetry are fashionable to praise. By pointing out this hypocrisy, Austen demonstrates, as Wyett notes, that “the characterization of certain kinds of reading as “fashionable” is not, in Austen's context, a cause for moralistic dismissal” (Wyett 2015, 271). In other words, Austen subtly argues that the novel is not bad literature just because it is fashionable. Moreover, the critics' judging of the novel for being “in fashion” is nonsensical, as their own judgment is also motivated by the fashions of society. What is and is not in fashion is a recurring theme in *NA*, particularly with a focus on what is fashionable among women. When Henry teases Mrs Allen about dresses and muslin, he is ridiculing the fashions of high society women. When he teases Catherine about women writing journals, he does the same. By the same logic, young women reading Gothic novels is another popular fashion. In fact, as I have already discussed, part of the criticism directed towards the consumption and production of Gothic novels was that there was just too much of it, which is a sentiment that the narrator is aware of when she remarks on novels as “the trash with which the press now groans” (NA, 10). Considering this, being “in fashion” appears to itself be problematic. Dresses and muslin, journal writing, and novel reading, all women's fashions, are looked on with condescension and ridicule, either by Henry or other characters in *NA*. What Austen cleverly demonstrates, is that it is only women's fashions that are ridiculed. However, what is supposedly popular among men, namely history and poetry and criticising the women's genre,

is not reduced to being a “fashion.” It becomes the norm and the ideal to which both genders aspire and pretend to achieve. The narrator of *NA*, however, calls it for what it is: “From pride, ignorance, or *fashion*, our foes are almost as many as our readers” (*NA*, 37, italics added). The novels’ “foes,” the critics, are a product of fashion, not intellectual or moral superiority, and the criticism should therefore not be taken seriously.

Moreover, this exaggerated respect for the celebrated, non-fictional men’s genre of history, Austen argues, is hypocritical and dishonest as there must be plenty of fiction in history. What sets the women’s genre apart from men’s is that novels were fictional. It contained made-up stories, fictional characters, and constructed realities. One of the great criticisms towards the genre rested on this fictionality, because the reader might mistake fiction for real life. If reality was wrongly portrayed in a novel, the reader might get confused and expect the world to be like in the novels, as is the case with the quixotic reader. For this reason, the non-fictional and educational genre of history was safer. However, as Catherine notes, there must “a great deal” of “invention” in history:

I read [history] a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all—it is very tiresome: and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention. The speeches that are put into the heroes’ mouths, their thoughts and designs—the chief of all this must be invention, and invention is what delights me in other books.” (*NA*, 108)

Catherine notes that history must necessarily be packed with “invention.” The same danger of misrepresenting reality which supposedly exists for novels, exists for the writers of history. One example of reality distortion is the lacking presence of women, as Catherine notes that there are “hardly any women at all” in history. Like Arabella, Catherine is conscious that women’s stories often aren’t told.

Moreover, the point which *NA* is subtly demonstrating is that it is history, not fiction, which constructs reality and proclaims it as truth. Fiction is at least honest in its “deception.” It makes up stories and characters and places and makes no claim of doing otherwise. A reader who reads fiction as “reality”; as, for example, history, does not understand the genre. Likewise, the contemporary critic which is concerned about fiction “lying” to its readers or misrepresenting reality, also does not understand the genre. Throughout *NA*, Catherine does

not expect her “real world” to play out as the Gothic fictional ones. She does not expect Henry to fall madly in love with her and pursue her after seeing her once, nor does she expect to be admired by whole rooms or kidnapped by servants. Catherine, despite her limited intellect, education, and experience, understands the difference between fiction and “real life.” This is perhaps where *NA* and *TFQ* differ the most. Lennox allows Arabella, who is more intelligent and possibly better educated than Catherine, to confuse fiction and history. Even when we allow for Arabella’s isolated upbringing and absence of female mentor figures, Arabella’s confusion comes off as extreme and a little unlikely. As *NA* demonstrates, even with a sheltered upbringing, poor education, and failing mentor figures, a young female reader’s expectations should not be as distorted as Arabella’s are. Arguably, as I have already discussed, Arabella’s extreme quixotic confusions is an attempt at satisfying the popular discourse on female novel reading. Austen, however, does not appear to make any such attempt. By pointing out the “invention” and misrepresentation of history, she suggests that the attack on novels is hypocritical. She also suggests that history, this men’s genre, is more dangerous because it actually presents itself as truth. Specifically, it is dangerous to women, whose existence is almost entirely eradicated in this constructed but fully accepted reality.

