

**The Province of the Poetess:
Chastity and the Poetry of Pilkington, Barber and Grierson**

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in partial fulfillment of
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submitted by Chantel Lavoie
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ABSTRACT: This dissertation explores the poetry of three women included in Jonathan Swift's circle of friends in Dublin. The demands of chastity and related tensions for eighteenth-century women provide a context for the poems and reputations of Constantia Grierson, Laetitia Pilkington, and Mary Barber. Chapter 1 provides personal histories and an overview of their relationships to Swift. Chapter 2 explores familial and gender issues alongside the problematic implications of appearing in print. The final chapter deals with the persona each poet created in order to realize her ambitions, and the dubious success with which publication was accomplished. Images of near-saint, coquette, and righteous matron have informed speculation about Grierson, Pilkington, and Barber respectively, originating in Grierson's apparent lack of ambition, Pilkington's divorce and audacity in printing her memoirs, and Barber's emphasis that she wrote "to improve the minds of [her] children". Simplified versions of the lives of writing women are a product not only of (frequently misogynistic) misunderstandings; they also result from taking these poets at their word, believing the re-creations on the page.

Acknowledgments and Dedication

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This is dedicated to my mother and father.

A good woman is infinitely more to be Valued than a good Man because they passe through farr greater Difficulties to become Such, then Men; who are not naturally Subject to so many Infirmities, nor tyed to Such strict Rules of Virtue; as Women are bound to observe.... And yett virtue in Women in the ordinary sense of the world signifies nothing else but Chastity; and vice the Contrary; as if they were Capable of neither Good nor Bad above the Middle; and that Part were the Seate where their Soules resided and the Same thing with the Heart and Braine in Men: For all their Wit and Ingenuity is for the most part derived from thence and relates to nothing else, as being the onely End of their Creation and their Province to be the Seminary of mankinde for which they are better qualified then any thing Else.

Samuel Butler
Prose Observations

I am sensible that a woman steps out of her province whenever she presumes to write for the press...

Mary Barber
Poems on Several Occasions

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-Introduction-

"From the time of Swift's settlement in Dublin as Dean of St. Patrick's." wrote Lord Orrery, "his choice of companions in general showed a very depraved taste.... [Y]ou would have smiled to have found his house, a constant seraglio of very virtuous women, who attended him from morning till night, with an obedience, an awe and an assiduity, that are seldom paid to the richest, or the most powerful lovers."¹ Along with other "minor" figures of the eighteenth century, the females who made up this fawning collective are now being considered as individuals. Some of these women were themselves writers, particularly of poetry, and because of their intellectual pursuits encountered the kind of scepticism regarding their "virtue" that Orrery's contempt hints at. Three of Jonathan Swift's female acquaintances who labored under the traditional role of womanhood and, to different degrees, the new and dubious title of "poetess," were Laetitia Pilkington, Mary Barber, and Constantia Grierson: a parson's wife, a clothier's wife, and the wife of a printer.

By criticizing the influence of these "very virtuous women" Orrery, a literary critic and acquaintance of the Dean, accented the dangers encountered by women who engaged directly with the written word in the eighteenth century. The relationship between private morality and public expression seems to reach a crisis point in the women of Orrery's observation, since it is not, after all, the Dean's scatological poetry (most of which was composed during the period when he was confined to Dublin) but his "choice of companions" that signals his "depraved taste." Orrery's

disapproval implies an ideal female virtue based on modesty and silence, by which female intellectuals, in particular, were scrutinized and frequently found wanting. Many male writers of poetry, criticism, and sermons, as well as other women in correspondence, supported the myth that women could appreciate the results of intellectual activity but not themselves engage in these pursuits. Whereas Orrery questioned the morals of Swift's companions on the grounds of their avid interest in literature, Alexander Pope chose to include typical feminine weaknesses as part of the criteria by which he judged the literary accomplishments of women writers in the *Dunciad*. The irony of this tension was that success as a poet therefore necessitated a partial failure in womanhood, and vice versa.

Women were therefore cautioned by both sexes that a disastrous neglect of the duties of wife and mother would surely result when one of the fair sex exposed herself to, and through, the press. What was deemed admirable in a learned lady was a *private* correspondence, which might include rhymes composed to celebrate the virtues of friends within a small circle of acquaintances. When a woman chose to write for publication, however, she became not only an observer, but the object of a spectatorial (and speculative) gaze in a way that Swift and other male writers, as Richard Steele acknowledged, were not forced to contend with:

I must tell my female readers, and they may take an old man's word for it, that there is nothing in woman so graceful and becoming as modesty. It adds charm to their beauty, and gives a new softness to their sex. Without it, simplicity and innocence appear rude; reading and good sense, masculine, wit and humour, lascivious.²

What mattered within the compass of this gaze, more than a gift for rhyme or a clever turn of phrase, was virtue, and in praising a female poet, one's recommendation had to begin first with an assertion that poetry was the least important consideration in her life. She was not sharing the best of herself with her audience; that was reserved for her husband and children. This reservation was often verbalized as "chastity," a word with a plethora of meanings in the eighteenth century.

The word chastity in Johnson's *Dictionary* encompassed "purity of the body", "freedom from Obscenity" and "freedom from bad mixture of any kind." The adjective chaste meant "pure from all commerce of sexes", "with respect to language, pure; uncorrupt; not mixed with barbarous phrases", "free from obscenity" and, finally, "true to the marriage bed."³ Like chastity itself, the "corruption" which opposed it evidently took many forms, and women were forced to be dishonest about themselves in order to appear uncorrupted, or untouched, by publication. In relation to the ideal female poet chastity denoted a woman who remained unexposed—desiring nothing and content to do without the adulation of those outside her home. Her mind, like her body, was her husband's province, and her children, gathered around this body in a kind of eternal tableau of domesticity, were both her responsibility and her shield. They filled her mind so that there was no room for her own pleasures, or praise.

That chastity could be an issue of such magnitude was possible in part because the protestant ideal of married chastity, while exalting marriage, also extended the boundaries of what classified unchaste behavior. Chastity, a concept originating in moral theology, and modesty, a matter of convention, became nearly interchangeable, like chastity and the "virtue" that Richardson's heroines were ever struggling to protect. Any challenge to

a woman's modesty, therefore, reflected on her sexual faithfulness, whether or not this was the intention of the challenge, which it often was.

Positioning themselves as lovers of hearth and home, female poets tried to forestall accusations of intellectual vanity arising from publication— for publication hinted at a capacity for sexual immodesty. They were obedient daughters, dutiful wives, affectionate mothers, and only incidental poets, even in cases like that of Mary Barber, whose poetry was for an extended period the chief source of family income. As Barber's publication history shows, women who wanted to express themselves outside the domestic sphere had to be cautious in the method of self- construction that accompanied publication. Even the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu warned, after reading Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs*, that:

Wit in women is apt to have other bad consequences: like a sword without a scabbard it wounds the wearer and provokes assailants. I am sorry to say the generality of women who have excelled in wit have failed in chastity: perhaps it inspires too much confidence in the possessor, and raises an inclination in the men towards them without inspiring an esteem so that they are more attacked and less guarded than other women.⁴

Montagu's analysis testifies to the opprobrious judgments women poets encountered from other females, including fellow intellectuals, but it primarily acknowledges the threat from men towards women who published, and the passivity with which a woman had to await an assault on her person once she had appeared in the press. The sword analogy defines wit not only as naturally a masculine weapon, but also as phallic, and therefore impossible for women to employ with any skill. Men naturally

possessed their own "swords," and could counter witty criticism in kind. Since the controversy over wit in the eighteenth century had moralistic overtones, excess wit even in men was often labeled sexual profanity or religious blasphemy, whether the writer was male or female. Evidently wit necessitated a double vision that was particularly unattractive in the weaker sex, a knowledge of the way of the world that, even if women blushed at what they wrote, confessed "a Virtue but at second-hand: They blush because they understand."⁵

Swift, like Pope, never married, yet both claimants to wit felt sufficiently comfortable in their own authorial personas to explore in writing the contents of ladies' dressing rooms and the layers of matter—human and commercial—that physically made up eighteenth-century woman. Theories that characterize Swift as a misogynist or, conversely, champion him as an early feminist do not alter (and often focus on) the fact that he was relatively free to make what amounted to unchaste observations about the bodies and bodily functions of both sexes. The fact that "*Celia, Celia, Celia* shits!" came as a surprise to no one; that this bodily function appeared in print briefly shook the reading world. The Dean was criticized on the grounds of immorality at various moments in his career, but this criticism did not destroy his credibility with most of the reading public. The censure he received in response to his *Tale of the Tub*, for example, related to the appropriateness of a church authority writing as he did. He was criticized as a member of the clergy, and not as a man, and his audience followed where he led them, even when this meant onto questionable literary ground, because he was versed in satire, and a master of creating acceptable authorial personae. His authority was further justified by cultural norms that allowed him access to the language of Horace and Juvenal, and he

enjoyed this education because he was a financially secure male-- another reason why his readers placed their faith in his words.

Lactitia Pilkington, Mary Barber and Constantia Grierson were wives and mothers by the time most of their extant poetry was composed, yet their poems suggest that their own relationships with their bodies were almost nonexistent. One of the demands facing the "poetess" was that she betray no physical urges, whereas Swift and his English counterpart created in their work the impression of possessing physical experience that balanced their book knowledge. As illustrated by the authorial persona in Pope's *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, they adopted a Horatian stance that included both the philosopher and the rake. The voices in their poetry were often those of urbane and sexually experienced men of the world, however unrealistic these poses actually were for the Dean, and for Pope, who was himself three days of every week "sick as a breeding woman."⁶

Pilkington, Barber and Grierson, however, wrote from a more precarious position: one which necessitated the assertion of knowledge, coupled with the denial of worldly experience.

Women were depicted by Swift as daily participants in the ritual of drawing order from the confusion of their physical selves. Although they were "gaudy Tulips rais'd from Dung," they could not, however, dip their pens in dung when they attempted to order their universe through poetry. It is little wonder, then, that the study of their poetry is frequently a study of absences, in which the scholar hoping to uncover purposefully subversive material sniffs everywhere in vain. The demands of virtue, of chastity, in their lives, dictated to a large degree what they chose to write about. When we read what Barber, Pilkington, and Grierson recorded of their

experiences, and observe those that they did not, it becomes clear what they considered either unworthy or unsuitable for their poetry.

In the first chapter of this thesis I provide biographical information on these three poets, their families, and their publication histories (or histories of non-publication, where this is the case). Unlike major eighteenth-century literary figures, who can be placed in a context with little biographical preamble, these women, particularly Grierson, are so little known that to depict their work as variations on a theme (like the restrictions of chastity) without historical exploration would be misleading, as well as unproductive. We need to see these women in the context of the lives that made poetry possible, yet constricted their ambitions and ultimately their achievements, both in terms of the quality of the poetry itself and, more significantly, in terms of their ability to write and publish at all. The relationships they enjoyed or endured with Jonathan Swift, as well as brief encounters with Pope, were influential both as means of encouragement and as occasions of restraint for these women poets, and are also discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter focuses more specifically on the problems faced by women writing for the press. The variety of strategies with which Pilkington and Barber countered the likely criticism following upon their decisions to publish involved an adherence to the rules of a patriarchal medium, and a playful manipulation of these rules. The fear of attracting suspicions of immodesty prompts negations of certain aspects of self in the printed poetry of these two women, as well as a cautious forging of authorial personae. The same fictionalizing of self was not as great an issue for Grierson, whose impeccable reputation is partially grounded in the fact that she did not write for publication. Recurring images in both the

printed and unpublished poetry of these women emphasize family duties, particularly a woman's obligation to educate her children, as well as the claim that these writings are intended to counteract vanity in other women. The emphasis on domestic obligations is more self-conscious in the work of Barber and Pilkington, however. As part of their supposed motivation for appearing in print, domestic and social obligations constituted part of these poets' marketability. Rather than providing a mutual sharing of ideas and experience, envy, mistrust, and a fearful sense that their world had only a limited capacity (or tolerance) for female poets often characterize the relationships among writing women themselves, including that between Barber and Pilkington.

The final chapter examines more closely the poetry itself, as well as the lights and shadows these women cast on different aspects of their lives in shaping authorial personas to comply with the multifarious demands of chastity. The difficulty in determining where the separation occurs between authorial persona and self is complicated by the fact that "self" is a continuing role that all human beings must play. For each member of Swift's coterie this self was composed of many elements: Irish writing woman, daughter, wife, and mother. Their nationality is significant, not only because they were exposed to Jonathan Swift but because, as writers in early eighteenth-century Dublin, Pilkington, Barber, and Grierson participated on the fringe of a literati already marginalized in the English literary world. Both Barber and Pilkington chose to leave Ireland in search of financial success, and the mixed feelings they express for their homeland indicate their confusion at establishing a sense of belonging in England. In the eyes of English male writers, women, especially Irish women, merely played at the serious game of poetry.

The term "poetess," then, is a diminution. In the serious business of poetry in the eighteenth century it implied, in effect, a non-poet. Contemporary game theory, as postulated by Hans Georg Gadamer, distinguishes between game, involving a focus on rules, and play, which encourages stepping outside of these rules, and suggests that women writing poetry in the eighteenth century automatically violated the criteria for what constituted a poet, and they did. The tactics with which they countered the rules that defined them as non-poets were various, and the economic success or failure of their poetry linked directly to their efforts to make their authorial personas believable. One of the most important characteristics for the "poetess" persona was chastity—the strict, yet nebulous virtue by which all female expression was measured. For Pilkington, Barber, and Grierson chastity was a crucial element in the process of authorial self-creation, in which they engaged as women attempting the genre of the forefathers, often for the male-oriented province of publication, in a land at the margins of English literature.

-Chapter One-

The Little People: Contexts and Constraints

Mighty *Thomas*, a solemn *Senatus* I call,
 To consult for *Saphira*, so come one and
 all:
 Quit Books, and quit Business, your
 Cure and your Care,
 For a long winding Walk, and a short
 Bill of Fare.
 I've Mutton for you, Sir: and as for the
 Ladies,
 As Friend *Virgil* has it, I've *Aliud Mer-*
cedes:
 For *Letty*, one Filbert, whereon to re-
 gale,
 And a Peach for pale *Constance*, to
 make a full Meal:
 and for your cruel Part, who take
 Pleasure in Blood,
 I have that of the Grape, which is ten
 times as good:
 Flow Wit to her Honour, flow Wine to
 her Health,
 High rais'd be her Worth, above Titles
 or Wealth.

Dr. Patrick Delany¹

When Laetitia Pilkington's youngest son, John, was christened, among his sponsors were two of his mother's closest friends, Mary Barber

and Constantia Grierson, and, reports John, "as none were present but poetical people, they determined to make a fairy christening of it." The baby was endowed with power and eloquence by his two male sponsors, Doctor Clayton (later Bishop of Clogher), and Doctor Delany. These were suitable gifts, considering that each was a masculine attribute that required outward manifestation. By contrast, the gift Mrs. Grierson bestowed upon him was that of "learning," and that granted by Mrs. Barber was "poesy." Significantly, both were intellectual yet potentially feminized attributes--learning and poesy can be silent, and experienced individually rather than publicly. The fairy tale ceremony orchestrated by Mrs. Pilkington was to prove an ironic one for John, who did not live happily ever after the christening. As the second son of a poor parson, he could ultimately hope for no inheritance "but a pen."²

John intimates in his autobiography that it was understood Jonathan Swift would also "honour" him, perhaps with more tangible gifts, since the Dean's first godson by the Pilkingtons had died in infancy.³ Swift, however, did not fulfill this duty with the same energy with which he had, in happier days, participated in what Doctor Delany called a "*Senatus Consultum*" with these ladies, a practice Delany referred to in the poem where he stiled himself "Mighty Thomas," and exercised his own eloquence to summon the three women and Matthew Pilkington to "consult for" Mary Barber. The Dean and the doctor corrected the poetic attempts of their protégées at these sessions, particularly (as Mrs. Pilkington explained somewhat enviously) those of Mrs. Barber, who was preparing to appear in print, although there are indications that the poetry of all three women may well have undergone communal scrutiny.⁴

I

Unlike her two friends, Pilkington chose to immortalize herself in three volumes of *Memoirs*, written after her marriage to the Reverend Matthew Pilkington deteriorated and she left Ireland for London. In these volumes, "Wherein are occasionally dispersed, ALL HER POEMS." Pilkington assures her readers of her own talent and lost potential. Here she also indulges in the vengeful anecdotes of a woman scorned. Born sometime between 1705 and 1708 (though she claimed it was 1712), Laetitia was the eldest child of Dr. Van Lewen, a Dutch obstetrician who settled in Dublin to become the second male midwife in Ireland. Her mother was related distantly to Irish nobility. Laetitia learned to read by the age of five, had a prodigious memory, and was delighted with poetry from childhood— instances of precocity that were often noted in accounts of the lives of eighteenth-century female intellectuals. The love of reading was an instinct with Pilkington that her mother discouraged, but her father indulged and guided. This paternal approbation was to be interpreted by Laetitia in her *Memoirs* as a sign that feminine virtue and female intellect complemented one another.

