Righting Women's Writing: A Re-examination of the Journey Toward Literary Success By Late Eighteenth-century and Early Nineteenth-century Women Writers

Submitted by

Roslyn Stanford (BA Honours)

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Philosophy

School of Arts and Sciences
Faculty of Humanities

Australian Catholic University
Office of Research
115 Victoria Parade,
Fitzroy, Victoria 3065
Australia

December 12 2000

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required).

_____

_____

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the progressive nature of women's writing and the various factors that helped and hindered the successful publication of women's written works in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The thesis interrogates culturally encoded definitions of the term "success" in relation to the status of these women writers. In a time when success meant, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, "attainment of wealth or position", women could never achieve a level of success equal to the male elite. The dichotomous worldview, in which women were excluded from almost all active participation in the public sphere, led to a literary protest by women. However, the male-privileged binary system is seen critically to affect women's literary success. Hence, a redefinition of success will specifically refer to the literary experience of these women writers and a long-lasting recognition of this experience in the twentieth century.

An examination of literary techniques used in key works from Catherine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen suggests that there was a critical double standard with which women writers were constantly faced. The literary techniques, used by the earlier writers, fail in overcoming this critical double standard because of their emphasis on revolution.

However, the last two women writers become literary successes (according to my reinterpretation of the term) because of their particular emphasis on amelioration rather than revolution.

The conclusion of the thesis suggests that despite the "unsuccessful" literary attempts by the first three women authors, there is an overall positive progression in women's journey toward literary success. Described as the 'generational effect', this becomes the fundamental point of the study, because together these women represent a combined movement which challenges a system of patriarchal tradition, encouraging women to continue to push the gender relations' boundaries in order to be seen as individual, successful writers.

Table of Contents

The Argument

The starting point of my thesis was a study of the relative literary success of a number of women writers at the end of the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. While researching works by Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen, I discovered that there were a number of key factors that affected any success for women as writers during this time. My contention, thus, is threefold. First, I suggest that the overt patriarchal system of tradition in both the public and private domains encouraged a critical double standard. This double standard had major impacts on women's attempts at writing. I point out that a fundamental factor in this negativity surrounding women's literary experience was the dichotomous worldview that dominated these two eras. In an effort to overcome these double standards, women writers experimented with a variety of literary styles. My second contention is that eventually literary success for women came from an ameliorational literary style, which saw writers like Shelley and Austen take advantage of their 'restrictive' marginal position. In adopting a less rebellious writing style these two writers maintained their feminist challenge to the overt patriarchy, which had previously silenced women writers' more rebellious literary challenges. In the conclusion of the study I argue a 'generational effect,' considering the literary experimentation of all five women writers as a progressive movement that would eventuate in a renewed recognition, by feminist historians, of women's journey toward literary success.

Literary Tactics

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries woman's choice to write was considered an act of rebellion and each of the writers I discuss varied in their literary success at any such uprising. Undertaking to overcome the distinctive patriarchal constraints that bound women to a literary inferiority was not a task to be taken lightly. Feminist critic Elaine Showalter suggests that women's writing can be defined by two distinctive gender-defining phases. The first phase is called "imitation," in which women internalised the era's prevalent modes, views and social roles (Showalter 13).[1] This imitative style, she suggests, can explain much of the early writing by women who took advantage of the styles and methods around them. The second phase in the transformation of women's writing, called "protest," particularly applies to the first three women writers I have analysed.

Women writers for reform, such as Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft, insisted on a reformation of the basic attitudes and principles that subordinated all women (Kramnick 31).[2] Macaulay addressed similar issues to Wollstonecraft, and although not usually recognised for her feminist work, she wrote *Letters on Education* (1790) two years prior to Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Although the title of Macaulay's feminist work is less provocative than Wollstonecraft's title, much of the content within Macaulay's work is repeated in Wollstonecraft's book. The contents of each stirred up concerns about the role of women in the eighteenth century, leading to both male and female criticism, including criticism by Hannah More, whose own *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) is considered as a conservative "attack" on the contemporary nature of females around her. In her suggestions for reform, More clung to biblical injunctions actively praising women who structured their lives around

religion. Although her work for female equality was not considered as radical as other women writer's works she is still considered by some feminist theorists as a conservative feminist.

In my analysis of the works by Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, I have identified shared feelings concerning certain issues, such as the poor level of education that women were subjected to - if they had any at all. Although sharing similar feelings and exhibiting differing degrees of anger and frustration, it is particularly noticeable that these women concentrated on a better standard of education for all, rather than for women alone, believing that the whole community would benefit from a more appropriate and equal education.

The education many women received, from the typical conduct book for example, reinforced the attitude that reform writers detested. The education in these types of books was often concerned with simply decorating a woman for pleasing grace and fine feminine manners. Women were so engrossed in becoming the perfect female companion that many concentrated solely on getting that elusive marriage proposal. Quality of life for women was questioned, but each writer I analysed listed different components necessary for an improvement upon their present situation. For Macaulay and Wollstonecraft, the intellect was being softened and the reasoning capacities of women were not being challenged. Therefore their goal was to rationally present the cultural and social disadvantages of the present system of education, which perpetuated women's inferiority as secondary citizens. They concentrated on the positive effects of an educative system that would treat women and men on a more equal level than was then the case. Hannah More had a more moral goal in mind. She concentrated on the lack of moral and religious education that was being replaced by the frivolity of dress and ornamentation in the women

around her. Her work concentrated on the vital elements of religious teachings that would allow women to focus their predestined characters toward reaching a pious quality, which they presently lacked.

However, what Lynne Agress observes in a great deal of the literature written by these so-called reformists, in their attempts at literary rebellion, is that some of the women writers still "reflected, rather than questioned society's values" (172).[3] Even though issues like the degradation of female education frustrated these women writers, their works could not have been successful in their open criticism, because of the traditional masculine ideology concerning women and the transference of these ideals onto literary women. The risk of writing criticisms as publicly as Macaulay or Wollstonecraft did was evident in the reactions their works received, even by women authors such as More.   In the closer examination of a chosen work by these three writers, it is clear that their failure to succeed as long lasting authors is related to the critical double standard that women in these times were confronted with. They were constantly reminded that the act of publishing was itself a masculine act. To enter into an arena that was socially accepted as a public profession, as well as to openly criticise the system that had, until now, been firmly sealed as *the* system, is nowadays considered as ultracrepidarian.

Women's active participation in the public realm had many advantages, and these three writers I analyse attempted to incorporate a 'womanly capacity' into this overtly masculine era. In their attempt to challenge the negativity surrounding women and their roles, these writers employed a variety of literary tactics in order to get their opinions into the literary public arena. Encouraged by the continued debate surrounding the dichotomous nature of the world, these women writers chose the

profoundly masculine discipline of philosophy and extended its content in an attempt to explain a better outcome for women and their negative position.

Historically the discipline of philosophy has been considered quite "oppressive" in relation to women (Gatens 16)[4] and feminist writers have over the centuries attempted to alter this misogynistic view. Mary Wollstonecraft was one writer who, in her extension of Rousseau's and Locke's philosophical texts, made her own argument by including women within their very masculine-biased arguments. Arguments presented by women like Wollstonecraft, from as far back as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and into the present critical analyses of various philosophical texts, were based on the idea that philosophy was not necessarily a masculine concept. What these women writers suggested in their literary extension of this masculine discipline was essentially that if women, properly educated, incorporated their specific feminist voice into this discourse, then philosophy might be gender neutral, hence it might become 'humanised' (Gatens 17). As Gatens further suggests, what feminists still consider as problematic is the content, rather than the structure of philosophy.

The first three writers I analyse - Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More - utilised a similar philosophical "framework," extending the context of various philosophical points of view to include a positive theoretical account of woman. Gatens suggests that the early attempts by writers like these three, who incorporated a 'human' factor into a masculine discourse, allowed it to become "universally applicable" (Gatens 20).

These writers have attempted to incorporate this very concept of universality into their works, rationalising like men, experimenting in this masculine art of philosophising, but also extending it. Essentially, their self-inclusion into this

masculine discourse would eventually change the context and shape of philosophy as it is known today, but some feminist critics consider their literary efforts marred for their very use of the male-stream literary within their works. Feminist theorists such as Moore, Yaeger, Agress, and Mitzi Myers, criticise these women's active appeal to masculine literary authority. They are also critical of these authors' utilisation of male stream discourses and the negativity towards women within their works. These factors and more will be discussed further, but the main point to make is that the significance of these three women's works has almost become invisible and their challenge has been silenced. Essentially, Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More emphasised a masculinised version of literary difference, which really made little difference for women in the literary field.

The second contention of my thesis focuses on the literary styles each of these women used to voice their concern over these issues for reform, which amounts to the choice between amelioration or rebellion. I suggest that the failure of Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More, to succeed as long lasting literary women, was due to their overt attack on the present system of education that had been in place for centuries. Their full frontal assaults, consisting of rebellious acts and revolutionary literary styles, simply reflected the typically masculinised version of life that these women were fighting against. In an environment that was almost hostile for women as writers, the idea that women were nonetheless writing was difficult for the masculine literary elite to accept. Traditionally women were confined to the domestic sphere and any writing by women was seen as an active challenge to this relegated position. The appropriation of masculine literary methods was an important move for women writers, but such attempts at rationally including women through the use of masculine

argument were a literary challenge that meant failure for women simply because they were women.

However, despite their passivity and being seen as succumbing to the literary boundaries set by patriarchal authority, these three women can be seen to gradually alter the literariness of this era. The 'generational effect,' which I have observed in my study of these writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is now more apparent. The active experimentation by the older generation of women writers, represented by Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More, provided to the next generation of women writers the key to long lasting success, which was the active continuation of a literary challenge to the system in which they lived. Providing the necessary 'stepping stones,' as it were, these three women left behind the legacy of challenge, which, although not successful in the long term, led to the next generation of women writers continuing forward in the journey toward literary success.

In an examination of this next generation, represented by Mary Shelley and Jane Austen, I suggest that the success achieved by these two women writers is due to a style of writing that emphasised amelioration rather than revolution. The successful, well known feminist pioneers who survived the traditional vilification from their fellow peers and contemporaries were the women like Shelley and Austen who chose to make a difference from within their marginalised zone. In doing so, both writers reverted to a different literary tactic in an effort to overcome the critical double standard that hindered their foremothers.

Both Shelley and Austen share a common theme within their work and that is that they attempted to challenge the current system, which they deemed as potentially damaging for the character of women in the domestic and literary arena, from within the domestic arena. In fact, Gary Kelly suggests that the merging of these two spheres

– the literary and domestic – was a necessary move by Romantic women writers. He suggests that women in this particular era had to "develop representations of domesticity..." and they did so by extending the "domestic sphere into the local, regional and national, thereby domesticating the public political sphere...".[5] In the merging of these two separate zones - the public literary world and the private domestic world - these two women demonstrated an active awareness of their encultured status. Their literary experimentation allowed for a type of literary success that was lasting and more effective than their 'foremothers.' In other words, a literary tactic that emphasised amelioration seems to have proven more successful.

In choosing to write novels they could express the unsayable and, in doing so, this passive style became a suitable 'cover' from which they were safely able to comment on public issues from within their domestic arena. Some critics may see these two writers as 'mere' novelists, but it was this very term that initiated their challenge for a more positive voice. In returning to the literary form deemed suitable for women, Shelley and Austen were able to insert within this once restricted sphere an innovative originality. Conformity, conventionality and commercial content performed a major part in their literary debuts, but they coupled the typical aspects of their storylines with elements of the unpredictable, unconventional and remarkable originality in their experimentation with the Gothic genre. Mary Shelley presented the novel *Frankenstein*, outlining the vast differences between the domestic and public world, between husband and wife, between feminine and masculine, and the consequences of her story were tragic. Jane Austen also incorporated the dichotomous romanticised ideals of her century in *Northanger Abbey*. Her story was conservative and true to the routine of the social society in Bath, yet blatantly critical of the literary difference between women writers and male critics.

These two women writers represent an altered thought process in the way women broached this topic of female enculturation within their work. They took into consideration the literary and social mood of their time, and I argue that there was a gradual alteration in the methods of writing. Rather than publish any critical analysis of the system, which saw women writers victimised further within their own as well as other social circles, women writers saw the need to use a more discreet tactical response. Shelley's and Austen's critical analyses became less overt and more passive, but in a positive sense. One can say that what was learned was that this generation of women took the past active responses of their foremothers and incorporated them into creative, positive responses toward the system of gendered dichotomy in which they lived. In other words, the full frontal attacks of masculine literary methods and rebellious critical content meant a certain failure for women writers. The success of the next generation, represented by Shelley and Austen, was due to an emphasis on amelioration instead of rebellion. This focus on an ameliorational style is indicative of the transformation that was taking place in the literature by women. Amelioration over rebellion ultimately emphasised a more successful literary criticism by women. The conclusion of my thesis partly attributes these two women's success to their foremothers. There is a progressive change in the methods women writers used over the centuries and I have called this process, in which women writers actively challenge the patriarchal system, the 'generational effect.'

Historical background: reason and revolution

The English had enjoyed a century of political stability since the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 – a stability threatened by the ideas and events of the French Revolution. The French Revolution represented an awakening of a "national consciousness in France," that "created a new man, one who in the course of a few years underwent an apprenticeship in politics, not necessarily as a confused or manipulated individual, but as a citizen aware of his rights" (Garrioch 18).[6] The notion of an ordinary citizen possessing an awareness of his rights was potentially damaging to the English authorities, especially in the light of the modest improvements for women advocated in Europe. The European market became an exemplar of innovative and revolutionary ideas, and these ideas were bound to have an effect on the shores of England. "Revolutions are, of course, literary events also," and Garrioch notes that there was a "linguistic explosion" as writers attempted to interpret and explain this "new order" (21).

Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1689) and Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762) were influential to the emerging challenges to the basic foundation of the governmental and social structures of their time. Within their questioning, these two authors also presented their own proposals or re-workings of the system that ruled their lives.

Locke concentrated on the "nature of society and politics, political personality and property, the rights of the individual and the ethical imperatives on government" (Laslett 47).[7] His work consisted of two books. The logic of Locke's first book has been concluded to be a refutation of the writings of Sir Robert Filmer, and his use of the Revelations to prove that the various superior/inferior relationships (fathers above sons, husbands above wives, older above younger and kings above all others) in

society were established by God's command. Locke began by inferring simply that, except from God's superiority, we are all free and equal (92). He supported his inferences and arguments using both reason and revelation.

Locke's second book is essentially a "discourse on Government" (Laslett 49). He first established a number of phrases such as the state of Nature - that which all men begin with and consequently was based on a law of reason - and the state of Law - that to which all men rationally give up their state of Nature in order to be governed more securely. The basis of this discourse is best summed in Locke's own words:

> To avoid these Inconveniences which disorder Mens Properties in the state of Nature, Men unite into Societies, that they may have the united strength of the whole Society to secure and defend their Properties, and may have *standing Rules* to bound it, by which every one may know what is his. To this end it is that Men give up all their Natural Power to the Society which they enter into, and the Community put the Legislative Power into such hands as they think fit, with this trust, that they shall be govern'd by *declared Laws*, or else their Peace, Quiet, and Property will still be at the same uncertainty, as it was in the state of Nature (sic) (377).

Rather than advocating a specific social contract, Locke seemed to shy away from any distinct legal terms, referring only to compacts and agreements (Laslett 112). He was most adamant about avoiding the idea of a governing contract, which would imply that the two parties, those governing and those being governed, each received something by making a specific contract. Locke made it clear in his references that the appointed government possessed no more than a mere "fiduciary relationship" (113). Locke's writings became an influential work concerning the

political and social issues of the time, but his *Two Treatises on Government* focused

on the elite and noble sectors of English society. Times were changing and with the

political tension in Europe permeating into the shores of England, the issues of the

French Revolution brought to the forefront serious concerns for those whom Locke

did not consider in his work.

Frenchman Jean-Jacques Rousseau was influenced by Locke's work, but in his

book *Social Contract* (1762) the focus was the rights of all, not just the social elite.

Although Rousseau shared similar issues with Locke, his work brought into

consideration the rights of the ordinary citizen. He argued for a specific social

"contract," the basis of which he discussed as a "bargain." He put forward the notion

that men surrender:

> rights of dubious value, unlimited by anything but an individual's own
>
> powers, rights which are precarious and without a moral basis; in
>
> return men acquire rights that are limited but legitimate and invincible.
>
> The rights they alienate are rights based on might; the rights they
>
> acquire are rights based on law (Rousseau 33).[8]

Rather than giving up any rights they have, men simply "*convert* their liberty from

independence into political and moral freedom, and this is part of their transformation

from creatures living brutishly according to impulse into men living humanly

according to reason and conscience" (34).

Rousseau believed that the social contract would be the solution to the

concerns of the ordinary individual, that of finding a legitimate body to defend one's

property and person and, at the same time, possessing a similar freedom that each

individual was used to (60). The uniting of individual wills into one collective will

enabled men to put into the "community his person and all his powers under the

supreme direction of the general will; and as a body, [men] incorporate every member as an indivisible part of the whole" (61). He concluded that the basic foundation of the "whole social system: namely, that the social pact, far from destroying natural equality, substitutes, on the contrary, a moral and lawful equality for whatever physical inequality that nature may have imposed on mankind; so that however unequal in strength and intelligence, men become equal by covenant and by right" (68).

The ideas set down by such writers as Locke and Rousseau reflected a growing concern for the equality of men and the quality of the ruling leader/s. It was a time of revolution and many norms and standards were being questioned and challenged. What is obviously missing in both works, however, is an emphasis on women. In fact, in all of Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*, only a single chapter is devoted to the notion of parental rather than paternal powers.[9] Other than this instance, Locke did not talk of women unless in relation to parental power over children. Rousseau also presented an overtly masculine philosophy in *The Social Contract*. He emphasised the "collective will" of "men," where overcoming any physical inequality will lead to an equality for "men" so that they may "become equal by covenant and by right" (68). It seems that women were never part of this formula.

This emphasis on men and mankind is particularly clear in the very nature of the English language. Barriers like the masculinity of language and the traditional ideal of women as inferior were upheld within the written works by leading literary authorities such as Locke and Rousseau. Their works focused on the dominant group - men - and there seemed no intention to extend this type of philosophy to include women under the heading of "mankind." This point was evident in Rousseau's other

writings, in which he further stated that women should never feel independent, and encouraged their inferior status.

The French Revolution, and the issues surrounding it, alarmed many English writers. In France, the French Revolution was a bourgeois and popular action spanning the differing economic classes, which addressed the authority of the ruling elite. The political tension in Europe permeated the shores of England and the issues that the French Revolution brought to the forefront were concerned with the freedom, solidarity and individual rights of the ordinary citizen against those in power. Accompanying this revolution there was also an increase in literary publications aimed at explaining, defending or refuting these types of issues. With works such as Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791) insisting "that all men were created equal and that they possessed inalienable natural rights which no government could legitimately infringe," there was bound to be some disturbance on the English shores (Dickinson 14).[10]

Authority in England traditionally flowed downwards, and not every citizen was aware of such "inalienable natural rights." Writers like Paine became the "Poor Man's Friend," as support for the issues of the French Revolution became more popular. John Nuttall toasted with this remark, "Here's Damnation to the King and Constitution," and William Francis wondered, "who the Hell will not join" the French if they came to England, and cried, "Damn the King and Country too" (qtd. in Epstein 9).[11] Critical statements like these were a concern to the political and social leaders, who firmly believed in the traditionalism of the English constitution.

Radical writers in England, like William Godwin and Thomas Paine, suggested new designs for political and social justice, which threatened to undermine and destabilise the traditional English constitution. Because of this, the anarchy and

unrest in Europe seemed a warning of what could happen to the existing social order

in England. The stability and longevity of the system was being threatened by such

radical reforms. Women writers in England utilised Locke's "natural rights" theory,

and extended it to include women. However, the very idea of women in politics was

somewhat disturbing. The German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel reinforced this "fear"

sparked by women's entrance into this masculine arena, writing that women's

"control of government" would eventually put the state in "danger." He argued that

women "do not act according to the dictates of universality, but are influenced by

accidental inclinations and opinions" (qtd. in Anderson and Zinsser 115).[12] Thus,

when writers like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft extended various philosophical texts

to include women, many readers viewed their work as a challenge to the very

foundation of the social and political structure. Simpson posits the notion that there

was, as a result, an "attempt at the partial remasculinization" of literature (9).[13]

Like other defenders of the British parliamentary authority, Edmund Burke

had warned, in his *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790), of the dangers in

rallying for parliamentary reform, claiming that the longevity of the system was

justification for its authority. Although writers like Paine countered this argument by

highlighting the disadvantages of this system, his works really only advocated the

rights of men. In all of his writings, little exists concerning the subjection of women,

except perhaps this excerpt:

> Even in countries where they may be esteemed the most happy
>
> [women are] constrained in their desires in the disposal of their goods;
>
> robbed of freedom and will by the laws; slaves of opinion which rules
>
> them with absolute sway and construes the slightest appearances into
>
> guilt; surrounded on all sides by judges who are at once tyrants and

their seducers...for even with changes in attitudes and laws, deeply

engrained and oppressing social prejudices remain which confront

women minute by minute, day by day (qtd. in Kramnick 28-9).

The central themes in such a revolutionary period in Europe permeated the

atmosphere of public debate and were bound to affect the literary world in England.

Burke and Paine were joined in this debate by many women writers who also wrote in

reaction to the French Revolution. Katherine M. Rogers suggests that this tense

atmosphere, in which the rights and equality of all citizens was being questioned,

"sharpened women's recognition" of their negative role, and awakened a new

realisation about the double standard that they were constantly faced with (203).[14]

Many of these women writers reacted against the negative position that women were

given and argued against the encultured stereotypes inherent within both the private

and public domains. My examination of works by Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and

More shows that, despite the literary challenge put forward by these women, their

efforts failed to be successful because of the transference of these masculine

stereotypes onto literary women.

Success

The term 'success' is a difficult one. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s listing of numerous definitions of success emphasises the fact that the term is one of constant change. However, despite the digressive meaning over years, the most common definition has come to settle on an association with wealth, power or status. The *OED* definition states that success is "the prosperous achievement of something attempted; the attainment of an object according to one's desire: now often with particular reference to the attainment of wealth or position" (*OED* 10: 77).[15]

This standard definition of success is problematic to my study because the nature of these two eras was one in which women were not given any legal or public status. Any such "attainment of wealth or position" was virtually impossible in a time that focused on a traditional system of patriarchy. The *OED* has maintained this traditionalism in the very use of mainly masculine sources to describe various examples of the way in which the term 'success' has been utilised. The range of citations includes references from historical, medical and poetical works, from the likes of Sidney, Milton, Dryden, Addison, Raleigh and Southey.

In any study that has as its focal point a "female-centered theoretical perspective," it is conceivable that the argument will be more objective than any other type of perspective, particularly a masculine one. As noted by March, this objectivity stems from the fact that "less is assumed and more is examined" (qtd. in Thiele 41).[16] Focussing on this concept, my study aims to re-examine the word 'success' and recognise women's experimentation within the literary realm.

In moving beyond the domestic, women's entrance into the public literary world changed society's view of women as solely domestic. This was a significant transformation because women were only ever considered as producers within a

domestic, private realm (ie. producing children, weaving and sewing goods etc. were traditionally deemed domestic). During the period under discussion, women were recognised as producers as well as consumers of literature. Women were now acknowledged as active participants within the literary realm, but mainstream 'success' eluded them. The notion of 'success' was of course dependent upon the gradual acceptance of women within this realm, but any 'success' as such is, as suggested earlier, problematic.

Therefore, this study takes up March's position, in which "more is examined." The term 'success' will be redefined to include a specific definition that recognises women's literary experimentation. The new definition of success will simply come to mean the recognition of women's literary challenge toward this overtly masculine realm. Hence, the very challenge incorporated through their active participation and literary experimentation within this realm is an effort that this analysis interprets as 'successful.' This active challenge to patriarchal society is a significant milestone for women because this activism against their encultured status in both the private and public spheres will finally be acknowledged.

The success that these women writers achieved was difficult to assess, but I take the view that there were two distinctive versions of success. One form of success was that which was immediate and relative to the particular era in which the writer lived, and the other form of success was that which was lasting and remains contemporary. In my analysis of the five chosen female writers I note that despite becoming literary notorieties in the immediate period of writing, the first three women, Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, failed to gain a recognition that would later see them studied academically. The ongoing process of the institutionalisation of literature has gradually acknowledged the fact that women

wrote great literature and, recently, within the academic arena many courses have been particularly concerned with women's studies and the literature written by women. However, the works by these three women writers are not often included. Their lack of appearance within such academic institutions is perhaps a reflection of the non-canonisation of these women's literary efforts. As a consequence of this exclusion from established literary fields, these works have effectively been rendered silent and invisible.

I note that despite the immediate success Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More achieved, any type of long lasting success was prohibited by the inherent patriarchal worldview during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially within the literary realm. The last two women writers, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen, gained the second form of success, which is vital to the recognition of a literary tradition by women writers during these two centuries. Their long lasting recognition is evident in the continued inclusion of their works within various academic literary courses, and their literary success resulted from their specific use of the marginal zone where women were constantly designated.

The success of each of these five women writers will be discussed in further detail, but a significant point established within this study is that the latter type of success seemed to emerge from the less revolutionary writing styles of Shelley and Austen. I argue that this latter type of success was established through the clever use of the traditional literary forms available to women writers. The success of Shelley and Austen actually came from within the comfort of the traditional feminised marginal zone. Although confined to specific literary forms suitable for women (as governed by a masculine literary tradition), writers like Shelley and Austen have

shown that women's literature can be reworked to say the unsayable, even while it presents a facade of conventionalism.

It is this type of literary experimentation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the recognition of this experimentation in the present that embodies my new version of the term 'success.' This recognition by feminist historians has influenced the study of women's literature today, and is evidenced in the re-evaluation of Hannah More's works. Her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799)[17] was once considered, by feminist historians, as reflective of her society's values, rather than questioning of them. The fact that new studies are now being published that reanalyse the *Strictures* as inventive and clever highlights a renewed recognition by twentieth century critics of the literary experimentation by women writers within these two eras.

What will be established by this thesis is that the success of Shelley and Austen is due in part to their foremothers. The older generation of writers (Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More) set an example through their literary experimentation. They left behind a legacy of challenge for women writers to continue their fight for literary recognition. It is this type of example by the older generation that leads to Shelley and Austen's continuation of literary experimentation, and which partly contributes to their overall 'success.'

The efforts of all five writers, taken together, represent a victory for all women writers who attempted to challenge and change the traditional system. Taken together, these five writers represent what I call a 'generational effect,' chipping away at the masculine traditionalism and historical patriarchy that constantly allocated women to an inferior position.

Masculine Ideology

Tradition and patriarchy have long relegated women to an inferior position to men on the social ladder. This subordinated, domestic 'home' for women was enforced by a prescription of 'nature.' By the eighteenth century the role and assumed nature of women in English society were firmly established. Women were *naturally* destined to this debased position. Women were *naturally* weaker physically and mentally. The traditional dominant group had constructed this ideal of a specific feminine nature. The masculine elite had set the standard and classified women to be lower in rank, socially, physically and mentally. They had placed women in a restrictive marginalised zone. Any stepping over or crossing the boundary of this encultured feminine ideal was to be punished. The penance was a strict chastisement by both the dominant authority and other women also. Hence, every sphere women participated in was bound by rules, rules which were established through a traditional gender ideology that had historically stood the test of time. Women's disgruntledness over this gendered ideology, however, led to a literary challenge by women writers who attempted to change this dichotomous worldview.

The overt masculinity prevalent in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, in which women were excluded from almost all active participation in the public world, led to a literary protest by women. Literature was for the male intelligentsia and the protest that eventuated in women's writing has been described as one of the "unintended consequences" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[18]

The term 'sexual ideology' refers to the phenomenon of an encultured dichotomy that had set the social foundation for the distinctive division between men and women in the period being discussed. Robert Shoemaker notes that, despite the

common references to this division in historical studies as "separate spheres," the exact timing of this division is still debatable (11). Nonetheless, by the middle of the eighteenth century this "separate spheres regime of gender roles" positioned women among domestic life at home (Shoemaker 10).[19] Popular belief was upheld concerning the separate roles and traits to abide by, with women being seen as queens of the private domestic realm of the household. They were considered as naturally weaker, passive and gentle. Men, on the other hand, were the kings of the public, competitive business world, naturally dominant, active and stronger (Burlinson 22).[20] Middle and upper class women were respected, but in a manner that regarded them as inferior and not as equals. They were resigned to the four "cardinal virtues" - piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Agress 171).[21]

One point that has been established by recent feminists is that this very ideal concerning women's nature is an encultured phenomenon, supported over centuries by masculine tradition and masculine discourses such as religion, science and language. Eva Figes' comment is most concise when she states that "Women have been largely man-made" (qtd. in Belsey and Moore 3). [22]

The traditional standard stood the test of time and patriarchal ideals ruled the norm. This was the crux of the problem, because the traditional discourses and masculine authorities established the character of women and the prescribed nature of this character. What characterised a woman as 'feminine,' then, was an ideal that was created by the masculine, dominant group. It was a male tradition that viewed women as soft, virtuous, benevolent and passive. The female was supposed to be physically weaker and mentally unstrained in her duties. Her rationale for any study was purely domestic and her whole being and purpose was to please and to be pleasing towards men. This version of women's nature did not go uncriticised, and women writers

continuously attacked the theory of nature (associated with the feminine) versus culture (associated with the masculine). Historically, the outcome between feminist rebellion and patriarchal tradition favoured masculine authority. However, more often than not it was an unstable win for the patriarchal tradition makers, as women continued to use different tactics in their rebellions. The traditional stability of any such feminine ideal was constantly being challenged, and the point that is now obvious is that the foundation on which women's ideal behaviour lay was not as secure as the masculine elite had once determined. Any such notion of a prescribed 'nature' for women, then, could not have been a natural phenomenon because women's nature had changed, and what constituted a feminine nature in the male's mind did not always equate with that of the female's mind. The self-perception of women was changing and this proved a positive step for writing women.

However, there was an overpowering force against women as writers that has hindered their literary success. For centuries, tradition, culture and ideology had affected women and their potential for literary recognition. The traditional stubbornness of the masculine tradition surrounding literature had caused women writers to respond against the masculine idiosyncrasies which had over the years encultured them as readers and writers.

In the mid-eighteenth century a gradual move arose which saw women such as those in the Bluestocking circle consciously question these traditional ideals by attempting a more active role than their predestined domains. They wanted serious recognition, to be considered more than 'angels of the household' or mere muses providing cleanliness and inspiration, respectively. Wiseman suggests that this effort could have been seen as an early feminine movement towards a more intellectual woman (19).[23] For centuries a literary profession was essentially a masculine career.

Women were, for a long time, the consumers of literature, reading books and material that were considered useful. Literary works focusing on disciplines like philosophy, theology, science or similar studies were not for female eyes. Any literary material that women were allowed to read was usually that from religious or conduct books.