## **A TRUE HEROINE’S STORY**

Like Lennox, Austen compares her lead character to a heroine. However, in presenting Catherine as an unlikely heroine, Austen depicts what is truly the essence of a heroine, and by extension, what is the true essence of romantic Radcliffian Gothic novel – namely, the virtues and moral character as represented by the heroine and conveyed in the romance.

The narrator of *NA* introduces Catherine as a heroine early on, but unlike the narrator in *TFQ*, Austen’s narrator does not mock Catherine for this, since she never consciously sees herself as heroine:

No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. (*NA*, 13)

When the narrator states that “No one” “would have supposed her born to be a heroine,” she also includes Catherine. In the whole of *NA*, there are no descriptions or dialogue which indicates that Catherine herself expects the attention or life which usually befalls a heroine.

As Natalie Neill notes, “[i]t is Austen’s narrator who likens Catherine to a heroine; Catherine herself does not aspire to be anything other than what she already is” (Neill 2016, 296). Rather, as Løfaldli argues, it is the “readerly expectations” which the narrator enjoys disrupting, while “Catherine herself is unaware of her failure to conform to the traits and modes of behaviours usually connected to a literary heroine” (Løfaldli 2000, 71). In other words, the narrator does not make an example of Catherine, to be mocked and ridiculed in a literary pillory.

The reasons for why no one “would have supposed” Catherine to be a heroine is because she does not appear to fulfill the requirements of a traditional heroine: “Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition.” The narrator later goes into more detail:

“Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features”; “She was fond of all boy’s plays, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush”; “She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid.” (NA, 13-14)

Here, the narrator lists the attributes which typically described a traditional Radcliffian heroine. Catherine clearly does not have the beauty, the feminine inclinations, nor intelligence to fulfill the requirements of a heroine. However, Catherine is still a heroine. In the narrator’s earlier phrasing this is stated indirectly: “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine.” This sentence would not make sense if Catherine does not, after all, turn out to be a heroine. She is an unlikely heroine; an atypical one, but a heroine still. Hoeveler argues that Austen’s choice to make Catherine ordinary signals an allegorical intent of giving all women the right to be heroine in their own lives:

All women, she hints, are born the heroines of their own rather inconspicuous lives, whether they look the part or not. All women, whether they live in the south of Italy or France or the middle of England, have the desire for exciting, fulfilling, meaningful lives, and all are engaged in quests for such lives whether the conditions are propitious or not. (Hoeveler 1995, 7)

This allusion is quite opposite of how the narrator in *TFQ* mocks Arabella for her presumption in calling herself a heroine. A woman should not think herself important enough to be a heroine – a protagonist and main character – no matter how beautiful or intelligent, the narrator of *TFQ* suggests. Austen’s narrator, on the other hand, shows how any young woman, no matter how plain or uninteresting, has a right to be the lead in her own story.

Moreover, by casting Catherine as a romantic heroine while making her appear more relatable and “realistic,” Austen points out the difference between sentimental Gothic novels and “real life.” As Glock notes, Catherine herself symbolises the normalcy and probability of her realistic surroundings and contrasts the sentimental and romantic world of the Gothic novels she enjoys:

[Catherine] represents the modern world of plain fact, a world in which common sense and sincere intention, not sentimental gestures and exaggerated artifice, must be allowed to define the essential quality of modern life. She is a democratic heroine who seeks, not honour or fame, but individual fulfillment. She wants a family and domestic tranquillity, and the love and respect of a husband whose marital integrity will anticipate the conventional orthodoxies of mid-Victorian morality. (Glock 1978, 37-38)

Here, Catherine greatly differs from Arabella, who certainly expects “sentimental gestures and exaggerated artifice” and who appears to be concerned with “honour or fame” through her insistence of having her story related. Catherine’s “normalcy” is representative of the reset of the novel’s “realism.” In everything from plot to descriptions and dialog, Austen has removed the lofty language, romantic characters and dramatic events, and instead inserted realism and humour. The question is, what then remains of Catherine’s heroic qualities? If she is so in tune with the expectations of modern society, perhaps she should be grouped with its representatives instead of the romantic heroines?