Constantia Grierson, née Crawley or Crowley, was brought "by a stationer" to study midwifery in Dublin under Dr. van Lewen.⁵ Born about 1705 in Graiguenamagh, Kilkenny county, Constantia was already an accomplished scholar when she arrived in Dublin.⁶ Mrs. Pilkington recalls their first meeting when Constantia was "about eighteen" and reports of her that she was "Mistress of Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French, understood the Mathematicks, as well as most Men: And what made these extraordinary Talents yet more surprizing, was, that her Parents were poor illiterate

Country People."⁷ A.C. Elias points out that Mary Granville, later married to Patrick Delany, "rather doubted the Hebrew at least," and that Mary Barber "omits the Hebrew and French from Constantia's languages but adds history, divinity and philosophy to her other skills."⁸ Grierson provided her friend with an example of the benefits of higher female education, thereby supporting the doctor's faith in his daughter's literary inquiry. Some of the most delightful hours Pilkington ever passed, she claimed, "were in the Conversation of this female philosopher," whose "Piety was not inferior to her Learning."⁹

Whatever the degree of exaggeration in these reports, Grierson was undoubtedly an accomplished scholar. Her work as an editor and student of the classics significantly furthered her husband's business and reputation, as the *Journals* of the Irish House of Commons for 1729 indicate:

The Petitioner George hath followed the Printing Business in this City for many Years, and the Petitioner Constantia hath, in a more particular Manner, applied herself to the correcting of the Press, which she has performed to general Satisfaction: insomuch, that the Editions corrected by her have been approved of, not only in this Kingdom, but in Great Britain, Holland, and elsewhere, and the Art of Printing, through her Care and Assistance, has been brought to greater Perfection than has been hitherto in this Kingdom.¹⁰

In his *Memoirs of Several Ladies* George Ballard relied on Mary Barber's description of Mrs. Grierson and expanded upon it: "She was not only happy in a fine imagination, a great memory, an excellent understanding and an exact judgment, but also had all these crowned by virtue and piety; she was too learned to be vain, too wise to be conceited, too

knowing and too clear-sighted to be irreligious."¹¹ The praise that accompanies Mrs. Grierson's name in all accounts of her is in part due to her having excelled in the one entirely acceptable outlet for the talents of a female intellectual. By contributing to her husband's business, she deferred to him and exercised her own mental powers without evidencing personal ambition. Her published work also positioned her as a translator instead of a poet, a vessel for the words of the ancients rather than a modern creator. Her choice of framing herself as a scholar and not a poet also made her less likely to be branded either as lascivious, or as a dunce—the two options critics availed themselves of in attacking women's poetry.

Evidently Constantia worked for Grierson, a printer several years her senior, before becoming his second wife sometime after the first Mrs. Grierson died in 1726. Besides correcting the presses for editions of Tacitus, which she dedicated in Latin to Lord Cartaret, and Terence, dedicated in Greek to his son, Grierson also wrote, according to Barber, *An Abridgement of the History of England*, but no such text remains extant.¹² At the time of her death she left a partially completed edition of Sallust. Parish registries show that the Griersons buried two infant children during Mrs. Grierson's lifetime, in 1727 and 1731, and that another infant survived her mother by less than four months. One son of her four recorded children survived to adulthood and became a friend of Samuel Johnson.¹³

Shortly after her own wedding, Mrs. Grierson had interposed on behalf of Matthew Pilkington in his suit to win Laetitia's hand, with what Mrs. Pilkington called "too much Compassion for a despairing honourable Lover."¹⁴ In 1729, after a series of melodramatic negotiations with her parents (her mother was concerned that the parson was beneath her) Laetitia had married Matthew, himself poor and also poetically inclined, whose

contributions to the household were, as befitted a poet, an owl, a harpsichord, and a cat. The *Memoirs* evidence Pilkington's apprehension of blame for choosing an unsuitable husband, and therefore deserving her unhappy her marriage; accordingly, she is adamant in her claim that she did not marry without parental approval. It was merely the plan for her mother to pretend this had been the case, Pilkington explains, since it was a hurried wedding. Grierson introduced the Pilkingtons to Dr. Delany, an introduction that in turn led to the Pilkingtons' meeting Swift, on the recommendation that they were a poor couple much maligned by Laetitia's disapproving mother.

In spite of parental censure and poverty, life together was happy for the newlyweds. Both diminutive in stature, they were called the "little poetical parson and his littler poetical wife" by Swift.¹⁵ Their shared literary talent, however, led to bitter rivalry, and contributed to a growing resentment, Mrs. Pilkington claimed, on the part of her husband. Both husband and wife seem to have failed at remaining faithful to the vows of married chastity, but both also succeeded, minimally, at poetry, and it was the combination of this success and failure that appears to have destroyed their marriage. They had three children who survived infancy, the youngest of whom, John, wrote in his autobiography, "The first thing which imposed itself on my infant memory, was the separation of my father and mother."¹⁶

Mary Barber, whose parentage is unknown, was born around 1690, and married Jonathan Barber, a woolen-draper of Capel Street, Dublin. She claims to have begun writing poetry in order to form the minds of her four children. According to Irvin Ehrenpreis, she met Swift when a petition she wrote for an officer's widow attracted his attention, at which time she would

have been about forty years old.¹⁷ Doctor Delany, a mutual friend, introduced Mrs. Barber to Swift, who affectionately styled her "Sapphira" and came to refer to her as "the best Poetess of both Kingdoms."¹⁸

Barber was eventually able to produce enough poetry and collect enough subscriptions, both under Swift's guidance, to publish her *Poems on Several Occasions* while in London in 1734. She first arrived in England in 1730, armed with letters of introduction from Swift to persons of distinction. The favors the Dean granted her were clearly reciprocated, however, since early in 1731 she was among those arrested for conspiring to publish several of his controversial poems, which, as Iris Barry explains, "was no simple matter in the 1730's. Literary men [and at least one literary woman], penetrating in Queen Anne's reign the region of politics as never before, lived still in a realm of intrigue and counterplot."¹⁹

When Mrs. Pilkington had gone to London to visit her husband, who was then serving as chaplain to the Lord Mayor of London, Mrs. Barber travelled with her, carrying a packet from the Dean that she gave secretly to the parson. Mr. Pilkington offered a number of Swift's poems to London printers, sometimes by a third party, and was allowed to keep the proceeds for himself. When the poems appeared they were taken as an attack on the Walpole administration, and Swift denied all knowledge of them. In January Mr. Pilkington, Mrs. Barber, the publisher, printer, and bookseller were arrested for conspiring to publish Swift's "An Epistle to a Lady."

Mrs. Barber was questioned, but the authorities decided that nothing in the poems called for legal action, and the printer and Swift's assistants were released. She soon left London and settled in Bath in the hopes that its healing waters might help the gout (possibly arthritis) from which she suffered most of her life. Here Mrs. Barber considered first letting out

lodgings and then selling Irish linen, two plans that came to naught because of her illness.²⁰ She requested and was granted Swift's *Polite Conversation* to publish in England, which helped her support her children. Swift, concerned with his friend's future, wrote to Mrs. Delaney: "I fear she is in no very good way either as to health or fortune."²¹ Bernard Tucker, who has recently produced an edition of Barber's poetry, estimates that she spent three years in England before returning to Dublin.

Jonathan Barber is conspicuously absent from correspondence by and about his wife. In a letter to Swift written February, 1733, Lord Mayor Barber (no relation to Jonathan) told the Dean that he had no position suitable for the clothier, and letters by Mrs. Delany suggest Mr. Barber might have neglected the needs of his family. Mrs. Barber obviously spent a considerable amount of time away from him, usually with most of her children in her custody. Nevertheless, the poet, like Grierson, was frequently praised as a helpmate to her husband to offset what might have been considered immodesty in her evident enthusiasm for intellectual pursuits. In Swift's dedicatory letter for her *Poems* he wrote to the Lord of Orrery: "I am assured, that no woman was ever more useful to her husband in the way of business."²² Swift also explained that Barber deserved Orrery's "protection on account of her wit and good sense, as well as of her humility, her gratitude, and many other virtues."²³

Barber's dependent state as a poetess is illustrated by the terminology of patronage in Swift's letter, which not only praises his student, but reflects the sexual threat under which women wrote for the press. The word "protection" was employed far more often than "favor" in discussing a female poet's prospects, indicating her vulnerability as a woman exposed to the public eye, as well as the unlikelihood of her achieving financial

rewards independently. Clearly she succeeded in publishing her poetry by subscription due to the combined efforts of herself and the Dean. Although the forays she made into England and the houses of the gentry on her own behalf were extensive, these visits were preceded by Swift's words rather than by her hosts' exposure to the poetry she was promoting.

Pilkington also succeeded in acquiring enough subscriptions to publish her *Memoirs* one volume at a time, although not as profitably as Barber had done, but she did so virtually unaided. The fact that Barber was able to print her list of her over 900 subscribers at the beginning of *Poems on Several Occasions*, while Pilkington assured her own subscribers that their names would not appear, indicates the greatest difference between the effects of publication on these two women. Swift's Mrs. Barber was talented and virtuous, whereas the divorced Mrs. Pilkington was witty and scandalous. The older woman had a protector who introduced her to yet more protectors, but no gentle words introduced Pilkington into the houses of the great in England. Only her reputation as an adulteress preceded her once she lost her principal protector, her husband.

As a young wife, Laetitia was warned even before Matthew left for London that he "could not taste any Pleasure where [she] was."²⁴ When she did visit him in England he tried to involve her in an affair with his friend, the painter Worsdale. This bizarre occurrence is never fully explained, but the parson seems to have owed Worsdale a favour, and was himself sexually engaged elsewhere. Swift received chastisement for the immodesty the parson showed in his own relations with an unnamed actress in London, who appears a shadowy presence in the first volume of Pilkington's *Memoirs*, and there is little doubt that it was Matthew Pilkington to whom Bolingbroke referred when he wrote meaningfully to Swift: "pray Mr. Dean,

be a little more cautious in your Recommendations.... The fellow wants Morals & as I hear it Decency sometimes."²⁵

The marriage ended three years later and Mrs. Pilkington returned to London without her children. She left Ireland in disgrace after a judgment of adultery was pronounced against her and assured her husband the divorce he sought. The *Dublin Evening Post* of 7-11 February, 1738 reads:

Last Tuesday came on in the Spiritual Court, the trial of Lactitia Pilkington alias van Lewen for adultery with Adair, which being fully proved, sentence of divorce pronounced against her by Dr. Trotter, Vicar General of the Diocese and judge of the Consistorial Court.²⁶

Her own dubious explanation for the incriminating circumstances in which she was found indicate more clearly than any other claim her desire to define herself in intellectual, specifically literary, terms:

I own myself very indiscreet in permitting any Man to be at an unfavorable Hour in my Bed-Chamber, but Lovers of Learning will, I am sure, pardon me, as I solemnly declare, it was the attractive Charms of a new Book, which the Gentleman would not lend me, but consented to stay till I read it through, that was the sole Motive for my detaining him. But the Servants, being bribed by their Master, let in twelve Watchmen at the Kitchen Window, who, though they might have opened the Chamber-Door, chose rather to break it to pieces, and took the Gentleman and myself Prisoners.²⁷

Her having chosen to emphasize this farcical occurrence as one in which intellectual concerns ought to eclipse those of propriety is ludicrous.

yet touchingly naive, and the tension between chastity and intellect are clearly illustrated. Having failed to abide by the absolute demands of the former, she sought to establish her superiority in the latter. Pilkington continued throughout her *Memoirs* to minimize her own physical presence, her body, by emphasizing the importance of books, yet her body was always there, being groped by unwanted hands, shivering in the doorways of potential subscribers, and experiencing hunger that made writing difficult, yet imperative.

Her excuses for her apparent lapses in chastity were a futile attempt to redeem her reputation, but they were also a significant part of the persona she presented in her *Memoirs* and her poetry. Barry complains that the poet "was a silly little thing to protest so much and fight so ardently to keep up appearance," but Pilkington's goal was more than that of salvaging her reputation for personal satisfaction. In each volume she sought subscriptions for the volume to come, and although she offered witty and somewhat scandalous anecdotes about other people, her own virtue was marketable in the world of print, if not virtue unsullied, than virtue weakened by attack. One incident that speaks for many is her refusal of fifty guineas offered by a gentleman who wished her to spend the night with him. He warns: "you do not know London; you will be undone here," and she asks: "I hope you do not imagine I will go into any bad Course of Life?" "No," he responded, "but I think you will sit in your Chamber, and starve."²⁸

In London her attempts to live by the pen included producing love letters and poetry at the commission of men at White's Chocolate House, London's first gentlemen's club, conveniently located across from her lodgings. Letter writing sustained her for a while but failed ultimately to produce enough money for her to remain in these lodgings. The first

volume of Pilkington's *Memoirs* at times paints an enchanting scene in which the lady on her balcony is able to look down at the men frequenting the club, nodding and drinking the gallants' healths with the wine they have sent. The reality of her situation was much more bleak. She not only struggled to fulfill a demand which was at times no more than charity and at others payment for time spent in her company, but she was also forced to create that demand with evidences of her own charm by flattering and teasing her customers. Any male hack writer could compose love poems for dandies and rakes to send their mistresses; Pilkington had to play along with the romantic overtures directed toward her in order to secure these commissions. To avoid the looming threat of prostitution, it seems, she engaged in a literary prostitution that frequently bordered on the real thing.

Although most of these love poems and letters probably remained unpublished, they unarguably were immodest literary exercises for a young divorced woman to engage in. The extent of the favors she performed for some of these gentlemen is also unclear. White's was a place notorious for gambling— a club with a dubious reputation. Compared to the more peaceful existences of Barber and Grierson, Pilkington's life in London involved a precarious balance between the demands of chastity and those of literature: she wanted to write for money, but the men for whom she wrote were convinced that chastity could play no part in her profession. Although Pilkington may have been naive upon entering London, one suspects she quickly learned what to expect from these gentlemen and how to profit from them while protecting her own reputation as much as possible. In her second volume she harshly criticized the unfaithfulness of husbands, for example, and then threatened her readers: "if every married Man, who has ever attacked me, does not subscribe to my *Memoirs*, I will, without the

least Ceremony, insert their Names, be their Rank ever so high, or their Profession ever so holy."²⁹

Her youngest son joined her while she was in London, as did her daughter for a brief time, and a failed attempt to keep a pamphlet shop reduced Pilkington to debtor's prison. Colley Cibber, who rejected his own daughter on the grounds of immorality, became Pilkington's self-appointed guardian angel. Curiously, Pilkington gives practical reasons for the reader to believe that she did not have sexual relations with Cibber: he was too old.³⁰ Cibber helped obtain her release from prison, and recommended her as a petitioner to Samuel Richardson. Finally, after raising enough money for passage by applying for succor from and blackmailing some of her wealthier male acquaintances, Pilkington and her son returned to Ireland, where eventually the first two volumes of her *Memoirs* were published. Between money procured from her husband and subscriptions for her third volume, Mrs. Pilkington survived, although even her last days were fraught with financial insecurity, as evidenced by her son's postscript to the third volume of her memoirs. This last volume John submitted for printing in London after her death in Dublin, July 29, 1750. Mary Hays, an early nineteenth-century biographer of literary females, added yet another vice to the poet's supposed licentiousness, in describing Pilkington's death as a "consequence of the pernicious habit of intoxication, into which she had fallen, to lose the sense of her misfortunes."³¹

The misfortune Pilkington may have regretted most bitterly was her inability to convince the public of her own chastity: "Had I stray'd from the Paths of Virtue, when turn'd out desolate to the wide World, forsaken by all my once dear seeming Friends and tender Relatives," she conjectures in the final volume of her *Memoirs*, "I might at least have hoped for Pity, and

given Necessity as a Plea for Error...."³² Her *Memoirs*, particularly her last volume, show that she was infuriated by the disbelief that met all her protestations of virtue. She wrote hundreds of pages and ultimately could not undo the accusation levelled at her in a spiritual court, whereas Matthew Pilkington married again and gained wealth and respectability by writing *A General Dictionary of Painters*. Ironically, until the discovery of Matthew's will in 1912, this new life led historians to distinguish between Laetitia's husband, and the author of the *Dictionary*. The DNB lists them as different men, the parson from the *Memoirs* having fallen into "evil habits and obscurity."³³

Constantia Grierson did not live to witness the publication of either Barber's *Poems on Several Occasions* or Pilkington's *Memoirs*. The *Dublin Journal* and the *Dublin Evening Post* reported her burial in December, 1732, the same year her husband had been granted the position of King's printer in Dublin.³⁴ Elias concludes that the cause of her death at the age of twenty-seven was likely tuberculosis. One letter in her manuscript book thanks an unnamed woman for medicine which provided some relief after "a cough for twel[v]e months."³⁵

Grierson remains the most mysterious of the three women. Until recently, all the available information about her was limited to Mrs. Pilkington's account and Mary Barber's brief reports in her *Poems on Several Occasions*. In contrast with both of her friends, who contributed poetry to journals and, in Pilkington's case, engaged in a scurrilous pamphlet war with her estranged husband, Grierson did not seek publication for her own writing. Although she has been credited with a published poem entitled either "How to Print a Poem" or "The Art of Printing," only one poem that is undoubtedly Constantia's ever appeared in print during her lifetime. This

was "The Goddess Envy to Dr. Delany," which "appeared so anonymously that no outsider has even suspected her authorship" until recently.³⁶ Hays says of Grierson that "as a daughter, a wife, and a friend, her conduct was exemplary."³⁷ This conduct was also a primary consideration in her friends' accounts of her, and for those who included her in collected biographies of literary women. The myth of Grierson "the immaculate" remained intact and survived in print, in no small part because most of the poetry she produced remained either in manuscript form or was published posthumously. Her intentions were clear: she wrote only for friends, family, and the love of learning.

Only Barber survived to see her name alongside those of Grierson and Pilkington in *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, which was published in London in 1755. A selection of Barber's compositions begins the first of two volumes containing poetry by eighteen women. Two years later, Barber died in Dublin, leaving behind a daughter who likely never married, and three sons, the eldest of whom became president of the College of Physicians at the University of Dublin. The editors of the anthology described Barber as an "ingenious Authoress" who did not, in fact, pursue publication, since she was "so well received by several persons of quality, that they offered to solicit a subscription for her, and prevailed with her to publish a complete collection of her works." Grierson is depicted as "a most excellent scholar" who sought neither favors nor the gratification of appearing in print. Moreover, she "acquired this great learning merely by the force of her own genius, and continual application." Pilkington, who is relegated to the second volume, is depicted as less passive than either of her friends, characterized by obviously detrimental self-exposure. She "had a lively genius, and a natural turn to poetry," but "it is a pity this Lady was not

blessed with discretion, and, we may add, good fortune, in some proportion to her genius."³⁸

II

We can do little more than guess at the relationship between each of these three poets and Jonathan Swift, particularly that between Swift and the elusive Grierson. Mrs. Pilkington's *Memoirs* encapsulates him in numerous anecdotes which Swift's biographers relied upon for two hundred years, while scorning their recorder, until Emile Pons pointed out that all three of her volumes had been regularly pilfered for anecdotes without acknowledgment.³⁹ Ehrenpreis calls Pilkington "the most important" of the Dublin bluestockings for Swift, "though the last to meet him."⁴⁰ Certainly, if the time she spent with Grierson counted among the happiest hours of Pilkington's life, those she passed in Swift's company furnished her with fascinating and doubtlessly profitable memories, since "...few persons now living, have had so many opportunities of seeing him in private life."⁴¹

Her son argued that from "authors who have wrote volumes call'ed *The Lives of the Poets* : the only information we receive... is that they were born at such a time, wrote at another, and died at last.... I think her bringing her readers to dinner with Dean Swift, has made them more intimate with the cast of that great man's temper, than other noble efforts that have been made to give him to the world in a proper light."⁴² Laetitia's own experiences of dining with "the great man" began soon after her wedding, when the bride expressed a "strong ambition" to be known to Dr. Swift, "for to give me my due I was pretty pert."⁴³ Considering it "a little hard to be excluded from the delight and instruction" of Swift's acquaintance, which

both Mrs. Grierson and Mr. Pilkington enjoyed. Mrs. Pilkington negotiated a meeting with Swift by writing "To the Rev. Dr. Swift, on his Birth-day." She sent this poem via Dr. Delany, whom she had also met by composing and sending a panegyric. After reading the birthday poem, the Dean permitted the parson and his wife to dine with him at Dr. Delany's, where Mrs. Barber performed the introductions.