Religion played an important role through the influence of the Bible. This text has occupied a special place in English culture, making a significant impact from as early as the pre-literate culture of medieval England. It has since been established firmly as an authority within the English culture that has been known to privilege the patriarchal worldview of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.   From this text, for instance, comes the so-called confirmation that men were destined to have greater, more active and knowledgeable lives than women would. Women, on the other hand, were to serve men, and their domain was strictly that of the household and family. When women writers began to actively challenge their structured lifestyles, by moving into the public domain, the literature that women wrote was 'naturally' compared to the male style.

The discussions for and against the relegated subordination of women have been a persistent part of women's studies. Woman led man astray and therefore is evil, but man knew the consequence of such sin and did not prevent the error. Therefore, man was responsible for the original sin. Whatever the argument, there exists the concept of "Evil Eve" versus the "Virgin Mary." These two 'models' were representative models often presented to women as the ideal figures from which to guide their behaviour away from the bad and towards a conduct that was ideally virtuous and morally good (Hull 106).[24] With such models to emulate, there was not a lot of question about which one to follow if women wanted any type of literary success. In order to break free from the ideals prescribed for women by the

patriarchal tradition women writers had to find a way to write 'successfully' without reverting to the "Evil Eve" model of literary wrongs. The early attempts to break free from this literary inferiority as female writers saw women faced with a critical double standard. The double standard was related to the longevity of the system.

Religious and scientific 'evidence' had firmly established women's traditional role and the specific gender distinctions particularly prevalent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries continually built upon this patriarchal foundation. For example, the inferior status of women had long been interpreted by many to originate from the very command of God. In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, it is written that God put man in the Garden of Eden first. He then decided that man should not be alone and created a "helper suitable for him" (Genesis, 2:18). Adam said of his helper, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man" (Genesis, 2:23). The Corinthians elaborated, "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (Corinthians, 11:8).[25] Many writers used this argument - that of women coming from Adam's rib - as proof that men are superior, but there are alternative stances, which suggest that Eve's place in the Garden of Eden and her nurturing role should guarantee some worth for women in society.

This argument did not stand up too well against popular and accepted 'evidence' from the Scriptures. Sean Gill devotes a whole chapter to what he calls the "scripturally based defence of male supremacy." Heading his chapter "The Theology of Subordination," he lists various religious authorities' use of biblical works to support and sustain their argument for women's inferiority. For example, the Bishop of Ely, William Fleetwood, often used the Scriptures in his book *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants* (1705).

Quoting from Genesis for his 'proof' that the lot of woman was to follow the command of man, Fleetwood wrote, "both the Laws of God and Man have subjected the Wife to the Husband." He also quoted from Timothy 2:11-15 - "Wives be in Subjection to your own Husband" - as another piece of supportive religious evidence (Gill 15).[26]

This support from religious authority strengthened the argument for women's subjection to men. With overwhelming support from the word of God, the idea that women's inferiority was natural was easily sustained. For example, Richard Steele wrote in the *Spectator* (1712) that "The utmost of a Woman's Character is contained in domestick Life," and "All she has to do in this World, is contained within the duties of a Daughter, a Sister, a Wife, and a Mother." Rev. John Bennet agreed, stating that while men are expected to "distinguish themselves by science, valour, eloquence or the arts, a woman's greatest praise consists in the order and good government of her family" (qtd. in Gill 15).[27]

Anthony Fletcher has noted that, well into the nineteenth century, the scientific revolution, although undermining some of the scriptural arguments during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had continued to supplement, through medical theories, various "explanations of women's inferiority."[28] There was a specific focus on the body and this was where much of the biological 'evidence' for men as the more perfect being originated (Shoemaker 18). Ian Maclean notes that women's position in the domestic was based on the perception of their bodies being less able to cope with the physical and mental tasks required outside of this sphere. The explanation for this inadequacy stemmed from the humoral theories of Aristotles and Galen, which based gender differences upon a theory concerning the circulation of body fluids. This theory of body fluids suggested that because women lacked the

heat that men had, they lacked the necessary blood flow to the head, consequently leading to women's smaller shoulders, larger hips and weaker brains. Women were moister and cooler than men and were therefore seen as the weaker and less active of the sexes (Maclean 34-5).[29] Under this theory, men possessed everything that women lacked: "their hot, dry humours made them active and gave them a general hardness of body and spirit, which gave them intelligence and led them to bravery and honour" (Maclean 41).

The perceived biological inferiority of women stemmed also from what early-modern medicine suggested as the less than perfect formation of the female sexual organs. This idea gradually became less popular as it then became apparent that women's sexual organs were designed perfectly for the job intended. As bearers of children women were again positioned in the domestic and the belief of inferiority continued. With the increasing scientific and medical research of the sex differences, the theories of body fluids and circulation progressed to theories of psychology and the nerves. Women were described as possessing "thinner, finer, and more delicate nerves than men" and these frailties thus made women less mentally stable than men (Shoemaker 20).

The brute strength and overall larger size of the male sex became a major component of the gender ideology argument. It was assumed that men were superior to women both physically and, therefore, intellectually. Scientific evidence persistently supported this theory which had already been established through the centuries by a strong religious culture in England. One of the best known scientific authorities was Charles Darwin, who, even in 1874, in his *The Descent of Man*, reinforced the notion that "...Man is more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than woman, and has a more inventive genius" (Barreca 212).[30] Using his study of

animals and primitive lifestyle to support his theories, Darwin concluded that men were "ultimately" superior to women through the long course of a natural hereditary sexual selective procedure. He admitted that the physical factor was an obvious element that supported men's superiority over women, but argued that without the "higher powers of imagination and reason" men could not have succeeded in such a level of superiority. Again the supporters for women have presented an argument that because women give birth and nurse men into the world in their dependent states, they must have a more gracious position than the inferior and dependent role to which women have been assigned.[31]   However, the scientific and religious endorsement of women's inferiority continued and authors of fiction often portrayed women as the more vulnerable, nervous and less rational of the species.

Women's Writing

The support for women's inferiority, from both religious and scientific authority, which was masculine, clearly had a major impact on the status and success of literary women. The various ideals that based notions of women's inferiority within the domestic were transferred to the literary sphere. Hence, women's move into the literary realm - a masculine and very public arena - became increasingly difficult, and led to a barrage of criticism. Among the many things written of such 'unfeminine' literary women, the striking contradictory comment is that they have been criticised as being imitators, and their style of writing was often considered nothing more than copycat structures of well known traditional masculine writers' styles. The notion of women being imitators was a fair assessment of their early works.

The idea that women writers could not write successfully was a particularly masculine one. Men, be they critics or authors, were 'allowed' to write. It was part of the public role that distinguished men from women. It was a masculine trade. For women to enter into the literary realm was never considered, but the fact that women were insisting on it meant there were strict guidelines by which they had to abide. Critics, mostly male, analysed women's writing and judged it according to usefulness, appropriateness and moral content. Essentially the critics judged the writing of women by ideal guidelines - ones that strictly adhered to the ideals of such male critics about what women should write if they insisted on writing at all. But, while women were critiqued on their content by a masculine ideal of appropriateness concerning women's writing, their literary style was constantly considered inferior because it was compared to the traditional male styles, leaving women's writing being seen as never quite up to the standard.

The challenge that women faced is exemplified by Showalter's conclusion of J.S. Mill's discussion on the topic of women's creativity. Showalter summarises Mill's thoughts, writing, "English women writers would all be imitators and never innovators" (3). These thoughts, characteristic of the dominant view concerning women writers, emphasised the challenge women faced. Such views, which categorically denounced women's literary attempts, encouraged women writers to copy the successful styles that prevailed. Showalter's gender-defining term, "imitation," explains women's reasoning behind this decision. She suggests that women simply internalised the ideas that were prevalent at the time. By writing, women were out of their sphere and, in doing so, they had to compensate for their active behaviour by writing within and keeping to the cultural stereotypes they were bound by. It was a common sense approach to be aware of what styles were popularly published. Showalter further suggests that in hostile territory such as the traditionally patriarchal literary realm, the idea that women writers were merely "sociological chameleons, taking on the class, lifestyle, and culture of their male relatives," was a notion that did not encourage women to be "innovators" (11).

Showalter is not the only theorist who identifies the challenge women were faced with in their struggle to break the mould of literary standards concerning women. In a literary realm dominated by the masculine elite, there have been other theorists who have indicated the possible causes for women's imitative style when writing. One such cause is the relation between the traditional cultural ideals concerning women and their allocated role in society. It is here that the traditional social expectations for women were inevitably transferred onto literary women. Traditional ideals about women's place in the domestic private domain clashed with women's desire to break into the literary public domain. This discord has led to the

conclusion that there existed a negative correlation between these traditionally

patriarchal cultural and historical ideals of women, and their writing. Mary Poovey

identifies such a "causal link" and realises that it was difficult for women to escape

perpetuating these patriarchal ideals of themselves as passive and domestic, because

of the "prescriptive" nature of these traditional values (xiii). A strong binding

historical force, one that was masculine and therefore powerful in its authority, had

carried along the notion of gender differences. Women's written responses in this era,

then, could hardly be any more innovative than the prevalent social and cultural

authority allowed. Considering that women's literature was unconsciously bound by

such prescriptive ideals, an imitative style did exist. It was, after all, difficult to

dismiss centuries of culture that had determined the standard as far as women's status

was concerned.

For centuries Western social and political thought has been structured within a

cultural and linguistic duality, whereby dichotomous terms were placed in opposition

to each other. This dichotomous worldview can be seen in the very nature of the

English language, of which many feminists are critical.

There is a culturally implicit assumption concerning the following dualisms,

and which of each is positive: mind/body, reason/emotion, and public/private. What

Beverly Thiele points out is that all dualisms must be treated with extreme care

because, more often than not, all of them can be related back to one of the original

dichotomous terms - that of male/female (37). Starrett also suggests that the

contrariness which exists between dualisms has an ethical basis, and that the relation

between which is good and which is bad leads to a "cause and effect" decision which

inevitably "reinforces...hierarchical thinking" (qtd. in Thiele 38). Helene Cixous takes

this point further, suggesting that the hierarchical organisation of such concepts is

male privileged in that all can be related to the active/passive dualism. This specific coupling is responsible, according to Cixous, for the ultimate "question of sexual difference" (qtd. in Belsey and Moore 92).

The dichotomous nature of language implicates men as the authority; and women, as the subordinate, are consistently being related to men in the negative. To feminist theorists it is the nature of language and its construction as a binary, where one pole is positive and the other negative, that is the foundation for the existence of the patriarchal order of which feminists are critical. For example, a particular aspect of language that Dale Spender brought to the forefront, in *Man Made Language*, was the "patriarchal implications" of a language that feminists have since termed "he-man language" (Spender 151-4). Spender claims that not only does language name men as superior, it in fact produces this position.[32] The use of the masculine pronoun 'he' and its conventional meaning in relation to all, for example, supports the familiar claim by feminist cultural historians that the social conventions of this era focused on a positive outcome for the dominant social group – men. Furthermore, this form of writing subjected women to standards that "worked in the interests of men." What was once supposed to be a gender-neutral term has led to an active concern by various critics, such as Germaine Greer, who comments on the "abusive" terms of language in relation to women, and Figes, who analyses the "ambiguity of the word 'man'" (Belsey and Moore 2). The universality of language and the generalisation of the 'he' pronoun have long become an accepted part of history. However, even the term 'history' is met with criticism and it is this masculinised language that women have, until recently, taken for granted as the given language.

Recently, many feminist writers have made a conscious move in creating a new language to counteract and support women writers. Feminist literary theorist,

Elaine Showalter, for example, has coined the term 'gynocriticism,' which

specifically focuses on women's writing and studies women in relation to and in

response to the patriarchal culture in which they live (Belsey and Moore 6). One can

take this point further in stating that, in the specific gendered dichotomous eras of the

late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is quite possible to regard the

literature of women as a particular "herstory," to account for the way in which women

responded to their times. Geradine Meaney poses an interesting notion:

> It may well turn out that in the critical histories of the future, these
>
> years will not be remembered as the Age of Structuralism or the Age
>
> of Deconstruction, but as the Age of Feminism. Wouldn't it be a
>
> surprise if, without having realized it, we have all been living in
>
> women's time? (Meaney 11).

Women's Reading

Overcoming the obvious masculinity of language was a difficult task and was not helped by the endorsement by both scientific and religious authority, which upheld the notion that the male sex was indeed superior to women both in mind and body. One of the key means by which the traditional status and role of women was enforced was through conduct books. These tended to perpetuate women's inferiority and substandard position in relation to men and concentrated on the traditional enculturation of women's feminine character.

Conduct books were published, mostly by men, to instruct women and young girls on the proper behaviour and conduct expected by the social community. As early as the fifteenth century there had been a steady growth of material widely labelled today as conduct or instruction literature. As the book trade grew and recognised the increasing number of women readers, there was a need to cater for this audience. The emergence of practical guides and 'how-to-do-it' books counselled and educated this growing female audience. Topics such as needlework, gardening, cooking, guides to general handling of servants, to letter writing, or to basic laws relating to women, were all indicative of the growing potential to appeal to the daily needs and interests of females and families (Hull 31).[33]

By 1640 the notion of women reading was important, even to the extent of being thought necessary, as DuBoscq wrote in the chapter "On Reading" in *The Compleat Woman* (1639):

> It is even necessary for all *women*, what kinde of spirit soever they be of, while it affords a certaine lustre to such as have it in an eminent degree, and lessens much their *imperfection* who have it not so great; it makes the one tolerable, and the other admirable; And truly Reading

shewes many things which reason by it selfe can never discover; it

makes us have more soliditie in our thoughts, and more sweetnesse in

our discourse; it finisheth that which nature but begins (sic) (Hull 131).

Such thoughts on women reading were fairly common, but with cheaper

means of printing and no real regulation of what was being printed, the direction of

women's reading matter focused on and encouraged women to behave appropriately.

Hence, the conduct books in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries began to

concentrate on such topics as piety and chastity. What these kinds of books focused

on was presenting an "emulatable" model as each writer saw fit. The material thus

centred on ideal and acceptable models that would embody legitimate values (Poovey

xii).

There were many conduct books and a quick glance at the titles of some

conduct books - by no means a complete list - allows literary theorists to glimpse the

emergence of the cultural definition of gender. The mere analysis of such titles as

Isaac Watts' *The Improvement of the Mind, to Which Is Added a Discourse on the*

Education of Children and Youth (1725), and Rev. Mr. Wettenhall Wilkes's *A Letter*

of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady (1740), or Dr. James Fordyce's

Sermons to Young Women (1766), and his *The Character and Conduct of the Female*

Sex (1776), as well as John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), and

Thomas Gisborne's *An enquiry into the duties of the female sex (1797)*, indicates the

type of material that was being published which imposed an unconscious stronghold

of implicit values upon women.

As a representative of the typical conduct material, John Gregory's *A Father's*

Legacy to his Daughters (1774)[34] is a book that expressed the idiosyncratic values of

the late eighteenth-century father as well as the standard notions of much of the male

population. His work, although particularly sympathetic to the subordinate position of his daughters, exemplified the normal perceptions about women, when he stated that having a "natural character and place in society" a woman must heed to a "certain propriety of conduct peculiar to [her] sex" (Gregory 7). Even though he acknowledged that women's "whole life is often a life of suffering..." he was quick to explain that the "natural vanity of [the] sex, is very apt to lead [women] into such a "dissipated state of life" (11-12). His fatherly thoughts became confused, however, as he contradicted this thought concerning vanity, stating that "dress is an important article in female life" (55). If it was so important, how could women possibly choose between such contrary rules? To be concerned with their looks was something that could lead to a foolish wasted life, yet dress was considered necessary and important, for the way a woman dresses was "expressive of [her] character" (57).

Although Gregory only meant to prevent his daughters from excessive dressing as well as untidiness, his words were proof of the constant difficulty women faced in this era. There were constant attacks on women's "folly" in dressing to please, and learning such fine arts as dancing, or pretty decorative efforts, were constantly being criticised as foolish and over indulgent. Simplicity was called for, but so was finery and elegance. The message for feminine softness went further and was continually being related to the education of women. Even though Gregory seemed to be comfortable with a woman possessing intelligence and a sophisticated education, he was quick to advise his daughters that they should be "cautious in displaying [their] good sense." His suggestion, if "you happen to have any learning," was to "keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding" (31-32).

It was a common thought that women were to have soft skin, gentle grace, and simple thoughts. Women should have a "virgin purity" which they should protect by avoiding such conversation as could contaminate and injure this delicate asset (Gregory 35). That some women were pressing for a more equal position, as far as conduct went, was a source of concern for Gregory. He specifically addressed this idea of women being considered as companions with equal intellect, by stating that even though women may make more "agreeable companions," it would make them "less amiable as women," which Gregory believed to be an important distinction that was lost sight of by many women (37). He was particularly concerned with the current state of female behaviour and wrote:

> By the present mode of female manners, the ladies seem to expect that they shall regain their ascendancy over us, by the fullest display of their personal charms, by being always in our eye at public places, by conversing with us with the same unreserved freedom as we do with one another; in short, by resembling us as nearly as they possibly can. - But a little time and experience will shew [sic] the folly of this expectation and conduct (41-2).

He supported this argument by choosing the accepted behaviour of men and their licentiousness to illustrate the disgusting consequences of men's thoughts towards women, who would be able to share the same experience that men had for so long taken as their right. Gregory presented the favoured opinion of many men, that if a future husband has found his future wife to have "prostituted" herself to "fifty men before" him, he will if he "has the least delicacy,...despise" her (44). In summing up, Gregory suggested that if women argued for equality then the ideal femaleness that men had envisioned, with the "virgin purity" and delicate manners, would be lost

because of the woman's equal chance to have many lovers. Her equal licentiousness would become a downfall, as her womanly attractiveness and everything that appealed to men about women's chastity and virtue would come to mean nothing.

Conduct material was not an area completely dominated by male writers, however. The cultivation of female virtues, the aim of these publications, led to a similar concern by women too. There are many examples of such literature by women who also adopted an advisory role. For example, there was Lady Sarah Pennington's *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters in a Letter to Miss Pennington* (1761) and Hannah More's *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies* (1791), and her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), Priscilla Wakefield's *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex with Suggestions for Its Improvement* (1798) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and also Mrs. Hester Chapone's *Letters on the improvement of the mind: addressed to a young lady* (1804).

What is apparent in these titles is that women's concern about women concentrated on a new area, an important distinction which illustrates a progressing development of consciousness during the eighteenth century. The conduct material that was being published had turned over a new leaf. Admittedly this topic of female education and equality had been around for a while, with such writers as Mary Astell and many anonymous women writers slipping through the literary barricades of the male-dominated publishing world. With works titled *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest* (Astell, 1696), or *Female Rights Vindicated, or The Equality of the Sexes Morally and Physically Proved. By a Lady* (Anon., 1758), or *Woman Not Inferior to Man, or A Short and*

Modest Vindication of the Natural Rights of the Fair Sex to a Perfect Equality of Power, Dignity and Esteem with Men, (from the Sophia Pamphlets, 1739-40), and *Women Triumphant, or The Excellency of the Female Sex Asserted in Opposition to the Male* (Anon., 1721), it becomes abundantly clear that the position and role of women had been a constantly challenging as well as frustrating one.

Double Standard

The works that I have chosen from each writer, Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen, were most relevant to this thesis, because of the particularly concerned statement each writer was making about the traditional dichotomous worldview. What I will demonstrate is that, despite various alterations to their literary techniques and tactics, each of these works was restricted by a critical double standard that ultimately prolonged the journey toward literary success for many women writers. With the constant publishing of conduct books and the staunch belief that the interpretations of male dominance over women in the biblical Scriptures were correct, as well as the growing consensus from scientific authority, the literature by and for women was bound to reflect this enculturation. The cultural and historical forces that had long relegated women to the inferior and dependent positions by which they lived had seen women struggle, unsuccessfully, in their efforts to realise some type of literary independence. Many researchers have blamed the combination of these two powerful elements - biblical and social ideals of feminine and female nature - on what has often been termed 'critical double standards.' The traditional dichotomy that existed was responsible for the position which women were allocated and each of the women writers I analyse became particularly emphatic in their quest to balance the power relations that placed women as the inferior sex.

The critical double standard is a type of test I have given to each author analysed. After looking at each work in question, the 'success' of each writer is dependent on whether or not the author was able to positively distance herself from the critical double standard set by the social and literary authority. The immediate redefinition of 'success,' then, comes down to a number of questions: how can one

say what one has to say and appear not to have said it at all? How does a woman criticise the system and still become recognised as an accomplished literary writer? These were the questions that plagued the way women authors wrote. Revolutionary topics needed to be discussed, but how did a woman get such a work published and into the public arena?

Historically, literature was strictly a male dominated field. However, women's eventual participation within this domain led to a critical double standard that was enforced and upheld by the traditional patriarchal authority of the literary arena. Not only were women forced to abide by specific gender-typed literary styles and particular material, but also their written work was regarded as inferior and substandard. It was trivial and often analysed scathingly. The 'catch 22' - in modern terms - of gender typing became an influential factor in the success of women's writing, and successful writing basically came down to a question of conservatism or innovation. Did women conform to the determined literary guidelines or did they attempt a more original written work? Either way, criticism was to be an expected consequence, so women writers such as Macaulay, Wollstonecraft, More, Shelley and Austen experimented with a variety of literary techniques in order to get their works read. The problem was how to get past that critical double standard and, also, how to do it in a way that successfully reached the reading public. Women were stereotyped by an ideal created by the patriarchal tradition and this ideal was reinforced in the guidelines for women as writers, which were set up by the masculine literary authority. Women writing quality literature was a difficult notion to grasp.

Challenging established history and tradition was not a task to be taken lightly. Serious analysis and reasoning had to be incorporated into any literary challenge. The early efforts by women writers, represented in the chosen works of Catharine

Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More faced the battle of overcoming a critical double standard. This double standard saw women faced with the inevitable dilemma of writing a piece of work that would be typically feminine (read inferior and trivial), or publishing a written work that would be topical, thought-provoking and challenging. Either way, there existed a double standard in which women had to choose between keeping their place within the private domestic world or airing an opinion that could jeopardise that place. The methods employed by these three women writers were quite different: two were visibly challenging and one was fairly passive. The use of male-stream discourses and the particular benefits for men and the public community were highlighted in their works, but it was these very factors that led to the feminist voice being muted and silenced.

Gradually, with the growing invasion of women into the literary arena, it became less acceptable to openly criticise women writers. Rather than disappear altogether, however, the hostility was replaced with a patronising double standard (Rogers 23).[35] The problem women faced when writing literature was that they had a style recommended as most suitable to women. Letters and novels to a certain extent were acceptable. In fact, novels had long been associated with women writers. Gary Kelly states that fiction was a "discourse conventionally and historically conceded to women."[36] The predominantly male population of literary critics categorised novels as "minor productions by unprofessional writers" (Rogers 23). The main critical aspects through which a literary production by a woman might be considered as good quality and praised with accepted recognition were based on the moral content. Also, the work had to possess acceptable "feminine material of sentimental romance" (Rogers 23).

The term 'critical double standard' reflects these inhibitive strictures on all aspects of female life that had long been established and supported by masculine authority. However, the standard that was set so long ago has become confused and blurred into a somewhat uncertain meaning. Women became confused as to what the correct standard was. The sample work by John Gregory exemplifies the position women faced. In his book, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774), Gregory represents the masculine stereotyping of women when he offers advice concerning women's dress. He explains that "dress is an important article in female life" and a woman should dress well because it is "expressive" of one's character. However, he then chastises women about their "vanity," which "is very apt to lead [women] into such a dissipated life (Gregory 55, 57, 11-12 respectively). This type of advisory text exemplifies women's struggle within the traditional ideals concerning their domestic and social lives, and this struggle with the norm became a factor with which women writers also had to contend. The standards women writers had to follow sometimes became so mixed up that women were often left with a double standard that left them questioning what was the right thing to do. Either way it seemed a loss to the women who tried to do to the right thing (the right thing, of course, according to the masculine ideals set for them), because the standard meaning of what was right or wrong was becoming confused.

Catharine Macaulay

Catharine Macaulay (1731-91) was a fringe member of the Bluestockings, an intellectual group of women who began regular gatherings to discuss a range of topics. The subject matter of the Bluestockings focused not only on domestic or traditional household feminine topics, but also on interesting ethical, political, philosophical and social issues.[37]   Sylvia Harcstark Myers sums the group's aspirations to "a life of the mind" (preface vii). She notes also that by the 1770's the Bluestockings came to focus on a predominantly female membership, and although the term bluestockings was often used with ridicule, to refer to the "female wits" who made up this group, Myers views this ridicule as instructive. She observes that the "transformation of the term's meaning reflects an awareness of the fact that women had broken the taboo against learning, and the taboo against their taking a public part in intellectual life" (prologue 10).

In the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, there existed an acknowledgment that the Bluestocking group, whose second generation of members consisted of many literary and intellectual women, such as Fanny Burney and Hannah More, was socially acceptable. However, despite their public support of women in both a literary and productive capacity, as well as their active role in supporting a "life of the mind," Myers notes that the first generation of the Bluestockings were not completely comfortable with women taking on a public voice. Consequently, some members did not favour the political writings of Catharine Macaulay. Elizabeth Montagu, for example, declared that she would not read any of Macaulay's works (S. Myers 244). Despite this declaration, Elizabeth Carter noted, after a few hours of conversation with Macaulay, that she "had a higher opinion of her talents" than Mrs Montagu had, and found that Macaulay had "a very considerable share both of sense

and knowledge" (S. Myers 244). Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790) [38] is particularly interesting in this context, in that it was respected by many of her male and female contemporaries (even if her personal life and political views were not.)[39] Mary Wollstonecraft was pleased with Macaulay's feminist turn and acknowledged this delight in her review of the *Letters*.[40]

The *Letters'* main concern, as the title indicates, is education. Although a great many things can be included in such an open-ended heading, a particular focus of Macaulay's work is related to the effects of the education that women had been subjected to. According to Macaulay, even though women were created with equal rights and liberties, it was the nature of their education that had caused the female sex to be considered as the 'inferior' and 'weaker' being. It was not, according to Macaulay, the fault of the sex that "vices and imperfections" were considered as "inseparable from the female character " (202). Women had learned to accept their role and nature simply because a predominantly masculine and patriarchal society and ideology had taught them. Enculturation of the female role, and women's acceptance of their role, clearly disadvantaged women. Macaulay became quite disparaging in her discussion, realising that "till that period arrives in which women will act wisely," she was left with no alternative topic of discussion than "women's follies" (207).

However, throughout her condemnatory account of women's "vices and inconsistencies," Macaulay stated that "the situation and education of women, ... is precisely that which must necessarily tend to corrupt and debilitate both the powers of mind and body...". She accepted the fact that women were inferior in strength, but insisted that some of their weakness could be rectified by regular exercise (142). She blamed the idea of weakness as feminine on an education which praised this appearance, falsely, as "beauty and delicacy...". Macaulay concluded her criticism by

stating that the "moral education [of women] is, if possible, more absurd than their physical" (207). She pointed out the obvious truths of the "defects" of female education and stated that "[w]hilst we still retain the absurd notion of a sexual excellence, it will militate against the perfecting a plan of education for either sex" and discussed throughout her book rules for amending this defective system of female education (208).

Macaulay's criticism of the educative system focused on the overt differences between the education of men and women. She disapproved of the feeble and weak frame that women were encouraged to form, claiming that the education they received taught women from early childhood to become the typical model of "female excellence"; a model which, rather than having a criterion that specifically suited the nature of women, led women to be trained in making themselves fit the criteria (47).

Historically, the maintenance of women's inferior status and the subject of women's education were endorsed by traditionally masculine authority, such as religion or science. Following the example of tradition, Macaulay also turned to history (her forte) to find 'evidence' to support her ideas for a more balanced educative plan for both sexes. Macaulay suggested following some of the beliefs of various races like the ancient Spartans who believed that their women played an equal role in the social community. In order that they might be more useful, the Spartans encouraged their female population to be physically stronger (24-5). In actively criticising the system of education and traditionally endorsed role of women, Macaulay joined the ranks of other women who campaigned for an improvement in female education.

Education, she insisted, began from childhood, and Macaulay admired many of Locke's theories concerning the education of children (71). One writer she

seemingly detested was Rousseau. She disagreed with his ideas about keeping children 'innocent' from the horrors and truth of the world (34-5). She preferred them to be gradually inducted into the reality of the world and suggested tutors and travel to broaden the child's worldly experiences.

Macaulay insisted that boys and girls, especially brothers and sisters, share an equal amount of playtime. They should learn to respect one another as individuals and in the long run the relationships each experienced with the opposite sex would prove to be more respectful, happy and even, perhaps, equal. Macaulay reasoned that:

> ...by uniting their young minds early in the soft bonds of friendship; let your children be brought up together; let their sports and studies be the same; let them enjoy, in the constant presence of those who are set over them, all that freedom which innocence renders harmless, and in which Nature rejoices. By the uninterrupted intercourse which you will thus establish, both sexes will find, that friendship may be enjoyed between them without passion. The wisdom of your daughters will preserve them from the bane of coquetry, and even at the age of desire, objects of temptation will lose somewhat of their stimuli, by losing their novelty. Your sons will look for something more solid in women, than a mere outside; and be no longer the dupes to meanest, the weakest, and the most-profligate of the sex. They will become the constant benefactors of that part of their family who stand in need of their assistance; and in regard to all matters of domestic concern, the unjust distinction of primogeniture will be deprived of its sting [sic] (50).

Macaulay's suggested method of teaching children early to be respectful of their duties and roles in relation to each sex would reap potential advantage for both men and women. She believed her philosophy for a virtuous and happy life was based on a better educational system than the present one.

Obviously frustrated with the direction of women around her, Macaulay's *Letters* paid particular attention to the educational strictures pressuring women into accepting the traditional male stereotypes. If women were not so obliging, Macaulay believed that they could utilise the potential which each possessed from birth, for equal rights. Equal rights, for Macaulay, were not deemed to be some sort of complete mutation of women into masculine or 'unfeminine' clones of men. She actually recommended that women maintain some of the traditional arts taught to women, considering arts like needlework as basically virtuous and necessary as "innocent" entertainment (65). For Macaulay, equal rights meant women would embody all the elements that she saw as being necessary for a complete and full life. Macaulay listed a number of elements that she called duties, which were important for all men and women. Essentially, there was a duty of benevolence and kindness, incorporating compassion and non-violent feelings towards all humans, and the extension of these feelings onto animals.

Another fundamental priority towards a better and more fulfilling life was, for Macaulay, the moral duty and responsibility of all concerning religion. Macaulay was particularly concerned with the decline in teaching and attention to religious and moral duties, without which, she argued, a complete contentment could not be possible. In Macaulay's discussion of a moral education, she gradually moved from specifically referring to female moral education to the moral education of "man." Her comments are inferred as applying to all of mankind, rather than the male sex,

because she had already stated her concerns for a more balanced approach to the education of both sexes. From the very beginning, Macaulay understood the role of the mind to be afflicted in its unity with the body (24). She reasoned that because the mental is joined so resolutely to the corporeal, with all the desires of the physical being the most difficult to resist, it was necessary to have a deeper understanding with the mental powers and therefore, she suggested, a moral education would produce a more complete and happy being (455). Macaulay's application of "Cartesian dualism" shows her support for the dominant (masculine) thoughts of her time.