On the contrary, I wish to argue that Catherine is very much a heroine in the traditional sense, even if she does not appear so on the surface. Catherine is not “ordinary,” as Hoeveler suggests, but stands out against the fickle, superficial women of society, as represented by Isabella Thorpe, because of her moral virtues. The descriptions of a heroine’s beauty, interest and intellect are all superficial descriptions of a person’s character. What makes Catherine special, what links her to Arabella and makes her a proper, traditional heroine, are her virtues and her moral character, which I have already discussed in the

previous chapter. Neither Arabella nor Catherine revel in gossip, neither are excessively proud or vain, neither are schemers, driven by desires of status or comfort, but instead seek romantic love and connection. This is where *TFQ* and *NA* stand apart from other Gothic parodies. As Munderlein explains, most parodic heroines imitate the romantic heroine only on a superficial level, thereby undermining the “Gothic heroine’s potential for social subversion” and the romantic/Gothic novel’s message of “moral goodness”:

Yet because of the Gothic heroine’s symbolic nature, simply imitating her conduct does not produce the desired results for the parody heroine, but exposes her to ridicule. Instead of emulating the Gothic heroine, she must be read metaphorically...Therefore, the Gothic parody undermines the Gothic heroine’s potential for social subversion through its obsessive focus on morality through personal improvement. While the Gothic heroine shows that moral goodness must be the ultimate achievement and be placed above social expectations, the parody heroine shows the opposite: girls must learn to behave according to society’s expectations and rid themselves of their oddities to be accepted. (Munderlein 2021, 139)

What sets Arabella and Catherine apart from other parodic heroines is that they do not simply emulate the Gothic/romantic heroines in a superficial manner by blushing and smiling and rejecting any lover’s propositions. In fact, Catherine does not do this at all. Instead, both characters read and understand the “symbolic nature” of the heroine as well. They understand the moral goodness of the heroine. In Arabella’s case, this moral goodness of the romantic heroines is what inspires her own. In Catherine’s case, her moral goodness is simply her own character as well as a result of her family and upbringing. Regardless, both Lennox and Austen present this “moral goodness” in their parodic heroines, and flatteringly compare them to characters who are less moral but more successfully meet social expectations, such as Miss Glanville and Isabella Thorpe. Consequently, in contrast to other parodies, both *TFQ* and *NA* demonstrate that “moral goodness must be the ultimate achievement and be placed above social expectations.” What Austen essentially does is to strip all the superficial, overly perfect qualities which has defined the heroine to show the true nature of a romantic heroine: a principled and morally good young woman. In fact, this mirrors what Austen is doing with her parody as a whole, as she demonstrates the true essence of a romantic novel, free of flowery language and superficial tropes. Remaining is the true essence of a Radcliffian Gothic novel:

the conveying of a woman's experience, the expression of women's fears, and the symbolic criticism of women's legal rights.

### **CONVERSION: *Women's Legal Rights***

Like Arabella, Catherine has a conversion scene. However, Catherine's suspicions are soon justified by General Tilney's behaviour, and the critical focus is redirected towards the tyrannical patriarch instead of the disgraced quixote. Though it is perfectly clear that Catherine's suspicions are a result of her reading of Gothic novels, Austen does not challenge the Gothic novel's tropes of female suffering. Instead, she resituates them into the "real world" of her novel of realism.

In the following excerpts, Catherine is confronted by Henry about her dark suspicions about his father. Catherine has just come from Henry's late mother's room after having looked for some kind of evidence of maltreatment, entrapment or even murder, as inspired by her Gothic novels, and Henry is shocked to learn of this. In a compelling speech, Henry both reprimands Catherine and implores her to remember the difference between fiction and "real life":

"If I understand you rightly, you had formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to—Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. (NA, 197)

After having expressed his shock, Henry is quick to point to the source of Catherine's ideas: "What have you been judging from?" he says. Although the sentence is constructed as a question, it is fairly obvious from the rest of the speech, and by how well Henry knows Catherine's love of novels, that he is aware that her reading has inspired her suspicions. He goes on, much like the countess in *TFQ*, to resituate Catherine to the "real life" of present day: "Remember the country and the age in which we live"; they are in England in the early 1800s, not in the south of France and Italy in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (as is the setting of *Udolpho*).