Swift's comment on first meeting Mrs. Pilkington marks the difference between the friendship Mrs. Barber enjoyed with Swift and that which the younger woman came to have with him. He asked Mrs. Barber if Pilkington were her daughter. The answer caused the Dean to roar. "What... this poor little Child married! God help her, she is early engaged in Trouble."⁴⁴ His exclamation not only set the tone for the relationship he and Pilkington would have, but proved an omen for the future of her marriage as well. Swift's remarks also seem to forecast the authorial personas each of these women would employ in their poetry. Ehrenpreis argues that "besides looking girlish, Laetitia affected in her speech the kind of freshness that Swift liked," and this was the speech she exercised in her writing— a mode of discourse indicative of coquettishness rather than the motherliness Barber displayed so profitably.⁴⁵

Swift continued to treat Pilkington as a child, instructing and scolding her at will, even pinching and, she claims, beating her when she used an inelegant phrase. While emphasizing her own youth and inexperience, as well as her physical attractiveness, Pilkington also identifies herself as a poet in these anecdotes. She wants to make it clear that she gained an insight into language from Jonathan Swift, and she also wants to make clear the cost of that education. The bruises she received at his hands were "favors" to her, but they were still bruises. Her *Memoirs* indicate that good

poetry was the fruit of not only mental but physical suffering— Swift's hands punished her person, as his companionship improved her mind.

Pilkington and her husband were frequently in the Dean's company during the first two years of their marriage, both earnestly composing poems in their spare time in hopes of winning his approval and preferment. In spite of her childlike stature (Swift once measured her against a wall and declared she was no more than three feet, two inches high), Pilkington also assured her readers that the Dean found her a woman of virtue and good sense. He complimented her by insult, a characteristic Swiftian strategy, accusing her of failing to help him prepare the coffee after dinner: "whereas [it] I had a Lady of modern good Breeding here, she would have struggled with me for the Coffee-pot till she had made me scald myself and her." This raised Laetitia's spirits, she writes, "as [she] found the Dean always prefaced a Compliment with an Affront."⁴⁶ When he first visited the Pilkington's "Lilliputian" house, he "ran up into the Garret, then into my Bed-chamber and Library, and from thence down to the Kitchen; and well it was for me that the House was very clean: for he complimented me on it, and told me... 'twas from the Cleanliness of the Garret and Kitchen he judged of the good Housewifery of the Mistress of the House: for no doubt, but a Slut would have the Rooms clean, where the Guests were to be entertained."⁴⁷

The portrait that emerges in her anecdotes is of a woman who proves her domestic qualifications, but it shows that she, too, could be entertaining. Swift comes across as a man who appreciated both the conventional and the unconventional woman. On one level, the woman's house was her means of expression, but that expression could do no more than prove her innocent of neglecting her wifely duties. That Swift put himself in a position other than that of a guest, allowing himself to see what her husband normally saw,

made that innocence complete, yet compromised the very wifeliness that was challenged by his inspection. In this scene Pilkington is exposed against her will, publicized, and both her person and her actions sanctioned as a result, because she is *not* the Celia of "The Lady's Dressing Room."

Unlike "Mother Barber," who is depicted in her own poetry and Swift's correspondence as a matron who also happens to scribble for the formation of her children, the persona Pilkington created in her *Memoirs* is notably less motherly than literary, though she at times uses her maternal role to elicit sympathy. Pilkington's youth and attractiveness seem also to have made for a more complex relationship than that which allowed Swift to endorse wholeheartedly Barber's struggle for publication. His chief concern for Barber was for her financial security, whereas he did not urge the younger poet to seek publication. Though the Dean helped the Pilkingtons financially by securing a position for Matthew, and though he appears to have corrected the parson's own book before publication, Laetitia did not *need* to publish, and Swift must have sensed that she was not as irreproachably humble as Mrs. Barber.

Although Mrs. Pilkington considered love "a Passion [Swift] was wholly unacquainted with, and which he would have thought it beneath the Dignity of his Wisdom to entertain," his habit of pinching a woman who was "I own, a little too much upon the Coquette, for a married Woman" complicated the tutor/pupil relationship of which the *Memoir* makes so much. The Dean seemed to have more than intellectual humiliation in mind when he warned Matthew, "I have a mind to clip your Wife's Wit," and when he commented to Laetitia: "what a fool Mr. P___n was to marry you, for he could have afforded to keep a Horse for less Money than you cost him, and that, you must confess, would have given him better Exercise and

more Pleasure than a Wife." Her response acknowledges the sexual innuendo and reverberates with the suggestiveness of such a comparison from the man who created the dispassionate Houyhnhnms: "I must answer you, Sir, with another Question; Pray how can a Batchelor judge of this Matter?"⁴⁸

Her teasing of Swift about knowledge which she implies he does not possess indicates a certain power of knowing that she found attractive in the idea of marriage. Upon her separation from her husband, for example, she argued that she was with child by Matthew and not from an adulterous relationship as the parson claimed, by commenting that her husband's vow that they had had "no matrimonial Commerce" for four years would bring *him* "no honour."⁴⁹

Mrs. Pilkington used any and every argument at her disposal to repair her own honour, yet while making the transition from marriage to publication, she engaged in a battle of sexual politics with her husband and all men that simultaneously vindicated and defamed her. The moments at which she appears naive and unprotected in her *Memoirs* are often ineffectual because of her venomous attacks and satiric commentary on the "great men" she has encountered. She exhibits the need for protectors, yet her shrewd understanding of men who pose as such, while seeking sexual favours, is too knowing. The authorial persona of her poetry, however, is simpler, and more innocent.

Her memoirs reveal that Pilkington would have liked to be a Pamela, but found that virtue usually went unrewarded, and she later identified with Clarissa but, unlike that heroine, would not allow herself die in sacrifice to the demands of chastity. The only middle ground the poet had between pretending to an innocence that would make her rely on "protectors" who

would ensure her downfall, and too much knowledgeable wariness, was continuous reflection on lessons learned in the past from her mentor, her father figure, the "more than the most powerful lover" of whom Orrery wrote— Jonathan Swift.

Diane Relke suggests that "Swift's delight in playing the role of stern literary father to women poets is reflected in the tremendous influence he had on the young Lactitia." She also argues the Dean "fanned the sparks of rivalry that were beginning to ignite between Lactitia and Matthew... by declaring that on occasion she exhibited more wit and poetic facility than her husband."⁵⁰ "That he is both a Scholar, and a Man of Genius," Lactitia remarked of her husband, "all who know him must allow; but like Mr. Pope he is so plagued with envy that he even hated me because I could write." The Dean's exclamation on one occasion to Matthew— "P—x on you for a Dunce... were your Wife and you to sit for a Fellowship, I would give her one sooner than admit you a Sizar"— serves to illustrate the part he played in the conflict between the spouses, as well as the role Lactitia wished, perhaps in retrospect, for him to have played as literary guardian and disciplinarian.⁵¹

Her autobiography mentions no encounter with the Dean after the time she was found guilty of adultery, although she wisely scattered anecdotes of him through all three volumes. The divorce occurred three years after Matthew's troubles in England, and Swift's own responses to the events surrounding the couple are evident in a letter he sent Pope during the divorce proceedings. The young man who was once "the most hopeful we have" had disappeared:

Dr. Delany is a very unlucky recommender, for he forced me

to countenance Pilkington; introduced him to me, and praised the wit, virtue and humour of him and his wife; whereas he proved the falsest rogue and she the most profligate whore in the kingdom. Her husband is now suing for a divorce and will not compass it; she is suing for a maintenance, and he has none to give her."⁵²

According to his wife, Mr. Pilkington had "the whole Kingdom of Ireland against him" when he returned from London, as it was believed he had "betrayed Dr. Swift."⁵³ Swift, who had commissioned the parson to publish his poetry, knew better, yet he clearly felt that Matthew had betrayed his loyalty, if only by failing to be more clever than he was (Swift went so far as to erase Pilkington's name from old letters where mention was made of him). Later, however, Laetitia is tasked with the failure of chastity - of which both Pilkingtons were suspect, and though her own immoral behavior could not directly affect the Dean, it apparently reflected on him.

This sense of responsibility for, and proprietorship of, the women under his tutelage is evident in the many references to Mary Barber in Swift's correspondence. Barber's wit is seldom mentioned without the defensive "virtue" accompanying it, coupled with references to her gender. He commends her for "Virtue, Piety, and Genious [sic] above [her] Sex" and finds that "she hath every kind of virtue, and only one defect, which is too much bashfulness."⁵⁴ The latter is a fault rarely mentioned in writings by men about women in the eighteenth century. Though Barber's humility is labelled a "defect," Swift may well have been indirectly praising her, since it seems doubtful that a woman could in fact *be* guilty of "too much bashfulness." In a letter to Lord Mayor Barber, Swift hoped that "by the

Success of her poems, she will be made tolerably easy, and independing [sic], as she well deserves for her Virtue and Good Sense."⁵⁵

Two incidents cast a shadow on the mutual admiration between Mrs. Barber and her mentor. One was the aforementioned scandal surrounding the poems by Swift that she smuggled into England. The other, which occurred earlier and had greater repercussions for Swift specifically, involved *Three Letters to the Queen on the Distresses of Ireland*, purporting to have been written by Swift and concluding with his forged signature, dated 22 June from Dublin, 1731. In one the writer laments that Mrs. Mary Barber, "the best female poet of this or perhaps any age," was ignored by those with the power to support her.⁵⁶

Swift responded to Pope, who had sent him a copy of this letter, with vehement denial: "to have so much zeal for one almost a Stranger, and to make such a description of a woman as to prefer her before all man kind, and to instance it as one of the greatest grievances of Ireland, that Her M____ hath not encouraged Mrs. B____ a woolen-drapers wife, declined in the world, because she hath a knack of versifying, was to suppose or fear a folly so transcendent that no man could be guilty of who was not fit for Bedlam." He not only denied writing the letter, but characteristically downplayed his own relationship with her: "I knew she was poetically given, & for a woman, had a sort of genius that way, she appeared very modest & pious, and I believe was sincere, and wholly turned to Poetry." He also made it clear that Dr. Delany had "long been her protector," and defined this guardianship in terms of physical proximity to the "poetess" rather than to correspondence or the correction of poetry itself, by declaring: "I never was at Mrs. Bar—s house in my life, except once I chanced to pass by her shop, was desir'd to walk in and went no further— nor stayd three minutes."⁵⁷

Barber had spent considerable time in Swift's presence, both at Delany's house and at the Deanery, but Swift was denying the specific kind of intimacy that Pilkington claimed in describing his inspection of her own home. By entering the domestic spaces of these women, he may have been giving them greater encouragement for their poetic attempts than he did by inviting them into his own lodgings. In their houses he was a witness to their lives, not just a reader and corrector of them; he was a public figure and his presence made their lives less private, yet acceptably so.

As far as is known, Mrs. Barber was not openly accused of having written the letter to the queen, although Tucker suggests she may in fact have been involved in the incident. Whoever was responsible, the trepidation it produced in Swift doubtless resulted at least in a temporary cooling of their friendship. Mrs. Delany gives the impression that when Mrs. Barber was back in Dublin in 1743 the relationship was on an easy, familiar footing. "Yesterday after prayers, it being a very bright and a dry hard frost, the Dean and I walked to see Mrs. Barber, a good mile from hence..."⁵⁸ Clearly the Dean no longer entertained misgivings about entering the home of his (now published) protégée.

III

A study of the poetry of these "minor" eighteenth-century Dubliners, both published and otherwise, is intricately associated with Swift because we cannot always distinguish where *they* end and *he* begins. "Apollo's Edict," a poem ridiculing the use of clichés, for example, is one on which Swift and Barber collaborated and which both printed in their collections of poetry. The influence Swift exercised over Barber's poetry is particularly

difficult to estimate, yet perhaps cannot be underestimated. He complemented her in 1730 with the fact that "of all of the verses I have seen of yours there is not one which with a little correction will not give you some credit and show your good sense."⁵⁹ In the preface to the dedicatory letter he wrote for her *Poems* he assured Lord Orrery, "Poetry hath only been her favorite Amusement: for which she hath one Qualification, that I wish all good Poets possess'd a Share of. I mean, that she is ready to take Advice, and submit to have her Verses corrected, by those who are generally allow'd to be the best Judges."⁶⁰ In the dedicatory letter that follows, Barber mentions "Dr. Swift" five times. At one point she emphasizes, "I am taught by the same Dr. Swift, that Characters are never so ill plac'd, or so little believ'd, as in Dedications...."⁶¹ Evidently, Swift's own desire for a flattering coterie and Barber's willingness to acknowledge male control over her female pen were mutually beneficial. Barber is able to draw on Swift's cynicism and combines it with her own, intensely feminine motivation for publishing, thereby balancing knowledge and sentiment, the business of writing a dedication and the art of poetry.

As each of Pilkington's poem appears in her *Memoirs*, she reiterates that the Dean appreciated all of her poetic efforts. One of the last poems in her first volume speaks in the voice of a muse who laments the young poet's bad fortune and unfulfilled destiny,

... in early Hours of Life,
 'Ere yet a Mother or a Wife,
 I tun'd thy infant Voice to sing,
 And plac'd thee near my hallow'd Spring
 My fav'rite Swift thy Numbers prais'd,
 Cou'd mortal Worth be higher rais'd?
 Yet I'll no more thy Wants supply,

Since Fortune leaves you, so will I."⁶²

Almost without exception, Swift's praise for his protégés was linked to his "corrections," and as we have seen the Dean's discipline was so significant to Pilkington that she wore the marks of his pinches like badges: "I am convinced, had he thought me incorrigibly dull, I should have escaped without Correction: and the black and blue Favours I received at his Hands, were meant for Merit, tho' bestowed on me."⁶³ In Pilkington's memory the physicality of their relationship is inseparable from questions of intellect. Mrs. Delany wrote that the Dean "corrects me when I speak bad English, or do not pronounce my words distinctly," but only Pilkington recorded being manhandled by the Dean for her stylistic lapses.⁶⁴ Orrery's choosing to refer to Swift as wielding more power than "the most powerful lover" in the lives of his seraglio may comment specifically on this relationship. Their familiarity suggests a lack of respect, or a suppressed tension in Swift, but the younger poet chose to interpret it differently. Their interaction was, according to her, anything but "criminal conversation," and her *Memoirs* incorporated him as a foil for the image of herself she wished to leave to posterity. With Swift, Pilkington was intensely feminine, diminutive, and obedient, yet still witty. She tells with obvious relish of her husband's informing Swift that the Dean himself had made Laetitia *conceited*: "since you have done her the honour to take notice of her, and make her your Companion, there is no such thing as mortifying her."⁶⁵

The only opinion we have from Swift of Mrs. Grierson appears in two letters to Pope. The first of these, dated Feb. 6, 1729, mentions her alongside Mrs. Barber. He writes of her as "a Scotch Booksellers wife" and "a very good Latin and Greek scholar," who "hath lately published a

fine Edition of Tacitus... and she writes *carmina Anglicana non contemnada*." English poems which are not to be despised. This last comment indicates that Swift must have seen more than the published translations. His moderation also suggests a respect for Grierson— a seriousness in the Dean's regard for her that contrasts with the almost jesting praise he sometimes lavished on Barber. In distinguishing the two women, Swift later explained, "one is both a Scholar and Poet, the other a Poet only."⁶⁶

What proves useful about the unpublished state of Grierson's poetry for the modern critic is that most of the manuscript work was subjected to less intrusion from Swift than either Barber or Pilkington sought or received. We know from his mention of her to Pope that Swift considered Grierson a good poet, and we also know that no subscription project necessitated communal consultations, as was the case with Barber. The poetry of this "scholar and poet" seems, therefore, more her own than either that of Barber, whose work underwent at least partial metamorphosis under Swift's corrections, or that of Pilkington, who wrote a great deal of her poetry with an end in mind— usually a commission, but also future publication.

Grierson's printed poetry, however, may nonetheless have felt the influence of Swift's correcting hand. In this connection, Elias discusses one of the poems in Grierson's manuscript written on the character of Mary Barber, which also appears in Barber's *Poems on Several Occasions*. The last four lines of the printed version in Barber's book differ from the manuscript version and are "the sort of thing Mrs. Grierson would have liked to have written, but did not." At first, the poet characteristically praises Barber for avoiding "the warrior's, and the lover's fire," emphasizing

her "tender care and grief for the distress: Her joy unfeign'd to see true merit blest." The printed version then finishes dramatically.

Thus the great Father of the Hebrew State,
Who watch'd for weary Strangers at the Gate:
The Good He thought conferr'd on Men unknown,
He found to more exalted Beings shown.

Elias reasons that this published conclusion may have originated with Swift, possibly not during Grierson's lifetime but as an addition to improve Barber's book. "Given the late date Mrs. Barber assigns to the poem— only eleven months before Constantia died— the lines on Abraham may well have entered the text only afterwards."⁶⁷

There is no indication, as Elias points out, that Grierson desired to see most of her poems in print, particularly those of a personal nature. They were outpourings of the Christian faith she earnestly embraced, as in the prayer-poem on the death of her three year old son, which ends pathetically:

And thou sweet Babe tho' you thus Early dy
With other infants shan't forgotten Ly
But by the Muse snatch'd from the dismal herse
Still Live in thy unhappy Mother's Verse."⁶⁸

Elias reads most of Grierson's poetry as associating her faith directly with learning and self-improvement, a manifestation of the protestant work ethic by which all of her efforts were offered up to God.