Despite Macaulay's use of a male-stream thought particularly prevalent in the late eighteenth century, her recognition of women's perpetuation of their inferiority was a significant observation for a female author during her time. Actively voicing her criticism of women, who accepted the idiosyncrasies that prevented them from being more fulfilled, physically, socially and morally, was a brave act on her part. It was necessary, however, because Macaulay despised the false notion of female beauty and delicacy. The very act of deliberately presenting oneself as weak, by fasting and being inactive, all in the name of perceived beauty and feminineness, was something that she could no longer sit back and watch quietly.

Macaulay pleaded to parents and mothers especially, to stop encouraging their daughters to accept the farce of female delicacy, writing, "Suffer no prejudices to prevail on you to weaken Nature, in order to render her more beautiful..." (50). The prejudices Macaulay mentioned referred to the views of writers like Rousseau whom she attacked. She especially denounced Rousseau's appraisal and glorification of women in his writing, and refuted his contention about the link between women's inferior physical beings and their assumed inferior intellect (205). She felt that it was writing like his that advanced women's degradation and typified the traditional male

strictures concerning the ideal woman. She called him a "licentious pedant" because his typical "pride and sensuality" had overridden any "reason" he may have used in such a deduction (206). In attacking his male reason, Macaulay ironically implied that Rousseau, the male, was more subject to his passions than women were.

Writers like Rousseau presented immoral female characters and apparently praised them as heroic and amiable. Macaulay criticised his portrayal of women, stating that he "seduces by falsehood," alluring the "warmhearted to embrace vice" (32-3).   Macaulay asserted that it was writers of novels, like Rousseau, who continued to thrust women into the traditional idealisation of females and female nature. Macaulay felt that novels led women astray, because the contents of such books often depicted unnatural, even fantastical, images and situations, which women readers turned to in order to escape what they believed to be their ordinary, stable, and inferior lives. The imaginary worlds created allowed women, some of whom took the words as real possibilities, to hope and dream and idealise about what, in reality, was not and could not in their life time ever be realised.

Martha Tomhave Blauvelt does not support Macaulay's criticism of novels. In her study of Mary Guion's diary, she rejects Macaulay's belief of the novel's destructive potential to influence women readers. She suggests that the unrealistic plots and situations within stories could have represented the social and moral choices women were faced with. Rather than present women with farfetched situations, she believes that women could instead treat the stories as lessons in real life, using the characters' experiences as a testing ground for their own possible decisions. She suggests that within the possible plots of the novel, female readers could experience relationships that involved courtship and married life, without suffering the consequences of making a wrong decision (133).[41]

However, many feminist critics agree with Macaulay's analysis of the idealistic presentation of women in novels. Terri Doughty, for example, suggests that specific structures within novels, like plots that present the heroine as object rather than individual and lacking in any real social or personal development, "reinforce societal strictures against female" self growth. She also suggests that many women authors were torn between the popularity factor of audience satisfaction, and the overwhelming desire to produce a story that was independent and strong, a story that challenged the standards and pushed the boundaries.[42]

Macaulay saw women wasting their lives away. Women were not taught to be better moral and religious beings, for if they were, they would be happy and content with their lives. Yet, over and over, women continually perpetuated the female stereotype, which had been constructed by male tradition. Macaulay felt that women accepted the unnecessary need to be weak and dependent - both physically and intellectually - and she seemed frustrated at the situation, which could not be remedied until women came to the realisation that they, themselves, were adding to this inferiority. It was difficult for women, however, to make the break from centuries of tradition, from the encultured perceptions of female nature and idiosyncrasies.

The masculine ideal which had, for centuries, maintained a strong control over the standardisation of women's role, position and behaviour, was an ideal that is problematic for many feminists. Lucy Irigaray, for example, believes that the implicit phallocentrism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is something that cannot easily be dismissed. The constant endorsement of the traditional masculine ideals by men, and the perpetuation of these ideals by women, continued to feed the power to the social dominant group – men. Irigaray suggests that in order to subvert the power relations inherent within these two centuries, women must "*master*" the

system, and actively participate within it (qtd. in Pateman and Gross 142).[43]

Macaulay attempted to master the norms and standards of the traditional literary

ideals, in her active use of philosophical theory, to support her cause for an

improvement of the existing system of education. A fundamental point that Macaulay

recognised was that it was women who continued to reinforce their own inferior

status, and Macaulay's awareness of this self-fulfilment by women, illustrates the

emerging difference in women's acceptance of such standards. However, within

Macaulay's work there exists strong evidence for the role of the unconscious critical

double standard, which many critics blame for the unsuccessfulness of women's

written responses during the period being discussed.

The Influence of the Critical Double Standard

Catharine Macaulay's *Letters on Education* advocated an argument for the

improvement of women's education and standing in both a private and public role

and, therefore, the twentieth century critic considers her a feminist. Even though this

term was not used in the time she lived, it is helpful because labelling Macaulay a

feminist enables one to categorise her among other women who held similar concerns.

Hill considers Macaulay as a feminist. She writes, "As a historian, a political

polemicist, and a fearless critic of all she thought wrong, Catharine Macaulay broke

every rule in the eighteenth-century book on how a woman should conduct herself

and the role she should occupy" (Hill, *The Republican Virago* 130).[44]

Macaulay's feminist message advocated reform to the substandard education

that women were receiving. Too many women were focusing on ornamental

'necessities' such as learning how to converse with wit, how to dance to attract a

husband and how to dress to appeal to a man.[45] There were more important and

significant considerations in life, which Macaulay appealed to the female reader to

consider. She defined "duties" such as kindness, non-violence, and benevolence, as the encompassing forces of essential happiness and fulfilment in life. As a woman, she appealed to all women readers that if they could only look beyond the stereotypical weakness of their sex, then they could set their minds to learning greater things that would improve their physical, social and moral selves. Women would then play a greater part in the whole community and would be more satisfied and content with their status than the relegated inferior position that women seemed to maintain.

Macaulay's ideas might seem to be backed by the force of conviction but as one looks more closely at the style of her writing, it is easy to see how she unconsciously fell victim to the very stereotypical ideals that she criticised. In fact, as a woman writer, Macaulay herself maintained the critical double standard she so easily recognised in her sex's self-perpetuation of the typical patriarchal ideal of women.

In her decision to write a compilation of letters, Macaulay recognised the importance of using the literary styles acceptable to women.[46] In her choice of literary style, Macaulay escaped any criticism that she may have encountered if her work was structured as a more critical piece. It is here that the critical double standard comes into effect. In choosing a literary structure that consisted of proposals and suggested amendments to the existing educative system, she can be viewed as accepting the conventional literary style commonly associated with women writers. However, Rogers criticises women writer's acceptance to write in the specific literary styles allocated to women. She suggests that even though literary forms, like letter writing and novels, allowed women to express themselves on paper they were, nonetheless,

written structures that inevitably kept women in an idealistic rut of literary inferiority and feigned professionalism (Rogers 200-1).

Rogers' criticism denounces Macaulay's chosen style, because her choice has made her a victim of the critical double standard (unconsciously, of course). She is seen as obliging the critics and sticking to the prerequisites she needed in order to publish or write publicly at all. In accepting the standard literary styles permitted by women, Macaulay's intended vindication for an improvement of female education, and her appeal to women to transcend the boundaries of masculine ideology, have been undermined.

In this closer examination of her work, it is clear that, despite advocating feminist issues, such as the improved education of women, Macaulay's *Letters* does not really succeed as a fully feminist piece. This failure is perhaps a reflection of the gradual change in the significance and popularity of the Bluestockings. By the time of Macaulay's membership with the infamous 'blues,' the term, 'bluestockings' came to refer to women's intellectual activities in a more general sense (S. Myers 244), rather than any specific gathering of intellectual elites. However, despite the Bluestockings having made a breakthrough for many women who wished to be seen as intellectual and rational, many of the members were still anxious to hold onto their feminine nature (as cast by a masculine ideal). The critical double standard can again be seen at work here. Instead of promoting this new intellectual identity for women, most members of the group rejected any overt objection to the traditional role of women, refraining from even associating with women considered as too radical and masculine. Some members even went as far as to publicly discredit, criticise and disown, in their publications, the works from such 'manly' females. Sylvia Harcstark Myers notes that as a result of the "realistic fears of the masculine world of letters," the "creative

powers of the bluestockings" was "diminished" (155). The push by the bluestocking group for women to become intellectual and rational beings was undermined by their internalisation of the traditional social view concerning educated women.

Although women wished to have an equal status in the social world, it was an equality based on what men (the authority) had set down as acceptable. Therefore, women who wanted to have their say in the literary world still had to contend with a variety of standards and rules if they wished to be published. The problem was that they had to address two very different and competing issues - whether to write, and whether to write within the boundaries as set by the literary authority.

Mary Jacobus notes the high "price of combining womanhood and writing," (11) pointing out that such a decision from women who lived within a traditional patriarchal society effectively compromised the masculine ideals of women as pure and silent. She claims that the high price came with "mortal consequences; the sacrifice not only of happiness, but of life itself."[47] The question of originality over conformity would have been a concern for Macaulay. She had serious suggestions for the modification of the existing system of education, but in order to reach the reading public, she had to present a piece of work that would not provoke any overt public criticism.

The idea that women were to abide by their nature is something that is still being discussed by feminists today. Women have been encultured about their place in the world: woman is inferior, weaker, and intellectually subordinate to her male 'superiors.' This was an ideology that extended as far back as the Bible, and was supported throughout the nineteenth century by science. Women were the lesser beings who were to live up to their role and position on the social ladder, as childlike and barely above the status of the instinctive brute. The transference of these

masculine ideals for domestic women onto literary women inevitably made the task of writing more difficult.

Many feminist critics have questioned this ideology concerning women's natural role. Critics like Millet, Figes and Greer comment on the very validity of these masculine ideals about women. Essentially, they consider any study that attempts to analyse women's writing during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in particular, as fraught with problems. They pose an interesting question: how do we discuss the writing of women within their culture when the very culture is one that we cannot accept as valid? Critics like Irigaray suggest that any attempt to criticise the traditional system of patriarchy cannot truly be considered serious if done within a traditionally masculine literary style, because of the assumed "validity" of these masculine discourses. She also discusses the validity of the masculine concept of female and femininity, noting that the particular ideals by which women in these eras guided their behaviour are themselves questionable, simply because of their masculine origins (Gross 134).[48] Taking these important issues into account, it is clear that Macaulay becomes trapped by the critical double standard.

Her assumption of Cartesian dualism in the *Letters* undermines her feminist position, because she has used mainstream masculine theories to reinforce her stance concerning the defective state of female education. In this respect, Macaulay becomes a victim of the double standard that she so astutely recognised. Therefore, I do not consider her work totally successful. Macaulay failed as a long lasting successful women writer because she could not escape the critical double standard concerning women's literary experience. However, despite her unsuccessful attempt to step beyond the confines of the conditions she criticised, she represents an evolving concern of female consciousness about women and their status in the late eighteenth

century. Her strong stance against the relegated inferiority of women is evidence of

her feminist turn, but the notable absence of research or acknowledgment of

Macaulay's work cannot be dismissed. Lehde suggests that Mary Wollstonecraft's *A*

Vindication of the Rights of Woman "overshadowed" Macaulay's *Letters* and this

factor has contributed to Macaulay's present day scarcity in the academic arena.[49]

Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) [50]

reiterates many of Macaulay's criticisms concerning the ideology of the nature of

women in her time. This work, one of Wollstonecraft's most famous, created a

number of reactions from her contemporaries, ranging from enthusiastic praise to

hostility and outrage. The very title of this work led Hannah More to dismiss it

outright, and Horace Walpole called Wollstonecraft a "hyena in petticoats" (qtd. in

Kramnick 17). [51] One anonymous critic wrote that she and her work should be

regarded "with disgust by every female who has any pretensions to delicasy; with

detestation by every one attached to the interests of religion and morality, and with an

indignation by anyone who might feel any regard for the unhappy woman, whose

frailties should have been buried in oblivion [sic]" (qtd. in Kramnick 8). [52]

Essentially, many feminists in the twentieth century have labelled Mary

Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* as one of the earliest feminist reactions that still has not

dated in its appeal or emotion. Despite some criticism of her style and methodology,

Mary Jacobus bestows upon her the honourable role of "feminism's founding mother"

(14). Such a label is given because this work was seen as a direct reaction to many of

the issues being raised by the radicals and French liberals, whose ideas were

continuing to have a major impact in conservative England.

The idea of reform surrounded Mary Wollstonecraft. The conversation

focused on reform in France, reform of parliament and reform for the people. It is not

really surprising that she began to think of reform for her own sex. Her application of

the reform principles in *Vindication* was not the first proposal ever put forward by a

woman concerning the manners of females in her time. Long before Wollstonecraft

there is a history of works suggesting improvements and reform of female manners

and education. Wollstonecraft, however, was a pioneer in the way she applied the literature and thought of the age to women (Kramnick 24). Although many women and men wrote about women and their status, it was Wollstonecraft who focused on the social system and the role it played in relegating women to a status inferior to men (Kramnick 29).

Wollstonecraft is different in many ways from Macaulay, and this difference had an impact on Wollstonecraft's 'success' as a female writer. For one thing, she was not a member of the Bluestockings, like Macaulay. She was, instead, a member of a radical and liberal group of male intellectuals whose likes included the Swiss painter, Henry Fuseli, the chemist and political and theological radical, Joseph Priestley, poet William Blake, the exiled Thomas Paine and - later to become her husband - the political philosopher, William Godwin.

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* is considered a "feminist declaration of independence" (Kramnick 7). Macaulay's *Letters* in no way receives such present day acclaim, and although Wollstonecraft's work is more evocative, Macaulay's work was supported by her more 'appropriate' and moral standing on both a social and public level. Despite her questionable personal life, Wollstonecraft's work was recognised in the bold statement she made. She took the radical step to further Paine's arguments concerning the rights of all men and passionately advocated for these rights to be extended to her own sex (Kramnick 7). Also, it is clear that the intellectual core of Wollstonecraft's book pertains to the second book in Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* and Rousseau's *Social Contract*. Wollstonecraft extended Locke's "natural rights" argument (from which Locke himself considered women and animals to be exempt), and extended Rousseau's arguments for a more active control of one's property and person, to

include women. Accompanying this thought with a definitive ethical plan, she suggested a return to the original biblical meaning of 'mankind' – referring to humankind - which had been tainted with masculine bias from as early as the fourteenth century.[53] Under the original definition, human beings would be classified as mankind, giving all equal rights under this label. Women and men were to be a part of one unified whole, which was an earlier idea of Rousseau's - except he referred to mankind as consisting of the congregation only of all men.

The plan that Wollstonecraft referred to is similar to Rousseau and Locke's systems for the improvement of society. She concentrated on the notion of the individual. All individuals are born with an innate ability to reason, and Wollstonecraft considered that women, too, have this capability. Moreover, she saw the necessity for all individuals to have the right to exercise their intellectual abilities as an important priority in the expression of one's power. In order to carry out this rational behaviour and lifestyle, the intellect must be strengthened by education. Wollstonecraft's opening contention for the rights of woman is simply "that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue..." and, similarly to Macaulay, noted that in order to promote "the moral and civil interest of mankind," women, as part of the species of mankind, must possess an equal status (85).

Wollstonecraft denied early that she was taking a biased interest in her argument, claiming a neutral corner writing in and for " the firm tone of humanity" (85). In pleading her case to improve the education of women, Wollstonecraft's arguments mirrored many of Macaulay's own. In her *Letters*, for instance, Macaulay also argued for equal physical, moral and academic studies for women and men, stating that "there is but one rule of right for the conduct of all rational beings"

(Macaulay 201). However, Wollstonecraft's arguments went further than Macaulay's in her effort to have women openly accepted in the public sphere. She rigorously advocated for female equality, liberty and economic independence. [54] Determined to recognise women as capable, rational and intellectual beings, Wollstonecraft discussed the flawed environment of female education, which typically denied such radical ideas.

She specifically condemned the notion of a new constitution which failed to consider that women, too, "want[ed] reason" and said that such a constitution would merely represent "injustice and inconsistency... and will ever show that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant, and tyranny, in whatever part of society, rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality" (88). Without a more equal society, in which women would have a fundamental part to play, Wollstonecraft argued that they could not be at fault for any damage caused by ignorant or negligent meddling. "The blame [was] the male population who [taught] a woman merely to acquire "personal accomplishments." Women, thus, "[would] be very excusable when, not taught to respect public good, not allowed any civic rights, they attempt[ed] to do themselves justice by retaliation (88).

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft felt that if women were not permitted to have "more equitable laws," the importance of marriage and the action of choosing partners would become less "sacred." Vanity presently ruled such a decision, and Wollstonecraft prayed for the day when it would be a decision based on affection and love. These ideas were part of her distinctive argument. Wollstonecraft did not suggest a more equal status for women out of some vengeful plot to be superior over men. Rather, her position emphasised a very personal and individual plea for genuine affection and love from men. It was a well thought out, rational argument that

appealed to men to accept women on a more equal level than presently was the case. Moreover, it was a request which had, as its backbone, an emotional cry for closeness, which attempted to point out that women could be more caring, loving and attentive partners if men would only grant them a better position to prove themselves. However, Wollstonecraft realised, like Macaulay, that "the education and situation of woman at present shuts her out from such investigations" (87).

Wollstonecraft's criticism of the part played by conduct books as well as the Scriptures in the continuation of the low status of women, and equally low standard of female education, was particularly vicious. She criticised authors such as John Gregory and Rousseau, meticulously picking apart their rationalisations of women's inferior position in the world.

Wollstonecraft's anger towards Gregory concentrated on his notions of women's expressiveness and behaviour appealing to men, as well as their necessity of ornamental dress, to which he implored his daughters to pay particular attention. Although respecting his attempt to leave behind a legacy of advice for his daughters, Wollstonecraft could not bring herself to agree with some of his fatherly advice, and explained what would occur in the domestic situation if such advice were strictly adhered to. Gregory's statement that women, especially wives, should lie or hide their true feelings, was a comment of which Wollstonecraft was particularly critical. She suggested that if such advice were taken, then the very idea of harmony in relation to friendship, companionship, and marriage, would be lost, being replaced by a cold and unnatural situation. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft believed that the wife would become an "overgrown child" (113-114). She instead appealed to women to "let the honest heart show itself, and *reason* teach passion to submit to necessity; or, let the dignified pursuit of virtue and knowledge raise the mind above those emotions

which rather embitter than sweeten the cup of life, when they are not restrained within due bounds" (115). She concluded her criticism of Dr. Gregory's advice, as typical and clearly indicative of "how absurd and tyrannic it is thus to lay down a system of slavery by any other rules than those deduced from pure reason, which apply to the whole species" (117).

Conduct books such as Dr. Gregory's were not the only types of literary work to be denounced by Wollstonecraft. Rousseau's character, Sophia, in *Emile*,[55] was also a particular source of anger for Wollstonecraft and she attacked his principles from which Sophia's education was forged. Before looking deeper into her criticism of Sophia, it is important to keep in mind that in the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft advocated constantly for an emphasis on a standard of women's education which she believed would expand women's intellectual capacities. Education, she wrote, if it be based on this principle, would stop the continuation of women's "blind obedience" to pleasing men (107).

Rousseau's characterisation of women was one that typically perpetuated the traditional status of women in the eighteenth century. Wollstonecraft was obviously incensed by his declaration that a woman should be "governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning and made a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a sweet companion to man, whenever he chose to relax himself." Most importantly, Rousseau declared that, in respect to the female character, "obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour" (108). Wollstonecraft concluded that "Rousseau, and most of the male writers who have followed his steps, have warmly indicated that the whole tendency of female education ought to be directed to one point - to render them pleasing" (110).

Wollstonecraft was particularly vehement about the standard of education that had led women to be solely "made to be loved, and [they] must not aim at respect, lest they should be hunted out of society as masculine" (119). She campaigned strongly against such standards appealing to the masculine ideals:

> Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers - in a word, better citizens (262).

Attacking the traditional ideal of weakness and fragility of woman as being part of her virtuous character, Wollstonecraft insisted that the various arguments which "excuse the tyranny of man" from such inventive construction did not really "deserve the name of virtue" (100). Furthermore, the unbalanced process of striving for virtue between the two sexes merely created more fuel for Wollstonecraft's growing determination to attain her goal in the *Vindication*. She was condemnatory when stating how

> women are told from their infancy, and taught by the examples of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least 20 years of their lives (100).

She was adamant in her disapproval when she wrote, "How grossly do they insult us who advise us only to render ourselves gentle, domestic brutes!" and realised that men appear "to act in a very unphilosophical manner, when they try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood" (101).

In making her position clear, Wollstonecraft then added, "the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent" (103).

Although she extended Rousseau's ideas about the nature of mankind, to refer to women, as well as men, Wollstonecraft was enraged by his other ideas, such as the glorification of women as physically and intellectually inferior. In his works and personal life, Rousseau actively promoted what he saw as the rightful differentiation between men and women, particularly idolising women's subordinate role. Like Macaulay, Wollstonecraft's reaction towards Rousseau's depiction of women was emotional. Both women were particularly angered by the obliging response from men and women, which encouraged such low, degrading and inferior attitudes concerning women and female education. Men like Rousseau might write about, as well as actively promote and get pleasure from, women's ideal role and behaviour, but Macaulay and Wollstonecraft also blamed women for their acceptance and continuation of these masculine ideals of themselves.

Like Macaulay, Wollstonecraft also discussed the idea of morality, blaming the increased degradation of women's moral and virtuous behaviour on the nature of female education, with its foundation based on subordination and authoritative power. She was explicit in her argument and defence of a moral education, claiming that the present mode of education for women appeared to deprive them of their very souls (100). She argued systemically that, with women having an equal status as reasoning beings in society, the nature of mankind would be perfected and everyone would be capable of happiness. Without the "exercise of reason," from which knowledge and

virtue naturally flow, Wollstonecraft felt that all mankind would never truly experience perfection and happiness (91).

She argued further for women's status by comparing it to men's in a most interesting way. In discussing the notion of rank, which was an important part of society, Wollstonecraft commented on the fact that rank was often allocated according to the professional career of an individual. She also noted that, with the allocation of rank, also followed the allocation of spirit. Hence, for a poor man there existed little rank, and the perception that little individual spirit also existed was disturbing for Wollstonecraft. All the poor man's identity and personality was lost, or as Wollstonecraft described, "all his opinions have been so steeped in the vat consecrated by authority, that the faint spirit ... cannot be distinguished" (98).

Furthermore, she blamed the higher ranking authorities, the "pestiferous purple," as the object that "render[ed] the progress of civilization a curse, and warp[ed] the understanding, till men of sensibility doubt[ed] whether the expansion of intellect produce[d] a greater portion of happiness or misery" (99). Wollstonecraft's concern was for the moral and spiritual element of every human being. The noble and elite, when basking in the light of higher education and intellectual reasoning, often forgot this spiritual element. To lose sight of the spiritual was, for the poor man, something that Wollstonecraft blamed on the "pestiferous purple," who often advanced educationally at the expense of spiritual happiness. The fact that the religious and moral grounding by which an individual's spiritual happiness is guided was the only element of any happiness for the poor man, was a point that made Wollstonecraft cringe. She was adamant about her position, suggesting that the higher classes were trading their eventual moral and spiritual happiness for an immediate advance on their present happiness, all of which was material. This

fulfilment in life was presently having a negative effect on the poor man, who could only hope to achieve eventual spiritual happiness by maintaining a morally pious – albeit poor – standard of living.

Spiritual happiness was available to all, not just the elite. According to Wollstonecraft, a lower status did not have to mean that the poor man was inferior. This ideal of spiritual happiness was far greater than any perceived status, and was equally attainable by all classes of people, including women, who in general also maintained their inferior status. For women, however, it was not a case of the elite and noble class creating this perception of inferiority. Although women helped maintain this inferior status of themselves, their case was a little more complex than the poor man's case. Women were continuously being moulded to suit the perception of the higher ranking authority, who, in this present time, possessed a great deal of power, a power based on a lengthy history of male traditional cultural and social ideals.

Despite the general acceptance of this gender difference, Wollstonecraft believed that if women and men could consider each other as equal companions then humanity would succeed to grow in perfection and harmony. If only "friendship" could be seen as more useful and sensible affection, then the current "system of government" would prevail in creating a moral world. The thing most necessary to the relationship between man and woman, husband and wife, and sister and brother, was friendship, which, if encouraged through proper education, would band together a harmonious society (113-114).

Mary Wollstonecraft's, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was expressively strong in its conviction, unusually philosophical in its cause, and wholly topical in its content. Her argument was essentially an appeal to both men and

women to reassess the traditional ideals that had for so long been the foundation of the social system in the late eighteenth century. By publishing this critique of her society, Wollstonecraft actively participated in the radical reform movement taking place in Europe and England. She became known as a radical and was considered as unfeminine; her philosophy was considered too masculine and her act of publishing in the first place was unladylike. The fact that she advocated for a reform of female manners and protested so vigorously against the relegated inferior status of women was enough to thrust Wollstonecraft and her opinions into the limelight.

The Influence of the Critical Double Standard

To the critic in the twentieth century, these are all advantageous points, and have led many critics to brand Wollstonecraft with the label "radical feminist." Although she was attempting to voice her concerns on behalf of her sex, the way in which she appealed to her audience has recently been under scrutiny. Her particular statement for men to let women be more equal, physically and mentally, was rationalised by making men see what better wives, mothers, and daughters women would become. This statement saw Wollstonecraft emphasising the benefits that men would receive in treating women more equally. The idea of pointing out the advantages for men is today considered a clever technique, for not only did it give men an attractive improvement in the way women would act and behave, but the criticism today is also considered a particularly logical and rationally structured piece of writing. Wollstonecraft employed a deliberately masculine style of writing in order to validate her arguments. It was constructed using the traditional styles, incorporating well-structured reasoning, and referred to traditional and topical

philosophical, social and ethical issues. In doing so, her message was read by many

authors who would not usually consider reading anything written by women.

Patricia Yaeger[56] commends Wollstonecraft's use of the masculine language

and her commentary on Rousseau, in particular. The conversational dialogue that

Wollstonecraft constructed with Rousseau, by liberally quoting his text, placed her in

the position of authority. Wollstonecraft's recontextualisation of Rousseau's words -

and hence his opinions - is seen by Yaeger as a powerful technique that put

Wollstonecraft in control. Her power came from a systematic rotation of Rousseau's

statements and Wollstonecraft's replies. Wollstonecraft created an atmosphere which

"assaults" the reader. Yaeger notes that Wollstonecraft began with lengthy statements

of Rousseau's text which were gradually cut down to smaller ones, interrupted by his

name, or followed by lengthy but emotional commentary of her own. Initially

"passive," Wollstonecraft became the master, appropriating and assimilating

Rousseau's text, his opinions, and his reputation, in order to transform them into

objects - objects that were controlled by Wollstonecraft. As Yaeger theorises,

Wollstonecraft's techniques removed herself as the object within the text, allowing

women writers to

> expropriate men's texts and treat these texts as bodies. These embodied
>
> texts are mortal, penetrable, excitable; they become imperfect sites of
>
> that sometime thing we call "patriarchal discourse." Thus male bodies
>
> and texts can be made to circulate through women's texts - breaking
>
> that circuit of meaning in which women have been the objects of
>
> circulation (161).

The transference of the authoritative word between these two texts is a

powerful literary technique, but Wollstonecraft's use of this technique did not singly

alter the course of literary history in relation to gender ideology or cultural tradition.

Many other issues within her work are still criticised as being inadequate. The

drawback in her methodology has been related to her lack of consistency. She made

vital errors in her plan when, for example, she didn't stick to her design for a rational,

clear-cut argument; or her appeal to men and women became confused when she

seemed to criticise her own sex in order to attract the praise of the leading male

literary critics. For instance, her attractive prediction of women's improvement as

"better mothers, more interesting wives and companions, and more responsible

citizens," saw Wollstonecraft become a victim in the same way that Macaulay did.

Although she advocated for a better educational system for women, as well as a more

equal ground for herself and others, the plea was undermined by her awareness of the

necessary approval by her mostly male critics and audience. Hence the need to find

some advantage for men, rather than for women.

Jane Moore's[57] analysis of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* suggests that,

although it is a challenging piece of writing in its obvious stance against the

traditional female ideals, Wollstonecraft failed in her promised mission to provide a

more rational-based (read: masculine) style than normally presented by a woman

writer (Moore 140). This point is illustrated in Wollstonecraft's opening declaration:

> I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style. I aim at being
>
> useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for wishing rather to
>
> persuade by the force of my arguments than dazzle by the elegance of
>
> my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, or in
>
> fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings... (82)

Later, Wollstonecraft further asserted:

> I shall be employed about things, not words! and, anxious to render my

> sex more respectable members of society, I shall try to avoid that
>
> flowery diction which has slided from essays into novels, and from
>
> novels into familiar letters and conversations [sic] (82).

Wollstonecraft's original intentions soon faded. Her language and style throughout the *Vindication* became filled with analogy and metaphor. The promised conciseness and transparency of her argument became increasingly "blurred at the edges by the 'dazzling' imagery of the rest of the chapter[s]" (Moore 140). Moore notes how Wollstonecraft's own wordiness made her a "victim" of the very thing she set out to avoid. Her argument was "clouded" with "continuous bodily metaphor of health and disease, beauty and deformity, which structure[d]" her whole work.

> Thus, 'vice skulks with all its native deformity' and is 'rotten at the
>
> core' (92). Aristocratic, monarchical and priestly powers constitute the
>
> 'pestilential vapour' (96) which hovers over society; while tyranny in
>
> all forms is a 'baneful lurking gangrene', [sic] a contagion spread by
>
> the unnatural state of the 'indolent puppet of court', who is the
>
> 'luxurious monster' and the 'fastidious sensualist' (99). These
>
> metaphors culminate in the final potent image of the 'pestiferous
>
> purple' which sums up all that 'renders the progress of civilisation a
>
> curse, and warps the understanding' (99) (Moore140.)

Another criticism towards Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* is the fact that she dedicated it to a man. In doing so she admitted that only men possess the power to change the current situation. Furthermore, the object of her discussion was her fellow kind, woman. In criticising women directly, Wollstonecraft turned against women and, as such, any feminist cause she was advocating betrayed her intentions to openly voice such opinions (Yaeger 175).

Despite being criticised as a confused argument marred with passion; typical female emotion that should not have been incorporated into an argument, especially if it was to be one strictly based on reason and logic, Wollstonecraft's argument was "clear enough," and critics like Miriam Brody no longer find it necessary to keep apologising for this lack of logic and reason.[58]

It is obvious that, although Wollstonecraft attempted to gain an improvement for the female sex, she failed in her attempt to publish a completely authentic piece of rational and philosophical writing. Although she is still considered a radical feminist for her outstanding and striking literary effort for women's intellectual and social advancement, her cause became blemished due to her strategy. It was a strategy that had seen many women writers in the era suffer because of the critical double standard. Essentially, women wanted to make a stand, and in writing they had to compete against an already competitive masculine authorial establishment. Not only did they risk criticism for entering the male dominated literary fields as authors, but they also risked condemnation concerning their violation of the expected female nature (Berhendt 73).[59]

This double standard, which saw women being judged by their fellow sex, as well as for their attempt at masculine methodology and literary styles, constantly thwarted the very concept of a successful woman writer within these two centuries. The use of male-stream ideological and philosophical issues and methods in Wollstonecraft's argument again emphasises women writers' failure to break free from the stronghold of patriarchal traditionalism in literary and public spheres.