Before listing just how these two realities are different, he implores Catherine to look within herself, to look to her own understanding, experience and education which must necessarily contradict her suspicions. However, Catherine's experience and education as a woman is very different from his own, but Henry fails to understand this:

“Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them?” (NA, 197)

Henry first appeals to Catherine’s understanding. Although the narrator has made it clear throughout the novel that Catherine is not the sharpest, there is nothing seriously wrong with her intellect. Still, understanding is not enough to form a “sense of the probable” if one lacks experience of what is “probable,” and experience is what Henry refers to when he implores her to consult her “own observation of what is passing around [her].” However, what has “passed around” Catherine has been little other than her own family and home, in addition to the small social circle of her village. What happens beyond this little world, Catherine has very little experience with. She knows nothing of grand houses and rich men; she has only ever met them in her novels. Next, Henry brings up “our education,” forgetting to consider that Catherine’s education has been nothing like his own. Henry has probably attended Oxford, like James Morland and John Thorpe, or some other respected university. As Hoeveler notes, Catherine will not have received the same level of education: “[Henry] suggests that in the perfect state that is England, literacy and “education” have eradicated evil, and yet there is no universal educational system for women or the lower classes” (Hoeveler 1995, 18). Catherine’s education is carefully told to us by the narrator early in the novel. With a satirical undertone, the narrator explains what Catherine learns from various poets: “From Pope, she learnt to censure those who “bear about the mockery of woe”. From Gray, that “Many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its fragrance on the desert air ...” (NA, 3). The point of this in-depth description of Catherine’s curriculum, I believe, is to demonstrate that Catherine has learned very little to prepare her for navigating the 18<sup>th</sup> century society of England. There is nothing in the narrator’s list on laws, for example, which Henry naively implores her to remember.

Finally, Henry gets specific about just how and why Catherine’s quixotic ideas are so unlikely, but despite his own fancy education, he again demonstrates an ignorance of the social and legal reality of being a woman in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, Austen undercuts Henry’s didactic arguments and uses the conversion scene, which is so pivotal in the traditional quixotic parody, to echo the Gothic novel’s message of female suffering instead of invalidating it:

“Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where



every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?" (NA, 197-198)

Henry's argument is that General Tilney could not possibly maltreat his wife, thus breaking the law, without someone finding out and responding. However, the argument rests on the premise that the wife held any kind of legal rights with which she could prosecute her husband. As E. J. Clery reminds us, the late 18<sup>th</sup> century law left married women with very little legal power:

the husband took control of the whole of the wife's property, past, present and future; he had sole rights over their children; a married woman could not enter into any agreement or lawsuit on her own behalf; she could not bring proceedings against her husband in common law; and since her "very being" as a legal subject was suspended she no longer held property in her own person ... Consequently, marriage meant in common law what has been called "a kind of civil death" for women. (Clery 1995, 125)

Because of this "civil death," Mrs Tilney would have had very little power to escape General Tilney's mistreatment. The consequence of Mrs Tilney having no legal rights, is that General Tilney held all rights to do with her as he pleased. Considering that this is the law, people's attitude surrounding this topic would probably have been quite similar. Therefore, although Henry argues that "every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies," these spies might not have much cared or certainly not acted on what they might have seen as marital issues. Of course, Austen does not at first specify what exactly Catherine's suspicions are, but if one is to refer to the Gothic tropes, they would likely include psychological abuse, physical abuse, entrapment and possibly even murder. Through the treatment of his children, we find plenty of evidence that suggests that General Tilney could have been a controlling, psychologically abusive husband. The idea that he might have also physically abused her or even confined her to her apartments for long periods of time, is also entirely possible. Murder, however, was illegal and would have needed some covering up. However, this is a scenario which would have required no more than one or two loyal or corruptive servants. Therefore, considering General's Tilney God-like legal power over his family, Henry's speech of laws, reason and transparency comes off as both ignorant and naïve.

Interestingly, as Natalie Neill notes, the conversion scene is not placed at the end of the novel, and what happens after complicates its meaning:

[Catherine's] conversion experience differs in that it does not occur at the very end of the parody. A later scene in which General Tilney casts Catherine from the Abbey seems to confirm his villainy and validate Catherine's Gothic imaginings. (Neill 2016, 199)

Though Catherine instantly regrets all quixotic suspicions and wallows in "tears of shame" (*NA*, 70), she is soon justified in her suspicions about General Tilney's character. Early in the morning, and with only a few hours' notice, Catherine is banished from Northanger Abbey. No carriage is provided, and she must travel unattended, which is unheard of and potentially dangerous (*NA*, 80). A few days after, Henry joins Catherine at her home in Fullerton and he tells her the truth of General Tilney's false beliefs of her wealth and his consequential actions. Catherine then concludes that she has not been so wrong in her understanding of him:

Catherine, at any rate, heard enough to feel that in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty. (*NA*, 247)

Catherine was not wrong about General's Tilney's "character" and "cruelty." By allowing Catherine this reflection, Austen directly legitimises Catherine's instincts. Even if Catherine's suspicions about General Tilney regarding his wife turn out to be completely or partially wrong, he is still a villain. Just as with the heroine, we see how Austen strips the traditional villain of the superficial Gothic tropes, like kidnapping, "ravishing" and locking women up in the attic (though the last one could be true) but leaves behind the "character" and the "cruelty." Moreover, it is a cruelty directed towards women; towards Catherine, towards Miss Tilney (who lives under her father's tyranny and is unable to wed the love of her life), and quite possibly towards the late Mrs Tilney.

Through the villainous character of General Tilney, Austen echoes rather than ridicules the Gothic novel's criticism of women's restrictive legal rights through tropes of entrapped wives suffering under tyrannical husbands. This proto-feminist frustrations found in Gothic novels can be defines as "Gothic feminism." Hoeveler defines "Gothic feminism" as "the notion that women earn their superior rights over the corrupt patriarchy through their special status as innocent victims" (Hoeveler 1995, 3). We see this with Catherine in *NA*. She fulfills her role as heroine, not through any impressive and brave action, but through

innocently suffering and enduring the tyranny of General Tilney. This Gothic trope is not ridiculed, but reapplied in a more realist context, suggesting that the Gothic novels holds a metaphorical value. The “real world” also holds dangers for women, and the patriarchal system poses a real threat to their lives. Moreover, Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the early proto feminists who challenged the patriarchy, and her frustrations are expressed narratively in the Radcliffian Gothic novel, as Hoeveler argues:

What we recognize as "feminist" rage at systemic injustice in Wollstonecraft's oeuvre can be understood only if it is set in its full gothic and melodramatic contexts. If gothic husbands can chain their wives to stone walls in caves, then what sort of action is required by women to protect and defend themselves against such evil tyranny?  
(Hoeveler 1995, 4)

Thereby, the Gothic novel expresses real fears that women had regarding their own powerlessness against the patriarchy. Though the Gothic novels often provided “melodramatic contexts,” Austen proves with her ambiguous conversion scene that even extreme cases of female suppression were possible, even in the “real world” which she has constructed in her novel of realism. Even when eliminating the tropes of entrapped wives, Austen argues, tyrannical husbands, female suffering and legal powerlessness exist. She does not challenge the Gothic novel. She resituates it, brings it closer to home, and thereby gives it even more power.

## CONCLUSION

In *NA*, Austen acknowledges the link between (Gothic) novels and women readers, as it is seen by society. She both directly and subtly criticises this link as sexist and hypocritical prejudice, suggesting that the critics are simply a result of pride, ignorance, and fashion. By stripping the Gothic novel and the romantic heroine of superficial tropes, Austen conveys the true essence of the novel, namely the critical message of patriarchal tyranny and women’s suffering under restrictive legal rights.

Both Lennox and Austen retrieve some proto-feminist message from the novels their parodic heroines read, and both repeat rather than ridicule this message in their own parodies. Central to both parodic novels, is the telling of a woman’s story. A woman’s story should be told truthfully, either by the woman herself or someone close to her. The story should not be ignored or distorted by ignorant strangers or patriarchal assumptions. *NA* further argues that a

woman's story is not only important if the story is very exciting or if the woman is very beautiful. Rather, what gives a woman value as heroine is her moral character. Both authors also defend their heroine's autonomy in life. Austen rewards Catherine's direct communication and contrasts her with the scheming Isabella who loses everything. Meanwhile, Arabella's autonomy crumbles after the conversion scene when she accepts Mr Glanville's hand in marriage. For Lennox, the conversion scene is a reminder of reality; a woman's rights are limited, her autonomy restricted, and her story judged. While Lennox has subtly argued against the patriarchal discourse which ridicules a woman's intellect and pride, she still acknowledges that young female readers will benefit, like Arabella, from knowing and meeting the expectations society has set for them. Austen, however, takes the power away from the conversion scene when she proves Catherine right and steadfastly continues the Gothic novel's narrative of female suffering under patriarchal tyranny. In other words, while one is subtle, and the other more direct, both *TFQ* and *NA* convey clear messages of proto-feminism, challenging the patriarchy of the society in which they write.