It is not surprising, then, that Grierson is depicted in several collective biographies of female writers as one who desired no more than to

be "a Scotch bookseller's wife." According to George Ballard she "set a perfect pattern of conjugal love and duty," and it is apparent that morally uplifting poetry, like the few posthumous pieces in the collections of Barber and Pilkington, was part of this domestic role.⁶⁹ Yet her duty also included avoiding publication for herself. She was a scholar and a translator, but as a poet she remained within her province —outside of print— just as she stayed within her own country, and away from England.

IV

Both Pilkington and Barber had some acquaintance with Pope from their stays in London, encounters which are known of in part because they provoked him to some degree of irritation. Swift's well-known ambition to "vex mankind" did not extend to the liberties of his protégées, and he found himself apologizing for Barber in a letter to Pope written in April, 1731:

Mrs. Barber acted weakly in desiring you to correct her Verses. I desired her friends here to warn her against every thing of that kind. I do believe there was a great Combat between her modesty and her Ambition.⁷⁰

As in the letter he later sent Pope concerning the queen, Swift here indicates an appropriate failure of communication between himself and the lesser poet. Although Swift lent Barber his support, his correspondence describes an unbridgeable distance between them that encompasses class, since she was "the wife of a citizen," as well as talent and gender. She was a good poet... "for one of her sex."

Pope also met Matthew Pilkington, again at Swift's recommendation, and was eventually offended by him, also. Swift's habit of foisting would-be versifiers on his friends and sending little people on publishing errands irritated Pope, as one of his letters indicates, in which he complains of

the intervening, officious impertinence of those goers between us, who in England pretend to intimacies with you and in Ireland to intimacies with me. I cannot but receive any that call upon your name, and in truth they take it in Vain too often... it is hard that the world should judge of our housekeeping by what we fling out to the dogs.⁷¹

Lactitia Pilkington does not mention meeting Pope in her *Memoirs*, but given her endeavors to make the acquaintance of other influential men, she may well have maneuvered herself into a position to do so during her visit to her husband in London. We know that Barber met the English poet, and that on Pilkington's first trip the two women travelled together. There is also mention in Pilkington's third volume of her writing a letter to Pope, indicating a personal familiarity with him, attesting that the bearer of the letter was once employed by Swift. Amidst praise and displays of her knowledge of Pope's work, she also inserts stinging criticisms of his poetry and his person in her *Memoirs*, comparing him unfavorably to Swift.

These meetings invite the question-- to what extent were women like Pilkington and Barber to fit Pope's sympathetic insight: "Too much your sex is by their form confin'd"? Were they, rather, amongst those whom he would later condemn in his "Epistle to a Lady" as having "no characters at all"?⁷² Valerie Rumbold's thorough investigation, *Women's Place in Pope's World*, describes a dichotomy between the devotion Pope exhibited to women who were content in the "shade" where their virtues "open fairest."

an ideal he describes in his *Characters of Women*, and his attraction to more strikingly assertive women like Mary Wortley Montagu. If, as we might assume, he met the young Mrs. Pilkington, was she "too much the coquette" with him? Might he have considered her "at heart a rake," or reserved that opinion until he received the vilifying letter from Swift?

Mary Barber, who was almost fifty when she met Pope, was by all accounts bashful and self-consciously motherly. Was she an annoying favour for a friend and no more? In light of the intensely feminine environment in which Pope was raised, surrounded by learned, elderly aunts and a gentle, also elderly mother, Barber may also have presented a challenge to Pope's efforts to categorize and thereby contain women with his words. When he read Swift's letter of recommendation for her did he think, "others roar aloud, 'Subscribe, subscribe!'" and mentally add her to the *Dunciad*?⁷³ His letter to Swift on the occasion has a peevish, wounded tone. Possibly Pope was envious of the ease with which a female poet could find support for compositions that, under different circumstances, he might claim furthered the art of sinking. He complained that "Mrs. Barber desires I would correct her Verses, truly I should do it very ill, for I can give no attention to anything." It was clearly not her verse but Swift's name that prevented the woman herself from sinking into obscurity: "All your Friends She will have without me; and all their Friends. But I'll do all I can."⁷⁴

Female poets, however, felt strongly the advantages enjoyed by the men who could safely call themselves poets, including both the education available to them and the knowledge they were permitted to display. Swift allowed Pilkington to read his letters and paste them into books, and one day she encountered a Latin phrase from Pope, which she asked to have translated. Writers would often slip into a foreign language when writing

suggestively, and the language gap that privileged educated male poets and scholars is evident in Swift's refusal to enlighten her. He suggested that her husband should translate for her, and she coaxed him in vain: "Why, sir... sure Mr. Pope would not (especially to you) write any thing which even a Virgin might not read." The implication that follows is that Pope indulged in many sexual innuendos, somehow of a more offensive nature than those of the Dean. Throughout the *Memoirs* Laetitia anticipates the warning Sarah Green would give her niece near the end of the century, that Alexander Pope was "no real friend" of her sex.⁷⁵

The juxtaposition of "especially to you" and "which even a Virgin might not read" is also interesting in reference to Swift, who himself wrote numerous pieces generally considered unfit for innocent eyes, yet who, as an unmarried churchman, should also have been a symbol of male chastity. If Pilkington did make such a remark, it had to be at least somewhat tongue-in-cheek in terms of Swift's supposed virginity and her own sexual (married) knowledge. Again she was claiming a language that *he* was unfamiliar with, that of sexual experience. Readers of her *Memoirs* must have agreed, in moments like this, that she *was* too pert, too witty. The constraints of her gender disallowed the poetic expression of this experience, however, and her lack of education did not permit her the Latin with which to simultaneously disguise and display her knowledge, as Swift was able to do. She could neither write Latin, nor seem to engage in poetry that required either linguistic or sexual interpretation. The male poet had access to the appropriate language which, ironically, made experience unnecessary, whereas Pilkington's mother tongue was, had to be, chaste.

V

As Swift offered his corrections to these women, their influence on his life and his work may also have been powerful, although less direct than his own effect on their poetry. Felicity Nussbaum identifies "Swift's most extensive treatment of women" as appearing "in the early odes, the birthday poems to Stella, and the cluster of scatological poems written from 1727 to 1733," which is the period in which he came most in contact with the trio we are considering.⁷⁶ On the 26th of February, 1730, Swift wrote mournfully to Pope: "I am daily harder to please, and less care taken whether I am pleas'd or not [.] I dine alone, or only with my House keeper. I go to my Closet immediately after dinner[.] there sit till eleven and then go to bed. The best company here grows hardly tolerable, and those who were formerly tolerable, are now insupportable."⁷⁷ Mrs. Pilkington reports of this time that the Dean "contracted his acquaintance into a very narrow compass, for as he was frequently deaf he thought the infirmity made him troublesome.... It was owing to this, that Mr. Pilkington and I frequently passed whole days with him, while numbers of our betters were excluded."⁷⁸

The specific "company" Swift refers to is uncertain, though he seems weary with everyone in the Dublin where he felt trapped like "a rat in a hole." We do have evidence, however, that the Pilkingtons were people with whom Swift felt he could vent his spleen; Laetitia could be pinched, and Matthew could be made to drink bitter dregs of wine and thank him for it. Swift's weariness with all of Dublin must have included Mrs. Barber and the combat between her modesty and her ambition, and the deferential, yet saucy Mrs. Pilkington, who teased him with her childishness, yet compelled him to accept yet another godchild. Barber also necessitated a great deal of

his time and energy in inducing subscribers to support her. Swift's own obviously mixed feelings may have included envy as well, since both women went to England while he was unable to visit the friends and literary milieu he missed. Perhaps even "pale Constance," who lost one child and would bury another eleven months before her own 1732 death, was a reminder that all the raillery and rage he indulged in was futile: "My eyes hurt with reading by candlelight," he wrote Pope in the same letter, and then added, moving beyond logic to ill-defined sorrow and powerlessness, "so that I am forced to write and burn whatever comes into my head."⁷⁹

Swift did not destroy all of his writings from this period, however, and Orrery taxes the "scraglio" with "the publication of many pieces, which ought never to have been delivered to the press."⁸⁰ The suggestions Swift offered these women was certainly not indicative of mutual critiques, but Orrery's comment inadvertently implies that the members of the Dean's coterie ought to have engaged in serious criticism, rather than thoughtless approval. Instead, criticism from these women usually appeared either anonymously or in anecdotes, if at all. Pilkington, for example, expressed concern that Swift "sometimes chose Subjects unworthy of his Muse, and which could serve for no other End except that of turning the Reader's stomach, as it did my Mother's, who, upon reading *The Lady's Dressing-room* [1732], instantly threw up her Dinner."⁸¹

Another response to this graphic poem by Swift came from an anonymous lady. *The Gentlemen's Study, In Answer to The Lady's Dressing-Room* claims that it first appeared in London, yet Foxon (Catalogue G123) suggests that it was published only in Dublin:

Some write of angels, some of goddess,
But I of dirty human bodies,

And lowly I employ my pen,
 To write of naught but odious men;
 And man I think, without a jest,
 More nasty than the nastiest beast.

Chloe Surpriz'd: Or, The Second Part of the Lady's Dressing-Room.

by Samuel Shepherd, appeared in Dublin later the same year, as did his "Thoughts upon Reading the Lady's Dressing Room and the Gentlemen's Study," which ends,

We may easily see, by the Spleen of what's said,
 That he's an old Batchelor, she an old Maid;
 Then wed them together, join her Shift to his Shirt,
 And let'em contend to excell most in dirt.⁸²

The anonymous poet may indeed have been a spinster, but she could also have been a married woman, knowledgeable about men's rooms and the male body. In either case, she obviously did have "spleen" to vent. Her response is so vehement it raises as many questions about an unknown woman's anger as Swift's poem does about his own complex responses to women.

Miss W___'s identity will probably never be discovered, but Pilkington, Barber, and Grierson, who were familiar with Swift and eighteenth-century Dublin, may be able to contribute to the question of a woman poet's confusion. In their own poetry, published and unpublished, the three women evidence different degrees of joy, anger, and resignation toward their situations as women writing. That a lady could *be* a poet in the eighteenth century seems contradictory, and Swift's many reminders that Barber was skilled "for one of her sex" distinguish clearly between poet and

female poet. The Dean's qualifications tend to classify Barber as what Kristeva calls "not even a poet, at best a poet's accomplice," but it was a status deemed necessary to ensure the "poetess" success.⁸³

VI

In his discussion of George Ballard's selection process for the sixty-four women included in *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain*, Robert Halsband comments that "all of [Ballard's] ladies have one trait in common besides their respectability: they did not write for money. Could there have been any connection between respectability and profit?"⁸⁴ Grierson is the only one of our three poets included in Ballard's *Memoirs*. That she did not seek publication for her own poetry, although as a printer's wife the medium was more easily available to her than to either Barber or Pilkington, contrasts interestingly with the conduct of the other two women, who were both forced to live by their pens for some time. Margaret J. M. Ezell, however, argues that Ballard omitted several noteworthy women because "his definition of the feminine... emphasized the domestic, the melancholic, and the impulse for self-sacrifice over the public, the witty, or the defiant (not to mention the erotic) in women's writing."⁸⁵ The esteem which Ballard seemed to hold for Barber, who presented herself as an emblem of domesticity, does indicate that had she also been a *deceased* female poet she, too, would have been included in the *Memoirs*, in spite of her financial dependence on her poetry. As long as a female upheld the rigorous demands of chastity in her poetry, which at times meant she must *seem* as though she were not writing for monetary reward, she was respectable.

Financial motivation may have been distasteful to many upper class readers, but there was a growing system of patronage by subscription even for respected male poets. Subscription straddled the line between respectable aristocratic patronage and publishing for the mass market (which was itself elitist, and not truly of the masses). Although burdensome for friends and the friends of friends, it was a system gaining increasing respectability, provided women writers evidenced the proper character attributes (chiefly modesty), and presented character witnesses (high-born women, and male poets). Pilkington fearlessly acknowledged economic reasons for publishing, anticipating Johnson's statement that only a blockhead wrote for reasons other than money: "If the Reader thinks this little Narrative is not quite in Point... he may blot it out of his Book if he pleases, but he shall not blot it out of my Manuscript, for that would be to deprive me of a Page, that is worth a Crown to me."⁸⁶

On the issue of literary commerce and female respectability, Harriet Guest concludes that, although "chastity is the most important virtue in women with some small fortune, economic independence takes precedence, and the value of chastity as a sign of bourgeois insistence on gender difference, seems relatively unimportant in comparison with the values of honesty and industry that may gain that independence."⁸⁷ The act of writing, however, constituted an industry unlike any other in which a woman might successfully engage. Barber's economic *dependence* on the kindness of subscribers and on her mentor yoked her virtue and her industry. Pilkington complained that, although both honesty and industry were necessary for her survival, the implacable demands of chastity never ceased to impede that industry, while aspersions cast upon her sexual virtue placed her at risk to accusations of dishonesty in all her dealings.

By not publishing her poetry, Grierson ensured herself a reputation for posterity as intelligent, but "too learned to be vain." By contrast, the more Pilkington wrote and the more she defended the virtue she was accused of discarding with her marriage, the more she suffered. Barber experienced criticism that her work was dull, but her motherliness and the choices she made about subject matter contributed to her reputation, and therefore her profits. Like Swift, the editor of *Poems by Eminent Ladies* praised Barber because she "found leisure without neglecting her husband's business."⁸⁸ The profitability of her endeavors rested in her ability to sell herself and in Swift's promotion of her. Not surprisingly, potentially dull literature was preferable to immodesty for Barber, and for her mentor's vision of her. Swift set out to offend, but women poets in the early eighteenth century were forced to concentrate on self-defense, either by shunning publication, as Grierson did or, like Pilkington, attempting to balance what Virginia Woolf calls "her duty to entertain... her instinct to conceal."⁸⁹

-Chapter Two-
 Appearing in Print

How I succeed, you kindly ask,
 Yet set me on a grievous Task,
 When you oblige me to rehearse
 The Censures passed upon my Verse.

Mary Barber¹

Barber, Grierson and Pilkington grew up in a society where women read cautiously. Reading was a potentially antisocial act, and both "idle" romance novels and overly intellectual literature were routinely condemned as inappropriate for the fair sex, whereas devotional reading, books which allowed wives to assist in their husbands' trade, and conduct manuals escaped censure. Consequently, the public personae women writers adopted in the eighteenth century reflected these few acceptable influences. Simply put, family businesses required intelligent women, and children and other ladies needed reading material that exemplified virtue.

For women to write at all was still problematic, however, since the conduct books their generation inherited and those that continued to be written employed "praise, hope, threats, fear and social ostracism" to encourage "the three womanly virtues: silence, piety, and obedience."² In addition to these overwhelming criteria, and in spite of the traditional praise of female virtue, women writers were not themselves a positive addition to literature-- one of the most common criticisms levelled against male poets and playwrights of the seventeenth century, for example, had been the label of "effeminate writers," although there were in fact few female writers to be

used as examples for the analogy.⁵ Ironically, Aphra Behn, the most noted woman writer of the generation preceding Swift's, was accused of *unfeminine* behavior and sharply criticized for immodesty in terms that leave no doubt as to the risks she took in writing for the press.

In this chapter I will argue that although women writing for publication automatically violated the criteria with which conduct manuals defined femininity, their poetry adhered to the rules of womanhood by promoting piety, obedience and, paradoxically, silence. Obviously the notion that a female "scribler" was indeed content to be womanly, and not attempting to excel in male activities, had to be conveyed in her writing. The concern with the social impact of a woman's writings and those of other females—frequently to the detriment of these other women writers—was made obvious, as was the effort to curb the vanity of all women in order to justify her own poetry. By depicting themselves as exceedingly feminine and, when appropriate, motherly, most eighteenth-century female poets admitted that they were not "real" poets. This was the paradox of the role the "poetess" played. A poet could define himself merely with this title (at the very least, the implication of the word). The "poetess" persona, however, had to include every traditional role of womanhood within a frame of poetry.

This necessary authorial persona involved self-imposed abridgements and omissions, but it also allowed for the exploration and expression of important aspects of eighteenth-century women's lives. Mary Barber, for example, seems obsessed with her children, especially her eldest son, but this allows her to adopt his voice and comment subtly on women's issues from a perspective that cannot simply be labelled the product of womanly "spleen." The creation of authorial personae involved numerous such

instances of give and take: for example, although a female poet would frequently belittled her own sex, this criticism paved the way for serious discussion on behalf of women's education.

I

In Swift we encounter the principal arguments in favor of higher learning for women. Education in the land of the Houyhnhnms, described in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, is "equally enjoined to the young ones of both sexes," and Gulliver's master "thought it monstrous in us to give the females a different kind of education from the males, except in some articles of domestic management; whereby, as he truly observed, one half of our natives were good for nothing but bringing children into the world; and to trust the care of our children to such useless animals, he said, was yet a greater instance of brutality."⁴ Even the childless Swift, who enjoyed the company and conversation of intellectual women for his own sake, had to argue that it was primarily children who justified their mothers' right to knowledge. The long-standing tradition of the father or husband acting as instructor to the woman is also firmly in place in Swift's many recommendations for female education, since women apparently possessed the sensibility—but not the discretion—necessary for literary education. Although Swift could encourage a poet like Barber, his concern with male-guided female reading indicates he felt strongly that women as a group were either not rationally prepared to judge literary merit, or too fragile to suffer exposure to unworthy literature. If a "little learning" was deemed "a dangerous thing" in *An Essay on Criticism*, extensive learning was seen as equally dangerous, at least for women. Again, the literary personae female

poets adopted reflected the apparent need for male guidance and approbation, as evidenced by the frequent references to Swift as mentor by Barber and Pilkington.