Hannah More

The term radical feminism, as it is applied to authors such as Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft, is a modern one. Feminism as we know it today would not have existed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, authors such as these two women did have to face their own critics. Critics, both male and female, considered their work as politically incorrect, often considering these writers as 'unfeminine' or masculine and going against the grain. One particular critic who agreed with this sentiment was Hannah More. She actively voiced her negative opinion of women such as Macaulay and Wollstonecraft, and even published her own criticism of the nature of females in her time, in her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799). [60]

Hannah More was one of the most influential women writers of her time (Ford xi). [61] She wrote many literary and moral works, but her most didactic is the *Strictures*. Written in two volumes, it represents one woman's complete and utter condemnation of the education of upper-class females in a time when the very stability of government, social order and education was being challenged. The French Revolution and the ideas it brought into the open led Hannah More to publish a work which recognised a "desperate need of a religious basis of society" (Stern vi). [62]

Hannah More believed that the only influential medium through which women could fulfil their natural destinies, as "daughters, wives, and mothers," and provide good in society, was by religion alone (vii), and the *Strictures* contained arguments that vehemently pursued this avenue through a restructuring of female education.

Her arguments were surprisingly similar to Wollstonecraft's concerning the degradation of the system of female education, but her call for an improvement had a different angle. Rather than support the views of women activists such as

Wollstonecraft, More detested them. She has been reported by many critics to have declared that she would never read Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (vi). Although there is no direct evidence for an accurate account of More's feelings toward Wollstonecraft, Ford has found what could be evidence of her sentiments. In his research on More, he has found a letter by Mary Berry to an unknown correspondent, which anticipated More's probable anger when she discovers that many of her points regarding female education were the same as the disgraced radical. Robert Hole notes that this dislike for women like Wollstonecraft was "twofold." Firstly, Hannah More did not believe in universal rights possessed innately by all persons. Rights, she believed, could only be granted by the sovereign. Secondly, women had a specific role to play in society and this role was supported by religion. Therefore, her view was that women like Wollstonecraft actively protested against a specific position which God had assigned to them (Hole xxxiii).[63]

Her views in the *Strictures* focused on a reform for women's education. The frivolity and "irreligion" in the women of the upper classes increasingly disturbed her (Stern vii). Many feminist critics consider her today distinctly as a conservative feminist because of her constant argument for religion and women's traditional roles. It is a conservative argument in her attempt to reach the women who wanted a reform of female manners, and also in her determined, yet out-dated, views which called for women to support men from their traditionally accepted domestic and social positions. It is not an argument, however, that had a particular impact on the many women affected by the challenges and views that the French Revolution sparked. Women were fighting for equality, both for public and educational equality, and More's position was one that refuted these types of claims.

The central issue about which More was adamant was the transformation of society into a better and morally suitable social world and the way she believed such a necessary regeneration could be brought about was through the moral education of women. What she began with in her introduction was a statement that accused the present "erroneous system" of singular "injustice... exercised towards women." This system gave women a "most defective Education and then expect[ed] from them the most undeviating purity of conduct." More believed that "to train [women] in such a manner as shall lay them open to the most dangerous faults, and then to censure them for not proving faultless," was an "unreasonable" and "unjust...by-standard that the whole scope and tenor" of women's education "systematically" encouraged (More viii).[64]

Despite her open criticism of Wollstonecraft, More's views did relate quite closely on particular points. In both women's introductions, for example, each commented on the possible reception they would receive from disgruntled women readers, who would perceive them as enemies to the female race because of their open and often quite vicious criticism of their fellow females' manners and behaviours. In More's introduction she voiced her apprehension concerning her betrayal of the female sex, and attempted to reach beyond this feeling by reasoning to her fellow women. Using an analogy of one's loyalty to land and country, More reasoned that in the long run, "... to expose the weakness of the land as to suggest the necessity of internal improvement, and to point out the means of effectual defence, [was] not treachery, but patriotism" (x).

Despite More's apparent apology for her public betrayal of female behaviour, she clearly believed that there existed women who could excel both in "wit and genius" as well as "domestic qualities," and who could accomplish an "elevated rank"

through their work as Christians (xiii). More appealed to younger women who were just on the verge of embarking on the journey of life; women, she observed, who were eager to fulfil all their desires and passions, and who had a belief in living life determined by particular principles. To these women, More specifically directed some of her experienced wisdom, and hinted to them that life was not that simple, and some guidance was helpful in strengthening one's mind and morals.

More's guide was, of course, a strict education or instruction from one's youth, to the devotion of "God as his Father, to Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and to the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier" (xvi). Following this guide, More believed that the enemies of mankind would no longer be temptations. Furthermore, as women grew to become devoted Christians, More believed that their greatest application of such an education was "influence." Christian women would be raised for the talent of influence; to spread a message that women can and do have a power and that this power was a fundamental element to the "general state of civilised society" (2). This power that women possessed, however, was currently being used in a manner that promoted "vanity or the indulgence of pleasure." More felt that it was being used as an external charm, an influential medium for women's "moral and intellectual degradation," which "increase[d] in direct proportion to the adoration which [was] paid" to these exterior factors (3).

As a result of the growing degradation of women's moral and intellectual instruction, which seemed to promote vice, luxuriousness, and unnecessary relaxation in both areas, More called on these women with a

> warning voice... to come forward, and contribute their full and fair
>
> proportion towards the saving of their country. But I would call on
>
> them to come forward, without departing from the refinement of their

character, without derogating from the dignity of their rank, without

blemishing the delicacy of their sex: I would call them to the best and

most appropriate exertion of their power, to raise the depressed tone of

public morals, to awaken the drowsy spirit of religious principle, and

to re-animate the dormant powers of active piety (4).

This was the power of women's influence; their moral role in life was to rise up

together, military-like, fighting for the renewed application of moralistic and pious

ideals. Women should march together, not to promote equality or elevated

intellectual or social opportunities, but to promote the necessity of religion in one's

life as the sole factor to a better and more superior life than any other equality could

offer.

Although More was quick to point out that she was "not sounding an alarm to

female warriors, or exciting female politicians: I hardly know which of the two is the

most disgusting and unnatural character," (6) she was suggesting that women could

lead others to an awareness of the role of religion in society. Moreover, this

leadership was becoming more and more necessary as she observed around her the

romantic idolisation that women had for so long been living. According to More, this

type of "absurd idolatry," of placing women on a pedestal, overlooked the fact that the

foundation of much of this idolisation of women originated from religion and chastity

(19-22). To ignore these important elements simply made no sense to More. She also

believed that, through continued reformation, systems and traditions that had survived

centuries were being demolished for the sake of "the modern idea of improvement"

(22).

Some of the improvements, of which More was critical, were the increasing

number of literary publications. Even though works such as General History, Natural

History, Travels, Voyages, Lives, Encyclopedias, Criticism, and Romance, contained important facts, tales and great passages of writing, it was More's suspicion that some of this type of literature was destructive. Novels especially, which More claimed were "dangerous," were now becoming "vehicles of wider mischief," diffusing "destructive politics, deplorable profligacy, and impudent infidelity" (31).

Like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft, Hannah More saw "Rousseau as the first popular dispenser of this complicated drug, in which the deleterious infusion was strong, and the effect proportionably fatal." She saw his work as unprincipled and seductive. He totally destroyed the notion of chastity in his presentation of women who, despite their vice and lack of conviction and honour, were elevated and praised for their crimes. Most horrific to More was that through his writing Rousseau implied, by "powerfully insinuating," that chastity did not necessarily belong to the system of male virtues. In More's own words, she concluded Rousseau's "mischief" as being

> his power of seducing by falsehood those who love truth, but whose minds are still wavering, and whose principles are not yet formed. He allures the warm-hearted to embrace vice, not because they prefer vice, but because he gives to vice so natural an air of virtue: and ardent and enthusiastic youth, too confidently trusting in their integrity and in their teacher, will be undone, while they fancy they are indulging in the noblest feelings of their nature.

Although she was appalled at Rousseau's notions and principles, More could not escape the fact that it was his writing, described as "a net of such exquisite art and inextricable workmanship," which was cast over the reader to "entangle innocence and ensnare inexperience" (31-33).

It was these types of publications which More felt were invading the hearts and minds of impressionable young readers. More appealed to the Christian ladies who would take up arms against these writers, calling for them to "act as the guardians of public taste as well as public virtue,... to oppose with the whole weight of their influence, the irruption [sic] of those swarms of publications that [were] daily issuing from the banks of the Danube; which, like their ravaging predecessors of the darker ages, though with far other arms, [were] overrunning civilised society" (37). With attacks on Great Britain coming from the French and German novelists, More was determined to show that the infidelity and irreligious behaviour which women were being confronted with in this type of immoral literature was specifically designed with such a cause in mind. More claimed that these writers had attempted to "destroy the religious principles of women, and in too many instances they [had] fatally succeeded" (41-42).

At this stage in her work, More appealed specifically to those readers who were mothers, pleading with them the importance of their responsibility in raising the next generation. She asked these readers to take care in the education they gave to their young sons and daughters, pointing out the necessity of the word of God which would better form their young hearts and minds by protecting them and guiding them away from tempting evils (52-53).

More's suggested method of education was one that would provide not only a guide for the present world, but one that would also give individuals knowledge about eternity. The present system of female education was poorly structured, and to achieve a better and more appropriate manner, More suggested that women and girls should not be merely taught how to achieve great success in the social world. It was important that they were also taught how to live successfully in their private spheres,

alone at home. The present system was one that did not consider a wider, yet obvious

part of woman's life. "Do we not educate them for a crowd, forgetting they are to live

at home? for the world, and not for themselves? for show, and not for use? for time,

and not for eternity?" asked More. In her observations, she identified the misused

term "accomplishments," which young women were taught as necessary requisites for

a higher standing in the social community. More particularly criticised teaching girls

from a middle-class background, the fine and showy accomplishments that many

educational institutions were offering. Sending their daughters to such places, More

observed, was unnecessary and a waste of hard-earned money on the part of parents

because the array of finery and decorative arts their daughters learned would not leave

them any better equipped to handle their middle-class lifestyles (57-63). This type of

misuse in instruction merely produced, according to More, an "abundant

multiplication of superficial wives, and...incompetent and illiterate governesses" (63).

The most appropriate aim of education, suggested More, should be one that

produced neither overtly competent masculine women, nor overly sensitive, weak,

beautiful women. Preferring a more commonsense approach, she suggested an

"obvious middle path, equally remote from each excess; and, while we bear in mind

that helplessness is not delicacy, let us also remember that masculine manners do not

necessarily include strength of character nor vigour of intellect" (68-69). If this path

in the road to better female education was followed, More believed that women's

virtues and natural delicacy would follow also. Likening the result of the present

system of education to that of an artist painting the perfect picture, More saw women

as being nothing more than cultivated products, who were carried off by the artist who

liked what he saw. The excessive teaching, then, of fine arts and showy behaviours

seemed, to More, the most corrupt element in the degradation of female education

(73-75). Sara K. Austin responds similarly to Macaulay's sentiment in stating that "a codified set of accomplishments" merely became "talents that were explicitly intended as bait for mercenary marriage settlements." The feminist concern regarding the nature of femininity is again raised here and Sara K. Austin echoes More's own concern when she writes:

> The very idea that the manners of femininity could be taught, and that they were being taught in the absence of moral and religious education raises concerns that "femininity" was merely a consumer item, to be bought and later resold at a profit on the marriage market (Austin x).

In making herself abundantly clear, More emphasised the point that she was trying to get across to her readers was one of moderation and limitation. If women and men became aware of these factors, then the more intrinsic values of life could better be established. Again the feminist argument surfaces as More began to question the nature of female education in relation to the education that men received. She noted that men were not merely taught their own profession, but were encouraged to learn and even train in other trades and careers. Women, however, were merely taught to accomplish the showy and decorative arts that would present them in a more attractive state for their prospective husbands. More felt that this type of education would not benefit the relationship between men and women. (Despite denouncing Wollstonecraft's views, it is particularly clear, in this next passage, how More reiterates Wollstonecraft's own sentiments). On a broader level, More realised that men wanted more than creatures

> who can paint, and play, and dress, and dance; it is a being who can comfort and counsel him; one who can reason and reflect, and feel, and judge, and discourse, and discriminate; one who can assist him in his

affairs, lighten his cares, sooth [sic] his sorrows, strengthen his

principles, and educate his children...

Essentially, what a man wanted when he came to marry was a companion, and this was why it was necessary to change the existing form of instruction that women received. Their education should concentrate on these important factors, if women were to have a better relationship with men. Women should, thus, learn how to be the best wives, daughters and mothers that they could be (97-98).

In the duties that entailed women to be better, More also added that women should apply some of their abundant spare time to spending some quality time with the poor. Not only would women get a deep satisfaction from helping the sick and feeble, but they were better equipped to do so than men. More reasoned that women were naturally more intuitive about domestic cares, and peculiarly sympathetic to the sick, than the male sex would be. Hence, a logical practice would be that women participate where their obvious character as women could best be applied (117). This Christian behaviour would be influential, having a beneficial effect on those who practised it, as well as those who received it.

More took this point further, to emphasise the fundamental difference one would easily observe between the ranks that the social system enforced. If only men and women of superior rank would take time out to consider the time, emotions, and limits of their servants and aides, then there would be an immense improvement for all. The lower ranks would respect any kind of generosity and have "forbearance of the superior," and the superior ranks would be more patient and gracious to the service they received (123).

In reference to the analogy that women's physical appearance may have a close affiliation with mental capacities, More was less willing to comment critically.

What she did state was that if it was true that women had delicate and weak frames, the obvious cure was medicine. Similarly, if women were less capable of understanding tough reading matter, then the cure should be a regular dosage of "what is called dry tough reading." This would "exercise the reasoning faculties, teach the mind to get acquainted with its own nature, and to stir up its own powers" (160-164). If reading such as this was taken up by women, then the simple and decorative arts that women found so important would be revealed as frivolities and vanities. A woman's concentration would shift from these typical beautifying elements of life to a more religious style of thought. "Sober studies," as More described it, would better qualify women for the Christian way. In no way was she encouraging "scholastic ladies or female dialecticians," but she believed that deeper powers of the mind would surface and women would then be able to see the "littleness of their own" (165-168). There would then be a shift from "sensation to intellect," the former of which the writers of novels seemed to encourage (168-170).

More also commented on the way different styles of literature might be utilised to "give a clearer insight into the corruption of human nature" (176). Weapons could be used to describe the unworthiness of the act of war, and the act of war might be used to illustrate the failure of social union and the result of vicious actions. Most of all, the lesson that would be learned from the books of history was knowledge.

However, similarly to Wollstonecraft, More argued that the attainment of knowledge and improved intellect was often found in the neglect of the spiritual. In concluding her analysis of the present state of the system of female education, More reasoned that if we divided the body into three component parts, the bodily, the intellectual, and the spiritual, and likened education to these parts, it was plain to see

that the present system of modern education was highly inadequate. The rational and intellectual had superseded all the parts, while it was More's claim that the spiritual and immortal part, though far greater in importance, was not receiving its due portion of teaching (217). Religion, according to More, seemed to be a part of the life that was expected to come naturally, but this was not the case. Religion should be the primary element of instruction. It did not have to be taught in the same way that it had been for so long. Obviously, this old method was not working and there needed to be a change, because religion should be a matter of the heart; it should incorporate feeling and deeper thoughts rather than rote tasks and memorised lines (230). In other words, all the teaching from religion should not come "mechanically, but rationally" (273). If this concept was put into action, then religion would become "an indwelling principle, an inwrought habit, a pervading and informing spirit, from which indeed every act derives all its life, and energy, and beauty" (240).

Hannah More's *Strictures* were a specific criticism on the lack of religious instruction for all men, women, and children. She was particularly angry at the contemporary system's form of education, which specifically aimed to bring about good conduct from women, but professional lives for men. Good conduct was the main issue that came under fire from More, who agreed (though not publicly) with more radical feminist writers, like Wollstonecraft and Macaulay, that the education of women seemed to be addressing external rather than internal qualities in female behaviour and character. What was missing from the present system of female education was a stricter concentration on the importance of a rational, intellectual and moral code for female virtues and conduct. Although More focused on the moral element, she agreed that the intellectual and rational elements would follow behind, naturally, once a religious education was properly administered.

The Influence of the Critical Double Standard

Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) is a thoughtful, focused piece of writing. Her opinions within the two volumes clearly identify feminist issues, such as the need for reforms regarding female education. Although her voice of reason suggests a conservative and rather out-dated view, her works are recently being given the just treatment that they deserve. Critics like Ford and Hole are only two writers who have recently published positive accounts of Hannah More's personal and literary achievements.

Ford suggests that Hannah More's "conservative" image was misleading (ix). Her reputation as a "traitor to her sex" has meant she has been cast aside for more lively radicals such as Wollstonecraft and Macaulay, and despite the common disregard and contempt towards her work by many twentieth-century critics, Ford sees More's work as cleverly deceptive. The use of cloaking devices and ambiguous passages, although not unique to More, has led Ford to argue her important position in the feminist writers' stand for improved educational standards in the late eighteenth century. He further believes that she did have reformist attitudes that were surprisingly "coded and ambiguous" (Ford xi). Hence, she was a vital part of the generational move by women authors to make progress from a subordinate position without marginalising themselves completely.

Hole agrees with Ford. He suggests that despite her "less significant" impact in comparison to Wollstonecraft, Hannah More's views in the *Strictures* represented an accurate and popular position that many of her contemporaries shared. To dismiss her work because it seems "repressed" and unfashionable to the twentieth century scholar would be a mistake (Hole viii).

Mitzi Myers also recognises Hannah More's talent, noting that More

> furbishes her goals in palatable form and hones those ideals paid
>
> cultural lip service to achieve her own ends, playing within the rules of
>
> the game while taking on the substantive reorganization of the
>
> dominant male culture's beliefs and values. Underneath its discreet
>
> surface, a More text is alive with submerged power, not that derived of
>
> dominance but a positive power of ability, competence, energy - a
>
> negative power of refusal, the right, indeed duty, to say no to custom,
>
> on Christian grounds of course (M. Myers 209).

Despite the conservative explicitness of her religious and moral advice, the
rediscovery of Hannah More's literary "power" has finally enabled critics to
confidently categorise her as a feminist writer.

In her arguments for women to support men in their power and superiority,
through women's natural caring instincts and morally taught intuition, More is
certainly not classified as a radical feminist as Mary Wollstonecraft is. Far from it, as
More critically protested against such women. However, the truth of More's words
(even if outdated and conservative) is that she attempted to reach out to her own sex
in an effort to change the present degrading system of education. More felt that it was
useless and wasteful and women were not being taught to treasure the right things in
life. Part of the role women were to play was acceptance of their position on the
social ladder. More's message to her fellow sex was that they could succeed as
superior and greater beings in their allotted roles. If the education women received
were directed to teach women their moral and religious goals, women's position in
life would be very important. They would become the army of goodness,
benevolence and understanding. Women would become the moral soldiers of society.

It is this type of attitude that leads contemporary feminist critics, such as Lynne Agress and Sylvia Harcstark Myers, to label Hannah More a conservative feminist.   Although her aim was to encourage a restructuring of society's classification of women as the weaker sex, her message was one that was not as logically convincing as it was emotional. Agress states that Hannah More was "continually reinforcing women's subordinate role," and Sylvia Harcstark Myers considers More to be "the most regressive in her attitudes towards the advancement of women" (48 and 260, respectively).

In a closer examination of the style and content of More's *Strictures*, it is obvious that, although she shared similarities with radicals such as Wollstonecraft and Macaulay, she too became a victim of the critical double standard which seemed to invade many women's early attempts at writing. The content of the *Strictures* was typically safe material. It was the latest and greatest, as well as constant, source of conversation. To write about education, even female education, was a recipe for success. Moreover, to write about the religious decay within such a system of education was bound to catch the interest of many a concerned reader.

The main focal points of the *Strictures* can be easily concluded to be religion and education. Moreover, More's criticism, if one can call it that, was somewhat mild and non-intrusive toward the authority that currently directed the system of female education. This gentle remonstration was well received by many of More's contemporaries. Elizabeth Montagu approvingly predicted that

> If our women lose their domestic virtues, all the charities will be
>
> dissolved, for which our country is a name so dear; the men will
>
> become profligate, the public will be betrayed, and whatever has

blessed or distinguished the English nation above our neighbors on the Continent will disappear (qtd. in Ford 222).[65]

The *British Critic* also commended some of More's points in their review of *Strictures*, despite reverting to the typical stance "that the female character derives its features and colours from that of the male, rather than the contrary" (qtd. in Ford 222).[66] The reviews were mixed, however. Even though some (such as Dr. Charles Burney - Frances Burney's father - and some royal families) took on More's *Strictures* as important guides to the upbringing of their daughters, others could not see past what they considered as typical feminine writing.[67] John Wolcot, for example, criticised the *Letters*, in his Canto specifically addressed to More:

> *Miss Hannah* has no eagle wings to flee
>
> Whom thus your adulation can befool;
>
> Alas! A poor ephemeron is *She*,
>
> A humming native of a Bristol pool.
>
> Indeed *Miss Hannah* has a so-so lyre,
>
> So out of tune it murders all the *Nine*.
>
> She really playeth not with taste or fire,
>
> No, *Doctor Porteus*, No, thou *Great Divine* (qtd. in M. Jones 120;

254).

This type of criticism has seemed to stay with Hannah More in recent academic studies. For instance, feminist critic William McCarthy discredited More's writing style, claiming she "shed her sex" in her attempt to imitate male writers (qtd. in Ford 220). Another feminist critic, Patricia Demers, notes that Hannah More's infamous "grimness and solemnity of her moral high ground" has seen More become the "embodiment of conservative, reactionary antifeminism" (preface).

However, More's methodology is particularly interesting. The use of letters to an imaginary Hortensia safeguarded Hannah More from any criticism she may have received if the letters were published in any other form. By constructing two volumes of friendly letters to a supposed acquaintance, More's own personal views were protected, because there was no way to pinpoint the content of the letters as her own truth, or as fiction.

Hannah More's conservative approach to criticising the system of female education was well conceived. Although it was effective in its immediate success, it does not really succeed as far as the twentieth century woman is concerned. The style of letters was a safe one, but it also revealed More's active participation in the delegation of writing styles permitted by women. In taking up her cause in such an accepted form, More had lost the fight of words already. She took up a form that was decided upon by the male writers, the masculine authorial elite. In her attempt to fight the system she bowed down to its rules and regulations. Her style was determined for her. The content of her work was determined for her. In order to be a woman writer she had to submit to these styles and methods if her work was to be considered, and even then it would only be judged successful according to a correct, suitable female form, as defined by the male publishing world.

However, these accepted methods, and her conforming stand, now put More into the position that had, until now, only been merited to her more radical contemporaries. Her methodology allowed her to combine the perspective of women on the edge of the social and public circle with that of an insider. As Ford notes, Hannah More was "partly in and partly out," and this position allows critics to gain an insight into the world in which she lived, from a perspective of a "literary woman caught between various worlds" (2).

Recent feminist critics are only now realising More's potential as a critical feminist author. The very mildness of her argument and the religious intensity in her message are now seen as an exemplary strategy in her cause. It was well known that Mary Wollstonecraft's overt attack on the patriarchal continuation of the substandard level of female education was considered by many of her contemporaries as extreme and unladylike. The perceived masculinisation of Wollstonecraft's personal character and the critical denunciation of her work became perfect cover for Hannah More's *Strictures*, which utilised an acceptable female literary form and marketable issues with possible solutions, and these elements allowed More's work to be seen in a more favourable light (Ford 198). Although Catharine Macaulay also utilised a literary style allocated to women, her work failed because of her overt attack on the system of rule, as well as her use of masculine philosophical argument. Hannah More may have considered these aspects when writing *Strictures*. Her less public and mildly critical evaluation of the current system of female education was basically unassuming and generally commonplace in the issues it dealt with. The powerful tenet that binds the radicals Macaulay and Wollstonecraft, and the conservative More, was their common theme, education. In More's tender approach to the criticisms she set out in the *Strictures*, she is now being seen as a "female crusader" who, according to Mitzi Myers, is "infinitely more successful than Wollstonecraft" in her combination of "everyday routine with aggressive virtue" (209).

Ford notes that More's challenge to the patriarchy was "disguised" with a "veneer of conformity to the fashionable world" (12). Her precision in bordering the conventional and the unconventional was not as easy as it appears now. Toeing the line of religious morality that she was advocating as well as remaining the proper lady publicly, had its downfalls. What is evident in this study is that despite the growing

recognition of her work as an important factor in the generational movement of women writers and their fight to "exercise...womanly power in a man's world," is that, for a long time after her death, Hannah More's work remained invisible. It went unrecognised, thrown aside for the more lively icons of her century. This notional act of being thrown aside resulted from More's exposure to the critical double standard, and Robert Hole notes that More, herself, recognised that women were "victims of a dual attack" (Hole xxxiii). One party of advocates pushed for women to be the ideal image of sensibility, embracing the common notions of emotion, sympathy and feeling. More felt that this party led to the beginning of "sensual indulgence" and brought about the downfall of "moral rectitude" (Ford xxxiii). The opposing party advocated feminine assertiveness and the rights of women. This party's opposition meant disaster, because women would contest the "situation in which Providence ha[d] placed [them]!" (More 139). Clearly, for More to make a successful statement, she had to carefully write a piece that would uphold her religious beliefs, appeal to the wider community and her critics, and definitely object to any claim for the rights of women (Ford xxxiv). In doing so, More achieved personal success in not breaching her moral and literary intent. However, in gaining personal success, she also became for a long time, and is still considered, a conservative writer who, in her advocation for women's better education and rights, suffered from the critical double standard that many women writers attempted to transcend.

A Return to Nature – the Novel Reconsidered

Historically, the accepted roles of men and women had stood the test of time. Religious, scientific, philosophical and literary rationales all pointed to the 'truth' of the matter that men were indeed superior to women in both physical and mental powers. Carolyn Merchant's research traces back this gendered dichotomy, by which masculine = culture and feminine = nature, to as early as 1160. The most prominent point her work makes is that despite varying levels of positive and negative views towards nature, it had predominantly been a phenomenon that was considered female. Once referred to as the mother, fertile and kind, nature was later seen as a "material and spiritual" provider and nurturer (Merchant 8). For example, the Stoics in the third century BC held the belief that the earth was created for the benefit of man. 'Her' resources were to be utilised to the utmost - wood for housing, basic metals like iron for farming, soil for growing, and even precious metals like gold and silver for ornamental use, were the potential resources that were to be cultivated and reaped from the earth.

Despite the view that mother earth provided essential daily resources, Merchant's research shows that this view had possible ecological downfalls. She provides examples from the early twentieth century, which indicate that this concern for the mother earth and her vital resources had remained a concern well into the twentieth century. The American Indians, for example, believed in the greatness and generosity of the earth as mother, and supported the view that 'she' provided all the necessities for life, like an abundance of food and materials to make clothing and housing as well as natural beauties to enjoy. However, to utilise these precious gifts from nature without awareness or care for the limitations and potential vulnerability

of the earth was considered a heinous crime towards 'mother nature;' to plunder and cultivate her products without such considerations was equivalent to raping 'her.'

However, Merchant also shows that, from as far back as the pastoral poets' insistence on nature as the provider of such fundamental products, it was implied that these resources from within 'her' fertile ground could actively be manipulated and cultivated. Even in the twenty-first century, there is an overwhelming global concern that natural resources should be saved. 'Mother nature' is still a common term that many environmentalists use and this personification of the earth is especially useful when attempting to discuss the vital role that we must play in preserving the resources provided by 'her.' Hence, nature grew to become, and has continued to be seen as, a vital part of the processes of urbanisation and mechanisation in changing times. Essentially, this commodification of nature became an integral part of society, especially to the male sector, whose perception of nature in this passive form was transferred onto woman (Merchant 8).

Women provided similar productive resources. They were the caregivers of children, producing the next generation and providing passive, benevolent emotions for the busy husband, who worked hard in the various public sectors open to men. The domestic sphere, the woman's domain, became the peaceful place where men could find some sort of solitude. Thus, women embodied the role of nature, of the mother earth, and both became "tamed and subdued" (Merchant 8).

Simone de Beauvoir's book, *The Second Sex*, sees woman's subordinate role being based on her reproductive organs and behaviours associated with the reproductive process. De Beauvoir focused on the negative aspects of reproduction which she considered as women's "enslavement to the species." Ortner sums up De Beauvoir's study as follows:

In other words, woman's body seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life; the male, in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally, "artificially," through the medium of technology and symbols. In so doing, he creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendent objects, while the woman creates only perishables - human beings (Ortner 75).[68]

Adding to this "woman problem," Ortner points out that although woman apparently accepted this position and analogy to nature, she was not a complete outsider to the cultural. De Beauvoir noted that although woman possessed the desire for something more, she was the one responsible for the maintenance of her social position. This point was often mentioned by women writers like Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More, but they failed to establish solutions for overcoming the critical double standard associated with this self-perpetuation of woman's inferior status. However, Levi-Strauss noted that woman could not simply be assigned wholly to the realm of nature, because she was an active participant of the social sphere. Woman also thought, spoke, generated and manipulated various values and symbols. Hence, says Levi-Strauss, "Woman could never become just a sign and nothing more, since even in a man's world she is still a person, and since insofar as she is defined as a sign she must [still] be recognized as a generator of signs" (qtd. in Ortner 76).

Despite the contradiction of women being synonymous with nature **and** culture, 'woman,' nonetheless, became synonymous with 'nature,' and as men became the active users of the products she provided, men became synonymous with culture. Although such a basic connection of nature and the female as "passive receptors" has remained current for generations, Merchant also offers alternative

views of nature. There was a side to nature that the likes of Machiavelli and

Shakespeare considered to be aggressive and disorderly. This wild and sometimes

chaotic potential of nature was a powerful force.

The association of woman with this wild, chaotic element of nature and its

potential power was a frightening concept for the nineteenth-century male, because

woman was traditionally considered inferior, substandard and weaker in both mind

and body. She was soft, virtuous, benevolent and submissive. To consider woman as

all powerful, incorporating and possibly inheriting nature's chaotic wild side, was a

concept that went against the grain of popular belief – men preferred not to transfer

this powerful side of nature onto woman. Instead, she was tamed; relegated to a

domestic zone, and the 'wild' in nature was collapsed into the domesticated by some

of the forces of Romanticism. The potential violence of nature was seen as a

phenomenon that must strictly be controlled and subdued. Wordsworth, for example,

wrote of the need for the poet to remove "What would otherwise be painful or

disgusting in the passion" (line 13).[69]

This equation between woman and nature reflected the prevalent thought in

the early nineteenth century that stressed the balance of opposing forces. Although the

Romantic period was a difficult one to define, there is a general consensus about some

of the central attitudes and beliefs of the Romantics. There was a desire to return to

nature, where one's own emotions ruled, passionate sensibility was valued over logic

and analytic reason, and there was a concern about an ethics of justice and fair

treatment for all (Ruoff 276).[70] Concepts such as these were essential to the

Romantic poet, who struggled to reconcile the oppositional terms of language and

thought, dealing with such concepts as body and soul, style and content, the real and

the imagined (Simpson 5-9).[71] However, any 'balance,' as such, has been questioned

by theorists such as Figes and Greer because the patriarchal dominance of this popular dichotomous worldview was a masculine construct. Nonetheless, the Romantic contention emphasised a deeper relationship between man (in the generic but patriarchal sense of the term) and nature (considered as feminine) and this is evidenced in a brief survey of the leading Romantic writers of the period.