## CONCLUSION

In my master's thesis, I have written about two rather different parodies on different genres from different times. While Lennox wrote an extensive and somewhat repetitive story about a young woman's obsession with 17<sup>th</sup> century French romances in 1752, Austen wrote a much shorter novel on a young woman's love for the Radcliffian Gothic in the late 1790s. Both novels, however, are tales of the female quixote figure and both novels illustrate a world which looks at this female quixote figure with great concern. This concern is not only expressed through the reactions of the characters, but also through the tone of the narrators. In *TFQ*, the narrator is didactic and critical, aligned with the voices of the real-life critics. In *NA*, the narrator expresses awareness and frustration with the existence of these anti-novel critics. This strong presence of the novel-criticism in the parodies suggests that this criticism may be as much under critical investigation as novel reading itself is.

I have argued this point about Lennox's commentary on novel criticism with my two analytical chapters. In my first chapter, I have argued that *TFQ* subtly addresses and responds to the novel-critics' concerns about novel reading and female impressionability by presenting Arabella as a moral being - constant, principled, and artless in her behaviour. By contrasting Arabella's virtuous conduct with other characters' cunning and strategic behaviour, Lennox criticises the patriarchal values of 18<sup>th</sup> century society, thereby defending the values presented in the romance which inspire Arabella's character. Lennox responds to the novel-critics by explaining that it is not novel reading which causes young women to appear unprepared when entering society. Rather, it is the sheltered upbringing, inadequate mentor figures and lacking education of young women that carry the blame. All of these aspects are consequences of the undervaluing of female development, or even a desire to keep women from reaching full maturity, in order to avoid any challenge to the patriarchal system. It is ironic, therefore, that the novel-critics, many of which represent and support this patriarchal system, complain about young female readers appearing ignorant and naïve when meeting society.

However, perhaps it is not the young woman's ignorance or naivety the critics fear, but the empowering force the romances' moral principles can inspire in female readers – namely, the freedom from the superficial and strategic conduct whose only aim is to help one better fit into society's view on womanhood. This is what I have discussed in the second chapter, as I focused on *TFQ*'s presentation of female autonomy as well as its celebration of a woman's

importance through storytelling. The romances allow women not only to see themselves as the main character in their own story - their own lives - but to act in accordance with what is right or wrong - virtuous or cowardly – rather than to simply follow the rules of the conduct books of their times, existing only to fulfill their designated gender roles and support and please the men about them.

Additionally, Lennox might be providing further critical commentary through the narrative structure of her parody. *TFQ*'s repetitive narrative with scene after scene proving the same point of Arabella's delusions, and the narrator continuously commenting on the same strange behaviour and noting the other characters' same astonished reactions, could be interpreted as Lennox's own critical commentary on the novel critics' repetitive arguments. Moreover, Arabella's extreme behaviour could be read as a parody of the critics' fearful expectations of female reading more so than a parody of an actual female reader.

Even so, many of the authors which would later draw inspiration from *TFQ* and write their own female quixote tales, clearly read Lennox's novel as an anti-romance parody. One example of these parodies is *The Heroine* (1813) by Eaton Stannard Barnett. Barnett takes *TFQ*'s narrator to heart and uses his novel to support his own sceptic views on women readers through his depiction of the selfish and cruel heroine, Cherubina. Austen, too, was inspired by Lennox to write a female quixote parody, but Austen's interpretation of *TFQ* clearly differs from Barnett's reading. Austen arguably picks up on Lennox's hidden rebellion. Importantly, she follows Lennox's example by presenting her heroine as a moral being, and by contrasting her with other superficial and cunning characters. In my first analytical chapter, I discuss how *NA* shifts the blame of Catherine's naivety and insufficient interpretation skills away from the novels, and instead, like *TFQ*, points to Catherine's sheltered upbringing, failing mentor figures and lack of education. However, Austen makes the point that Catherine's character has not been shaped by her reading habits at all. Possibly, Austen might have objected to Arabella's extreme delusions. To demonstrate the unlikelihood of this behaviour, Austen makes Catherine considerably less intelligent than Arabella is supposed to be. Even with Catherine's upbringing and average (at best) intellect, Catherine is much more rooted in reality than Arabella is. Only when teasingly encouraged by Henry does she confuse Northanger Abbey and its inhabitants with the fictional settings and characters of her gothic novels.