As I have mentioned in regard to Swift's letter of recommendation, a male protector was deemed necessary to the literary success of a middle class woman, and often to her very survival as well. Dale Spender comments that "by the eighteenth century some women perceived a choice of occupation between the 'oldest profession' and the 'newest profession,' and the reason for engaging in either was usually necessity."⁵ These appear to have been the unhappy alternatives for Pilkington while in London, where for a time she was paid to write poetry and letters for the painter Worsdale while confined to his home, a curious situation never fully explained to the reader of the *Memoirs*. The criticisms levelled at many successful women writers purposely confused the distinctions between these two professions, continuing in the tradition of Aphra Behn's satirists, one of whom claimed that no woman could be a playwright unless she was also a prostitute. There was also little or no sympathy for women who could not survive on the proceeds of their writing, although "the threat of real rather than metaphorical dirt, greed and promiscuity came primarily from the poverty," rather than from literary ambition, "that drove many women into Grubstreet or the playhouse.... Here "life was as Laetitia Pilkington found it... a shifty world of unreliable acquaintances interested in sexual favors as often as literary commissions."⁶

In such a hostile and competitive atmosphere the decision to write for the press unavoidably violated the silence which "the three womanly virtues" demanded. As we have seen, only the promotion of chastity and obedience in a woman's writings offered the one irrefutable argument for violating the

virtue of silence, by projecting her voice beyond the walls of her home. Women were so anxious about writing *morally*, that whether or not they wrote *well* was frequently not a focus of criticism. Like the tribunal that decided Pilkington's divorce, the concern of women writers in the eighteenth century was more with the "spiritual court" of readers who pronounced their work morally sound or otherwise, than with the acknowledgment of literary merit.⁷

If the generally accepted role of the poet was to reform society, at times by mirroring its hypocrisy through satire, the role of the poetess was to reform chiefly by example, and with only limited satire—chaste satire. Eighteenth-century literary critiques were seldom divorced from personal criticism, and public approbation on moral grounds was as much a condition of financial success as it was a determinant of personal reputation. Although published women hoped for some acknowledgment of poetic talent, they also knew it was improbable unless coupled with approval of the poet herself.

In *The Universal Passion*, Edward Young argued in a familiar strain that women were meant to adorn, and be adored:

Ladies supream among amusements reign
By nature born to sooth, and *entertain*.
Their *prudence* in a share of folly lies,
Why will they be so *weak*, as to be *wise*?⁸

The implication that a woman had a choice about being, or rather appearing, wise, was not lost on female poets, who understood both the apparent lapse of chastity in, and the folly of, making claims either to excessive wisdom or more dangerously, to wit. Pretending to less understanding than they had

was a seemingly timeless rule in the game between men and women, in which men were classified either as protectors or attackers. The stanza also illustrates the dilemma Virginia Woolf describes between the duty to entertain and the instinct to conceal, since the most entertaining ideas a woman might put to paper would likely be those which earned her the most criticism. We might think it a problem that Anne Donnellan wrote to Swift about "a few fine ladies" who found Barber's poetry dull, but we must also remember that Swift himself corrected her verses as he thought fit before they went to the press. Barber prudently constructed her authorial persona to reflect the female poet's claim to virtue in preference to wit. "To a Lady who commanded me to send her an Account in Verse, how I succeeded in my *Subscription*" depicts would-be subscribers with mild satire, and yet the last stanza is both earnestly self-defensive and unapologetic. Here, as elsewhere, the poet "presumes to boast" of one merit only:

The Muse I never have debas'd:
 My Lays are innocent at least:
 Were ever ardently design'd
 To mend and to enlarge the Mind.
 This must be own'd a virtuous Aim,
 The praise of Wit— let others claim.⁹

When a collection of poems such as Barber's appeared in print the motivations that were expressed, especially in a book's preface, to justify its publication often involved complex negotiations between poet and reader which, in the case of publication by subscription, meant negotiations between the writer and her multiple patrons. Ambition was not supposed to motivate a woman to write, yet publication automatically implied ambition, and Swift, in his efforts to promote Barber's work to a would-be subscriber,

prioritized her qualities wisely: "She had so many friends of great quality who encouraged her to print her poetical works by subscription, and went on with great Success.... I believe few people have met with more considerable friends and Patrons than She: and very well deserves their favor, by her Virtue, her humility, Gratitude and Poetical Genius."¹⁰ In Swift's estimation, and likely in that of most subscribers, virtue was foremost among a female poet's attributes, and genius the last, token qualification.

Rebecca Gould Gibson explains that prefaces to books of poetry by women, which carefully linked "modesty with chastity and domesticity," were intended not merely as an "elegant apology made for form's sake, but as a prelude vital to the work's winning public approval."¹¹ In the "Preface" to *Poems on Several Occasions* Barber admits she is "sensible that a Woman steps out of her Province whenever she presumes to write for the Press," but she contrasts with this her intentions as a poetess. She defines herself as a traditional woman and an unusual woman writer, whose "verses were written with a very different View from any of those which other Attempters in Poetry have proposed to themselves." When describing others like herself she avoids the term "poet," yet she is also *unlike* other *attempters* at poetry. She is therefore superior to most women writers because she is more than merely striving toward poetry, but she is not quite succeeding as a poet, either.

In her "Preface" she mentions the desire to educate her children through verse as her primary reason for writing, and in this domestic space she would have remained— had it not been for the influence of others, and her own desire to help the needy. Typically, Barber came in contact with "Noble Persons" who encouraged her to publish. Her "Preface" briefly

mentions the poet's ill health and then praises Constantia Grierson's scholarship and piety to explain why the book begins with poems about the older poet by the younger. Domesticity, generosity, gratitude, a hint of want, and the portrait of a perfect (almost saintly, because deceased) friend of the poet set the scene for the pieces to follow. Modesty permeates this preface, in which the poet hopes: "that my Intention (which I hope will be allow'd good) can atone for my Performance."¹²

Adopting the other (somewhat) forgivable excuse for publishing, Pilkington justifies the publication of her poems in journals and the writing of her *Memoirs* as the only alternative to starvation, expressing the wish that she had not been forced to write them at all:

... I have been a Lady of Adventure, and almost every Day of my Life produces some new one: I am sure, I ought to thank my loving Husband for the Opportunity he has afforded me of seeing the World from the Palace to the Prison: for had he but permitted me to be what Nature certainly intended me for, a harmless household Dove, in all human Probability I should have rested contented with my humble Situation, and, instead of using a Pen, been employed with a Needle, to work for the little ones we might, by this time, have had.¹³

Several discrepancies between this statement and what we know of her from the rest of her *Memoirs* indicate that this is the frame for a calculated construction of authorship. She was, in fact, often employed with a pen even in the happiest times of her marriage, and the couple did have three living children when she made this statement. The poet's "natural" inclinations seem here to be entirely domestic, and her spouse is blamed because she must profit from a talent she does not deny having, but

which she would prefer not to exercise *seriously*. Her explanation for living by the pen, coupled with the favorable assessments she gives of poetry she wrote while married, indicates that it is less the telling of others' private tales than the self-exposure of publishing that she is justifying. Readers of the *Memoirs* were most fascinated with the portrait of Swift that Pilkington's vantage-point allowed, although the story of her unhappy marriage and subsequent adventures in London make up the bulk of her *Memoirs*. The prominence of her poems throughout all three volumes, however, and the contextualization each undergoes, including the details of Pilkington's relationship with Swift, form a kind of ongoing preface, complete with footnotes, to a collection of poetry that was never published as such.

II

As her own "Preface" suggests, Barber makes the most of her domestic persona. In keeping with the claim that she first wrote poetry in order to broaden her children's education, several of her poems include her elder son, Constantine, as recipient of her advice or, more frequently, as the speaker of what she has composed. "Written for my Son, and Spoken by him at his first putting on Breeches" begins,

What is it our Mammās bewitches,
To plague us little Boys with Breeches?
To Tyrant Custom we must yield,
Whilst vanquish'd Reason flies the Field.

The boy objects to poor circulation and shoes that cramp the feet "Which is the Cause. I make no Doubt. Why thousands suffer in the Gout." He also finds fault with tight sleeves, hatbands, and cravats.¹⁴ The sentiment behind the aggravation at the constrictions of clothing might easily be a woman's complaint (particularly a woman with severe gout arthritis), and may still be, although Barber leaves the responsibility for fashion with women. The boy's desire for physical freedom is expressed as a natural inclination, yet his mother's insistence on decorum—a social concept—is also portrayed as a natural reaction for a woman to have.

The phrase "tyrant custom" however, originated with Pope, as a description of the lot of women. Although Barber's maternal authorial persona is displayed to advantage in this piece, her usage of Pope's expression subverts the concern with little boys and raises questions about clothing and the imprisonment of women. Male children actually appear as surrogates for women in "Con's" poem. It was hardly appropriate for a child to worry that "Dress, that should prolong our Date, Is made to hasten on our Fate," whereas Mary Barber's ill health must often have made the bindings of fashion painful to her.¹⁵ While seeking subscriptions among the gentry, this woman whom Swift described as "but poor," would also have been acutely aware of the demands of fashion, finances, and humility in her effort to dress the part of the modest female genius.

Amidst the many poems referring to her eldest son, the one extant piece in which Barber mentions her only female child, Myra—"A Letter written for my Daughter, to a Lady who had presented her with a Cap"—also touches on fashion, but here she argues that the "Crimson Velvet Cap" is inappropriate for her daughter:

Know, Girl... that Affectation
 Suits only those in higher Station:
 Who plead Prescription for their Rule
 Whene'er they please to play the Fool;
 But that it best becomes us Cits,
 To dress like People in their Wits.

Barber allows herself to express irritation with her daughter for aspiring to privileges she will never enjoy, and permits the girl to put the cap on only "to please ... brother Con."¹⁶ Con is the authority, yet his mother is the author, as well as *his* author.

While many of Barber's poems illustrate the bond she felt with her son, they also signal the appropriation of a voice, that of a male who appears to speak for himself, yet who is curiously recreated by his mother. "Written for my Son in his Sickness, to one of his School-Fellows," for example, criticizes a friend who abandoned Con when he was ill— an occasion for resentment more likely to have occurred in the mother's life than the son's. Another significant piece, which Bernard Tucker includes in his edition of Barber's poetry, was not written by but about the poet, and reads as gossip:

Believe me, Rose, howe'er this Con may please,
 With flowing Numbers, and an easy Phrase...
 No, no, dear Rose, his Tricks are too well known;
 They are his Mother's Verses, not his own."¹⁷

A rejoinder by Barber to the foregoing stanza insists on Con's authorship; yet the poet was clearly using the voice she imputes to him to address a greater variety of topics, as well as to engage in the dual perspective of a young boy with the potential of a man, and a woman who was fulfilled by being his mother. She emphasizes the centrality of her children in her life

in every piece, but "Con's" mention of her also makes *her* the center of his life. This anonymous piece argues her authorship while providing the perfect testimony both to the female poet's gift for rhyme, and her modesty in concealing it.

Barber uses the same strategy to distance herself from a piece like "The Conclusion of a Letter to the Rev. Mr. C—." Rather than lecturing Mr. C— on the advantages of women's education directly, she insists that Con advised her to send "what he calls a *poetical* Letter," and then inserts advice she gave her favorite son on how to choose a wife. "Chuse a Woman of Wisdom, as well as good Breeding, With a Turn (or) at least no Aversion to Reading," she tells Con. "Yet still, let her principle Care be her Mind: Who can, when her family Cares give her leisure, Without the dear Cards, pass an Ev'ning with Pleasure."¹⁸ Swift's reasoning on behalf of women's education is clearly an influence here, and the confidence she gained from his tutelage is evident. The poem is also self-descriptive, with an emphasis on the mother's duty to lead her children "to virtue and knowledge," and on the husband's choosing "Books for her Study, to fashion her Mind." It is doubtful that Jonathan Barber actually exercised the intellectual responsibility of the husband in this poem, but Jonathan Swift compensated for this and did recommend reading material to the woman whose writings he "corrected."

The version of Mrs. Barber that emerges from her poems is good-natured and humorously self-deprecating. "The Prodigy, A Letter to a Friend in the Country" describes the poet's suffering of a toothache: "Avert the Portent— a Woman not speak! Since Poets are Prophets, and often have sung, / The last Thing that dies in a Woman's her Tongue."¹⁹ Again she defines herself as other than a poet by distinguishing between "Poets"

and women. She here reiterates the personal humility with which the poem begins: "Tho' Rhyme serves the Thoughts of great Poets to fetter. It sets off the Sense of small Poets the better..."²⁰ The term "small poet" is, it seems, interchangeable with "poetess." Also worth noting, however, is the affirmation that minor poets are not only capable of adhering to the rules of poetry, but excel at observing them.

We find the same impulse to employ and then distance oneself from the title of "poet" in a letter by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who at one point checked herself and apologized to Sir James Steuart: "Do not be offended at the word Poet: it slip'd out unawares."²¹ However, the women surrounding Barber in the illness from which she suffers in the poem, then ask, "O JOVE, for what Crime is SAPPHIRA thus curst?" Here the use of the name Swift gave her is a subtle reminder that Barber is more than wife and mother; in spite of her own self-deprecating vocabulary, she is a poet.

The reference to Mr. Barber later in the poem describes him as hen-pecked and easy-going. Another woman remarks:

"Let her husband come in, and make one step that's wrong,
My life for't, the woman will soon find her tongue.
You'll soon be convinc'd —O' my Conscience he's here—
"Why what's all this Rout!— Are you sullen, my Dear?"²²

By clearly ascribing to Mr. Barber the position of head of his family, and simultaneously showing him to be gentle and somewhat malleable, Barber represents her marriage as one of mutual sympathy. Her efforts imply that her husband *allows* her to write poetry and that she is therefore not an intellectual shrew. In instances like these, Barber's literary persona is not

incongruent with the accounts of her in the correspondence of those in her circle. Mrs. Delany's letters support this version of the woman, who, in spite of continued ill health, was sought after for her sociability: "I am in great hopes that Mrs. Barber will be well enough to travel with us; she will be an excellent companion for us, for she has constant spirits and good-humour." Jonathan Barber was perhaps less the head of his household than his wife implied, however, since Mrs. Delany fretted that if Barber's family "had not met with better friends than himself, [they] might have starved."²³ The indifference others saw in him may in fact have been essential to her poetry, because it both permitted and forced her to write.

The first poem Pilkington claims to have written was at the request of her brother as a school exercise for him. Like Barber's poems "for" her son, Pilkington ostensibly wrote the piece on behalf of a boy, yet she too makes it clear that he was not its author. The result is a poem about its own creation, in which writing is itself an unchaste act:

O spotless Paper, fair and white!
 On whom, by Force, constrain'd I write,
 How cruel am I to destroy
 Thy Purity, to please a Boy?
 Ungrateful I, thus to abuse
 The fairest Servant of the Muse,
 Dear Friend, to whom I oft impart,
 The choicest Secrets of my Heart:
 Ah, what Atonement can be made
 For spotless Innocence betray'd?
 How fair, how lovely didst thou shew,
 Like lilly'd Banks, or Falling Snow!
 But now, alas, become my Prey,
 No Floods can wash thy Stains away.

Yet this small Comfort I can give,
That which destroy'd, shall make thee live.

The subversion of metaphors that occurs when the phallicism of the pen that spoils the white page is in the hand of a (remorseful?) female is incomplete, because Pilkington did so "by Force... to please a Boy." This force provides both an excuse for the act of writing and a topic, and the poem's mysterious appearance four years later in print allows for an independence which argues the piece has an existence, and a virtue, separate from its author. Both in terms of the poem's creation and its subsequent publication, Pilkington appears as innocent as the paper itself, without a stain, almost as if she had inspired rather than written it. The poem's ending, in which the paper as the object of the poet's gaze is thereby endowed with life, is similar to the conclusion of a Shakespearean sonnet. It is a hollow finish, yet conveniently foretells the independent nature the poem later seemed to acquire.

When Pilkington's *Memoirs* are considered as prefatory material, this tale of spontaneously regenerated poetry fulfills one of the criteria of the chaste preface. As Rebecca Gould Gibson puts it, "The reader must be assured that the poet had not intended to write for the press; that in fact she did not take her writing seriously-- certainly not so much to neglect domestic duties-- and had it not been for circumstances beyond her control the poems would still be in manuscript, floating innocuously among family and friends."²⁴ Many of these same ritual arguments are also echoed in Pope's apologia, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, but their effect in that poem is vastly different:

But why then publish? Granville the polite,

And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write:
 Well-natur'd Garth inflam'd with early praise
 And Congreve lov'd, and Swift endur'd my Lays."²⁵

In Pope's case, a certain degree of false humility is called for, but little stress is placed on domestic duty, although he does emphasize that he was a good son. Men's humble declarations also rarely touch on manly sexual modesty, unless to mock that quality, and it is important to remember that Pope's anti-Poet, Sporus, is depicted as an effeminate creature. Unlike Pope, no "poetess" could admit to being "inflam'd" with praise. Moreover, she must not be seen to desire this praise. Publication happened by accident.

Unsought publication is precisely the route by which Constantia Grierson did reach the public. Except for one anonymous piece, the few poems by her that were published appeared posthumously in anthologies and in more recent feminist attempts to retrieve little-known eighteenth-century women and female Irish writers. The basis for the praise Grierson's name received in her own century was a total of nine short poems, which first appeared cushioned by Barber's *Poems*, and in Pilkington's *Memoirs*. These previously unpublished verses then provided credibility for her friends in their efforts to publish without censure. Barber adds to her description of Grierson the ideal modesty that allowed the younger woman to write "several fine Poems in English, on which she set so little value, that she neglected to leave Copies behind her but very few...."²⁶ The recent discovery of a manuscript book of poetry and short prose pieces by Grierson doubles her known output, although this is still few to have left "behind her."

The fact that a woman who worked as a printer did not seek the distinction of appearing in print hints at several circumstances which set her

apart from her professional friends. Barber also helped her husband in his business, yet the woolen-draper's life could not offer her the intellectual stimulation she sought in the company of Swift and in her poetry. Grierson, however, was constantly challenged by reading and translating into her own language the ideas she encountered. Pilkington was forced to support herself, as well as her son, for several years by writing, and Barber supported her family with her subscriptions for some time before, as well as after, her husband's death. By contrast, the Griersons were financially secure, and Mrs. Grierson contributed to their income by working alongside her husband. The couple remained together in Dublin from the time of their marriage to Constantia's death. No separation or voyage placed her in the position either of physical or financial independence from her husband. All of her work was a reflection on him and his household, and the cover of her manuscript book, probably written in her son's hand, reads "Miscellaneous Poems by Mrs. Constantia Grierson Wife to Mr. Grierson."²⁷

Consequently, there is no strong sense of an authorial persona behind, or rather in front of, Grierson's poetry. She engaged in exercises which incorporated various personae, but these were not that of the poetess. In one of these pieces, addressed to Barber's son, Grierson practiced speaking from another's perspective as she had earlier in the anonymous "The Goddess ENVY to Dr. DELANY." The poem to Con Barber, "VERSES occasioned by Mrs. BARBER's Son Speaking *Latin* in School to less Advantage than *English*. . ." was among those included in *Poems by Eminent Ladies*. A schoolboy confronts Con in the poem, accusing him of plagiarism: "Yet now thy undeceiv'd companions see./ The Muse, thy mother, only speaks in thee." Con's schoolmate also speculates that "In

learned languages had she been skilled. Still with your praises had our school been fill'd." Grierson then imagines Phoebus jealously proclaiming his reasons for withholding Latin from Mary Barber:

With ev're elegance of thought and phrase:
 With Virgil's purity, and Ovid's ease:
 Though she with them in all their graces vie:
 Yet I'll their universal tongue deny
 For if, like them, she could unfold her mind
 In language understood by all mankind:
 Their matchless fame through many ages won,
 (Her sex might boast) would be in one out-done.²⁸

That Grierson was herself versed in Latin, as well as being a poet, does not enter into her claim for Barber's potential. The fact that she could speculate so warmly about the consequence of adding the "universal tongue" to her friend's accomplishments argues a genuine modesty about her own intellect and poetic achievements. Each of her poems included in the 1755 anthology is itself a panegyric to another "eminent lady," a title she doubtless would not have given herself.