Of the many male Romantic identities, the most familiar perhaps are Wordsworth, Coleridge and Percy Bysshe Shelley. These men have an iconic stature that has continued from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, well into the twenty-first century. Each was, and still is, respected, not only as a poet, but also as a critic and theorist. They felt that the poet had a duty and responsibility to the reader to provide pleasure, as well as to teach and educate. With this goal in mind, it is particularly ironic that women, who also may have had this goal in mind, were not given an equal standing in their literary works.

In Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, he went to some lengths to explain what a poet is, and the nature of the poet's role. He agreed with Aristotle's view that poetry is the "most philosophic of all writing" (line 11).[72] Poetry, Wordsworth suggested, aimed at revealing an objective truth, which was driven forward by the honesty of the heart's emotions. His most famous proposition was perhaps his idea that poetry reflected the combined image of man and nature. The poet should produce this image in a pleasurable way, and this act of pleasure did not degrade, but uplifted the art of poetry, paying homage to the spirit of man in response to nature. Wordsworth's argument became contemporary in his connection of the poet's roles and beliefs to those of the scientist, who also took pleasure in knowledge.

Wordsworth influenced Coleridge, who also contributed to the *Lyrical Ballads.*
Coleridge felt the same way as his fellow writer, in the belief that poetry was an
important avenue of expression. He believed that poetry should have a moral and
religious purpose (Harris 223). He viewed poetry as a vital step to reforming the
social injustice he saw around him. Unlike Wordsworth, however, Coleridge saw
man as separate from nature, and it was in man's power to subdue, possess and rule
over nature. This idea of man dominating nature was a constant theme reflected in the
scientific endeavours and technological experimentation occurring in the period.
Similarly, Percy Bysshe Shelley felt that reform was the poet and philosopher's
objective. He had a "passion for reforming the world," claiming in his *A Defense of
Poetry*, that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World." His poetry,
however, was not directed at this cause alone, for he also viewed poetry as a means of
expressing "beautiful idealisms of moral excellence" (Bloom & Trilling 424).

Like their forefathers, these writers were not only concerned with the social
conditions of their age, but also they often suggested radical reforms to revolutionise
the systems in which they lived. Taking the role of writer beyond the strictly
theoretical or solely critical, these authors felt that their poetic art became a medium
of public expression. This advantaged the position of male poets, critics and writers,
who could, through the guise of poetry, join in serious contemporary debate.

Women writers also utilised the literary for making serious critical
commentary. However, it was difficult to dismiss the significant Romantic gender
bias toward man, which reinforced traditional patriarchal authority. Feminist theorists
like Mellor have long claimed the Romantic ideology of much of the nineteenth
century to be a masculine, and therefore questionable, construct in relation to the
idiosyncratic conceptualisation of women and the transference of these concepts onto

women's writing. Historically, women's writing was connected to their inferior position within the marginal and this masculine construct hindered women's literary attempts to go beyond the marginal zone. Therefore, any writing by women like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft which specifically attacked and criticised their position and the ideals that placed women within the domestic was severely frowned upon. Their feminist challenge - through literary means - was silenced because their writing was critically denounced in the Romantic era for its imitative masculine-likeness, and their use of masculine discourse has been criticised by modern-day theorists. It was no surprise, then, that despite the variety of methods and styles that were openly available for women writers to use, they could never quite break free from the relegated position of their social standing.

Women's encultured inferiority became a subject of frustration and dissatisfaction, which was evident in the history of women's writing. Forced for so long to abide by certain disabling and censorious rules when writing, it is no surprise that the feminist author's words, from the likes of Macaulay, Wollstonecraft, and More, had disappointing results. Women's literary works were often considered as secondary and inferior. In attempting to challenge the system of rule regarding this position of women, women writers were restricted by a critical double standard upheld by both the literary and public sectors of society. Even the attempt at imitating the leading literary examples led to failure rather than success.

The exclusivity factor of many of the masculine discourses and theories made it difficult for women to make a literary statement, particularly when literature was a traditionally male-dominated field. When women attempted to use these theories, then, the criticism towards their literary efforts came from both within and outside their own sphere. Moira Gatens explains that the crux of the problem is that,

historically, philosophy as a major discourse in the male-stream educative world "has had an oppressive relation to women" in its omission of them. In their use of male-stream discourses such as philosophy, Macaulay and Wollstonecraft attempted to humanise philosophy. They attempted to correct the misogynistic view of women within the theories of philosophers like Rousseau. To expand and apply philosophical thought to female experience and life was to be a literary tactic that would aid women in their crusade to add a human factor in the "political, moral and social" world (Gatens 16).

However, rather than humanise philosophical discourse, making philosophy an equal opportunity enterprise, in which men and women could complement each other in their inclusion within this discourse, philosophising 'like men' only made women seem more like bad imitators. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, early critics in their reviews and studies of women writers used many phrases like "man-like," "masculine," and "chameleon-like," in their criticisms of female writers' works. Many critics today also suggest that what these female writers managed to do was to set back their own cause. Critics today also suggest that in Hannah More's case, her work simply became invisible, due to her apparent conformity within accepted forms of literary style available to women. Critics today consider that these women writers failed in their efforts to make themselves heard by their active participation in a male-stream discourse. Even though these women used various literary tactics to make their own statements, their works were judged as inferior and substandard. Clearly, the factor that marked them as failures in their own time was the distinctive patriarchal worldview. The critical double standard lies here within this very dilemma. Either women writers attempted to compete with men and theorise using masculine discourse, or, they adhered to the standard techniques traditionally

set aside for women. Whatever their choice, the result was a silencing of their own voices.

The concerted literary challenge put forward by women over the centuries did not come to an end with women such as these. In looking at the works of women authors in the early nineteenth century it is obvious that the effort to overcome the literary inferiority and critical double standard faced by women as writers continued. Moreover, rather than continue writing in an ineffective form, which saw writers like Wollstonecraft attempt more philosophical, masculine tactics, women authors began to take a stand within their own, accepted feminine literary forms. To a certain extent, authors like Macaulay and More had attempted this literary tactic; however, they criticised the one literary genre that eventually led to a successful literary challenge to the critical double standard that women faced as writers. Macaulay and More made their opinions of the novel clear, claiming novels to be unnatural, idealistic, seductive, and dangerous. Nonetheless, the reputation of the novel continued, albeit slowly, to change.

In Walter Allen's book, *The English Novel*,[73] one gains a sense of appreciation for this literary genre, which has survived centuries of change and has developed into a powerful literary tool. In the evolution of the novel, as Allen sees it, there was a positive transition for the reputation of the novel, particularly apparent when the writers of novels began to make a concerted effort to connect with the reader. In fact, the novel's slow but steady evolution from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ensured a more reader-friendly style. The expectations and experiences readers gained from a novel, as well as the messages and advice that readers drew from such an experience, led writers of novels to focus more on their content. The novelist was an "imitator" according to Allen. '**He**' [my emphasis]

writes for various reasons and has a variety of motives. Whether it is to "inculcate

right conduct," "reform the manners of the age," "expose the social evils," or even to

"make money by providing acceptable entertainment," the novelist is led by **his**

deepest personal compulsions to express a certain opinion to **his** audience, the reader.

In analysing the nature of a novel, it is obvious that in assessing the author's novel

and views it is also necessary to look closer at the author's characters and their

behaviour. In doing so, it is important to realise that the written work of any writer,

the novelist included, represents a very individual and personal vision of the author's

world, which is acted out, as it were, in the scenes and images by the people within

the pages (Allen 16-17).

Allen's very advice contains an important discussion point for feminist

theorists. His recommendations for the writer are addressed to a male audience. This

use of 'he' as the generalised pronoun, as well as the association to culture rather than

nature theory of gender relations, has seen Eva Figes comment that "Women have

been largely man-made" (qtd. in Belsey and Moore 3). Concerns such as these,

however, were not apparent during the early development of the novel, so, despite this

generalisation that the writer of novels was male, the novel continued to have a

specific role in literary history, in that there had to be a 'reality' connection with the

reader. As the structure of the novel further developed in the eighteenth and early

nineteenth century, the writer's emphasis focused on convincing the reader of the

contents of the story. The novel must, therefore, be a "careful study of some phase of

real life, or of conduct in a situation which, however impossible in itself, the

imagination is willing to accept for the time being as possible" (Cross 26).[74]

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is clear that the novel took on a

more active role. The novelists themselves analysed the world they lived in. In the

written form, their stories, characters and messages reflected certain attitudes that concerned the author. Traditional, cultural and social norms were changing. Challenges were being made about the renewed attitudes towards life as the French Revolution passed and its ideas still lingered. Writers of novels began to make their own personal statements concerning the very world around them. This active role by the novelists allows for a closer analysis of the evolving formation of the English novel, as well as the historical and social transformation of this particular era.

The author's need to focus on the reader and reality lifted the reputation of novel writing. Novelists' motives in capturing a reader with a gripping adventure, or a romantic tale of two lovers, had deepened. Emotionalism and reality became major parts of a successful entrapment, with each element dependent on the other. From Defoe's style, his distinctive range of adventure, and his simple language of everyday life, came more realist novelists, who utilised his great success in their novels by incorporating and focusing on the meaning of morals and ethics, virtue and vice. There was, however, a concern that the early writers of novels presented plots that could be harmful to the virtuous young female reader. This idea of the novel's influence over the reader became a major concern for literary authority and, hence, a distinctive emphasis emerged within the realist novel that paid particular attention to the tradition of women's virtue and purity.

Authors began to comment on traditional patriarchal cultural and social standards and it gradually became evident that in many of the books being published there was a rising discontent with these standards. Issues such as appropriate feminine behaviour and the correct teaching of it were still dominating literary matter. Novels and other types of publications were encouraged by the increasing mass of literature that was emerging from the educated and professional spheres. Written

works from the likes of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, on subjects such as the structure of government, society and education, influenced major literary reactions by men and women (Cross 84). With this rising discontent making its way into the realm of novels, it is evident at this time that a new element transformed the English novel yet again. The novel now had a specific purpose. This novel of purpose was then developed as a medium for such issues as the emancipation of women, government structures, conduct and education, taking the subjects to a new level. In other words, the novel became a powerful tool that enabled writers to popularise a range of current and topical issues (Cross 85).

Even though the novel now had a specific purpose, the successful 'life' of a novel and its writer was judged, not by the readers or the market, but by the "Reviewers." Frank Donoghue argues that the notion of a "literary career" was determined by reviews in periodicals such as *The Monthly Review* (1749) and *The Critical Review* (1756) (3).[75] Although the critics who ran these sorts of publications believed that they were the rightful representatives of the elite literary and intellectual reading public, many authors struggling to achieve publication saw these critics as "oppressive." Donoghue presents examples of the reaction that some authors had to this suddenly privileged position with which they had to collaborate. One such writer - anonymous, of course - held a view of the "the reviewer as executioner," in which "the office of reviewer...in the republic of letters" is described "as beneficial and necessary, though as odious and unpleasant, as that of an executioner in the civil state" (qtd. in Donoghue 10).

Nonetheless, the authority of reviewers to judge the success of a writer's work was seen by many as merely a policing of the books and literary material that were constantly being churned out by writers. With the growing market and the economic

equations between supply and demand, the "Reviewers" saw it as their role to somehow control the market. What seems apparent is that there was an underlying threat in the development of a literary marketplace, which was beginning to seriously affect the social stability and longevity of traditional ideals concerning the "foundations and cultural authority that the Reviews" were beginning to acquire (Donoghue 17). The important development that occurred as a result of such a struggle between the writer and reviewer was the very notion of "literary history, literary biography, and established canons that are the hallmarks of later-eighteenth-century letters" (Donoghue 17).

The notion of a canon of English literature is difficult to explain. Even now it is a much-contested area of debate. The questions of who deserves a place in the canon and what makes one belong to it are issues that are still argued in academic circles. From as early as the eighteenth century when the literary market began to demand more and more reading matter, the Reviewer came forth to "police both the production and consumption of literature" (Donoghue 17). Fiedler observes that the critical authorities believed themselves to represent a higher form of literary interest:

> "Real literature," though packaged and distributed side by side with commodity literature, was something quite different; it was responsive not to the laws of supply and demand, but to standards established by contemporary critics, the visible legislators of the invisible "Republic of Letters" (73).[76]

This control which "Reviewers" sought over the reading and writing public was often legitimised by their analogy to the state. Like an army or police, they were the regulatory forces in their land, the "Republic of Letters." It was their right, therefore, to set standards in the behaviour of readers and writers (Fiedler 38).

The notion of women writing was beginning to be accepted or, more precisely, the laws of economics and consumption for women's literary works were a part of the package if reviewers were to reach a wider market audience. However, the standard of women's written work was considered inferior and this thought was reflected in various critical reviews women received. Even though critical reviewers gradually reduced the force of their criticism towards women, their comments still had a scathing bite. Hence, women's literary works would never be praised as highly nor on the same terms as men's would. Fiedler notes that this "critical lenity" consolidated a double standard which "disabled" the ambition of women as successful writers (161). Moreover, the gender bias presented by the "Reviewers" was yet another blocked path for women writers trying to battle their way through, in a war for equality of literary success. Being the most influential institution in the literary world at the time, the Reviewers' double standard for women as authors simply meant women had to try other methods to fight their way past these traditional ideals, which considered all women's writing as weak and second-rate.

Although it is impossible to precisely pinpoint the time when women starting writing fiction, it is clear that, by 1750, English women novelists were beginning to become major competitors for a slice of the literary market (Showalter 16). The *Monthly Review*, in 1773, commented on this fact, noticing that "that branch of the literary trade" seemed "almost entirely engrossed by the ladies." The increasing number of women novelists is, however, deceiving, as the comments were being made by the male leaders of the literary field who would have seen any number of women writers as a competitive enemy (qtd. in Showalter 40). Many women attempted to achieve success in both a pedagogic or revolutionary didactic form, but it was not an easy task. The woman's novel, and the very idea of women writing at all,

was a difficult concept to comprehend, especially in the light of the traditional social, cultural and historical forces that had, until now, prevented such an occurrence. When women did begin to write, then, they had to constantly struggle against these forces which continued to relegate women's writing to a secondary rank (Showalter 36).

The well established patriarchal strictures which had long hindered women's success as literary leaders did not slow women writers in their quest for equal standing as authors. The challenge of having one's writing put on trial, as it were, by the adjudicators of literary excellence, was still a difficult task. Women's writing, like all writing, was analysed by the "Reviewers" who would award a successful writer with the ultimate prize - acceptance and praise.

Of the many women who continued to defy and challenge the male authorial elite, two authors feature in this study. Jane Austen and Mary Shelley are particularly interesting women writers to examine. In their literary quests to succeed in a male dominated sphere, one is canonised and the other is not, but their methods and content share a similar intimacy in relation to their cause. In choosing to write novels, they both seem to accept their fate as being women writers who 'toe the patriarchal line.' However, in a closer examination of a key novel by each writer, it is obvious that they have, instead, progressed and transcended the boundaries and the critical double standard that foiled the efforts of their foremothers.

Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley was surrounded by high-profile Romantics, such as Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and her famous father, William Godwin. All of these intellectuals have, in some way or another, been claimed to be responsible for the various issues that arose in her first novel, *Frankenstein* (1818).[77] What is notable in this list of well-known poets, philosophers, and intellectuals is the fact that all were male. The exception would have been Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who had died giving birth to her daughter. The prominence of male intellectuals and masculine ideals leads some critics and researchers of the Romantic period to suggest that the era of Romantic attitudes - social and philosophical - was a gendered construction, in which the ideas and beliefs of the Romantic male prevailed.

A great deal of the literary history of women seems to represent the dissatisfaction and frustration that women writers felt when they came up against such patriarchal strictures. A generation earlier, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* represented one female's courage in raising her voice against the dominant masculine attitude of women's encultured inferiority. Continuing in her mother's footsteps, Mary Shelley also commented on the negativity surrounding the female and feminine. With the continued publication and constant academic study of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, critics have claimed that this novel could easily be interpreted as a direct attack on the inherent masculinity of Romantic thought.

Frankenstein challenged the traditional male domination of the public sphere. In raising serious scientific, philosophical and social issues, the novel is often read as a successful continuation of the female invasion into the masculine domain of literature. More importantly, it also represented women's successful literary challenge in that it was an indirect criticism on the dichotomous worldview in the early

nineteenth century. As many critics have suggested, Mary Shelley's novel was a concerned social statement about the masculinised way of life, and this is evidenced in her deliberate emphasis on masculinity throughout the novel. Adopting an ameliorational tactic, Shelley utilised the marginal zone to her advantage, writing within the accepted boundaries of a specific literary convention by which women writers had to abide. In doing so, she presented a facade of literary conformity, and this has proven a long lasting, effective tactic, which has led to a recognition by modern day theorists of Shelley's feminist challenge to literary patriarchy.

Of the three male protagonists, the first two, Robert Walton and Victor Frankenstein, were men in the public arena. They were two men who were eagerly developing their rational minds, and the story depicted them as desirous of succeeding in their revolutionary vision. For Walton, this vision was the discovery of a new path through the icy regions. For Victor, it was the creation of a new superhuman species, which would "bless [him] as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to [him]" (82).

It was in the thorough and deliberate masculinity of these two characters that Mary Shelley began to comment on the extreme nature of the Romantic way of life. The subtitle, "...or the Modern Prometheus," strengthened her comment about the masculine world. The authority of Greek myths and legends offered a respected exemplar that many writers used. They often transformed these tales to fit into their contemporary framework, and Prometheus was a popular myth to adapt. As a Titan who stole from the Gods the sacred spark of fire, the Romantic writers often considered Prometheus a symbol of rebellion, winning over evil, ultimately triumphant. In Aeschylus' version, Prometheus was punished severely, but in Percy Bysshe Shelley's adaptation, *Prometheus Unbound*, rather than deserving

punishment, his Prometheus was a symbol of the "highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and truest motives to the best and noblest ends" (Bloom & Trilling 422). By referring to Victor Frankenstein as the Modern Prometheus, Mary Shelley was following on not only from the Greek myth as it was written, but also from the adaptations created by her contemporaries.

Surrounded and submerged within an elite circle of male intellectuals, Mary Shelley showed an understanding of these men as intellectual titans, and her main male character, Victor, was portrayed as such. A broader outlook sees this character, with the ideals and actions that he carried out, as representing those same ideals and actions in her contemporaries. Frankenstein was in this sense the 'Modern' Prometheus. Mary Shelley's version was, however, much more condemnatory of the human desire of her colleagues to imitate the rebelliousness and defiance of the original Prometheus. *Frankenstein* was truer to Aeschylus' version in its portrayal of a Prometheus who was punished severely for his God-defying ways. Victor Frankenstein, the 'nineteenth-century disciple' of the fire stealing Prometheus, infused a spark of life into an inanimate being, and suffered greatly for his crimes (Goldberg 30).[78] The reader begins to realise at this stage that the story will be much more than a simple tale of ambition and discovery.

Mellor, a twentieth century feminist writer and critic, claims that there must surely have been two kinds of Romanticisms - one male and the other female. The male Romanticism would be the most familiar, following the traditional ideas of the Romantic movement. According to Mellor, though, this romanticism was not felt by the "leading women intellectuals and writers of the day" (Mellor in Ruoff 274).[79] Mellor stresses Mary Shelley's part in this negative reaction to Romantic philosophy, claiming "*Frankenstein* is a direct attack on the Romantic celebration of the creative

process" (Mellor in Ruoff 281). Mellor further suggests the concept of separate roles for gender in the nineteenth century, arguing that the two forms of Romanticism account for distinctive differences between male and female character and behaviour.

Male Romanticism included a belief in the importance of "creative imagination," "unity of being," "development of an autonomous self," political revolution, and the role of writer as a political ground for advancing one's position. It was an ideology "celebrating revolutionary change, the divinity of the poetic creative process, the development of a man of feeling, and the acquisition of the philosophical mind" (Mellor in Ruoff 285). Victor epitomised these values in his excessive actions. He was the true poet-scientist who systematically and indefatigably studied every avenue of his scientific goal. His aim, to create a new, stronger species which would survive against the odds of the present disease and hardship of the world, was achieved by covering all the "branches of natural philosophy" (79). So complete and focused was he in the creative process and his revolutionary aim that he failed to consider any consequences. The resulting destruction, isolation and loneliness were proof of the ignorance that this type of endeavour produced. He was so obsessed in the dream and the process that he lacked the necessary insight or capabilities to handle the effects of his final product. In turning away from his responsibility towards his creation Victor committed a monstrous act of scientific hubris, and compounded this ignorance further in his disgust at being reminded that he was responsible. He said to the creature, "Why do you call to my remembrance the circumstances of which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and author?...!" (129).

Meanwhile, the product of his work was left alone, literally abandoned. Beginning life learning to adore and treasure nature, he developed feelings that were characteristic of a feminine nature. The simple songs of birds moved his heart, and

although a large, physically grotesque creature, he seemed gentle and affectionate, allowing the simplicity of life within the forest to pleasurably sway his emotions. Eventually, he realised happiness was with others and, with the help of the De Laceys, he reasoned that knowledge of the human world and life was important to his happiness. In his endeavours to learn speech and language he did so in complete solitude, quietly, and unobserved. Obviously the creature felt his education was paramount to his harmonious life with human beings, but the "increase of knowledge only discovered to [himself] more clearly what a wretched outcast [he] was" (158). Desperation and loneliness led to his final acts of violence. He became so impassioned by this despair that he sought retribution the only way he knew. Using his past experiences as a model the creature became violent in an attempt to get what he wanted. Upon witnessing Victor enjoying a happy time in his life, when he himself was miserable, the creature became "bitter," and was filled "with an insatiable thirst for vengeance" (244). He began a mission of destruction where "evil thenceforth became his good" (244). Any traditional feminine characteristics he possessed, such as the deep feeling of love and emotional warmth he experienced from nature's wonders, totally disappeared as more passionate yet rational-minded thoughts emerged. It was this transition that reconstituted the creature as monster.

Victor and his monster both shared similar desires. They both sought recognition in the social and public spheres. In pursuing the creative process to promote radical physical change, Victor chose to acknowledge only some of the values of male Romanticism. He concentrated on the revolutionary aspects of Romanticism to the exclusion of its other central issues, such as justice for all. His overreaching ambition led him to operate without thought for the moral and aesthetic implications of his work. Similarly the monster, desperate for some kind of accepted

identity, turned to a concentrated but limited study of human knowledge. In both instances, Victor and the monster turned away from the social, public and private spheres. Their failure was inevitable because they needed to participate in each of these spheres in order to fully succeed. Left with nobody to turn to, Victor and the monster blamed each other for their respective downfalls. Vowing to destroy one another, they failed to consider an important Romantic issue: the value of justice for all individuals.

The monster pleaded for some justice from Victor, demanding a "creature of another sex," and from the monster's passionate request, Victor felt for the first time "what the duties of a creator towards his creature were,..." (130). He noted how "his tale, and the feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a rational creature of fine sensations; and did [he] not, as his maker, owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in [his] power to bestow?" (173).

As Victor contemplated too late the possible outcome of this request, he concluded it to be a mistake and destroyed the incomplete female monster. Soon after, the monster vowed destruction and unjustly murdered Clerval and Elizabeth. Both acts of injustice - the creator's toward his creature and the creature's toward his creator - were based on powerful forces of injustice against the heart.

Yet both creator and creature claimed their acts were rational and deserving.[80] It is therefore possible to regard the depiction of these male characters as representing a way of life without consideration, responsibility, or care for others. And it is this argument that leads Mellor to believe that the destructive and monstrous acts and story were an extrapolation of a male way of life, a male Romanticism. If the resulting behaviour from both Victor and the monster is seen as embodying Mary Shelley's personal critique of the Romantic ideals, it is clearer that what was missing

was the female equivalent. For this reason, Mellor suggests a counter philosophy, a female ideology that foreswore all of the aspects which the male Romanticism incorporated.

This feminine ideology focused on the importance of education for the rational woman. It believed in an ethics of care and responsibility for one's actions and for the actions of those in one's care. According to a female Romanticism, then, it is clear that Victor failed to consider the consequences or to take responsibility for his actions. Both males became obsessive, ignoring the important aspect of justice, which was an attitude of the male Romanticism. Although Victor was thoughtful in his initial aim of benefiting humankind, his objective later became distorted. He lacked any moderation in the process of achieving his goal, obsessively devouring every hour of every day and night until he succeeded. The possible benefit to humankind became second in line as glory and recognition took priority.

The ideals of a female Romanticism are not overtly recognised within the story of *Frankenstein*, a story specifically about men and the public world. Without such a philosophy, critics have seen Victor's actions as violent and unnatural. As a scientist, the extreme nature of his experiment was frightening, for it called into question the current anxieties of scientific enterprise. Caught up in this creative process, he failed to consider the limitations and consequences of his work. This idea, of unlimited power of the imagination, was a serious concern to those who questioned the freedom and infinite realm of scientific pursuit. Mary Shelley presented an exemplar, then, of the possible dangers of scientific exploration without thought for responsibility in one's work. This lack of thought about the consequences of scientific experimentation was illustrated in Victor's attempt to forget his initial horror of the hideous monster he created, by thrusting himself back into the life he

once shunned. He attempted to fool himself out of responsibility as he immersed himself in the limelight at university, socialised with his family, and enjoyed the natural surroundings on his travels with Clerval.

This factor of the family is interesting. Before his return to the happiness and joy of family life, Victor had completely rejected any social communication. He was so obsessed with his idea of creation that he deserted all wider spheres of society. The private world filled with family, love and all kinds of affection was portrayed as an opposing force to success and achievement in the public domain. This view of life, in which public and private cannot work in harmony, was clearly a statement from the author. In representing the sexual ideology of the nineteenth century to such an extreme perhaps Mary Shelley was making a statement against the complete division in society that saw women and men separated in all spheres.[81]

Frankenstein is also seen as an obvious warning on the mental attitude of this masculine realm, as scientists aim to control, dominate and possess nature and the world. Cude suggests that the story involves the ethical implications of scientific research. She sees in Mary Shelley's story "the morality of a scientist presenting an unwary world with a gift that is capable of both great good and great evil" (213).[82] Moreover, in portraying the real, life-endangering situations of the pursuit of knowledge in isolation and without consideration or responsibility, Cude suggests that the story was a success because it was situated in the real world. Rather than deal in the true Gothic, which was the conventional genre for many Romantic women writers, Mary Shelley focused on the real and natural world instead of the imagined and supernatural.[83] In going beyond the traditional tropes of darkness and death, Shelley revealed a possible outcome of a situation that could easily occur in the real world. In

confining her story to a close reality that all could identify with, surely Mary Shelley was commenting on various social, ethical and philosophical aspects of her world.

Rather than incorporate what Mellor describes as the feminine ideologies of home and family into his work, Victor, in attempting to control and dominate nature, invaded the feminine domain. As Mellor and others have claimed, Victor usurped the woman's role of creating life. In doing so, Victor failed as a parent. He failed to love, name, or even educate his creation. This was a monstrous act, which in modern day terms evokes an outrage similar to that aroused by child abuse. Victor's failure as a parent was so horrific that it has been claimed it bears a striking resemblance to the vicious cycle of abuse, where the battered child becomes the battering adult (Mellor in Ruoff 283).[84]

Victor's failure as a parent was particularly ironic in the light of his own upbringing. Upon meeting Walton, Victor insisted on giving him a detailed account of his childhood. Most interesting was his description of his parents, who showed undivided attention for each other and their children. Of his father's love for his young wife, Victor told how Alfonse rescued her from potential poverty and despair, striving to "shelter her,... and to surround her with all that could tend to excite pleasurable emotion in her soft and benevolent mind" (Smith 39).[85]

Also, Victor noted how, in his father's total devotion for his wife, he "relinquished all his public functions;..." (Smith 40), which was quite an opposite picture of the male role in the nineteenth century. This picture of perfection was then extended with the addition of family members. He reminisced about how his parents "seemed to draw inexhaustible stores of affection from a mine of love to bestow..." upon their family (Smith 40).

What Victor did to his creation - his child - then, was all the more horrific, considering the example of his parents. The abundance of love that his parents showered upon him was not once reflected in his reaction to his creation (except in the undivided attention it received in the production process). It was for these actions that Victor was criticised as an abusive parent, ignorant of the basics of parental care, especially in the light of his joyous childhood. Such a portrayal of a man who failed in his responsibility of scientific and parental duties can easily support Mellor's proposition of two types of Romanticism.

This attack on the male invasion into the female domain is made all the more evident in the lack of any strong female characters within the story. The first female character the reader encounters is Victor's mother, Caroline Beaufort. In his memories of his childhood he recalled how she "partook of [her] children's enjoyment" (71). He told Walton of his parents meeting before marriage, describing his mother as a courageous woman who "possessed a mind of an uncommon mould." In attending with "the greatest tenderness" to her sick father, she showed determination and strength of will in survival. As their small amount of savings dwindled, her "courage rose to support her in her adversity" and she found simple work, such as sewing and plaiting straw (64). This determination in the face of poverty and sickness led to her death as she ran to her step-niece's sickbed "long before the danger of infection was past" (72). As a loving mother she merely wanted to comfort the recovering "favourite," but eventually she caught the scarlet fever herself.

Victor recalled admiringly her "fortitude and benignity" in the face of death. Although she despaired at the thought of leaving her family, she noted how unbefitting such thoughts were, and then "endeavour[d] to resign [herself] *cheerfully*

to death..." (72). [86] Continuing as the perfect mother figure, Caroline died, but not before Victor noted her 'imprudence" as she rushed to comfort another. This depiction of Caroline Beaufort exemplifies a typical image and role of women in the nineteenth century. She was portrayed as a loving and devoted mother who cared so much that her own life was sacrificed for the lives of her loved ones.

One female who was particularly devastated by the loss of such a wonderful woman was Justine Moritz. She was taken into the kind household of the Frankenstein family by Caroline Beaufort and, like her protectress in the devotion and care she gave to her dying father, Justine too "tended on [Caroline] with the most anxious affection." She loved the woman so much that she imitated her every gesture and eventually came to be a mother figure for little William. That she, in the end, would be accused of murdering the little boy was quite an unjust claim when one considers her devotion to Caroline, who was seen as the "model of all excellence" (94).