In my second analytical chapter, I discuss how Austen, much like Lennox, echoes the proto-feminist messages of the hypoggenre to shed a light on the female experience in 18<sup>th</sup>

century society. Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novels' tropes of female suffering, women's legal rights and patriarchal tyranny are incorporated into the narrative of *NA*. By presenting General Tilney as a tyrant and supporting Catherine's suspicions about the General's cruelty after the conversion scene, Austen shifts the critical focus from the deluded quixote figure to the tyrannical patriarch. Even Catherine's specific suspicions about General Tilney's crimes against his wife, like mistreatment, entrapment or even murder, retain some credibility due to Henry's deficient attack on them. His arguments, seen in the lights of a woman's restrictive legal rights, are not particularly convincing. Thereby, General Tilney's mistreatment of his wife is entirely possible. Whether the mistreatment took the form of melodramatic gothic tropes is uncertain. Instead of exploiting and exaggerating the gothic/sentimental melodrama as many parodies do, Austen continuously subverts the Gothic expectations and replaces the romantic settings with realism. Therefore, General Tilney might not be a Gothic villain in the literal sense, and he *might* be innocent of murdering or imprisoning his wife. However, Austen proves throughout the novel that he is a patriarchal tyrant through the treatment of his children. Consequently, Austen preserves the proto-feminist message of drawing attention to female suffering at the hands of patriarchal figures. Arguably, because she resituates this message by making the context more realistic, the message is strengthened. Even though the Gothic novels contain fantastical elements far removed from the reality of English 18<sup>th</sup> century society, Austen argues that they still convey a powerful and terrible truth about the female experience.

All in all, I argue in my master's thesis that Lennox and Austen both use their parodies to convey a proto-feminist message regarding the female experience in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Hidden behind didacticism or served with humour, both *TFQ* and *NA* criticise society's treatment of women, from their negligent upbringing and lack of education to the silencing of their stories, stigmatization of their creative work and victimization from patriarchal tyrants.

Writing this master thesis has been an awarding and challenging experience and it has been strongly aided by the many previous discussions on this topic. However, the previous analysis on the parodies have also added to the challenge of ensuring some originality into my own. Hopefully, I have argued more boldly the proto-feminist undertones of my two parodies, inspired by the fact that it was written by female authors. However, it is important to note here that I have no insight into Lennox's or Austen's intentions behind writing their parodies. The idea that Lennox cleverly wrote a parody which *appears* to align itself with the popular contemporary criticism, thereby ensuring literary approval and financial success, while *really*

criticising “the critical father figure of its day” and rebelliously defending the romance novel and the female novel readers, is certainly enticing for a 21<sup>st</sup> century literary critic. In an attempt at being honest, I must therefore admit that some personal, modern bias is difficult to shed and might have influenced my interpretation of Lennox’s novel, as it might have done for other critics as well. Although I repeatedly refer to Lennox’s “message” or even allude to Lennox’s intent, I am really only referring to my own interpretation of the parodies, aided by the interpretations of other critics. However, I do find Lennox’s presence as a female author relevant in this discussion on women’s genres and women readers. The same goes for Austen, although she arguably makes her intentions clearer through direct speeches to the reader on the topic of novels and female readers.

A particularly interesting aspect of writing this thesis and comparing these two parodies, has been to see how the two novels speak to each other across time. The proto-feminist message which Lennox had to keep in darkness, Austen gets into bring out into the light – or at least, into twilight. While Lennox had to hide behind male mentor-figures, Austen calls for her fellow female authors to band together in a literary sisterhood. With Lennox’s subtle rebellion, she carefully paves the way for Austen to march more proudly later. Austen, in her turn, gives grateful nods back to Lennox with her emulation of the rebellious parody. Lennox’s hope, if this is how we can interpret her hidden proto-feminist message, is not in vain. As time goes on, the female reader and the woman’s genre have been more and more free from prejudice and paranoia. However, this is not to say that women’s genres today are free from stigma. One of the reasons why this topic spoke to me, is because I have sensed how, even now, women’s genres are considered of lesser quality than men’s and even sometimes ridiculed. However, Austen’s words about women’s novels still stand: “our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world” (*NA*, 37). This “extensive and unaffected pleasure” of women’s novels is not to be undervalued, nor is the power of conveying a woman’s story. As time goes on, and one woman after another pushes the limits of what is accepted in the literary world, as both Lennox and Austen did, the narrative regarding women’s stories and women’s reading will evolve, and as a consequence, so too will the female experience.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

Austen, Jane. 1933. *The Novels of Jane Austen: The Text based on Collation of the Early Editions*, Vol V, third edition, by R. W. Chapman. London: Oxford University Press.