There is more evidence by which to determine the self-images of Pilkington and Barber in the impersonations of their printed work than there is for Grierson, yet these are also more clouded— a search further confused by the passage of time between original composition and the printed versions that remain. By the time Barber's *Poems* went to press, for example, her darling "Con" was twenty years old, and like Barber's original verses and those printed after Swift's welcome intervention, most of what Pilkington wrote as a young bride and what she rewrote as a more experienced poet are now inseparable. The commentary each poem makes

on the demands of chastity is therefore difficult to contextualize apart from what the *Memoirs* tell us about original composition.

"The Petition of the BIRDS," for example, Laetitia supposedly presented to her husband on her honeymoon, after he had spent the day hunting. Here the young bride is concerned with her husband's choosing to kill birds, but it was only printed in the *Memoirs* after Pilkington's divorce and move to London. Although Lord Ponsonby calls this piece "quite a pretty little child's poem" it is significant that the poet herself referred to it as her "first Attempt in Poetry that was not quite childish."²⁹ Her appraisal indicates a degree of aesthetic, and perhaps professional, satisfaction with the poem, yet the circumstances in which it was written question what "childish" signified in this instance— whether an indication of literary improvement, or a reflection of her new status as wife and, consequently, woman.

Mr. Pilkington expressed enthusiasm over this poem, and "with the Raptures of an enamored Bridegroom, read it to every Person whom he thought possessed of Taste or Genius."³⁰ There is no indication in the *Memoirs*, however, that her petition to spare the "plum'd Inhabitants of Air" was taken seriously, nor that the poet was herself exceedingly distraught at their plight. The concerns she raises on behalf of the birds, however, serve as an interesting commentary on the newlyweds, particularly in light of the eroticism and fertility that birds are frequently made to symbolize. Arguing for a kinship in nature, she writes from the position of Matthew's prey, asking,

What Phrenzy has possest your Mind?
To be Destructive to your Kind?
Admire not if we Kindred claim,

Our sep'rate Natures are the same.

This claim to kinship makes the birds sound like women in this piece, and the implications of the violence directed towards them increase when we consider the timing of the poem: the morning after the poet's wedding night and the sacrifice of her unmarried chastity. The typical qualities associated with good women are imposed on the birds, primarily sacrifice and gratitude. Men and women are both equal ("our sep'rate Natures are the same") yet in a power situation males are undeniably in control. The young bride seems fearful and hopeful at once—fearful at the ferocity that has resulted from "Virtues" given over, and hopeful that the rage of sexuality will abate into love:

The chaste, the fond, the tender Dove,
 Inspires thy Breast with purest Love....
 Did we so many Virtues give,
 to thee too fierce to let us live?
 Suspend your Rage, and every Grove
 Shall echo songs of grateful Love.³¹

The circumstances of the poem's composition link hunting, sex, violence and inevitably death, creating a darker vision of marriage than that with which this same young bride cheerfully taunted Swift, supposedly only a few months afterward.³² Where is the bride in this piece, and where the divorced (possibly adulterous) older woman? Unlike Grierson, whose posthumous appearance in print argues a static and therefore ideal female personality, Pilkington created her own stasis with an authorial persona that combined the remembered and the present self in poems that appear regardless of chronology in the *Memoirs*.

The need to express the self in terms of chastity led not only to the adoption of a victimized persona, but also to that of the judge in Pilkington's poetry. A later, longer poem entitled "The STATUES: or, the Trial of CONSTANCY. A TALE" appeared in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* as well as in the first volume of the poet's *Memoirs*. Written by a less hopeful married woman, it is inscribed *For the LADIES*, and in it Pilkington explores man's infidelity to woman and the dire consequences that result, at least in the just world of poetry, for the inconstant husband. The poem describes men who are turned to stone as a punishment for their unfaithfulness— a characteristic all males seem to share:

Thy changeful Sex in Perfidy delight,
 Despise Perfection, and fair Virtue slight,
 False, fickle, base, tyrannic, and unkind,
 Whose Hearts, nor Vows can chain, nor Honour bind:
 Mad to possess, by Passion blindly led;
 And then as mad to stain the nuptial bed...³³

Though her anger at men is evident, she cites a double motivation for writing the poem. The poet longs to "expose the Inconstancy of Men," but she also claims that she had "a great inclination to be even with" the Dean and Mr. Pilkington, who were "eternally satirizing and ridiculing the *Female Sex*."³⁴ Nearly every male writer of the day was engaged in the same exercise, but Pilkington's desire "to be even with" her educator and her husband was as much about equality as it was retribution on behalf of her sex. She clearly cherished the memory of Swift's casual comments on her intellectual superiority over Matthew, and since it was impossible for her to win the fellowships her mentor said, in jest, she deserved, or to be assigned

a position in London, as her husband was, the Dean's comments were the highest honours she could hope to achieve.

The claim to intellectual equality with men was seldom voiced as such, and the highest praise a woman could receive was that she wrote well in spite of her gender.³⁵ She could not write like a man, which implied excessive boldness and experience, but she could write unlike a woman. As opposed to the dangerous masculinity and accompanying licentiousness depicted in the fictitious hags in the novels of Richardson and Fielding, females might aspire to an intellectual androgyny which constituted another aspect of the successful female's authorial persona. As a female knowledgeable in Latin and mathematics, Constantia Grierson exemplified this intellectual androgyny, without forgetting her place as a woman, and Margaret Ezell discusses Barber as an example of the female writer who received approbation when she embraced an androgynous role: "In Swift's view, Barber's poetry is rational, didactic, and well-organized, and is not a reflection of her gender, social rank, or domestic activities. It is, in fact, entirely distinct from those factors governing her private life, and as such praiseworthy." Even Martha Blount, whom Pope addressed in his "Characters of Women," could not be "simply the best of her sex, but... a kind of hermaphrodite, 'a softer man.'"³⁶

The notion of the "softer man" is an important one in the analysis of Pilkington's authorial self-fashioning, as well. One evening which she discusses in the final volume of her *Memoirs*, she recalls having dinner at the Dean's home where she was seated amongst twelve clergymen, including her husband. Swift had her remove her shoes so that he could measure her

height, and expressed disappointment that she had neither "broken Stockings, or foul Toes," in which case, he admitted, he would have "delighted to have exposed" her. She could not eat the dinner provided because she was, like Congreve's *Mrs. Qualmsick* the Curate's Wife, always a breeding," and she told the Dean she wished she were male. The Dean put it to a vote, and Mrs. Pilkington was declared a man "in Spite of Petticoats."³⁷ Notions of androgyny and procreation are conflated in this scene, in which Pilkington is simultaneously honored and mocked as a man, her pregnant state removing any threat of genuine equality from the conversations that take place. After the meal she was made to keep a pipe in her mouth like everyone else. It was not lit, although she adds, almost by way of defense, neither were those of Dean Swift or Mr. Pilkington.

The presence of Pilkington's husband ensured the respectability of her position among the men. Swift's efforts to expose her, however, affirmed his right to do so. Her tiny stature made her seem more a child than a woman, as Swift was always telling her, yet the child within her womb signalled the impossibility of disguising her adulthood, or her gender. The petticoats and the babe beneath debarred her from being treated or spoken to as man, and her position as the sole female in the room seemed to assure her the focus of attention, or at least a share in that enjoyed by the Dean. Her request that the Dean act as godfather to the coming child is in keeping with the other indications of male superiority and freedom in the dinner scene, for Swift responded: "Well, if it be a Boy, I don't much care if I do, but if it be a little Bitch I'll never answer for it." She did bear a son, who died five days after his birth.

iii

Not surprisingly, children are a prominent subject in poetry by eighteenth-century women. As testified by Barber's collection of poems, the favorite son is a recurring theme in these women's lives: he constitutes the rationale for women's education and is the most significant beneficiary of a mother's understanding. "What has the public to do with verses written between a mother and her son?" Barber asks in her Preface. "I answer, that as nothing can be of more use to society than the taking every care to form the minds of youth, I publish some of the verses written by me with that view, when my son was a schoolboy, as the best apology a woman could make for writing at all...." ³⁸ The favorite child was usually, like Constantine Barber, the oldest living son, though in the case of Pilkington it was the younger, John, with whom she had the closest relationship. John's praise of his mother after her death confirms the maternal picture she had drawn of herself: She "Rais'd me to Knowledge in each polish'd Art;/ Refin'd my Manners, and improv'd my Heart;/ Taught me from pleasing, sacred Truths to Know...." ³⁹

Good children had good mothers, and good mothers who were poetically inclined paid special attention in their writing to their sons. Pilkington briefly mentioned a visit from her daughter to London in her *Memoirs*, but what she did not discuss were the circumstances in which the girl arrived. In a letter to Samuel Richardson she wrote: "My daughter is come to me big with child, naked and desolate; and because I would not let her lye in the street, my saint-like methodist landlady has padlocked the door, and turned us both there." Later, she petitioned him for "a little old linen of any kind" for the baby. The child died, and Pilkington's daughter

left London. The vulnerability of this event goes unrecorded in the *Memoirs* and in Pilkington's poetry, whereas John's presence in London is dwelt upon at length.

Grierson was strongly attached to her children, those she lost to death and those who lived beyond her. Her having studied midwifery points to experiences of childbirth beyond her own, and, perhaps with this in mind Elias remarks that although "infant mortality was a fact of life in the eighteenth century" which "should not have bothered sensible parents unduly...." Grierson's poem on her baby's death is notably more directly painful than philosophic:

Unhappy Child to early Sorrows born
 And sent to make thy wretched parents mourn
 From fear of Dire distempers scarcely sav'd
 Of life it self by Sudden fate bereav'd
 Ah Lovly harmless shade Couldst't thou but see
 How much thy wretched mother mourns for thee.⁴⁰

By eighteenth-century standards, however, the *sensible* mother was one who would have felt as Grierson did at her loss, especially of her firstborn, and, although her training as a midwife would have made her more aware than most of the high infant mortality rate that threatened her son, as it did other children, he was not simply any child. This pain was not for the public, and one suspects that had Grierson intended to publish the poem, the sentiments she expressed would have been considerably altered, perhaps more like the positive, yet unsatisfactory response to the poem by Barber in her *Poems*. With a cold but admirable piety, the older poet momentarily forgot maternal feelings after seeing the verses Grierson

wrote on the death of her son. She reminded the grieving mother of the heavenly state the child had achieved, and then rather morbidly called on her to imagine the sorrows and distempers of life which he would have had to bear had he remained on earth.

Perhaps publication would not have altered Grierson's piece significantly, since poems by women about lost infants revealed more honest emotions than those composed on other subjects deemed worthy of poetry. It is here that the "poetess" persona and women's reality are closest. In his anthology of eighteenth-century women poets, Roger Lonsdale includes several pieces in which mothers mourn the loss of children or address unborn infants. Like Grierson, who lamented that "Yet long on Earth I first on Earth must wretched be. . . Doomed in this Vale of Sorrows to remain." Mehetabel Wright could find no solace at the time of her baby's death, and wished that

Ere thy gentle breast sustains
Latest, fiercest, vital pains,
Hear a suppliant! Let me be
Partner in thy destiny!

Elizabeth Boyd composed "On the Death of an Infant of Five Days old, being a beautiful but Abortive Birth," in which she exclaims:

What dire convulsions rend a mother's breast,
When by a first born son's decease distressed...
With what kind warmth the dear-loved babe was pressed:
The darling man was with less love caressed!
How dear, how innocent, the fond embrace!
The father's form all o'er, the father's face..."⁴¹

The relationship between son and father was evidently an important factor in the feelings of a mother for her male children. The first-born male, as in Grierson's case, was often the father's namesake, and as such testified to the state of married chastity of the faithful wife and mother, and to the legitimate inheritance of estate, no matter how modest the family fortune may have been. Grierson's manuscript book contains another poem written about the second son she bore, again named George Abraham Grierson, in whom she obviously took great pride. This strong sense of patriarchy that so defined their society shaped these women's poems—poetry which suggests that the oldest son carried on his mother's reputation along with his father's name.

John Cartaret Pilkington, who grew to be his mother's favorite, was renounced as a bastard by Matthew. The *Memoirs* cite several instances in which strangers remarked that the young man looked exactly like Parson Pilkington, and in his own *Memoirs* John comments that he does not understand how his father could doubt his paternity. The eldest child, William, was the namesake of Matthew's father, and it is significant that in her confusion on her deathbed Pilkington mistook her younger son for the elder when he asked if she knew who he was, answering: "Yes... you are my eldest Son, come from the College for my Blessing; you might have called before, but God bless you." This last comment may have been a fabrication by John, a reproach to his older brother for his absence from their mother's life, but it is more likely that Laetitia truly longed to see the one child Matthew had allowed to remain with him, the child he later acknowledged in his will as "my son William Pilkington, who never felt a filial affection for me (to the utmost of my observation)." William was bequeathed five pounds. John Cartaret Pilkington and Elizabeth Pilkington,

"those two abandoned wretches," not acknowledged as his children, were allowed "the sum of one shilling if Demanded within 12 months, and I should abhor to mention them in any Deed of mine, if it were not to prevent all possibility of Dispute or Litigation."⁴²

In spite of writing only for herself, a small circle of friends, and probably her husband, Grierson relied on the sad but perhaps necessary argument that her poem would keep her lost child alive on some level when she begged: "Still live In they unhappy Mother's Verse[.]" Although Pilkington as a young girl made the same kind of claim for the life her poetry brought to paper, she later chose to publish little poetry of a genuinely personal nature. She writes in her memoirs of having lost a child a few days after his birth, and in the second volume mentions that the daughter born after her divorce and left behind in Ireland had died, but does not immortalize either of them in poetry. She focuses little on her children apart from some peripheral mention in her verses, although her *Memoirs* included every anecdote she had heard or remembered, and supposedly "ALL HER POEMS."

When she did write about her children, however, she produced her strongest, and most honest, poetry. In the third volume she addressed Lord Kingsborough in a dedication, working in an old literary convention, but adapting it to a mother's circumstances. Her attempt was to secure a protector for John after her death, but she wrote with dwindling confidence in her own powers of persuasion:

Shed one kind Tear of Pity on her
Hearse,
Thou matchless Subject of her latest
Verse:

And let no Stone or Marble ever tell
 What Woes her Children, or herself, be-
 fel:
 But, mix'd and cover'd, with forgotten
 Clay,
 Time shall dissolve her Memory away.

Pilkington's best known composition, entitled simply "Sorrow," was written while her husband was suing for divorce. The poem, in which she first addresses God and then her husband, made Colley Cibber weep, and was recommended by Wordsworth to reading women in his own time. The poem quietly defines Pilkington as a poet who is such because she has lost all other titles:

While sunk in deepest solitude and woe,
 My streaming eyes with ceaseless sorrow flow,
 While anguish wears the sleepless night away,
 And fresher grief awaits returning day:
 Encompassed round with ruin, want and shame,
 Undone in fortune, blasted in my fame;
 Lost to the soft endearing ties of life,
 And tender names of daughter, mother, wife...⁴³

Pilkington describes herself as one who "hardly 'scap'd domestic rage," underscoring the tragic aspects of domesticity and marriage, and she is particularly concerned that she can "no more... boast a mother's name./ Nor in my children can a portion claim." In light of the poem her husband so proudly read on the day after their wedding, it is significant that here she also creates for herself the image of a mother bird no longer in the position to guard her little ones from danger:

Thus the poor bird, when frighted from her nest,
 With agonizing love, and grief distres'd,
 Still fondly hovers o'er the much-lov'd place,
 Though strengthless, to protect her tender race:
 In piercing notes she movingly complains,
 And tells the unattending woods her pains.⁴⁴

This affecting piece speaks of sorrow both genuine and impotent. The poem also foreshadows, even as her divorce proceedings were ongoing, the reasons Pilkington later gave for publishing her poetry. The authorial persona of her poetry is helpless and herself in need of protection, but also filled with righteous anger. She is not appearing in print only to please, but to complain in "piercing notes," shrill and feminine, about her misfortunes and her husband, the villain of the piece, the hunter.

In the majority of the compositions she wrote in England, however, Pilkington was highly conscious of her duty to entertain the readers of the *Gentlemen's Magazine* and later her own subscribers with satires and panegyrics, whereas Grierson felt no obligation to please the unknown reader. Grierson's public and private intellectual activities were clearly separate, and if her poetry was intended to please anyone but herself (and her husband?) it was her friends. Mary Barber incorporated the members of her family and domestic imagery into her art not as subjects, but as if the poetry were subject to them, in her desire to (cautiously) entertain her readers. The unhappiness of Pilkington's own family situation made necessary the concealment of facts, such as her daughter's pregnancy; instead, most of her poetry reflects the pattern of her life in London: profitable entertainment required providing the customer with what he wanted. Her concern with reader response is evident in a comment she

makes concerning Swift, who, she delicately acknowledged, "sometimes chose Subjects unworthy of his Muse, and which could serve for no other End except that of turning the Reader's Stomach, as it did my Mother's..."⁴⁵

IV

Susan Stanford Friedman reasons that, although the authorial persona of the poetess incorporates domestic imagery, "facing constant challenges to their creativity, women writers often find their dilemma expressed in terms of the opposition between books and babies." Barber's child-education and woman writing paradigm protected her from a "books versus babies" exclusion from the writing community, and, although Pilkington's apprehension about spoiling the page with her pen may have been an expression of the anxiety of authorship that women experienced in a male-oriented profession, her concern was more likely the necessary *display* of such an anxiety. For Friedman, the childbirth metaphor of creativity "validates women's artistic effort by unifying their mental and physical labor into (pro)creativity."⁴⁶ Women writers made use of this metaphor, and John Pilkington acknowledged the complementary natures of poet and procreator, in presenting to the world "this last Offspring of my beloved Mother."⁴⁷

If her *Memoirs* were a form of procreation, however, Pilkington's divorced state and the criticism she levels at her husband in its pages bespeak a literary illegitimacy. As evidenced by the poem about paper in volume one, however, her writing was either conceived of innocently (almost immaculately), or she was compelled by men to versify. In the cruel world of the hack writer, to which she gravitated as an alternative to

domestic rage, she wrote poetry for which men claimed authorship. Her poems are therefore categorized as being either entirely her own, or the result, if not of literary rape, then of forced literary prostitution.