At Justine's trial Victor agonised over the injustice of the very procedure and noted how she appeared strong, seeming "confident in innocence and did not tremble..." (109). She knew she was innocent, but when all the evidence weighed against her, she could only suggest that someone may have placed the miniature in her pocket. Following the typical nature that all women were supposed to abide by, she next stated, "I believe that I have no enemy on earth; and none surely would have been so wicked as to destroy me wantonly" (11). Moreover, when pressed by her confessor and feeling "threatened and menaced," Justine eventually admitted falsely to the murder of little William. It was overwhelming condemnation by all others, plus the likelihood of "excommunication and hell fire in [her] last moments," which led to this false acceptance (114). In her dark cell, when Elizabeth and Victor visited her,

Justine once again displayed benevolence and consideration for others (as did Caroline in her last minutes) in consoling Elizabeth's despair and sorrow. She commented thankfully on the "sweet ...affection of others to such a wretch" as she (115). Once again Justine was portrayed as a passive woman who, although strong in the beginning, quickly learned that she must play her correct role in life if she wished to be ultimately forgiven. She demonstrated emotion, consideration, respect and love for others when she herself was suffering. In the end she too died.[87]

Elizabeth Lavenza was also a character whose traits and feminine nature again emphasised the specific role and behaviour of females in the Romantic era. She was described by Victor as "docile and good tempered, yet gay and playful as a summer insect...Her figure was light and airy; although capable of great fatigue she appeared the most fragile creature in the world" (65).[88] As Victor noted the "great dissimilitude" that existed between them, it is again clear how diverse the natures of men and women were in this era. He described Elizabeth as having "busied herself in following the aerial creations of the poets" and her world was considered a "vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own" (66). She waited at home, writing to Victor about gossip and the growth of little William, while Victor travelled and enhanced his education. Also, her one attempt at active involvement in the novel when defending Justine was fruitless and ineffective. Again, when Elizabeth told Victor that "men appear to [her] as monsters thirsting for each other's blood," she retracted immediately, saying, "Yet I am certainly unjust" (121). In knowing that such thoughts were unsuitable for her mind she lived up to the 'rules,' as it were, just like Caroline and Justine.[89]

What was presented, overall, was a picture of women who were traditionally female according to an ideology constructed by men. Victor also noted this difference

between genders in his description of interests. He mentioned his "philosophical"

interests, of which he "delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world"

(66). He displayed similar, if not the same, traits as those of the male Romantics

prominent in Mary Shelley's time. He even admitted that the "world was to [him] a

secret, which [he] desired to discover" (66). It was clear that the female characters,

on the other hand, were unsuccessful at such active, selfish or personal concerns, and

hence fitted perfectly into the masculine notion of women, with its rigid framework

by which gender behaviour was guided.

This idea of presenting an explicit story of the gender division that existed in

this era was again illustrated in the De Lacey saga.[90] While observing them, the

creature noted the differences in the roles and nature of Felix and Agatha De Lacey.

He watched Felix leave home daily to work in the fields and told Victor how he took

Felix's tools to help the cottagers. He sometimes saw Felix clear the snow off the

path, or chop and bring the wood inside. Noting Felix's brooding nature, the creature

concluded that he had a great weight on his shoulders. He silently worried, making

sure he was always cheerful for his elderly father. He was also the teacher,

instructing Safie (and the creature) on the French language and history of the

country.[91] Agatha, on the other hand, was viewed as emotional, often crying quietly

and receiving comfort from her brother and father. She was seen as the domestic

carer, "arrang[ing] the cottage, and prepar[ing] the food. The distinct spheres of their

life were seen by the creature as he noted how the "young man was constantly

employed out of doors, and the girl in various laborious occupations within" (138).

Clearly there was an emphasis on this separateness within the novel, and it was

obvious that all the women were dependent on the male figures in their lives in one

way or another.

The one female who could have been seen as a challenging newcomer was destroyed before she could attempt to defy such a social structure. The female who had this potential was the monsteress - the female companion to the male monster. It has been suggested that there was an element of fear attached to Victor's total destruction of this creature. This thought can be seen in his reflections about the female mate showing strength both physically and mentally. The idea of a female who could easily "become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate..." and who could possibly "become a reasoning and thinking animal..." that "...might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation" seemed overly threatening to Victor (192).

Victor's fear of women's potential has been considered in a few critical analyses of the novel. Newey suggests that what Victor was afraid of was the possible end of female dependency on man (33-34). Homans sees Victor's creation of a male monster as certain proof that he desired an all masculine culture. She writes:

> By making the demon masculine, Shelley suggests that the romantic
> desire seeks to do away, not only with the mother, but also with all
> females so as to live finally in a world of mirrors that reflect a
> comforting illusion of the male self's independent wholeness (147).[92]

It seems evident that there was an emphasis on the male Romantic philosophy, by which all the male protagonists were guided. What Shelley had pointed to was the monstrosity and destruction that resulted from these ideals. That is why Mellor suggests that there must be a female set of ideals to counterbalance the dominant male thought, which she claims Shelley was attacking. In presenting these overreachers as failures in the story, it is suggested that Mary Shelley disapproved of the original

ideals of this masculine structure, which saw women and all that was female as separated from all that was masculine in life.

Mary Shelley's story demonstrated that the excessive actions by the male characters resulted in loneliness and isolation; their actions were "so thoroughly counterproductive that they result[ed] in paralysis, much as Walton's ship bec[a]me immobilised in the ice" (Berhendt 72). The extreme division between the male lifestyle and the female was presented in a negative way throughout the story.

In reading her mother's work, Mary Shelley must certainly have realised that the special bond that her mother had "as a lifelong intellectual equal and companion" to her husband, William Godwin, was not the typical relationship that she herself experienced as a woman in nineteenth-century Europe (Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* 233). Shelley acknowledged her understanding of this contemporary situation in a letter to Frances Wright:

> You do honour to our species & what perhaps is dearer to me, to the feminine part of it. - and that thought, while it makes me doubly interested in you, makes me tremble for you -women are so per{pet}ually the victims of their generosity & their purer, & more sensitive feelings render them so much less than men capable of battling the selfishness, hardness & ingratitude wh [sic] is so often the return made, for the noblest efforts to benefit others (Bennett, ed. *Letters*, 1983, 4).

This extract presented her recognition of the struggle that women were to contend with if they wished to break free from the traditional reins of feminine domesticity. Her comment also reflected the way she depicted her female characters in *Frankenstein*, which saw them paying dearly for their more virtuous nature.

Years later, Mary Shelley again revealed her understanding of the roles and nature of women as subordinate to men. Her letter to Maria Gisborne concerned many topics. Of particular interest was her comment concerning women's intellect:

> You speak of women's intellect - We can scarcely do more than judge
> by ourselves - I know that however clever I may be there is in me a
> vacillation, a weakness, a want of "eagle winged {"} resolution that
> appertains to my intellect as well as my moral character - & renders me
> what I am - to one of broken purposes - failing thought & a heart all
> wounds. - My Mother had more energy of character -still she had not
> sufficient fire of imagination - In short my belief is - whether there be
> sex in in [sic] souls or not - that the sex of our material mechanism
> makes us quite different creatures - better though weaker but wanting
> in the higher grades of intellect. (Bennet, ed. *Letters* 246).

Although this comment was unusually rich in its "self-depreciation" (Berhendt 72), in that it pointed out women as "weaker," it was also supportive of Mellor's view that Mary Shelley upheld a feminine ideology. She acknowledged that, although traditionally weaker, women were "better," stronger and virtuous in their ideals than their male counterparts.

The negative descriptions of the feminine in *Frankenstein* revealed an almost scathing reaction from Mary Shelley concerning these masculine ideological representations of women. Widely critiqued as a successful novel, some researchers have suggested that the actual act of writing the novel was also a remarkable achievement for a young woman writer in this Romantic age. Not only did Mary Shelley go beyond the typical subject area for many female authors in the nineteenth century, but she also achieved serious recognition as an accomplished writer, which

was a difficult milestone for any woman in an age of patriarchal domination in all spheres of life. Literature was a masculine realm that claimed 'authority' over various issues and aspects of literature, including publication and criticism. Literature was a serious occupation, as demonstrated by such writers as Wordsworth and Coleridge, who were concerned in their poetry with various philosophical and social issues. The novel, on the other hand, was largely regarded as domestic entertainment. It was, therefore, a form of expression that was an acceptable arena for women writers and readers.

The idea of equating novels with women was obvious in many of the stereotypical reactions which reviewers gave to the novel. Readers of novels were described as "idle templars, raw prentices, and green girls, that support the circulating libraries of this learned metropolis" (qtd. in Donoghue 42).[93] Although later apologising for the negative response to novels, the reviewers also seemed irritated by the lack of difference between good and bad material and lack of quality coming from the "herd of Novelists" - as Wollstonecraft herself called them (qtd. in Donoghue 43).[94] Writing later in her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft reiterated the Reviews' concerns about the Romance novel's corruptive influences on the young mind (Donoghue 44).[95] Even booksellers were not immune to the criticism, as this extract illustrates:

> The booksellers, those pimps of literature, take care every winter to procure a sufficient quantity of tales, memoirs, and romances for the entertainment of their customers, many of whom, not capable of distinguishing between good and bad, are mighty well satisfied with whatever is provided for them: as their female readers in particular have generally most voracious appetites, and are not overly delicate in

their choice of food, every thing that is new will go down. The

circulating librarians, therefore, whose very beings depend on

amusements of this kind, set their authors to work regularly every

season, and, without the least grain of compassion for us poor

Reviewers, who are obliged to read their performances, pester the

public with their periodical nonsense (qtd. in Donoghue 44).[96]

The Gothic novel was part of this domestic entertainment and, although women had a recognised place in the Gothic and, later, Romantic genres, it has been clearly illustrated that the literary realm took part in hierarchical gendering. Agress notes the Gothic novel's concentration on the traditional depiction of women in these stories. Women were often presented as "beautiful, passive, and suffering, perfectly pure or perfectly repentant" (147). Shelley participated, purposely, in this Gothic tradition in *Frankenstein*, with her accurate reflection of women's positions in nineteenth century society.

Popular belief held that the woman writer was like a puppet or mouthpiece for social opinion and she must reflect the idiosyncratic thoughts of her period (Agress 167). In attempting a breakthrough into the new genres and styles, women had to compete against an already competitive masculine authorial establishment. Not only did they risk criticism for entering the male dominated literary field as authors, but they also risked condemnation concerning their violation of the expected female nature (Berhendt 73).[97] For women, then, serious authorship was a difficult area in which to compete.

The Influence of the Critical Double Standard

Frankenstein was an extrapolation of the dichotomy of thought which was the established structure of nineteenth-century Romanticism. It courageously depicted the disastrous potential implicit in a male-dominated world of Cartesian duality. Moreover, in focusing on and utilising the typical expectations and perceptions of its contemporary readers and reviewers, the novel questioned the very concept of Romanticism as a construct of balanced opposites. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a remarkable piece of feminist writing because she used literary tactics that differed significantly from those of her female predecessors. Taking on an argument from the marginal literary zone of the novel allowed Shelley to challenge the inherent dichotomous worldview, of which women writers were critical, through a less overt, more passive voice, and this tactic has proven successful in a number of ways.

In choosing to write a novel (an accepted literary form for women), Mary Shelley appeared to accept, to the best of her ability, the limitations established by an overtly masculine society. Novels were a form typically chosen by women, and the Gothic genre was also familiarly a woman's choice when writing at the time. Mary Shelley's choice, then, of genre and form, seemed to demote her to the category in which Hannah More was placed. She wrote a story appealing to the male audience. It depicted men in the public sphere doing what they did best; they were scholars, scientists and explorers. It also depicted women in the private domain doing what they did best; they looked after the children and family, took care of all the household chores, dutifully attended social gatherings, while all the time worried about the health and safety of their male partners. In this sense, Mary Shelley appealed to the audience's expectations by presenting an accurate portrayal of the current issues and Romantic ideologies that framed the early nineteenth century. Evidently following in

her mother's footsteps she also seemed to be another female writer who fell victim to the "pressures exerted upon the woman author..." in "adopting the masculinist culture's literary conventions" (Berhendt 72).

It has been further suggested that in her efforts to write such a tale, Mary Shelley suffered from a little anxiety about the reaction towards her first novel.[98] Many critics have focused on this issue of author anxiety, pointing out that women writers like Shelley published their literature anonymously. However, in keeping with the idea that many women writers were forced to adopt the masculine forms in order for their works to be considered as genuine pieces of literature, Mary Shelley's move to remain anonymous could be viewed as a necessary and effective tactic, as evidenced from early reviews of *Frankenstein*.

These reviews pointed to certain conventional aspects in her novel that were associated with the techniques of many accomplished male authors. One review, in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, commented on the shocking nature of the content on *Frankenstein*. Clearly there was no consideration of a female author: women possessed virtuous and benevolent natures, and simply were not viewed as contemplating such shocking and violent storylines. Another point that the review focused on was the nature of the events within the novel. Not only were the descriptions of scenery praised, but also the logical precision of the events was noted. This appraisal of Mary Shelley's coherence in storyline reflected her adoption of a recognised mode of masculine literature, in much the same way as Mary Wollstonecraft used the male literary form of strict logic and reasoning to validate her own argument. From the beginning, the review noted the tale as being the "production of no ordinary Writer," and by the end, the suggestion was that it was perhaps the work of a "Noble Poet" - a phrase often used to refer to Byron.

Blackwood's Magazine also assumed *Frankenstein* to be written by a man. The review went beyond implicating a male author and actually suggested that Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*. This deduction was based on the very telling sign of the dedication to William Godwin, Percy's father-in-law. Considering this assumption of identity, the rest of the review for Mary Shelley's novel was full of praise. Revealing a classic case of mistaken identity, the reviewer remarked on the author's clarity and "forcibly expressed" ideas, as well as *his* [99] descriptions of landscape having "in them the choice requisites of truth, freshness, precision, and beauty...". As a further compliment, and perhaps indicator of the presumed identity of the author, the reviewer continued the praise by noting how the "author possesses the same facility in expressing *himself* [100] in verse as in prose."[101]

The critics, all male, assumed *Frankenstein* to be the work of a male author. It was such narrow-minded thought that led so many women writers to "misrepresent" themselves by conforming to the previously laid down conventions and styles that they were directed toward (Berhendt 72). Mary Shelley, however, defied these pressures, by utilising the current nineteenth-century thought process and attitude to her advantage. She used the expectations of her audience against them. Although aware of the division that existed between the various aspects of culture and society, the audience unconsciously expected a traditional story to be revealed.[102] Led in the beginning to suspect that a traditional Gothic tale was what they would be reading, the audience would have felt betrayed when Mary Shelley finally revealed a strangely evocative story that ended in monstrousness, death, destruction and isolation, and presumably had no clear moral or solution. In this way, she is seen as a representative of a new social and cultural age and her story is evidence of a literary evolution, which sees *Frankenstein* as a symbol of a radically new mode of female authorship.

Shelley departed from the preferred formalities of the well-established masculine literary standard commonly adopted by many female writers and presented, instead, a story that challenged her readers.

The challenge was driven forward in Mary Shelley's active stance against the typical expectations of her audience. It also came from the ensuing concerns that were raised by the various criticisms and perspectives about the story. A particular licence, as it were, for the multiplicity of interpretations stems from the fact that Mary Shelley failed to resolve the story. In not providing a solution to *Frankenstein*, and the actions of all her characters, Mary Shelley allowed critics and researchers to conclude varying and sometimes stretched accounts as to what she meant when she wrote this tale.

This element of *Frankenstein* was particularly attractive and pleasing to the male reader and critic, because Shelley's characters all resembled the real nineteenth-century world in which she and her readers were living. It was here that Shelley began to weave a web of imagined reality to capture her readers' full attention. To strengthen this web of deceptive reality, Shelley borrowed from Defoe's formula in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). His use of diary entries, as well as a preface that claimed he was merely editor of a man's incredible life experiences, enhanced his intention to give to his story a belief factor. Much like Defoe's aim to "invest his narrative with a sense of reality..."(Cross 28), Shelley, too, does this by utilising every available device in order to deceive the reader. This illusion of truth was cast further by the normalcy of her character, Victor Frankenstein. Victor was a man of ambition, a man of science and learning. He epitomised the typical male Romantic who desired achievement, recognition and success in the public sphere. The experiences that Victor contended with seemed to bring the story down to the level of ordinary man.

He represented Shelley's concept of man in the early nineteenth century and this factor added to the believability of the novel.

This identification and illusive reality of various literary tactics in Defoe's novel of incident was influential in the structure of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In simple terms, what Defoe did for the novel of incident was to humanise it (Cross 28-29) and, almost a century later, Mary Shelley did the same for the Gothic novel. But she was not alone in this. Jane Austen also adopted this realistic human element to the Gothic, in her novel, *Northanger Abbey*.

.

Jane Austen

In comparison to women writers such as Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, Jane Austen was a well-respected and highly regarded female author. Her works were acclaimed with an enthusiasm that counterbalanced any minor critical reviews. Her well-known favourites are still read, studied and reviewed by readers and researchers all over the modern world. Austen's first novel, *Northanger Abbey* (published posthumously in 1818), can be seen as an early example of Austen's concerns. It was a novel that set a new standard in women's writing and female commentary from a novelistic point of view.

Jane Austen was writing in a time when women were rebelling against their roles, raising their voices and taking an active stance against the traditional standards concerning women's secondary status. Women writers like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft had had their say and were heavily criticised, both by male and female critics. Jane Austen did not want to make the same mistake. It is well documented that she wrote all her manuscripts over and over, revising them thoroughly so as to avoid any possible critical review that may have damaged her character or her family name. It is also well known that she sent out the manuscript for what was eventually published as *Northanger Abbey* many years before the publication of her first release, *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811. The mystery of its advertised release and subsequent non-release is still a question that many scholars argue on, but the fact that Austen bought it back to rework and republish indicates that she was unhappy about its last polished form and possibly chose to modify it in the light of the new literary environment.

The Gothic novel was the popular genre circulating in the mobile libraries and typical periodicals at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Gothic

tropes allowed readers to dream of the unreal, the supernatural. The world of the dark Gothic enabled readers to imagine beyond the realities of life and the typical ordinariness of normal living. It was a phase that captured the reader's need for a superficial and fantastical world to turn to.

Austen wrote *Northanger Abbey* as a reaction to this popularisation of the genre. Published after she died, and after her more famous works, *Northanger Abbey* can seem a little outdated. However, the Gothic remained a popular and familiar style, recognised by much of the reading public (evidence of this popularity is the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818). The novel can easily be read as a typical Gothic piece that 'cashes in' on the hype and craze that was leading the literary market. In analysing *Northanger Abbey* more closely, however, one can read a great deal more between Austen's lines.

Northanger Abbey tells the story of a naive young girl's journey through the social world of courtship. Moreover it seems, on the surface, a journey that follows through the natural phases of a typical heroine who finds and eventually marries her typical hero. A closer reading of the story tells a different tale, and it was Austen's remarkable use of the unspectacular and the ordinary, throughout the story, which placed her among a new league of women writers.

Austen's style of writing deviated (presumably with purpose, as some critics argue) strongly from her predecessors. The style of her feminist foremothers had proven unsuccessful. They directly attacked the dominant social order and traditional stereotypes concerning a variety of issues, those prominent being women and education. In their overt criticism of the way of life lived for and by every woman, man and child, however, women authors like Wollstonecraft and Macaulay only paved the way for further resistance to their fight for women's rights. Jane Austen

was a different breed of woman writer. She belonged to a different class - an all-important distinguishing fact in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Established in this higher class, she was able to describe it accurately from the inside; her experience allowed her a first-hand view. Although Wollstonecraft also wrote for readers in this privileged class, and believed strongly in her mind that this was where a difference could be made, she remained an outsider. The conviction and strength of her writing therefore could not possibly have the advantage of Austen's writing, which shared a world-view with its readers.

Writing from within, Jane Austen could say the unsayable (Kirkham 162).[103] She could criticise and attack with purpose the many issues those women writers like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft also attacked. Unlike her foremothers, however, Austen's attack was not overt, nor was it in any way direct. Rather than assume a more extroverted role in her criticisms, like Wollstonecraft, Austen chose instead to have various issues emerge gradually within the story. This method allowed her criticisms to be 'mere' fiction - made up characters with made up lives. No one could really blame Austen directly for the different, sometimes strange characters within *Northanger Abbey*. After all, it was just a Gothic tale, a simple tale about a heroine who marries her hero. Nonetheless, just as Wollstonecraft's words assumed a familiar reflection of Macaulay's, so Austen's words seem in many cases to mirror much of Wollstonecraft's own criticisms.

To fully discover the potential impact of *Northanger Abbey* in the late eighteenth century, it is first necessary to explain the story. The supposed heroine of the tale was Catherine Morland. The question of Catherine's heroic capabilities is often noted and researchers like Milligan suggest an "anti-heroine mode."[104] This deliberate control by the author over her character formation has led many researchers

to suggest that Austen was deliberately challenging the conventional methods and rules of the typical heroine/adventure story. Rather than paint the perfect picture of a heroine, Austen's heroine was opposite in both appearance and nature. Catherine was a tomboy. She was plain and her literary and musical skills were very mediocre. Furthermore, she had no lovers to admire her and did not really possess any great features to attract one. Although she did not explicitly describe the perfect heroine, Austen still suggested that this very ordinary girl *was* to be the expected heroine (V. Jones 8).[105] "...From fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine..." ; "Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way" (*Northanger Abbey*, 19, 20, respectively). Readers became curious as to how and why such a naive young ordinary woman could possibly become a heroine. They were intrigued by the simplicity of her character, and the open possibilities allowed readers to dream of a reality in which one day they too could become something extraordinary.

Although an ordinary woman, Catherine was the one who would be the heroine of the story. All the authorial hints pointed in that direction. The control which Jane Austen had over her readers' every emotion and expectation was well devised. She mixed the expected with the unexpected. She allowed the reader to move toward a certain feeling, but before they became so comfortable as to predict the next move, she smoothly destroyed any sense of comfort. Walton A. Litz [106] suggests that what Austen realised in this method of authorial control was that the "reader's feeling of cozy security was an illusion, and that the ridiculousness of the average Gothic fiction lay in its sentimentality and improbability, not in the emotions which it presented in debased form" (66).

Realising that the reality of the situation was also important to the reader, Austen, as a writer, knew that in order to keep hold of the reader's attention she had

to incorporate some general material.   Her unexpected material and emotional control over the reader was supported and strengthened by her use of the predictable. Austen chose to utilise the natural social environment, so all the typical references to the class structure and social standards became familiar points of reference for the reader. Despite this 'local' and, perhaps, standardised style, Austen was able to express her individual didactic force by combining both the predictable and unpredictable.

In the beginning of the story, for example, there seems a possible authorial comment in the very name of her heroine. Typically, a bountiful dowry was essential for women who wanted to marry well (and men too needed fortune). The potential of gaining a husband was greatly increased if a woman had land and property when entering into marriage. It was assumed, then, that a heroine with the surname of Morland (*more* land) would surely be a hint by the author of the possible outcome of the story. It was not to be. Rather, the whole journey that Catherine experienced as a part of the social scene in and beyond Bath was based on other people's assumptions of her wealth. She was thought to be wealthy, but when she was incorrectly judged to be poor, the very idea of marrying her hero seemed impossible. This was this type of control that Austen experimented with. Typically, the reader expected Catherine to marry her hero, but when she was thrown out of the abbey in true Gothic style, Austen again proved her control. In the hint of Catherine's name reader's expectations seemed typically to be fulfilled, as Catherine enjoyed the celebrations among the rich and wealthy, but with every turning of a new page, the reader's expectations were not satisfied. The reader could not predict the next line, the possible outcome. That was Austen's role as the writer and she succeeded in her authorial role to keep the reader guessing.

This authorial control over the reader was interesting. It was extended further with the development of the four other main characters. There were two brother-sister pairings that Catherine was able to associate with, and the situations between these two brother-sister pairs acted as a guide for Catherine in her personal journey of moral and rational growth. The one female whom Catherine initially became attached to was Isabella Thorpe. Her character was one who typically lived by the literature she read. In all the circumstances of which she was a part it was clear that every expression and behaviour was a performance. She was representative of all the typical characters with whom she identified. Her exaggerated conversation, indecisiveness, and her repeated superficial kindness and love were portrayed to resemble the standard female victim that the Gothic had made famous.

The way in which Isabella was formed to represent, and in fact to behave, in this 'victim' mode was extremely damaging to the so-called female movement of the time. Despite coming from a novel, and a Gothic one at that, Austen had given critics the evidence needed to argue against the efforts of the female reader to choose their own reading material. Isabella Thorpe was the perfect character for the critics to condemn. Her reason, if any, was founded on the emotion and passion that the Gothic seemed to exude. Beyond this type of sentimental rationale, she seemed to possess no underlying moral or religious character and, therefore, could not be allowed to pass uncriticised.

Although Austen seemed to have betrayed the female movement, she had not. Her characterisation of Isabella was necessary in order to lure the readers (and critics) into this mode of thinking. Catherine was unscathed by Isabella's disloyalty towards her brother, and she gradually learned - on her own - that Isabella was not the type of friend she initially seemed. Through all the situations that Catherine and Isabella

shared, it was Catherine herself who came to realise that Isabella was not a stable character for her to learn from. The message, which Austen had cleverly embedded into her story, was that ordinary women, as Catherine would prove, could read a novel, choose their literary material, and not be affected in their thought and behaviour. Women could look beyond the Gothic and the fairy tales and could determine what was real and imaginary. Despite the fears of textual influence leading to women's moral corruption, Jane Austen suggested that reading women were capable of making the right moral and personal choices and could be respectable and responsible individuals in their decision making.

Jerinic supports this message, stating that what Austen has in fact done is celebrate reading women. Furthermore, she states that *Northanger Abbey* is a "strong social critique..." and the genderisation of the fear surrounding textual influence is thrown out of the window, because Austen suggested in her story that it was not reading women who were the threats. Rather it was the "men who wish to dictate to women what they should and should not read. Austen does not want to reshape or reform men, but her text does insist that women be allowed the same opportunities as men to choose what they read" (Jerinic 138).[107]

This message was reinforced by the obvious deformities in John Thorpe's social and literary 'expertise.' John was a typical male scholar who found great entertainment in his holiday by riding his horses into the ground. He was loud and active and brutally frank in his opinions. Although Catherine immediately disliked him, she felt wrong to trust her own quick judgments, especially when he was Isabella's brother and her own brother's best friend. In his own quick criticism concerning the beauty of the women they passed while riding, for example, Catherine, although "listening and agreeing as long as she could, with all the civility and

deference of the youthful female mind...," was "fearful of hazarding an opinion of [her] own in opposition to that of a self-assured man..." (*Northanger Abbey* 47).[108] In managing to change the subject to the latest novel one was reading, she only felt more "humbled and ashamed" for ever admitting her excitement and passion over Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*. John's reaction was immediate disgust for anyone who would consider reading novels, which he claimed were "the stupidest things in creation," filled with nothing more than "nonsense and stuff" (47).

Catherine's initial judgment was correct, but in all her experiences with John Thorpe, she was often left feeling ignorant and naive. Her own excitement was put aside, as was her opinion. It was not surprising that she forfeited voicing a personal side, however. It was a natural and common behaviour and Austen's scene described the very relationship that existed between men and women in the social and literary world. Men were the majority of literary critics, publishers and authors. They were highly regarded as artists who were responsible in their quests, as it were, to convey a message to the literate public. Novels, such as the Gothic, were viewed with contempt and were certainly not regarded as serious literature, yet the novel was a literary form that became acceptable for women to use, if they insisted on writing in the first place. It was a form and style of writing that the highly regarded male critics and literary authority assumed would suit women best. After all, women were not yet classed as serious citizens who could make a positive difference to the State, and they certainly were not thought to possess the intellectual capacity to write serious literature. Novels, the Gothic, and romance seemed appropriate then, as a settlement to the women who felt a need to experience a similar creative and literary talent (but by far an inferior, subordinate and superficial style) to men.

But *Northanger Abbey* destroyed all such negative assumptions concerning women and their literary freedom. In her heroine's development, (which is the point of much of the story), Jane Austen allowed Catherine to choose her own fate, and in making her own decisions, her heroine also made her own mistakes. The matching pair of Isabella and John revealed that the Thorpes would represent the threat to Catherine's self-development. To counteract this flawed pair, Austen introduced another sister-brother pair. It was up to Catherine, however, to choose between the two familial pairs. It was her own decision that would eventually lay down the foundation for what type of person she would become.

With a move to the abbey with her chosen friends, Elinor and Henry Tilney, Catherine's mind began to open up and mature. In the company of the Tilneys she found comfort in the knowledge that these two people both enjoyed the Gothic style and they did not mind discussing and sometimes living within the fantasy. The conversation became more emotional and passionate when focused on the library of novels that they had all read. The atmosphere in the story changed at this point. It became lighter, more comfortable and altogether positive, and the change was reflected in Catherine herself. With her realisation of the true character of the Thorpes, Catherine developed as an individual. She became "morally active" (V. Jones 21), shedding her naivety. She showed a growing independence, as she became stronger in her effort to accept the real value of her own feelings. Finally, she contradicted the male authority of her brother and his praise of John Thorpe and she slowly, but constantly, questioned Isabella's value as a genuine friend. Vivien Jones sees this development in the heroine as marking a progressive step "towards a moral maturity" (21). Austen's message was directed at literary authority that had established the growing anxiety about women's freedom to choose what they read.

Moreover, it was a comment on the wider social strictures about women's choices and the very concept of freedom and individuality for women. The "moral maturity" that Catherine gained by being in the company of those who shared and encouraged her literary choices was a positive message to literary authority, and directly challenged the fears of textual influence leading to women's moral corruption.

This issue was taken further in chapter v of *Northanger Abbey*. Many critics have commented on what has commonly been termed the "Northanger Defence of the Novel."[109] This section of the work (chapter v) has been perceived as Austen's own opinion concerning the positive power of novels. It is a remarkably strong passage of writing that clearly defended the novel from its many "detractors." In fact, Kirkham boldly states that it was the "only statement about the novel which [Austen] ever intended for publication" (67).

In admitting that her two female characters, one of whom was to be the heroine of the story, spent much of their spare time reading novels, Austen seemed to have set herself up for disaster. This was not the case, however. The one thing that appeared to surpass this confession was Austen's authorial voice, which seeped through the following passage with an infuriated disgust. Her profound anger was extraordinary in its direction at the "Reviewers." She urged the reader, as well as her fellow writers, not to degrade their own work by censoring their own heroines from the literary joys of novel reading. It was a strong plea to all readers and women to "not desert one another; we are an injured body," claimed Austen. The writer, she insisted, had struggled to produce a literary work, and even though the novel might not possess a similar capacity of entertainment and learning to other literary forms, it was a composition that "ha[d] been so much decried." Austen was drawing an important point out into the open, a point that seemed to have been accepted for so

long. She boldly stated the truth, that there "seem[ed] almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances ... of a novelist...." (37).

The denial in the enjoyment of novel reading was a "common cant," stated Austen, but she insisted that the literary work within the novel was something to celebrate. It was a form in which the "greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language" (37-8). This passage showed Austen's awareness of the world around her. Moreover, it was an unmistakable indication of her acceptance of the role she had undertaken, to continue the challenge to literary authority and patriarchal tradition, which undervalued women's intellectual capacity. Especially concerned with the literary, she boldly stated her support for a more informed and wider acceptance of novel writers, especially women writers.