Lennox, Charlotte. 1970. *The Female Quixote or The Adventures of Arabella*, edited by Margaret Dalziel. London: Oxford University Press.

### Secondary sources

Clery, E. J. 1995. *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glock, Waldo S. 1978. "Catherine Morland's Gothic Delusions: A Defense of *Northanger Abbey*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 32, no. 1: 33-46. [doi:10.1353/rmr.1978.0028](https://doi.org/10.1353/rmr.1978.0028)

Gordon, Scott Paul. 1998. "The Space of Romance in Lennox's *Female Quixote*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 38, no. 3: 499-516. <https://doi.org/10.2307/451060>.

Hoeveler, D. L. 1995. *Vindicating Northanger Abbey: Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen and Gothic Feminism*. Marquette University.  
[https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1259&context=english\\_fac](https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1259&context=english_fac)

Hume, Robert D. 1969. "Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel." *PMLA* 84, no. 2: 282-90. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1261285>.

Joanne Cordón. 2011. "Speaking Up for Catherine Morland: Cixous and the Feminist Heroine." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 32, no. 3: 41-63.  
<https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.32.3.0041>.

Langbauer, Laurie. 1984. "Romance Revised: Charlotte Lennox's 'The Female Quixote.'" *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 18, no. 1: 29-49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1346016>.

David Hume. 1975. *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1777 edition, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), Appendix I.

Løfaldli, Eli. 2000. *Female Quixotism: A study of Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote, Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey and Tabitha Gilman's Female Quixotism*. Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet.

MACKENZIE, SCOTT. 1991. "ANN RADCLIFFE'S GOTHIC NARRATIVE AND THE READERS AT HOME." *Studies in the Novel* 31, no. 4: 409–31.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/29533356>.

Munderlein, Kerstin-Anja. 2021. Chapter 2: Some Theory: Genre, Reception and Frame, and How They Are Connected. In *Genre and Reception in the Gothic Parody*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Neill, Natalie. 2016. Gothic Parody. In *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, edited by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend, 185–204. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Pawlowicz, Peter H. 1995. Reading women. Text and image in eighteenth-century England. In *Consumption of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Ross, Deborah. 1987 "Mirror, Mirror: The Didactic Dilemma of The Female Quixote." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 27, no. 3: 455–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/450435>.

Schulz, Dieter. 1973. "'Novel,' 'Romance,' and Popular Fiction in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century." *Studies in Philology* 70, no. 1: 77–91.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4173793>.

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. 1988. "The Subtle Sophistry of Desire: Dr Johnson and the Female Quixote". *From Restoration to Revision: Essays in Honor of Gwin J. Kolb and Edward W. Rosenheim, Volume 85, Number 4*: 532-542.  
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/391661>

Stafford, William. 2010. *English Feminists and Their Opponents in the 1790s: Unsex'd and Proper Females*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

TURNER, JAMES GRANTHAM. 2012. "'ROMANCE' AND THE NOVEL IN RESTORATION ENGLAND." *The Review of English Studies* 63, no. 258: 58–85.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41410090>.

Uddén, Anna. 2008. "Narratives and Counter-Narratives —Quixotic Hermeneutics in Eighteenth-Century England: Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 6, no. 2: 443-457.

UPHAUS, ROBERT W. 1987. "JANE AUSTEN AND FEMALE READING." *Studies in the Novel* 19, no. 3: 334–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29532512>.

WATSON, ZAK. 2011. "Desire and Genre in 'The Female Quixote.'" *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 44, no. 1: 31–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41289225>.

Wittmann, Reinhart. 1999. Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century? In *The History of the Book in the West: 1700-1800*, edited by Eleanor F. Shevlin, 284-312. Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.

Woodmansee, Martha. 1984. "The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the 'Author.'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17, no. 4: 425–48. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2738129>.

Wyett, Jodi L. 2015. "Female Quixotism Refashioned: 'Northanger Abbey', the Engaged Reader, and the Woman Writer." *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no. 2: 261–76. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24575169>.