An interesting reflection on the legitimacy both of her poetry and of her children is a religious question she poses in this last volume: "Why is our Blessed Redeemer stiled the Son of Man?" she asks. "When we are told, that a virgin should conceive; that the Power of the highest should over-shadow her! How was he then the Son of Man?"⁴⁸ The virgin is and is not the mother of the redeemer because of her need to be overshadowed by "the highest." Pilkington expressed this same kind of dichotomy for her own creative process. She emphasized the talent for poetry that she was born with in the depiction of herself, but as I have argued, her chief claim to legitimacy is the implication that the cerebral father of her *Memoirs* and her poetry was Jonathan Swift.

In Pilkington's third volume, stories about Swift abound, yet she allows the portrait of the Lilliputian coquette she evidently was to him to fade somewhat, and fresh signs of a strong personality and experience of the world emerge. Styling herself after Swift's example, she begins: "I cannot, like a certain Female Writer, say, I hope if I have done nothing to please, I have done nothing to offend; for truly I mean to give both Pleasure and Offence." In addition to echoing Swift, who vowed to offend men because he loved man, Pilkington was writing at a point in her life when she had little left to lose. She had discovered her reputation to be beyond repair, and the realization permitted her to vent her spleen more fully against those who had made life difficult: "Persons whom I know nothing of, come and beg I may not put them into the Third Volume.... But, Oh my dear LADIES, why are you so frightened?"⁴⁹ Men do not escape her wrath

either, although the threat of exposure does not result in the revelation of her enemies' names:

Tis but a mean Piece of Cowardice to insult a Woman, and as some Gentlemen have had the Courage to challenge me, by the known Laws of Chivalry, I have a right to chuse the Weapons: a Pen is mine, let them take up another, and may-hap they will meet their Match.⁵⁰

V

Whatever pride Pilkington had retained in spite of the deterioration of her reputation, she claims in this final volume that her "Days of vanity are over...." and that she "languish[es] for Retirement."⁵¹ Like so many other female poets, she also takes it upon herself to subdue the vanity of others. A common method by which women writers asserted their own virtue and justified their poetry was by addressing the problem of women who did not occupy their leisure time in self-improvement. They argued primarily that a suitable education would temper the vanity of young women and lead naturally to their becoming better wives and mothers. Gulliver learned that the education of the girls in Lilliput was nearly identical to that of the boys, "For their Maxim is, that... a Wife should be always a reasonable and agreeable companion, because she cannot always be young."⁵²

Liliput's system reflects on Pope's advice in Canto V of *The Rape of the Lock*, where Pope's Belinda is reminded of her own mortality and the need for mental improvement as a replacement for feminine vanity. The model for Belinda, Mrs. Frances Arabella Kelly, née Fermor, served both as

an ideal poetic object and a scapegoat not only for Pope but for intellectual women, as well. Both Barber and Grierson composed poems to the renowned Irish beauty. Grierson's poem is mainly complimentary: entitled *A Fable*, it refers to its subject as "Arabella beauteous Maid."⁵³ Barber's poem, however, is more a reflection on her own age and approaching death than an appeal to the virtues that will serve in both this world and the next:

Today, as at my glass I stood,
To set my head-clothes and my hood,
I saw my grizzled locks with dread,
And called to mind the Gorgon's head.
Thought I, whate'er the poets say,
Medusa's hair was only grey..."

She laments the mockery matrons receive from "witty concombs," and imagines Arabella, looking into the glass, saying: "Surely... this lovely face will never suffer such disgrace... Her envy now I plainly see. Makes her inscribe those lines to me."⁵⁴ Barber satirizes the vanity of fleeting physical beauty, but does not discuss the cultivation of virtues that will ease the burden of old age. She seems to regret her bitter honesty immediately after, however, and reverts to convention in the next poem she addresses to Arabella:

Forgive me, fair One, nor resent
The Lines to you I lately sent.
They seem, as if your Form you priz'd,
And ev'ry other Gift despis'd:
When a discerning Eye may find,
Your greatest Beauty's in your Mind.⁵⁵

Barber's concern was more likely the impression she had given of herself as "despising" her own "form" and being unappreciative of finer "gifts." yet she fortunately chose to include this original and exceptionally personal poem in her collection.

In spite of not writing for publication, Grierson still chose to focus on the traditional concerns about women wasting their time and lives. In a panegyric praising an unnamed lady she evinces sincere dismay at this waste. Here she invokes Mary Astell in expressing unaffected concern for a lack of learning in women:

Shall every fair who trifles time away
Uselessly Good impertinently Gay
Whose life's to game to sleep to dress to dine
With Astal's Soul in equal Glory shine[?]⁵⁶

Grierson's manuscript book also contains an undated letter to Arabella, in which the writer warns Fermor of placing too much faith in the temporary joys of this world. Here she explains:

The house you have left and the house you are come to have both lately had very remarkable instances of the uncertainty and transitoryness of the glories and happyness of this life.... God has bestowed on you such a fine understanding & so many other eminent advantages to be trifled away in the impertinencys and abuses of the fashionable World that seem rather fit for the amusements of a Child than the employment of rational minds [M]ake a right use Lovly nymph of the Gifts of Heavn [T]hey must increase either your Glory or your Misery [T]here is no medium."⁵⁷

The most notable difference between Pope's reaction to Fermor and that of the women who made her a subject in their writings is that the English poet sought to recreate her, and in doing so raised a monument to vanity the glamour of which is not negated by the loss of the lock or by Clarissa's dire warnings. Pope's emporium of beauty continues to shine after the virgin's disgrace, whereas Barber's poem does not discuss the exotic paraphernalia that allow woman, somehow, to live on artificially. Female beauty, in effect, holds no mystery for Barber, who also chose to focus on hair in her poem, contrasting her own "snaky locks [that] freeze up the blood" with young "tresses [that] fire the purple flood."⁵⁸ Like Swift in his more graphic portrayals of women, the female poet is concerned with the decay of the female body rather than its make-up. Unlike her mentor, however, Barber's concern is a personal one, partly based on nostalgia, as well as the shared human frailty of women that Swift exposes and exploits in "The Lady's Dressing Room," "To a Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," and "Strephon and Chloe." Barber's focus is natural decay; Swift's that of artificial construction.

It is likely that Grierson, Barber, and perhaps Pilkington encountered Arabella Fermor often, since by January of 1731 she seems to have become one of the Deanery circle. Mrs. Delany wrote that "Miss Kelly's beauty and good humour have gained an entire conquest over him [Swift] and I come in only a little by and by."⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, considering the image Pilkington created for herself as a young, attractive, and poetically gifted woman fallen on hard times, as well as the puzzling flirtation she describes having carried on with the Dean, the youngest of the three poets does not mention Arabella Fermor either in her poetry or her *Memoirs*. Although she warns against vanity as a matter of course, Pilkington also implies that her

own coquettish stance is earned. By her third volume she acknowledges having aged and matured, but scattered youthful memories of time spent with Swift argue, too, that she has not aged, even as her authorial persona vacillates between a maternal woman and a satisfied divorcée.

Pilkington compares herself favorably with authors whose vanity prompts them to include their pictures at the beginning of their memoirs, but perhaps the existing portrait of her was too indicative of the coquette, and not enough the mother protesting her chastity. The painting by Nathaniel Hone shows the poet wearing a large pendant, earrings, and a veil with thick folds under which her hair seems to be loose. One shoulder is bared as the sleeve of her gown has slid down to expose the top of her right breast. Less beauty than imp, Pilkington saw herself as a young woman imposed upon by age, men, and bad luck: "Poor Laetitia is become the Football of Fortune."⁶⁰ Cibber assured her, "under all the rubbish of your misfortunes, I can see your merit sparkle like a lost jewel."⁶¹ Perhaps her greatest misfortune and most damning indiscretion were those of combining personas as she did in her three volumed portrait of self— where she vacillates between coquette and mother, self-proclaimed poet and "domestic dove." The inclusion in her *Memoirs* of poems that she had written at the request of men for their lovers, for example, is partly justified as a way of illustrating the deception of the male sex, yet as the agent of that deception she is herself the most harmed by these revelations.

Pilkington expresses the wish, in her later *Memoirs*, that the word "impudent" not be applied to her so often. Wit and courage, she implies, are usually labelled impudence in women, and one suspects that it was in part to suppress manifestations of critical consciousness that accusations of vanity were so often levelled at women by both sexes. Matthew Pilkington,

apparently while still in love, addressed his young wife with a poetic warning:

... In thee, Latitia, tho' we find
 All Virtues that exalt the Mind;
 Tho' Nature ev're Gift supplies,
 To make thee, more than Woman, wise;
 Tho' Seraphs Hymn the pow'r divine
 In strains that only equal thine;
 Tho' now with all Perfections grac't:
 As Hellen Fair, as Cynthia Chaste,
 Must bow to wasting Time, and Fate,
 Thy sprightly Wit, thy Eyes divine
 Shall Cease.— Ev'n they shall cease to shine.⁶²

Here is a reminder of the inevitability of death, without genuine consolation drawn either from the woman's beauty or her many talents, including that of poesy. Her virtue, however, supposedly makes the end from which no one is exempt less worrying. Ironically, years later, upon hearing of the death of his first wife, the parson "with great Composure, said it had been well for her, to have died some Years ago."⁶³

Most women writers, however, were more likely to illustrate, as Pope did, the compensation of wisdom in conjunction with the passing of physical beauty, rather than merely the threat of death. Mary Barber discusses the brevity of the charms that encourage vanity in "Stella and Flavia," a poem that contrasts physical and spiritual beauty and allows consolation to those who do not possess the former by emphasizing the benefits of inner charm, not only in the life to come, but in old age.

Stella and Flavia, ev're hour,
 Unnumber'd hearts surprize:

In Stella's soul lies all her pow'r,
 And Flavia's in her eyes.

More boundless Flavia's conquests are,
 And Stella's more Confin'd:
 All can discern a face that's fair,
 But few a lovely mind.

Stella, like Britain's monarch, reigns
 O'er cultivated lands;
 Like Eastern tyrants Flavia deigns
 To rule o'er barren sands.

Then boast, fair Flavia, boast your face,
 Your beauty's only store:
 Your charms will ev'ry day decrease,
 Each day gives Stella more.⁶⁴

Although aimed at all women, a poem such as this may well have conveyed a stronger message of consolation to the Stellas of society than of warning to the Flavias, who, it seems, countered accusations of vanity by ascribing envy to the writers. It may also be here that the absence of poems to Barber's apparently plain daughter, Myra, is subtly rectified. What little is known about the girl suggests she was unattractive and lacking in confidence. Mrs. Delany wrote to Swift that "Poor Mira [sic] Barber is a melancholy drooping young woman, and I wish a prospect of her being well settled; but I hear of none." No happy prospect was forthcoming, it seems, since fourteen years later Delany wrote to another friend: "Poor old Mrs. Barber has struggled for six weeks past with a disorder that I doubt must prove fatal to her; her children, as they have great reason, are in the utmost distress. Poor Myra (who is in a deplorable way) and the youngest son

Lucius Barber, were entirely maintained by her and Betty Woddal, who has the care of Myra."⁶⁵

Barber wrote a letter to Richardson, who published the first edition of her poems in 1744, thanking him for sending a copy of *Pamela* to her daughter, who would by then have been a confirmed spinster. Barber's gentle suggestion to her printer that Mr. B's second attempted rape scene was "a little too strongly painted" indicates an interesting effort to protect her own daughter from Pamela's more unpleasant experiences.⁶⁶ Although her professional relationship with Richardson contrasts sharply with that of Pilkington, who petitioned him for financial aid, both were women who, unlike the good mothers of Richardson's novels, were not always in the position to defer to their husbands in dealing with their daughters. Both poets had to be strong maternal figures in the absence of their husbands, although the self-images projected in their poetry were those of docile madonnas. Barber wrote of herself as a mother hen, and Pilkington as a wild bird chased from her nest.

The ultimate powerlessness of these personae is reflected in their own appearances in print. Whether or not they were chosen for anthologies of women's poetry was in the hands of male editors, for example. The extent to which even a successful writer like Barber could protect or console her unmarried daughter by emphasizing the value of intelligence and virtue over external beauty was also minimal. The epigraph for volume one of *Poems by Eminent Ladies* offers a backhanded compliment:

*We allow'd you Beauty, and we did submit
To all the Tyrannies of it.
Ah, cruel Sex! will you depose us too in Wit?*⁶⁷

In addition to defining wit as a naturally masculine attribute, the quotation partially negates the poetry that follows, beginning with Barber's own compositions, by stressing physical beauty as the genuine source of power for women— a *natural* basis for a woman's province. When engaged in combatting this dismissive stance, Barber and other women poets not only played down the importance of traditional female beauty, but at times suggested a correlation between beauty and a lack of sensibility.

VI

Female writers wrote warily not only because they were under the male gaze, but also because they were subject to that of other women— often the harshest critics of a fellow female's endeavors. Swift's recommendation of Barber to Orrery is followed by a letter from Mrs. Jones, a fellow poet, to the "Hon. Miss LOVELACE." Mrs. Jones praises Barber for being unlike the majority of women writers, who harp too much on love, which she calls "that passion which has made so many female poets." Jones also encourages a wider variety of topics for the female pen, yet emphasizes the constrictions of chastity: "'Tis pity, that this passion alone should set us to rhyming."⁶⁸

Barber responds to a lady who asked her how she succeeded in soliciting subscriptions by enumerating the "censures past upon [her] Verse." Most of the criticism she met with evidently originated with other women:

SERVILLA cries, *I hate a wit,*
Women should to their Fate submit.

Should in the Needle take Delight:
 'Tis out of character to write."⁶⁹

Another character chooses to criticize the verses as amounting only to rhymes rather than poetry, and another dislikes them because she has not been made the subject of Mary Barber's verse. Barber uses this opportunity to position herself as superior to most women, and more masculine in her discernment, emphasizing that she has "no Taste—/ For Women's Poetry, at least." She also stresses Swift's approval of her verse via another's petty censure: "She may succeed among the Men:/ They tell me Swift subscribes for Ten..." Among the many female critics in the poem, one male, ALBINO, is described both as unpatriotic and sexually ambiguous: this critic

has no Gold to waste,
Far gone in the Italian Taste:
 He vows he must subscribe this year,
 To keep dear *Carestini* here.

The other male voice in the poem, Pulvillio, will "ne'er subscribe for Books.../ *'Fore Gad*, it looks like *Pedantry*."⁷⁰ Women in the majority cannot appreciate good poetry or will not acknowledge that it might originate with another woman. Only educated, truly masculine men, ironically, and a few high-born ladies, are capable of appreciating the work of this Irish clothier's wife.

Friendship, particularly among women, was frequently the topic of Barber's poems, a subject Tucker points out as a feature that "sets her apart from her male contemporaries."⁷¹ Female friendship could also prove dangerous, however, and hurtful to the poet. One piece that suggests this

vulnerability addresses "a Lady who valu'd herself on speaking her Mind in a *blunt* Manner, which she called being *sincere*." Though we cannot ascertain whether or not the woman's bluntness is directed at Barber's poetry, or, in fact, at Barber at all, the poet's anger indicates her sensitivity to criticism: "To be *sincere*, then, give me leave, And I will frankly own, Since you but this *one* Virtue have, 'Twere better you had *none*."⁷² Barber's efforts to build and maintain her reputation also caused her to distance herself from Pilkington, who was bitter about the older woman's request that her name be omitted from the first volume of the *Memoirs*. The younger poet also speculates that some of the poems from Barber's collection "I fancy might, at this Day, be seen in the Cheesemongers, Chandlers, Pastry-cooks, and Second-hand Book-sellers Shops."⁷³

Women writing for women had to capitalize either on youthful, chaste enthusiasm for poesy or on the matronly desire to encourage modesty and modest education as thoroughly as they did writing for the male gaze. Pilkington asks the reader to excuse her candor: "if you are a Man of Sense I am certain you will, and from the Ladies I yet hope Compassion: tho' rarely met with from one Woman to another."⁷⁴

Grierson, the memory of whom both Barber and Pilkington venerated, did not experience the same pressure towards authorial self-definition that her friends did, and the unguarded tone of her earlier poetry reflects this. The poems Grierson wrote to Pilkington when they were younger show a marked contrast to her own later solemnity, expressing youthful enthusiasm and a tendency to romance:

The fleeting Birds may soon in Ocean swim,
And *Northern* Whales thro' liquid Azure skim:

The *Dublin* Ladies their Intrigues forsake:
 To Dress and Scandal an Aversion take:
 When you can in the lonely Forest walk,
 And with some serious Matron gravely talk...

Interestingly, Pilkington is here again compared to a bird, this time "fleeing" and unable to remain still "in the lonely Forest"— imagery Pilkington picked up on in her honeymoon poem. In a later poem, written when Grierson was herself married, she also candidly teases her young friend about Mr.