This passage can almost be seen as a direct attack on her fellow women writers who wished to demoralise and decry the very act of writing novels. Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More all criticised the novelist and the novel. They felt those greatly acclaimed novelists like Rousseau set a bad example for women. These earlier women writers felt that novelists led women readers astray in their celebration of immoral women. They believed that novels, from Rousseau in particular, actively participated in the continued and encouraged tradition of relegating women to subordinate and inferior positions in life. Austen advocated for the writer and reader to accept that there was a different view of life, a more positive and fair outlook. Her novel set a new standard. It became a stage for protest. In her defence of novels, Austen believed that novels could be the new way for women and men to learn about

their culture and history. Novels could pave the way for change, and writers of novels

should be supported in their goals because they, too, had a message to voice in much

the same way as a poet or critic or philosopher.

What was particularly striking in this enthusiastic praise for writers and

readers of novels was the very presence of Austen's authorial voice. The reader

assumed that Henry Tilney would lead and direct the storyline. In Chapter v,

however, Austen intruded, as it were, in speaking directly to the reader herself.

Nowhere else in *Northanger Abbey* was Austen so pointed as in this defence of the

novel. This overt criticism was an unusual tactic by a novelist because Austen was not

writing a tract or an instructional book. She was writing a novel, a fictional tale about

the life of a young lady. However, some striking issues emerged from this simple plot

and it seemed as if she was guided by some strong opinion that led to this deviation

from the conventional method of the author-reader relationship. Henry's voice did

not seem enough. He could not emphasise more explicitly than Austen herself could

the injustice that novelists had suffered with the degradation and censorship of their

literary efforts. Only Jane Austen could say what she wanted. She stepped out from

behind her character-spokesperson and onto the page with her own words, her own

opinion. Finally, a woman took the chance and stood up for her beliefs. Most

importantly, in the eventual release and publication of *Northanger Abbey*, Austen's

words would forever go on record in defence of women reading and writing reputable

novels.

In stepping onto the page and going on record in defence of the novel, Jane

Austen defied convention. She supported a definite role for novels, which

emphasised the importance and positive power that novels could hold over readers, be

they men or women. Most importantly, she denied the assumption of the corruptive

power of novels over women's morals. What Austen achieved before *Northanger Abbey* was ever published was a reputation as a good female author. She carefully toed the line in favour of publishing stories that would be praised as good entertainment. However, had *Northanger Abbey* been the first of Austen's literary efforts to be released, her reputation for producing acceptable novels might not have been so glamorous and socially approved. If one revisits *Northanger Abbey* as the first of Austen's novels, what is evident is Austen's individualism as a novelist. A key term in discussing this first authorial attempt is convention - or rather, the lack of convention.

Northanger Abbey seemed an early representation of a young adventurous novelist who seemed to deliberately play with the various conventions that were considered necessary in the 'code' of novel writing. Her unconventional heroine for example, was almost an anti-heroine, and the potential lovers Austen allowed the heroine to meet were representative of a reconstruction, as it were, of the fairy tale conventions. Hoeveler has observed that the narrative control with which Austen presented her story was obvious in her very inclusion of a "double suitor" format (123).[110] In presenting this unconventional choice to her heroine, and in fact, in the very idea that the heroine in some way had a choice, *Northanger Abbey* was a new development in the literary mechanisms of story telling, especially in this genre, where the female was usually the victim of a Gothic tale.

Essentially, Austen's complication and manipulation of such traditional literary structures allowed critics a sneak peak into the mind of a developing young female author. In her conscious deviation from a simple literary structure, such as the fairy tale, Austen managed to transform the very nature of her own act of writing. In developing the story *Northanger Abbey,* it now becomes evident that what Austen had

in fact achieved was a reconstruction of the whole idea of genre and the typical

structures with which all writers, novelists especially, were guided. Hoeveler, for

instance, notes that the narrative control, which Austen held over readers, was

strengthened in her "foreshowing" tactics. The fright factor of the Gothic became

nullified because Austen laughed at such stock Gothic tropes and, in doing so, her

reader was "refused the standard power" of surprise that was typically depicted in the

Gothic genre. It was almost ridiculous to have, for instance, a heroine-in-training

whose greatest tragedy was not kidnap or rape but the common fate of not being

asked to dance by a gentleman at the ball (Hoeveler 124).

The idea behind Jane Austen's heroine was intriguing. Some critics suggest

that what Austen wanted was a connection closer than ever imagined from a novel

between the female reader and the heroine of the story. What was apparent in this

intimacy that Austen wished to create was the intrepid notion that women would not

be morally corrupted in the decisions they made in relation to what they read.

Moreover, what has been read as a self-conscious feminist act was her message that

women could be responsible for their decisions, whatever the decision might be.

Hoeveler suggests what that Austen hinted at was that all women were "born the

heroines of their own rather inconspicuous lives, whether they look the part or not."

Catherine was Austen's "Everywoman heroine" (Hoeveler 123).

Simply put: we all make mistakes but, as Catherine proved, we all can do our

best to rectify a bad decision. Whether it concerned a choice in reading material or a

cancelled social engagement, the problem could be solved provided responsibility was

taken. One issue Austen broached in *Northanger Abbey* was the factor of

responsibility. Like men, women could and did make mistakes, but women did not

have responsibility as citizens, so why should they have responsibility at all? The

very distinction between the sexes had led to the development of this traditional dichotomy of thought. It was this patriarchal way of life, which had been embedded into women's thought and their domestic lives for so long, which made it difficult for women to take the responsibility for mistakes, to make choices and to decide for themselves. Traditionally, responsibility for one's actions had not been a major part of women's lives. What Austen suggested, in her heroine's acceptance of her misunderstandings and wrong assumptions, was a situation that *could* happen. In realising and waking up to the reality, Austen suggested that Catherine's experiences could be the experiences of every young woman. Novels or no novels, women must be allowed to choose. Women must control and be responsible for their own decisions.

Jane Austen took this point further in her exploitation of the conventions of literary writing, in her recognition of, and amplification of, the gendered dichotomy of the social world in which she lived. Throughout *Northanger Abbey* it was clear that Austen had a point to make concerning the idiosyncrasies of her social class and its traditional separation of masculine and feminine roles, traits and situations. In looking at the male and female characters in *Northanger Abbey* it can be assumed that some are caricatures, based on the stereotypical range of women and men around her.

Isabella Thorpe was conniving and flirtatious. She used her beauty and feigned innocence as ploys in a private matchmaking game to find the perfect husband. Mrs. Allen ruled her all her worldly knowledge and behaviour in relation to fashion. She made decisions about social engagements, individual personalities and morals according to the latest and greatest in material, design, and overall appearance of one's clothing. Hoeveler believes that these female characters were powerless pawns (122).

These types of women possessed the very characteristics that Wollstonecraft was criticising in the *Vindication*. Wollstonecraft would have seen these two characters as exemplars of the effect of a poor education and, as a result, women such as Isabella and Mrs. Allen would have become victims to the standards that men had laid down for women concerning dress and behaviour. Hoeveler recreates Wollstonecraft's tone:

> Taught from birth to fetishize their physical appearance as their only means of survival, women can only become as foolish as Mrs. Allen or as cunning as Isabella. Like lapdogs coddled and petted, such women are physically weak and mentally vacuous, living only for the attentions occasionally doled out to them by their masters (120).

This behaviour, which was so characteristic of the female way of life in the Bath social scene, was intentionally realistic according to Austen. In her depiction of these types of women in *Northanger Abbey*, Hoeveler believes that Austen may have been suggesting that for many women to play the role of the victim and to profit from it was the closest thing to being a feminist (Hoeveler 121). The irony of what a woman's movement really meant in this period was realised in Austen's depiction of women in *Northanger Abbey*.

This aspect of gender bias was again approached in Austen's 'typecasting' of men in such a time. John Thorpe was as exaggerated as any 'typical' male could be. He shone when talking about his leisure activities, which were his horse and carriage. Other than this topic the conversation soon ceased. He had an indifference toward everything, considering women on face value and judging a woman in the same way as he would his horses (V. Jones 14).

Although her characters appeared to embody specific traits that Austen was presumably mocking - the flirt, the fashion conscious and the self-absorbed - Henry and Catherine were much more complex characters. The depth of these two characters directs the analysis into difficult territory, because the complex, yet ironic nature of these characters, especially Henry Tilney.

Henry Tilney was certainly cast from a different mould. His character was one of mixed traditional masculinism and an interesting level of femininity. In one situation, Henry was an expert in the feminine habits, boasting to his new dance partner, Catherine:

> My dear madam, I am not so ignorant of young ladies' ways as you wish to believe me; it is this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Every body allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature may have done something, but I am sure it must be essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal (29).

Henry also was guilty of being attracted to Catherine for her ignorance. Austen led the reader into this line of thought, when she lectured to her readers on the traditional "advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl," which were essentially that "imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms" (102). Catherine, Austen revealed, "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..." (102). These were the typical thoughts of a man in the Romantic era who lived in a society where the genders were polarised so thoroughly.

There were peculiarities in Henry Tilney's character, however, which marked him as an extraordinarily balanced individual who possessed both masculine and feminine qualities. In one conversation he admitted to Catherine that he believed that "In every power, of which taste is the foundation, excellence is pretty fairly divided between the sexes" (29). In another situation, Henry revealed himself as an expert in the properties of muslin. Even Catherine began to realise that he was not an ordinary man, but she brushed off the notion that he was "strange," as Mrs. Allen was so intrigued and comforted in his "genius" and the fact that he even took the slightest notice of what they were wearing (30). Henry differed remarkably from John Thorpe in his deliberate sensitivity to Catherine's and other's interests. Later on, as their relationship developed, Catherine was astonished and warmed by the fact that Henry actually liked reading novels, especially those seemingly directed at the female reader.

Henry Tilney's taste and passion for the Gothic genre put him into a class of men that appeared to view life as a more open and even playing field for the genders. Vivien Jones believes that the character of Henry Tilney showed "unprejudiced common sense" and was willing to accept and judge people on "individual merits" (14). Most impressively, his character was not ridiculed, nor did he appear in any way less masculine. It was this very complexity which left the reader and the critic guessing, wondering whether Jane Austen was deliberate in creating such a diverse male character. On the one hand, Henry's masculine traits, like his attraction to women's ignorance as 'charming,' led the reader to presume a typically masculine character. On the other hand, Henry's particular affinity with things traditionally feminine, like his expert knowledge of muslin, led the reader to rethink this

masculinity and to reconsider Austen's intentions in her creation of a male hero who possessed these feminine traits.

The deviation from the standard 'script' of a Gothic story was obvious in *Northanger Abbey*. The female heroine of the story did not appear to be the typical Gothic female victim. Austen interrupted the main flow of the story in her direct attack on the social and literary authority that masterminded the unproven and disabling 'textual influence' theory. Henry Tilney was not the typical male hero of a Gothic story, nor was he the only hero for the heroine to choose from. Even the fact that Catherine had the choice of two men was another point that emphasised Austen's interesting and experimental re-construction of the Gothic structures.

However, there was one element of the Gothic novel that she did not dismiss. The ending of such stories was typically a romantic 'heroine gets her hero' outcome. Despite all drama and adventure and Austen's deliberate denial of the power of the Gothic mechanisms to her reader, she returned to the traditional structure in the final pages of the book. The ending may seem like she was reverting to the rules of novel writing in quickly tying up all the loose ends. For example, Henry and Catherine were married. So too was Elenor, and the General was happy to learn that Catherine was not as poor as he originally thought. Austen admitted that her readers would see this obvious solution in the final pages of *Northanger Abbey*, writing, "I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity" (217). But this ironic confession only reinforced Austen's control over her readers.

Rather than have a predictable outcome that the reader could look forward to, Austen once again makes her move in refusing the reader any guesswork. She even went as far as to lay out every detail involved in the happy ending. In a clever use of

a situation earlier in the story, the reader was reminded about the list Catherine found in her room at the Abbey, and Austen used this list as the connection to the man Elenor married. Austen used direct authorial address when she added to the text, in parenthesis, that she was "aware that the rules of composition forbid the introduction of a character not connected with my fable" (218). As a tidy conclusion was necessary Austen completed her task as a novelist, but her ending was somewhat dramatic, as if she were returning her characters to a box, like "puppets ... and making fun of her own performance" (Milligan 29).

The idea of a perfect ending was strangely marred by the final sentence of the story, in which Austen left a thought for the reader to consider. In an ironic twist, Austen finally allowed the reader to make a decision, to guess and to ponder on the final outcome of the story. After carefully manipulating the reader's every thought and feeling she suddenly threw upon their discretion the whole message of the story. It was up to the reader to decide the moral - if any - in *Northanger Abbey*, which was unusual and perhaps startling to the reader who expected everything to be announced and laid out for them, especially when this was what Austen had done throughout the whole story. Nowhere else in the book was the reader given the chance to predict something for themselves. Austen had complete control over her reader's every move, and made certain that she destroyed any readerly individualism by taking control and not allowing the reader to become too comfortable. To eventually allow the reader to have the final word was, in actuality, Austen's way of having *her* final word. She controlled the reader again for the final time by allowing this unexpected decision. Austen's manipulation of the reader confirmed that she was very much in control of her writing, and she proved this control even in the final sentence of the book.

Fergus suggests that Austen's intentions were "playful" and that what she wanted was to "bring off a *tour de force*, to expose her readers to everything absurd in a convention or genre and then to make the convention 'work' all the same. She explode[d] a convention and then exploit[ed] it, and in doing so, often succeed[ed] in eliciting a response from the reader in spite of himself." In *Northanger Abbey*, Fergus suggests that Austen "demonstrate[d] the force of literary convention, its fundamental accommodation and appeal to human emotions - but she also simply show[ed] off her power over her readers"(20).[111]

Despite Milligan's criticism of *Northanger Abbey*'s ending, which he considers "lacking in integration," he shares Fergus's opinions regarding Austen's playful intentions. Milligan sees her games with the conventions of the novel as a "a new and honourable kind of art-form." In her "verbal acrobatics and constructional play" he believes that Austen's novel is "worthy of the clever facetiousness of the young Jane Austen," despite the serious purpose in the ending. Underneath, there "lies the affirmation that the novel is more than a game, that it can offer some reflective critique of current modes of life. Jane Austen has learnt that she can do more than make fun of existing kinds of novel..." (29-30).

The Influence of the Critical Double Standard

Jane Austen established her name in the literary field with the success of her four well-known novels, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) being the first. Although considered in this analysis as her first piece of mature writing, *Northanger Abbey* was, in publishing terms, merely an addition to her status as a successful writer. F.R. Leavis called Austen the "inaugurator of the great tradition of the English novel" (7), but Kirkham believes that Austen's influence on the 'tradition' must be viewed in

relation to her style within a "collective, feminist context" (174). But this construction of Austen as 'feminist' was not a view held in her own era. Rather than any direct criticisms on her social comment being the focus of early reviews, the points that aided the success of *Northanger Abbey* were, more than anything else, her irony, comedy and realism. Another factor, perhaps, for *Northanger Abbey*'s well received induction into the public literary world, could have been the fact that Austen had recently died and was so greatly admired for her work - especially by her family who vigorously protected her virtuous name and artistic reputation - that 'detractors' would not have dared sully her name with criticism.

In 1870, Anthony Trollope declared approvingly that "Throughout all her works, a sweet lesson of homely household womanly virtue is ever being taught."[112] But Austen also attracted her share of criticism (ironically, on much the same grounds that attracted Trollope's praise). Mark Twain wrote: "Jane Austen's books, too, are absent from this library. Just that one omission alone would make a fairly good library out of a library that hadn't a book in it." Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote:

> I am at a loss to understand why people hold Miss Austen's novels at
> so high a rate, which seem to me vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic
> invention, imprisoned in their wretched conventions of English society,
> without genius, wit, or knowledge of the world. Never was life so
> pinched and narrow. ... All that interests in any character [is this]: has
> he (or she) the money to marry with? ... Suicide is more respectable.[113]

Despite such criticisms, it is clear that *Northanger Abbey* highlighted some issues that would suggest Austen had what might now be called feminist tendencies. Although seemingly quaint, *Northanger Abbey* was a story that was much deeper and more complex than the average Gothic. There were a few conservative features, such

as the politeness and civility permeating the whole novel, but the most obvious feature was Jane Austen's determinedly critical response concerning the nature and role of literature.

Like many of her contemporaries, Austen was writing in a time of turmoil, a time when women's capabilities and preferences about women's writing were determined and judged by a ruling masculine authority. Whether it was a critic, publisher or some other literary expert, women's choice and material when writing and reading was rigidly policed – a term that, in relation to the effect of such strictures upon literary women (both readers and writers), is not at all too severe. Many women were frustrated by the controlling forces of the tradition, which prevented women from achieving the same freedom and access to the full potential of the literary market that men had. Austen's famous 'Northanger Defence of the Novel' represented women writers' criticism concerning this stubborn, apparently unchangeable, masculine-dominated field of literature.

Although *Northanger Abbey* seemed conservative in the literary mode Austen chose for her 'feminist' outburst (and a considerably mild one at that), her thoughts towards the Reviewers were openly critical. The negativity and disgust towards the system was a feminist voice striking out. The mildness of the outrage is now considered advantageous and should not lead to a dismissal of this feminist nature. In choosing the Gothic, and quietly but accurately presenting the natural, hence believable, social world of Bath, Austen took control over her readers as they became familiar and intimate with the experiences they read.

Austen always led her reader, and it was evident that she succeeded in this control again and again. An obvious example of her command can be seen in the very nature of her style. Throughout the story what is obvious is that the conventions of the

Gothic, as well as the novel, have been manipulated. Austen's daring experimentation with these established structures leads to a positive view by feminist critics that she possessed an awareness of the patriarchal stranglehold over women's reading and writing. Her intriguing playfulness and irony represented a mixture that emphasised her conscious challenge to the literary tradition. She can be called a feminist in her active denial of a boundary that had been defined for women over centuries. She challenged and overturned these conventions and this was a brave step in the light of the cultural literary reactions of the time. It was a time when critics and authorities were anxiously bracing themselves for a literary reaction against their long-held strictures and boundaries, which controlled the literary market.

Despite the growing discontent of writers and readers, the fears concerning women's moral corruption still held sway, and novels were still pushed into the category of unsavoury and second-class literary works. Strict guidelines determined the success of a literary career, and Austen's deliberate denial of such barriers was a brave front from a woman. In overturning and manipulating the conventions of the novel and the Gothic genre, Austen actually set a new standard for women writers, for she basically transformed the very nature of novel writing and genre structure. Furthermore, the specific literary tactic she employed was one of amelioration; she took up her challenge toward literary patriarchy from the confines of a supposedly restrictive marginal zone, using a typically feminine genre, and this active use of these controlled boundaries advantaged her feminist voice.

Revolution or Amelioration

The first three women writers, Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, represent literary challenges to the system of traditional patriarchy. They insisted on a re-evaluation of the dichotomous worldview that perpetuated a marginalised view of women. Their ideas were revolutionary and so were the literary methods that they chose to utilise. However, in the use of specifically masculine literary techniques, which were assumed necessary if their voices were to be heard, the works of each of these writers have become silenced in the twentieth century. This silencing of their challenges to the system resulted in the lack of success in the present and is related to the effects of the critical double standard.

By using philosophy – a male stream discourse – within their works, it could be argued that Macaulay and Wollstonecraft were attempting to advantage the reception their work received from the literary male elite. Using rational argument and logical thought would have proven that women could write as effectively and professionally as men could. In Gatens' research about women writers, she notes that this line of argument was specifically one that many feminist writers utilised, because in the past, philosophy had proven to be "oppressive" in its regard for women (Gatens 16). It was a male dominated field that had a distinctly masculine bias. According to Gatens, feminist writers thus felt that women's role in philosophical discourse could be quite influential, in that women could offer a certain complementariness, which could remove this bias against women. In women's active use of philosophical terms and theories, there would be the possibility that they would add to this discourse, giving it a feminine touch.

It is important, however, to note that this feminine extension of philosophy was not aimed at competing with the masculine ideals. Rather, the aim was to fill in

the "gaps" and, by so doing, philosophy would become a "human enterprise" (Gatens 16). In order to properly extend any particular masculine discourse and apply it in a way that would make it a "human enterprise," women themselves have to become the problematic object, and women writers' re-examination of this problem involves adopting a particular philosophical theory (Gatens 16). Both Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for an egalitarian approach to their ideas. In their direct criticism of women and in their overt cry for equality on a public, as well as a philosophical level, the message was clear.

Extending philosophy to include women was a valid concept, but problems flowed from the very use of male-stream discourses, which to the modern critic often presented a ludicrously exaggerated exclusion of women. The fact that women were practically non-existent within some of the philosophical theories that various women writers attempted to extend suggests, perhaps, that a complementary application simply could not be established. Gatens proposes that women writers like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft failed in this process, because their comprehensive application of male-stream discourse meant that they did not "add" any of their own words. She also suggests that instead of adding to the theories with a distinctly female voice, the woman writer who chose to emulate philosophical masters did not "claim" any words for herself (Gatens 21). In specifically aiming to disguise her work within a masculine traditional theoretical framework, the feminine voice inevitably became invisible (Gatens 22). Responsibility for the eventual invisibility of these women's voices lay with the traditional standards of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which were founded on a masculine norm.

Despite women writers' active attempts to transcend literary ideologies put upon women, writers like Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More still could not

transcend the double standard that fused women's inferior status and their writing. Women writers were tolerated, but the established guidelines that allowed women into the literary arena were captious and restrictive. Serious considerations were necessary when making the decision to write especially in the manner that Macaulay and Wollstonecraft did. They utilised a specifically masculine literary technique and male stream discourse in their works and actively, as well as very publicly, denounced and criticised the specific gender bias concerning women and their inferior status. In doing so, however, they stirred up the common sentiment of the day, which was that women, who attempted to write didactic literature, were masculine, manly, and unfeminine. In replicating male stream discourses and literary techniques within their works, women like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft impeded women's journey toward literary success.

From my study of Macaulay's *Letters* and Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, it is evident that their literary tactics did not, and could not, work, especially when using male stream theories and literary tactics. As already discussed, these works have failed to make a significant presence in the twentieth century because of the overt nineteenth-century patriarchal ideals concerning women, and the transference of these traditional ideals into literary women. I have given this process, in which women's literary experience in the late eighteenth century has been impeded by traditional masculine strictures, the term 'the critical double standard.' The repercussion of 'the critical double standard' is that these women's works have been virtually silenced. However, I have also found that the literary experimentation undertaken by women writers, of the late eighteenth century, in their efforts to overcome the critical double standard has proven vital to the choices made by the next generation of women writers.

Hannah More, however, is a writer who requires specific attention. Her work was particularly religious and once considered excessively conventional by most critics, but some critics now argue that *Strictures* was a deceptively clever piece of writing from a female writer. Ford and Hole argue that her literary conventionalism is simply masked "artistry" (Ford xi). According to them, Hannah More's concentrated piousness and intentional "lip service" to the dominant cultural ideals allowed her to slip through the ever-critical eyes of the literary authority (Ford 40). The "submerged power" of her literary style as noted by Mitzi Myers has, however, not been given the full honour it rightly deserves (M. Myers 209).

However, despite this current revisionary assessment of the feminist voice, in her lifetime, Hannah More's work was impeded by the inherent patriarchal ideals that plagued literary women during this era. Hannah More suffered on a different level from Macaulay and Wollstonecraft. She avoided the criticisms that both of these women faced concerning their application and extension of masculine theory to include women, by advocating for a renewed pious and moral stance to be taken up by women. Instead of being subject to critical reviews for unladylike literary content or style (none of which the *Strictures* contained), she was thrown aside for the more lively icons of her time, simply because of the sheer conventionality of her work. Part of the reason for this silencing of her feminist voice was that she was writing in a time of political and social change. She produced a literary work that was nowhere near as compelling or topical as the likes of Macaulay and Wollstonecraft, both of who actively challenged the literary and public ideals concerning women in their works. Although slowly becoming recognised as a feminist author, who may in the future be studied further, it is for this reason that Hannah More remains, for the time being, largely invisible and silent.

It is clear that there is a common link that these three writers share. All of them attempted to change the established systems in which they lived. In the time of political debate concerning such issues as authority and rights, women became aware of their enculturation as feminine idols and domesticated subjects. They were encouraged by the political atmosphere and chose to make a stand. This literary confrontation against the masculine idiosyncrasies of women could have been a positive step forward for women. In a time when literature was being churned out to a mass market of consumers who craved for more reading material, women finally had a chance to confront the literary tradition from a stand that was assumedly on an equal level with the male professionals.

However, the critical double standard, which restricted women to a distinctive writing style based (falsely) on women's assumed feminine character has been a key factor that has prevented these literary protests from being as successful as they could have been. As stated earlier, my contention is that any success came about from a choice between amelioration and revolution. These three women writers – Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More – chose a literary tactic that emphasised rebellious ideas concerning their current system. Their overt critical attacks on the traditional masculinity of the era resulted in a backlash of criticism by literary critics both in their own time and today. In the late eighteenth century they were criticised for their use of masculine argument because it essentially translated into women trying to gain a level of equality that simply went against the Romantic concept of balancing opposing forces. In the present, these writers are condemned for their use of male-stream discourse, because critics like Gatens believed that the feminist challenge is thwarted in this active participation of masculine discourse. In taking on a male position, using literary discourse and attempting masculine rationale, these women

lost their own voices and the feminist challenge was eventually silenced and became invisible. The feminist challenge from which they made their stand was lost in a masculine tradition that had already considered women and their writing as second-rate and inferior. Therefore, any direct feminist attack on the traditional dichotomous ideals of the late eighteenth century seems not to have benefited the challenge put forward by these women writers.

As stated throughout my thesis, any overt attack against traditional authority would eventually be thwarted by the critical double standard that women were constantly faced with in these two eras. The French Revolution inspired women to take an active position. The political upheaval throughout England presented women with a positive atmosphere in which they could possibly voice their opinions against the role and zone to which they were allocated. They chose a literary challenge and in terms of 'success' as (re)defined by this thesis, these first three women authors failed. Revolutionary writing was the key, but the age in which they were living did not allow such revolutionary ideas to be heard without criticism and, as noted, condemnation by both the masculine authorities and their female peers.

The literary failure of these women writers, however, involved an effort that should not in any way be devalued. They tried to change the system in which they lived, but their efforts were blocked by the critical double standard upheld by a binary system of thought, which privileged the male population. Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft directed their criticism toward the masculine elite and in such a rebellious attack on their traditional system their literary works, *Letters on Education* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, were severely criticised on both a private and public level. Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Education* also suffered critical condemnation. It was considered long and dull as well as extremely

conventional in both the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Feminist critics consider

her work as "reinforcing women's subordinate role" (Agress 48) and her

conventionalism is considered "regressive" towards women's advancement (S. Myers

260). However, in the third contention of my thesis I have specifically coined a term,

the "generational effect," that can directly relate to a renewed enthusiasm for the

literary techniques in Hannah More's work.

  The "generational effect" was described earlier as a progressive movement

that would eventuate in a renewed recognition, by feminist historians, of women's

journey toward literary success. In this study, the nominated works by Catharine

Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More can be viewed in a new light.

Their literary experimentation and their literary tactics helped to chip away at the

established literary guidelines concerning women as writers. Taken together, these

women appear as a group that provided the necessary 'stepping stones,' as it were, in

the continued challenge to the literary patriarchy. Sharing a common desire for

change, in which individual 'success' was less significant than the overall impetus for

change, these women provided to the next generation of women writers the key to

long lasting success.

  This active challenge against the system of female enculturation perpetuated

by the traditional dichotomous worldview of these two eras is continued by the next

generation of women writers. Mary Shelley and Jane Austen also challenged the

system of patriarchy in which they lived. These two women writers have a particular

common link, in that their literary debuts, Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Austen's

Northanger Abbey, adapted and modified the Gothic genre.

  It is, however, important to first note that their works were written in the

advent of a new political and social environment. The time for revolution had passed

and the works of Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More had all been criticised and condemned in one way or another. The success of the next generation was a reflection of the "shift" from "Radicalism to Romanticism" as recognised by Jane Moore. This "transition" from the "collective radicalism" to "individual Romanticism" was reflected in the works of novelists like Mary Shelley and Jane Austen (Moore 146). Katherine Rogers supports this view, stating that radical literary challenges could not be an "effective vehicle for feminism (202). However, she also points out that the radical works from earlier women writers "gave women confidence to venture out of their traditional sphere" and, by "forcefully articulating" their ideas, these radical writers highlighted the need for serious discussion concerning women's various rights (Rogers 203). Their literary experimentation - and consequent criticism of them - in the eighteenth century enabled women writers of the next generation to approach the challenge to literary patriarchy from a different position.

The position from which Shelley and Austen made their challenge was the marginal zone that their foremothers criticised and their challenge to the patriarchal ideal of women proved successful in a number of ways. The literature by Shelley and Austen is included in literary courses worldwide. Reproductions of their works are regularly in stock at the local bookshop and various critical analyses tower upon the shelves of academic libraries. Their success is dependent on the challenges put forward by their foremothers, who led the way for new literary attempts at chipping away at the masculine traditionalism and historical patriarchy that constantly allocated women to an inferior position, on a social and literary level (hence the "generational effect"). The literary works of Shelley and Austen were based on a style that emphasised amelioration rather than revolution, and the works by their predecessors

became exemplars of what not to do when attempting a critical examination of the traditional system of patriarchy.

In analysing *Frankenstein* and *Northanger Abbey*, there are obvious similarities. For example, both novels were published in 1818, and both storylines are based on the Gothic genre. However, the analysis of these two novels only briefly discusses these similarities, because the way that each woman chose to use the Gothic is vastly different. Clearly, Shelley's *Frankenstein* is really a Gothic story, enhanced by the Gothic tropes such as darkness, fear, nature, mystery and monstrosity. Although Austen's *Northanger Abbey* seems to be at first glance a typical Gothic story, it has been proven that this genre was merely a mask that disguised her more important concerns. Shelley also concealed her concerns within the guise of her Gothic tale, but the Gothic as Austen utilised it was ridiculed and comically stifled of all its glory. The emotion, anxiety and fear depicted in the Gothic were shown to be quite silly, foolish elements. The standard Gothic structure was reconstructed, experimented with and thrown into complete disarray.

Despite Austen's unconventional use of the Gothic content, structure and method, her story was in no way inferior to Shelley's. Instead, what both women achieved from their contrary usage of the Gothic was a successful medium from which to voice their concerns. Much like a theatre, the Gothic setting merely advantaged, demonstrated, enhanced, and provided a necessary background for the stage upon which their director, the author of the novel, controlled characters and the audience.

Both novels contained similar issues that were tailored to address specific concerns important to each woman. Shelley felt that the issue of a sexual ideology that so thoroughly separated the public and private spheres would cause greater

disturbances if the educational and intellectual separation between the sexes continued. Men would grow stronger in mind but their hearts would be weaker. The mind would be overpowered by their need to achieve, create, reason and learn, but their lack of feminine elements in this need was noticeably detrimental to the whole of society. By the early nineteenth century, Romantic thought influenced literature, but as many feminist critics and historians have noted, it was an ideology that concentrated too much on a masculine tradition. The feminine was still idolised and domesticated, but in *Frankenstein*, the potential outcome of this powerful sexual dichotomy between the masculine and feminine resulted in Shelley's dramatic story. Shelley addressed this unbalanced sexual ideology in *Frankenstein* and Jane Austen also showed a concerned awareness of this issue in *Northanger Abbey*.

Essentially, the idea behind Austen's more considerate male was one that was purposely non-existent in Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Austen's male narrator exemplified Shelley's ideal concerning a feminist Romanticism. Henry represented Austen's ideal man, a combination of the masculine and the feminine. He was in no way condemned for possessing feminine characteristics by his acquaintances within the story. Rather, he was often praised and celebrated in this new character style. Moreover, the female heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine, actively controlled much of her life experiences, making her own choices and, by the story's end, did not fall into the typical role of this genre, as the victim. Shelley's female characters, by contrast, did not possess any sense of individual control over their own lives, and all ended up dead by the end of the story.

The overemphasis on the distinctly feminine characteristics of Shelley's female characters, and Austen's experimentation with the feminine characteristics of her leading male character and her deviation from the traditional female victim mode

in the Gothic, suggests that both authors wanted something more for women in this era. While Shelley's portrayal of women was overly exaggerated in their passiveness, as well as their inability to handle asserting themselves, Austen's females were also exaggerated, but the emphasis was on variety. Women could be different. Some women were weak, some were strong, some were morally capable and some were less so, but, all in all, women should not be classified and stereotyped. The same can be said about the male characters in Austen's story. Shelley made her point by exaggerating the idiosyncratic traditional and patriarchal ideals that existed in all areas of a male's life. Austen, on the other hand, depicted men who were good, bad, and some who were weak as well as some who were not perfect nor always right.[114]

In the over emphasis of particular traits, whether one possessed or lacked them, Austen and Shelley were making a point concerning the genderisation of all men and women. Essentially, the stark contrast between all spheres of life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not, in reality, accurately represented. Men could study and still be ignorant. Elders could be wrong or self absorbed in their advice. Women could read novels without being morally corrupted. They could determine their own lives, and make their own decisions, and whether right or wrong, women could also be responsible for them.

Important to Austen's successful depiction of this type of male was that her characterisation of Henry Tilney emphasised a potential change to the traditional conventions of the social and literary structures. The relaxed boundaries of sexual ideology that were evident in Henry's character were presented positively, without any adverse effects and literary standards were playfully experimented with, without any extreme disruption to the overall story.

Despite the differences in the styles of exaggeration, the points that both Austen and Shelley made were alike in many respects. Mary Shelley indirectly attacked masculine authority, which reinforced the tradition of men in the public sphere. Whether that area was academic, political or literary, women were excluded. Jane Austen shared Shelley's concern about this overt masculine rule, but she chose directly to attack these authorities. She directed an angry voice towards the Reviewers and pleaded for an outcome that would better suit the literary careers of male *and* female writers. While both women displayed a remarkably similar humanisation of the world and of the people in it, their differences were striking - especially in the light of Austen's canonisation and Shelley's non-canonisation.

The idea of canonisation is one that stems back to the Classics. Centuries of debate show arguments questioning who and what should be included to represent any one particular country's or nation's literary talents. For the English canon, as for any, the guidelines were far from clear. However, F.R. Leavis states in *The Great Tradition* that "the great tradition and its members within it should represent an...individual talent" that "exemplifies" and "illustrates" a realistic view of life experiences (5). There was a realism that extended beyond the pages of a story - that one could know intimately and familiarly.

Whatever the structure or foundation that was established for the English canon, it was clear that Shelley's personal relationships with her fellow radicals, together with her mother's legacy, were major factors in her exclusion from the canon. Also, there is no acceptance of serious literary stature for any subsequent works. Furthermore, Shelley's story condemned man as he celebrated his glorious freedom to pursue life on an ethical, philosophical, political and social level. Even though her commentary in *Frankenstein* was cloaked within mechanisms of the

Gothic, it was a clear and precise attack on the ruling elite. The cycle of success for any literary career had to be judged by the "Republic of Letters," so anything that criticised the authority of tradition, especially the intellectual and philosophical principles on which it was founded, would guarantee an end to any literary career. Austen avoided such potentially damaging fallout by delaying publication of *Northanger Abbey*.

What underlies the issue of canonisation is the issue of what an author is. For men, the personal was often cast aside in the light of literary greatness (Percy Bysshe Shelley and Byron, for example), but for women, the personal would invariably be a part of the writer. Even though this analysis has paid little attention on the personal background and relationships each of these women experienced, it was undoubtedly a major factor in the immediate success or failure of their literary careers.

All these issues and more arise in the analysis of both Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. In fact, these two women represent a new feminist tradition. They defied literary and social conventions, challenged the traditional ideals, and criticised patriarchal authority. Moreover, they succeeded in overturning the critical double standard. Instead of choosing more potent forms to voice their opinions, both women remained within a literary mode that would guarantee their work would be read.

Readers, attracted to the initial appearance of the Gothic in both *Frankenstein* and *Northanger Abbey*, were drawn into a story that completely defied their expectations. Shelley and Austen had an immediate power over their readers, and they both used this power to their full advantage to lead the reader, pulling the reader into a realm beyond the pages of the novel. Realism and fantasy were combined to bring about a control that trapped the reader into a false sense of confidence about the

novels' contents. Expectations were overturned, predictable and unpredictable mixed so thoroughly as to be merged into a reality that was so truly visible and close to the reader, that there was an emotional connection to the characters and the situations.

In *Frankenstein*, the story mixed the natural and the supernatural, the intellectual, rational, emotional and passionate. The reality of the situation was so possible that the potential for such a disastrous outcome was unerringly too close to consider. The real and the unreal formed such a convincing story that the reader was left to wonder. The way in which Austen played with the Gothic in *Northanger Abbey* was very different to Shelley's use of the various tropes for which this genre is famous. Rather than drawing on the dark and mysterious world often depicted in the Gothic novel, Austen played with these conventional tropes, often intruding her authorial voice into the text. She set up the story in Bath, a real city that readers could identify, and then she played with her reader by breaking up any typical expectations of the Gothic, often nullifying the possible impact of such tropes in the process. Seemingly conventional, Austen blurred the boundaries of what constituted the conventional, by changing the rules in her experimentation with characters, as well as with the Gothic form, and even the role of the novel.

The ameliorational literary style applied by Mary Shelley and Jane Austen allowed them to say the unsayable, and they did so from a zone that had in the past been viewed as traditionally restrictive. This marginalisation of women into a domesticated private realm had historically projected women as the negative 'other,' and as seen in the works of Macaulay, Wollstonecraft and More, the repercussions of any literary challenge to this space was silence and invisibility. However, Alice Jardine suggests that this "marginalisation of woman to the perimeter of patriarchal

meanings simultaneously produces a space from which to counter the 'truth' of patriarchal accounts of the world" (qtd. in Belsey and Moore 14).[115]

This point is highlighted in Mary Shelley's exaggeration of the complete disparateness between the public and private worlds. The solitary nature of this marginal domesticated sphere left her female characters unable to cope in any of the various social and public situations that they encountered. The resulting death of all her female characters in *Frankenstein* poignantly exemplified Shelley's extreme version of such an inhibitive isolated zone. Jane Austen's use of the marginal comes from a different angle. From the guise of a fictional tale, she used the novel as a platform to direct a criticism that seemed to have been causing her great frustration. The negativity surrounding the novel as a serious literary form was something that Austen seemed to have great pains about. As a novelist, she experimented with the conventional structure of the Gothic form, mixing the predictable with the unpredictable. The merging of feminine characteristics in her male hero, as well as giving the heroine a strength of individual character that previously eluded the typical female of the Gothic story, shows Austen's awareness of the world around her. All of Austen's literary experimentation pointed toward her conscious awareness of the strictures inherent within the patriarchal principles of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries.

In commenting from within the specific zone that placed women on the outer spheres of the literary and public, Shelley and Austen transgressed these restrictive boundaries. Their use of a literary form traditionally allocated to women, the novel, allowed them both to bring the public issues into their private world. The issues raised within their stories forced a re-examination of the inherent patriarchy of the privileged zone, which would ultimately be responsible for the consequences that may

be suffered if such situations as those depicted within their novels occurred. As Mary Jacobus points out, it is such a traversal of boundaries that will eventually lead to the undoing of the patriarchal dominance, because these boundaries will be exposed as "the product of phallocentric discourse and of women's relation to patriarchal culture." Women writing in an ameliorational style would allow a specific deconstruction of such masculine discourses and hence, allow women to "write what cannot be written" (Jacobus 13).

This "transgression of literary boundaries" brought the marginal into "focus," which allowed women writers like Shelley and Austen to enforce a reconsideration from the literary elite and the general readers regarding this encultured view of women (Belsey and Moore 71). Hence, the revolutionary literary styles utilised by their foremothers encouraged women writers like Shelley and Austen to take the next step forward in the challenge to the system of traditional patriarchy. They continued to actively push the boundaries of a traditionally masculine-privileged system, which perceived women in the negative. They became, in effect, the next step in the "generational effect."

Conclusion

This study has redefined 'success' to incorporate a recognition, by feminist historians, of the woman writer's active participation and literary experimentation within the masculine domain of literature. Despite the centuries of tradition, culture and ideology that had hindered women and their potential for literary recognition, all five writers I have discussed became part of the (her)story of women's success in the literary field. Although some of their challenges were more passive than active, all five authors did challenge, to varying degrees, the literary ideals concerning women and their writing. I have noted that, at the time of writing, success seemed to emerge from the less revolutionary writing styles of Shelley and Austen. The fact that the success came from within the comfort of the traditional feminised marginal zone that these writers were protesting furthermore points to a more important factor, which is that this generational challenge revolutionised the way literature is read, written and critiqued today.

Moreover, what were once studied as separate revolutionary women authors scattered over the years, can now be seen as a unified evolutionary generational challenge. This challenge is further distinguished as an ameliorational challenge by women writers, each of which attempted a method of writing that would try to alter the standard. The techniques varied over the years but all stand out as exemplars or stepping stones in the "herstory" of women's writing in an era where women had to fight against the very notion of who they were and what they were supposed to be. The works these women put forward are important. They leave behind a legacy of challenge, which allows the next generation of women writers to continue to push the gender relations' boundaries in order to be seen as individual writers and not classified as secondary or chameleon-like. As theorists continue to reassess women's

writing it becomes clearer that in order for a feminist challenge to have taken place, there did not have to be an inversion of the gender roles.

However, it is obvious that there have been many obstacles that have hindered women's literary success, the most formidable being the encultured perception of women as feminine. It is clear that, historically, the overt patriarchy within all spheres of life played an important part in women's subjection and marginalisation. The traditional system of opposing binaries and the implied negativity of one pole over another further obstructed women's prospects of escaping the marginal zone, where the private was so thoroughly disassociated from the public. Such a dichotomous worldview presented for women constant barriers, which were reflected in the critical double standard inherent in both their social and literary lives.

The difficulties faced by these authors in writing successful literature, according to a male version of success in their eras was symptomatic of their encultured inferiority. As these women writers have argued, it was partly the fault of the degradation to the education system, which taught women to become the "feminine" objects that they set out to be, in order to be consumed on the marriage market. In an attempt to remedy this situation, the first three authors all wrote didactic texts that advocated a better system of female education. As I have shown, their methods of utilising male stream discourses and appealing to the benefits of the male readers proved in the long run to be unsuccessful (according to my reinterpretation of success) as feminist works. In their extension of masculine discourses such as philosophy, the intention was to transform such discourses into theories that referred to humankind, rather than mankind. These works, however, were described as revolutionary in both content and methodology. In their time, the

effect that this type of literary experimentation had on women was that pejorative labels like "manlike" and "unfeminine" were bestowed upon them.

In the conclusion of this small historical study works by women writers such as Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More must be acknowledged as part of my "generational effect." This is a fundamental point in my study. These three are representative of the cumulative effort put forward by women as writers. Their messages were positive and although they did not succeed as long-term feminist voices they do fill in the gaps in women's journey toward literary success. Moira Gatens supports this view in her recognition of their "contributions to philosophy" and points out that despite becoming "invisible," they did make some feminist difference and these efforts should not be disregarded (20-2).

However, the irony is that these works have remained silenced and invisible because their revolutionary writing style and tactics are not often viewed in the academic arena as advancing the feminist challenge to literary patriarchy. Tradition was the standard and men as the ruling cultural elite determined the literariness of the era. The definition of femininity had long been associated with the ideals that the dominant group had created. Moreover, what once were idiosyncratic ideals about women's nature continued to grow and develop into expected intrinsic values. The point concerning these two eras, which many feminist critics have commented on, is the fact that it was a masculine hand that determined all that is feminine. The overt dominance of the patriarchal tradition and its strong hold over the definition of any specific feminine nature, has been an area of much criticism. Luce Irigaray for example questions the very "validity" of what she sees as "phallocentric conceptions of femininity" (qtd. in Gross 134).

The invisibility and silencing of the feminist voice within works from women writers like Macaulay and Wollstonecraft stemmed from these women's utilisation and acceptance of "phallocentric" ideals concerning women as writers. However, as shown in the case of Hannah More, although her literary work was masked by a passive conformity to religion, her important statement, which once was effectively invisible, is now being revealed as an innovative piece of feminist work. In sticking to conservative topics and a literary form that was acceptable for a woman to use Hannah More seemed to submit to the patriarchal literary guidelines, but feminist historians are now re-evaluating her challenge, claiming a positive feminist voice in her work.

These literary challenges to the patriarchal ideal of women and their written works continued and, twenty years after their predecessors, works from Mary Shelley and Jane Austen displayed a different approach in an effort to overcome the critical double standard that hindered their foremothers. In returning to novels, the literary form deemed suitable for women, Shelley and Austen were able to insert within this once restricted sphere an innovative originality. Conformity, conventionality and commercial content performed a major part in their literary debuts, but they coupled their typical storylines with elements of the unpredictable, unconventional and remarkable originality in their experimentation with the Gothic genre.

The key to literary success for these later women writers came from their foremothers, but it was Shelley and Austen who used to their advantage the critical double standard that had hindered previous literary challenges. The full frontal attacks on masculine literary methods, and rebellious critical content, meant certain failure for women writers. The feminist voice of Shelley and Austen, which successfully challenged the patriarchal ideals concerning women and their writing, was produced

from the marginal zone. Amelioration ultimately won out over revolution. Once seen as a restrictive place for women, the marginal became a positive place where women could counter patriarchal 'truth.'[116] Significantly, the recent reassessment of this zone has led, not just to a re-evaluation of early women writers, but to new developments in the way women's literature is studied today.

[1] Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: from Charlotte Bronte to Doris Lessing*, rev. ed. (Great Britain: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[2] Miriam Kramnick, ed. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. By Mary Wollstonecraft (1792; Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1975).

[3] Lynne Agress, *The Feminine Irony: Women on Women in Early Nineteenth Century English Literature*. (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1978).

[4] Moira Gatens. "Feminism, philosophy and riddles without answers." *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, eds., Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (1986; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991). PART ONE: THE CHALLENGE TO THEORY.

[5] Gary Kelly, "Feminine Romanticism, Masculine History, and the Founding of the Modern Liberal State." 'Romanticism and Gender' Vol. 51of *Essays and Studies*, ed. Anne Janowitz (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998) 3-4.

[6] David Garrioch, *Two Hundred Years of the French Revolution*.Monash Publications in History (Monash University; Clayton; Victoria, 1989).

[7] Peter Laslett, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967). All further references to Locke's work will be from Laslett, unless otherwise stated.

[8] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (1762; Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1977). All further citations regarding *The Social Contract* will be from this text.

[9] Interestingly, Locke refuted the idea of Adam being the chosen sovereign leader of all mankind and beast. He actually gave scriptural references to rebut Filmer's claims that Adam and all men after him, were given the divine right to rule over Eve and all women after her. He utilised Filmer's own source, the Bible, to support his suggestion for an acceptance of parental, rather than paternal power. He noted many biblical references in which God mentions man *and* woman, father *and* mother, which supported his claim that the relegated inferior position women have is not because God subjected Eve to a position below that of Adam.

[10] H.T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* Historical Association Studies (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 14.

[11] James A. Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1750-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 9.

[12] Bonnie E. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe From Prehistory to the Present, Volume II*, rev. ed. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 115.

[13] David Simpson, "Romanticism, criticism and theory," *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Curran (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 1-24.

[14] Katharine M. Rogers, *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Urbana/Chicago/London: University of Illinios Press, 1982).

[15] "Success." *Oxford English Dictionary: Being a Corrected Re-Issue with an Introduction, Supplement, and Bibliography of a New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. Vol. X, Sole-Sz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), repr. 1961, 1970: 76-7.

[16] Beverley Thiele, "Vanishing acts in social and political thought: Tricks of the trade," *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, eds. Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (1986; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), PART ONE: THE CHALLENGE TO THEORY: 41.

[17] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) Vols. 1-2, intro. Jeffrey Stern (England: Nonesuch Press, 1995). All further citations of this text will be referred to as *Strictures*.

[18] This was suggested in the introduction of *The Feminist Reader* (2nd ed), eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: Macmillan Press, 1997) 7.

[19] Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (New York: Longman, 1998).

[20] Kathryn Burlinson, "Nineteenth-century Britain." *Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature*, ed. Claire Buck (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1992) 22-5.

[21] Lynne Agress, *The Feminine Irony: Women on Women in Early-Nineteenth-century English Literature* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1978).

[22] Also see Simpson and Mellor.

[23] Sue Wiseman. "Britain 1500-1800." In Buck: 19.

[24] Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books For Women 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982) 106.

[25] Kramnick 31.

[26] Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), 1994) 15.

[27] Original quote from D.F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator*, vol. 3 (5 vols., Oxford: OUP, 1965), 272; and J. Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady on a Variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects*, vol. 2 (2 vols., Warrington: W. Eyres, 1789) 213, respectively.

[28] Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) ch.14.

[29] Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A study in the fortunes of scholasticism and medical science in European intellectual life* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980)

[30] See Regina Barreca, ed. *Desire and Imagination: Classic Essays in Sexuality* (New York, U.S.A.: Meridian, 1995) for a extract of Darwin's essay, "The Descent of Man." 210-59.

[31] Despite the fact that Darwin's suggestions postdate the works of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century writers being analysed, his work is representative of the persistent conservative position taken up by the scientific sector, in their support of the very influential religious sector.

[32] Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, 'Introduction: The Story So Far,' *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism.* eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, 2nd ed. (London; Macmillan Press, 1997) 4. Also see Spender's Introduction 1-6.

[33] See Hull for a comprehensive listing of the early publications of such literature.

[34] John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774). intro. Gina Luria (New York/ London: Garland Publishing, 1974).

[35] Katharine M. Rogers, *Feminism in Eighteenth-century England.* (Urbana/Chicago/London: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

[36] Gary Kelly, *The Last Man and Masculine History: Between the Revolutionary Aftermath and the Founding of the Modern Liberal State.* (Romantic Circles Moo Conference 1997): <http://www.rc.umd.edu/villa/vc97.kelly.html>

[37] See S. Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle*, for a more comprehensive analysis of this group.

[38] Note that all further references to Catharine Macaulay's *Letters on Education* will be written as *Letters*.

[39] See Jonathan Wordsworth's introduction to *Letters on Education* for more detail concerning the gossip over Macaulay's personal and social 'deficiencies.' Macaulay's status as an outsider to many of the mainstream active groups during the late eighteenth century has contributed to her demise as a recognisable female historian. In Natalie Zemon Davis' research on Catharine Macaulay's past she has found this quote from an author of *The European Magazine*, who notes the detrimental effect of Macaulay's personal decisions on her literary career: "Her marriage has totally extinguished all curiosity about her opinions. Perhaps there never was an instance, where the personal conduct of the author so much influenced the publications of their writings." "Account of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Catharine Macaulay Graham," *The European Magazine* (November 1783): 330-32 quoted in Natalie Zemon Davis, "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers 1400-1820." *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia H. Labalme (New York: New York University Press, 1980) 168.

[40] *Letters.* Intro. By Jonathan Wordsworth. Original source: *Analytical*, September 1790.

[41] Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, ""This Altogather Precious tho Wholy Worthless Book": The Diary of Mary Guion, 1800 – 1852." *Anxious Power: Reading, Writing, and Ambivalence in Narrative by Women*, eds. Carol J Singley and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (Albany: State University of New York, 1993) 133.

[42] Terri Doughty, *Sarah Grand's* The Beth Book: *The New Woman and the Ideology of the Romance Ending.* Singley and Sweeney: 189 and 185 respectively.

[43] This is Irigaray's emphasis.

[44] Bridget Hill, *The Republican Virago: The Life and Times of Catharine, Historian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[45] Sara Kay Austin's study analyses this point in great detail. Emphasising the enculturation of women's ideal nature within the social and literary arenas, she pays particular attention to the commodification of femininity and the reinforcement of it in novels. Her work is helpful in that it clearly reveals the masculine dominance within all spheres over the ideals concerning women's nature. Sara K. Austin. *Novelties: Femininity and Fiction in the Works of Wollstonecraft, Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen.* (Berkeley: University of California. A.B. Princeton University) 1990. UMI ProQuest Digital Dissertations (7 April 2000). <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/fullcit?p9931173>

[46] See Wilber L. Cross, *The Development of the English Novel* (Macmillan: New York, 1916) (cpyr. 1899) 22. He notes the fact that letters to imaginary friends surfaced, in his chapter on 'Literary Forms that Contributed to the Novel,' making this a popular, but weak literary form.

[47] All references to Jacobus in the main text are from "A Difference of View." *Women Writing and Writing about Women*, ed. Mary Jacobus (London, 1979) 10-21.

[48] Elizabeth Gross, "Philosophy, subjectivity and the body: Kristeva and Irigaray," *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, eds. Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (1986; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), PART THREE: THE CHALLENGE TO ACADEMIA: 134.

[49] Anika Lehde, "Catharine Macaulay and the Enlightenment: An Argument for Her Inclusion and Explanation for Her Exclusion." <http.www.members.home.com/anikal/hist-macaulay_essays.html> Lehde actually suggests five factors possibly responsible for Macaulay's demise in reputation and her career.

[50] All further references to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* will from now on be referred to as *Vindication.*

[51] Original source: *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Mrs Paget Toynbee, Oxford, 1905, XV, 131-2 and 337-8, respectively.

[52] Original source: *Historical Magazine* (1799) 1: 34.

[53] See the *O.E.D*'s definition of 'mankind,' Vol. VI, L-M: 127.

[54] Married Law Property rights were non-existent. Women, at this time had no economic independence until well into the nineteenth century - around 1856 and 1870.

[55] See Jean Jacques Rousseau. *Emile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (1911; New York: Everyman's, 1963).

[56] See Patricia Yaeger and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, eds. *Refiguring the Father: New Feminist Readings of Patriarchy*. (Carbondale, Illinios: Southern Illinios University Press, c1989).

[57] Jane Moore in Belsey and Moore chapter 11: "Promises, Promises, Promises: The Fictional Philosophy in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*." First given at the Cardiff Critical Theory Seminar, November 1987

[58] Quoted in Mary Wilson Carpenter, 'Sibylline Apocalyptics: Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Job's Mother's Womb', *Literature and History*, 12 (1986), 215-28, 227, n.9, and Miriam Brody, 'Introduction' to Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* 41, respectively.

[59] Also see Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 56.

[60] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education 1799* (Vols. 1-2), intro. Jeffrey Stern (England: Thoemmes Press, 1995). All references to this text will now be referred to as *Strictures*.

[61] Charles Howard Ford, *Hannah More: A Critical Biography* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

[62] Jeffrey Stern, introduction. *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education 1799*. By Hannah More (Vols.1-2), (England: Thoemmes Press, 1995) vi

[63] Robert Hole, ed. *Selected Writings of Hannah More* (London: Rickering & Chatto, 1995).

[64] All further citations come from Hannah More's *Strictures*, unless otherwise stated.

[65] Original source: Elizabeth Montagu to Hannah More, May 1799, Roberts, *Memoirs* vol.3: 87.

[66] Original source: The British Critic's Review of Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, with a View of the Principles and Conduct prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune. By Hannah More. Two volumes. The Third Edition, *British Critic* 13 (June 1799) 644.

[67] See Ford 223 Original source: Frances Burney to Mrs. Waddington, 20 April 1799 in Joyce Hemlow, ed., *The Journal and Letters of Frances Burney (Madame d'Arblay)* vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) 277, and Charles Burney to Hannah More, April, 1799, Roberts, *Memoirs* vol. 3: 69-74, and Mrs. Kennicott to Hannah More, 19 April 1799, Roberts, *Memoirs* vol.3: 84.

[68] Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" *Woman, Culture, and Society*, eds. Michael Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) 67-87.

[69] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Derek Roper (1805; London: Colins Publishers, 1968) 33.

[70] Gene W. Ruoff, ed. *The Romantics and Us* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

[71] David Simpson. "Romanticism, critics, and theory." *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Curran (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[72] Wordsworth 33.

[73] Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1958).

[74] Wilbur L. Cross, *The Development of the English Novel* (1899 London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1916).

[75] Frank Donoghue, *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-century Literary Careers* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[76] Leslie A. Fiedler, "Literature as an Institution: The View from 1980." *English Literature: Opening up the Canon*, eds. Leslie A. Fiedler and Houston A. Baker, Jr. (London: Johns Hopkins Press Ltd., 1979).

[77] Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent page references to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* come from D.L. Macdonald & Kathleen Scherf, eds. *Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (the original 1818 text)* (Canada: Broadview Literary Texts, 1994).

[78] M.A. Goldberg, "Morals and Myth in Mrs Shelley's *Frankenstein.*" *Keats-Shelley Journal* 8 (1959)

[79] Anne K. Mellor, "Why Women Didn't Like Romanticism: The Views of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley." *The Romantics and Us*, ed. Gene W. Ruoff (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

[80] Katherine Newey, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1993) comments on Victor's obsessiveness leading to horrific consequences as undercutting his reasoning for creating such a monstrous being.

[81] Newey discusses the notion of scientific pursuit without some sort of social life, leading to destruction and isolation. This was obvious in Victor's asocial behaviour - retreating to a darkened room to work secretly, and his evening trips to charnel houses and dissecting rooms (6). Goldberg also makes this point in reference to Walton. She notes his thirst for knowledge carried him further away from his conflicting desire for social contact and love from a fellow being (29).

[82] Wilfred Cude, "Mary Shelley's Modern Prometheus: A Study in the ethics of Scientific Creativity." *Dalhousie Review*. 52 (1972)

[83] See Safaa El-Shater's study in Mary Shelley's novels, and also Newey. Both discuss this aspect of reality in *Frankenstein*.

[84] Also see Charlotte Ann Frick, *The Cognitive Turn: The Interdisciplinary Story of Thought in Western Culture* (Lanham; Maryland: University Press of America, 1994) Chapter 4: Her analysis of the monster's murder presents a different interpretation. She views his actions as mimetic murders, of repaying society for rejecting and 'killing' him. It is a view that sees society as the abuser for not giving the monster a chance of being human in some way.

[85] These quotes are from Shelley's 1831 edition, in Joanna Smith's *Frankenstein: Mary Shelley*. (New York: Macmillan, 1992). This source is used because Mary Shelley strengthened this point in her following editions by adding a detailed account of Victor's family life. It adds to her argument of the social being excluded from the endeavours of men in the public sphere.

[86] My emphasis.

[87] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile,* trans. Barbara Foxley. (New York: Everyman's, 1911; repr.1963) 333 comments "What is most wanted in a woman is gentleness, formed to obey a creature often vicious and always faulty, she should learn to submit to injustice and to suffer the wrongs inflicted on her by her husband without compliant." Although a startling comment to contemporary readers, such notions were abundant and considered natural in this period.

[88] Leila Silvana May, "Sibling Rivalry in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*" *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*. 35.4 (Autumn 1995): 19pp. Online. Ovid Database 2 April 1996 presents an interesting analysis of this relationship as sibling rivalry.

[89] William Veeder, *Mary Shelley and Frankenstein: The Fate of Androgyny* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Chapter 6 offers a more complex interpretation of the relationship between Caroline and Elizabeth. He suggests that there was a rivalry between the two for Victor's affections, in relation to the dominant mother figure.

[90] Critics have long disagreed on the importance of this tale within the story of Victor and his monster. Some consider it a clear indicator that Mary Shelley advocated for an egalitarian family model (Smith, "Cooped Up"). Others see the story's importance as the role the family plays in the development of personal growth and education (Newey). Some also see the story of Safie and the Turkish as completely irrelevant and mere political opinion about the race (Florescu).

[91] Newey (36-7) points out that this is a positive feature that illustrates a lack of strict gender roles, because Felix is teaching Safie to be independent and educating her about life away from her dominating father.

[92] Margaret Homans, "Bearing Demons: Frankenstein's Circumvention of the maternal." *Frankenstein: Mary Shelley*, ed. Fred Botting (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995).

[93] Original source: *Critical* 2 (November 1756): 379.

[94] Original source: *Critical* 8 (December 1759): 458.

[95] Original source: *Critical* 23 (March 1767): 210.

[96] Original source: *Critical*16 (December 1763): 449.

[97] Also see Anne K. Mellor. *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 56.

[98] See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), Chapter 2, part 1.

[99] My emphasis.

[100] My emphasis.

[101] *The Gentleman's Magazine* 334-35 and *Blackwood's Magazine* 614-20, respectively.

[102] Even Wordsworth admitted, in *Lyrical Ballads* (19-20), that the author had a certain duty towards his reader to present "certain classes of ideas and expression" in his book and exclude others.

[103] Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (London: The Athlone Press, 1997).

[104] Ian Milligan, *Studying Jane Austen* (York Handbooks, Harlow: New York Press 1988) Ch. 2.

[105] Vivien Jones, *How to Study a Jane Austen Novel.* How to Study Literature Series (Houndmills: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1987).

[106] Walton A. Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965).

[107] Maria Jerinic, "In Defense of the Gothic: Rereading *Northanger Abbey*." *Jane Austen and discourses of Feminism*, ed. Devoney Looser (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995).

[108] All further citations to Austen's *Northanger Abbey* come from the Doubleday version listed, unless otherwise stated.

[109] See Litz (1965); Watt (1963); and Kirkham (1997) as examples.

[110] Diane Hoeveler, "Vindicating *Northanger Abbey*: Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, and Gothic Feminism." Looser: chapter 7.

[111] Jan Fergus, *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel: Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1983).

[112] Jane Austen's Art and her Literary Reputation. <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeart.html> This site is operated by The Volunteer Committee of the Republic of Pemberley.

[113] Jane Austen's Art and her Literary Reputation. http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeart.html

[114] See Merle Thornton's "*Sex equality is not enough for feminism*." In Pateman and Gross PART TWO: THE CHALLENGE TO LIBERALISM: 78-97. It is a particularly interesting position regarding a theory for an equal grid of degrees and kinds in relation to women's and men's abilities and capabilities. She discusses both Plato and Mill in relation to a Wollstonecraftonian sex equality theory.

[115] Original quote from Alice Jardine *Gynesis* 1987.

[116] Qtd. in Belsey and Moore, 14. Original quote from Alice Jardine, *Gynesis* 1987.