Pilkington's suit to win Lactitia's hand:

If all these pow'rful Arguments shou'd fail,
 I'll in the tenderest Part your Heart assail:
 The lovely *Damon* languishes and dies,
 Nor can revive, but by your charming Eyes:
 But I forgot— Mamma these Lines must see,
 So you shall hear no more of him from me.⁷⁵

Since almost none of Grierson's poetry was intended for publication, each of her poems reads more as a direct address to its recipient than does the work of Pilkington or Barber. Nonetheless, her frank admission of an audience that includes "mamma" (circumstances suggest Pilkington's mother) acknowledge the sharing of texts that occurred within families and among friends and, consequently, the limits of candor even in the most personal poetry. Helen Molitor argues that social conventions were developing "which protected middle-class women from immoral texts," and in extreme cases "family readings became a form of censorship, controlling access to books, censoring offensive passages and interrupting the text with moralistic commentary."⁷⁶ Barber's having chosen to read *Pamela*, either before her daughter had done so or simultaneously, reaffirmed the mother's

role as censor (just as she had encouraged husbands to take on that same function in their wives' education). It was a practice that Richardson understood and would explore with circumspect approval in *Clarissa*, and later in *Sir Charles Grandison*. Although flighty and somewhat incautious in the early addresses to her young friend, Grierson clearly understood that audience was at times inevitable, and discretion was the better part of poetry.

I have argued that poetry composed with a view to pleasing even a family audience lent itself to positive depictions of the far-reaching demands chastity placed on women, as in the fixation with teaching family values to the younger generation. Poetry composed with publication in mind was understandably more cautious, and frequently more caustic in its criticisms. The authorial personae these women chose to adopt also included a critical stance toward most other women, those who wasted their time playing cards and staring in mirrors. Notions of motherly indulgence and stringent standards of modesty combined to depict a female poet as she knew she must appear in order to succeed financially and reputably. Although the poetess of the early eighteenth century inhabited a narrow province, the stereotypes of femininity did allow for certain types of poetry that touched on important aspects of a woman's life. As Pilkington's honeymoon poem and the words "written" by Con Barber illustrate, there was room for extensive, albeit covert, self-expression. Relke argues that "in order to tell the truth Mrs. Pilkington must resort to lies" in her autobiography.⁷⁷ This was also the case in regards to eighteenth-century women's poetry, particularly of those women who dared to appear in print—as if they desired no such thing, as if they were not poets.

-Chapter Three-
Personae and Play

"But terrors wait on talents misapply'd."

Constantia Grierson¹

Carl Jung considered the "persona" to be the role that an individual played within his or her society. For eighteenth-century women to assume a role other than those of daughter, wife, mother, and friend—for example, that of a professional writer—domesticity and intellectual pursuit had to be presented as being other than mutually exclusive. The fair sex had already been assigned certain personae within society, and the role of poet was not included among these. To fit the new part of the "poetess" they had to affirm many of the constrictions under which they wrote. Even as they respectfully engaged in poetry as a game in which men made the rules, they broke these rules merely by writing.

Re-creation of the self was the means by which they played in (and in spite of) a male-dominated genre. Play is the very subversion of game, and "the poetess" signalled a mixture of the grave and the playful, more so than the traditionally revered designation of "the poet" under which male intellectuals labored. For women, who were commonly accused of artifice, the relationship between appearance and reality was associated with issues of domesticity and, particularly, chastity. That female writers could not engage comfortably in irony about themselves therefore made the forging of authorial masks all the more complex.

Swift and Pope faced many of the same pressures; however, since "poets" were male there was provision for discussion, a vocabulary for

dealing with the adoption of an authorial other "self." Even "the most serious Christian" should be able "to write, as a Poet, upon the Pagan Model," a writer in the *London Journal* argued. "Are not poets allowed to personate all characters fit to be personated, and ought they not always to write in the Character which they personate...?"² Narrator and authorial persona are not the same thing, yet the "poet" and "serious Christian" discussed in this passage are both part of a unified authorial pose. The model, the norm, is obviously male.

Constantia Grierson made a number of significant decisions in her short life, but as we have seen, choosing a persona with which to address a vast reading public was not one of them. Whether to practice midwifery or enter the printing business, whether to marry her widowed employer— these were the decisions she faced, and her poetry remains a monument to the work ethic that was to her a way of living and of writing. Her greatest concern was with pleasing God, with whom she could not dissemble, whereas her friends sought the approval of multitudes, and for them public personas were indispensable.

The game of creating an authorial creator is one whose rules professional writers like the Scriblerians understood. Barber listened to Swift, recognized the limitations expected of her, and succeeded financially and reputably in carving out a "province" for herself where she admitted none yet existed. In her *Memoirs* and poems Pilkington slipped from one pose to another, at times a doting mother and loving wife, at others a wit, and at still others a rebellious critic who wrote exactly what she thought:

They tell us, 'tis not lawful to separate on any Cause, save
that of adultery. A Woman of Spirit, who is married to a
disagreeable wretch has nothing to do but to make him a

Cuckold; and then welcome thrice dear Liberty.³

This slippage resulted to a great extent from her decision to write both as a poet and an autobiographer, since writing her *Memoirs* placed her under more suspicion than confining herself to poetry would have done.

Pilkington did not adhere to the rules of the publishing game but played with them as she did with the rules of patriarchy itself. By composing love poetry on commission for the gentlemen at White's Chocolate House she impersonated a male seducer, and including some of these pieces in her *Memoirs* revealed not only the depths of man's deception, but also the foolishness of women who were swayed by her words. Although Swift had threatened to expose her foul stockings, it was she who exposed his eccentricities to the world and raised questions about the chastity of his mind and his wandering hands. Herself accused of straying from the bonds of matrimony, Pilkington travelled through a collection of characters established in print as her own.

For Hans Georg Gadamer, "play is fundamental to art, both in the sense of art as a playful exercise and art as lacking final goals or necessary purposes."⁴ Even at her most guarded moments, Pilkington is a more interesting subject than Barber, and her poetry at its least discreet (though she could be discreet when the situation, and profitability, required), usually more playful. If she was a more successful artist by Gadamer's standard, however, this was not the case in her own time. Swift's Lilliputian pupil did have serious financial goals, and a driving purpose to clear her name. She managed to conceal herself somewhat amongst her personas, and she did entertain, but she failed to convince. At times her poetry depicts her as an abused wife, at others, Swift's comrade in wit. She is a frightened bird, a

wounded near-virgin, and a female rake. Nussbaum argues that "even the scandalous Laetitia Pilkington knew well the formula for the ideal woman of the period: she was to be a chaste companion who cheerfully created order and fostered domestic serenity."⁵ Undoubtedly she did, but she chose to step outside of this ideal by establishing claims to intellectual, unwomanly authority, and having admitted to losing her own rightful position within society, she could not return to the original role of wife and mother. The demands of virtue were too rigid to accommodate her shifting persona; though she tried to play with interpretations of chastity, there were too many rules. The game would not permit it.

I

Like the more respectable females who made up Richardson's reading circle, Pilkington was privileged in 1745 to examine an early draft of *Clarissa*. At the time she could not "bear the thought of the lady's person being contaminated." The aging coquette begged Richardson that if Clarissa "must die, if her heart must break for being so deceived, let her make a triumphant exit, arrayed in white-robed purity.... Spare her virgin purity, dear Sir, spare it! Consider, if this wounds both Mr. Cibber and me (who neither of us set up for immaculate chastity) what must it do with those who possess that inestimable treasure?"⁶

A number of striking statements are made in this passage. Only if Clarissa's virginity remains intact can she exit life "triumphant." Her rape, therefore, negates for Pilkington the triumph of spiritual virtue independent of forced sexuality that Richardson strove to emphasize. Moreover, Pilkington aligns herself with an older man within the discourse of chastity

and experience, with an honesty that expects compassion from her reader. The comparison is shocking, considering there could be no pretence that standards were equal for both sexes. The novelist Penelope Aubin, for example, saw no incongruity in lamenting: "But I forget the Age I live in... when there is scarce any Truth, Honour, or Conscience in Men, or Modesty and Sobriety in Women."⁷ Chastity was not expected from a man; it was demanded of a woman.

More importantly, the juxtaposition of Clarissa's virginity with Pilkington's admission of having failed at "immaculate chastity" implies that chastity is both absolute, and a virtue measurable by degrees. What might chastity that was *not* immaculate have constituted for Pilkington? Considering her protestations of innocence when she was accused of adultery, her comment may refer to married, and therefore imperfect, chastity. This would be a distinctly Catholic interpretation of virtue, however, and difficult to confirm. Alison Adburgham says Pilkington "preserved her independence and her honour—spiritually, if not technically."⁸ This may have been what the poet referred to in a letter to Richardson, two years before the poet read *Clarissa*: "I know not what proofs you would require as to the sincerity of my reformation," an allusion which appears to acknowledge her acquisition of "worldly" or sexual knowledge in London. If it was to this that she referred (living under the same roof as Worsdale, the painter, for example), did she nonetheless continue to consider herself *somewhat* chaste? She also admitted when her unmarried pregnant daughter arrived in London: "I have less authority to blame her than perhaps another mother would take."⁹

The imperfect chastity Pilkington wrote about, however, was likely neither a description of the experience of marriage, nor an admission of

her own sexual adventures, but a chastity which encompassed speech and the written word, as well as the indiscretion of allowing herself to appear in potentially compromising situations regardless of how innocent she may have been. Pilkington's having been found "reading" with Mr. Adair in her chamber, even if this was all she was doing, lessened her perceived value as a wife and mother when it compromised her chastity. Writing about this incident Ellen Pollack defines chastity as a value that "extended far beyond the literal avoidance of illicit sex. As Dr. Johnson explained to Boswell, "every notion of female honour and virtue... are all [sic] included in chastity."¹⁰ Chastity was therefore a word that encompassed too many rules to accommodate Johnson's own definitions, and as both an ideal and a requirement it translated confusedly at best into women's poetry.

Both Swift and Pope played games in which their authorship was concealed, yet revealed. In their attempts at self-construction female poets were part of a larger, more complex eighteenth-century trend towards the development of our modern conception of the author. However, their poetry, far more than that of men, was expressly concerned with skillful, yet not blatant, mimicry, an openness to correction, and only a perfunctory show of originality. Poetry was not about maturing for women, who were trapped in a language that labelled them as both changeable and stagnant. Their models were men, or women who had already successfully imitated men, and correction was evidently a male prerogative. Because female construction of the writing self was still new, however, to write uncensored and to appear in print reputedly demanded endless originality of them.

Ellen Pollack argues that Pope incorporates women in his verse as a foil to a persona which "is stabilized by the opposing inscription of woman as absence, lack," whereas in the verse of Swift, "no such unifying

equilibrium is ever comfortably achieved."¹¹ Women's writing evidenced a tension between attempting self-representation in a male-dominated and male-oriented medium, and the impossibility even of pretending that man *could* be "absence" or "lack." Herein lies the difficulty in determining what constituted "women's poetry" either for women or men, because women's poetry must, according to Johnson's and Samuel Butler's notions about womanhood, focus on issues of chastity, and chastity was everything. If "men's poetry" meant everything else, what in fact did it mean?

Some of Pilkington's poetry bridges the perceived gender gap by revealing the poet's difficulty in concentrating on her intended subject. Her apparent focus in *The Statues* on the lesson she wishes to impart about male infidelity, for example, almost, but not quite, conceals the unwanted freedom that the women in the poem enjoy. The Queen, who is betrayed by every husband she takes, and then transforms them into their own funereal monuments, is able to engage in sexual activity with countless men without herself ever "stain[ing] the nuptial bed."¹² Unlike Bluebeard she is blameless because betrayed, again and again, by husbands who condemn themselves to death. The queen also enjoys an unending state of married chastity, perhaps not "immaculate," but within the confines of acceptable sexual behavior. As much as her own dubious reputation and her telling of tales, the female sexuality beneath the surface of her poetry may have contributed to Pilkington's ostracism. This same, incompletely veiled sexuality may also have spurred Elizabeth Montagu to accuse Pilkington first of having forsaken her chastity, and secondly, of inviting an attack on what virtue she had left.

By the time the members of Swift's seraglio were writing, such early female writers as Aphra Behn had been universally condemned as immoral.

unworthy of consideration, let alone emulation. Lonsdale reasons that "the cumulative effect of the moralists must have had its effect. Within the domestic restraints and responsibilities imposed on women, literary interests were not forbidden but inevitably had to take second place..."¹³ The focus in the magazines and pamphlets of the early eighteenth century on the roles women should play was not simply a matter of preserving the distance between the sexes, but constituted an offensive aimed at women's exploration of new personae.

Despite the fact that Mary Barber's motives differed from those of "other" women writers, Swift's favorite female poet stepped out of the roles of wife and mother when she moved into print. Surreptitiously, she upset the status quo—and Swift helped her do it—by uniting what were intended to remain forever antithetical: women's writing and women's domestic role. In showing her own support for men of often radical ideas, like Swift and even John Locke, Barber engaged in play without attracting suspicion— all on behalf of her children. She supported Locke's ideas about learning through amusement, for example, when she argued that play should replace rules in children's education. The poem, "Written for my Son, and spoken by him in School, upon his Master's first bringing in a Rod," criticizes the rules of grammar and argues that play may one day "become a science":

That sage was surely more discerning,
 Who taught to play us into learning,
 By graving letters on the dice:
 May heav'n reward the kind device,
 And crown him with immortal fame,
 Who taught at once to read and game!¹⁴

Barber manages both game and play by combining the role of mother and poet so perfectly that the reader cannot immediately distinguish where the shift between the two roles occurs in her work. In one piece she boasts of her son's accomplishments at the University of Dublin and his desire to give his first prize for learning to her:

Behold this letter from my Heir:
There see the picture of a mind.
In duty, as in arts, refin'd:
Who, in full triumph, could submit
His trophies at his parents feet.

She then skillfully makes the transition from her "heir" to a discussion of her "estate," which constitutes little of material value, since "*Criticks, not lawyers, are to show, / Whether my title's good, or no.*"¹⁵ What this title is she does not say, nor does she have to. With considerable irony, she complained in another poem about Con's schoolmaster's attempts to make her son a poet. Here she applies the terminology and rationale of a merchant's wife to the medium of poetry:

A fine way of training a shopkeeper's son!
'Twould better become him to teach you to dun...
You may rhyme till you're blind, what arises from thence?
But *debtor* and *creditor* brings in the pence[.]"¹⁶

Humour is the tool Barber employs against the patriarchy, because she mocks her own authorial persona even as she writes, laughing, as it were, all the way to the bank. This subversive element of Barber's work is subtle and, paradoxically, personal enough to offset personal attacks, since she

makes few claims for the potential of women as a group being capable of anything more than raising intelligent children. The line that marked the boundary between her literary persona and the merchant's wife was seamless, and a merchant's wife was no threat to patriarchy. In helping Barber create this particularly inoffensive character Swift showed his understanding of the risks she would run in the press, and his emphasis on her deserving a protector, though we might have wished for more consistency from her tutor himself, also evidences his insight.

Although women writers were scrutinized more closely for signs of unchaste behavior than were men, Barber's work shows that their very femaleness allowed women to play with typically feminine characteristics in a way that allowed them, at times, unique freedoms. Pilkington's poem about verse that spoils the purity of paper was renamed "Carte Blanche" after her death by the editors of *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, although the pen obviously did not offer endless possibilities to the women who ventured into print. A letter from "a great man" to John Pilkington sent after his mother's death suggests that she had enjoyed no real liberty after her divorce, that she was never far from watchful and censorious male eyes. The writer advised John against emulating his mother by writing satires about his betters:

It was imagined, when she was dead, they should hear
no more of the matter, but you seem'd to keep her
Spirit alive. Now, young Man... consider you are not
a Woman, from whom ev'n a Blow cannot hurt Honour:
We toleratd those Things in her, which, in you, would
be culpable in the highest degree....¹⁷

Although the warning offers a frightening picture of male domination, it also acknowledges the potential for subversion in women's writing. Because they could not easily be labelled harmful to anyone but other members of their own, impressionable sex, and because, after all, they were only playing with verse, women could sometimes venture outside of patriarchy's rules.

In acknowledgment of women's unusual privileges in print, John adopted a modified version of his mother's reasons for publishing. Like her he uses misfortune as an excuse for writing his memoirs in his youth, as she had done in apologizing for her gender: "had it pleased Providence to have blessed my earlier days with Quiet and Felicity, 'tis probable I should now have as little to set forth as any other young Man who had lived the same number of Years."¹⁸ The authorial persona he presents is the male version of his mother's denial of undeniable worldly knowledge: his apology is not for the experience he possesses, but only that he has come into this possession too soon. John also left Ireland to make his fortune, and had to justify his presence in England and his intentions as a foreigner. The epitaph to his memoirs complains of his being "always shipwrecked e'er I reach the coast," yet we suspect that this was more the case with Laetitia, whose "reputation for infamy," Diana M. Relke argues, "reaches London before she does."¹⁹

Her reputation as an adulteress did precede Mrs. Pilkington, yet the first printer to whom she offered her *Memoirs* chose to focus not on their female writer and main character, but on the men within the narrative. The printer "gave it as his Opinion, that it would not answer the expence of Paper and Print, for madam, said he, what's one Doctor Vanlewen, or one Parson Pilkington to us? Or who can be entertained with Anecdotes and

Characters of Persons utterly unknown in this part of the World?"²⁰ He did not ask "what's one Lactitia Pilkington?" although this is implied. A better question would have been, "*which* one is Lactitia Pilkington?" The *Memoirs*, however, hold no satisfactory answer. The question throughout the three volumes, in poetry and prose, is "which one do you want?"

II

Ireland can itself be read as a metaphor for writing outside the center, and the mixed feelings all three women showed toward their own country and Britain comment on the desire to be other, as well as on the defense of self. Although Barber published in London, her poem "*Written upon the Rocks at Tunbridge, on seeing the Names of several Persons written there*" suggests an illegitimacy about her writing, and her literary parentage, that leaves her nameless as a poet.

Hither, amongst the crouds, that shun
 The smoaky town, and sultry sun,
 In cooling springs to seek for health,
 Or throw away superfluous wealth,
 A native of *Hibernia* came,
 Thus writ her thoughts, but not her name.
 Hither the *Britons*, void of care,
 A happy, free-born race, repair:
 Whilst I, who feel a diff'rent fate,
 Lament my country's wretched state:
 The pitying rocks return my lays,
 Just emblem of the barren bays...²¹

The notion of namelessness reflects particularly on Barber as an Irishwoman. Referring to herself at first in the third person, she describes

one whose impermanence vis-à-vis both males and the English allows her to write her thoughts on paper "but not her name" on the rocks. Barber is comforted later in the poem by the "god of wit," because "*Sackville* soon shall bless [her] isle," but Ireland has already been defined as displaced, marginalized, where the great visit, but do not live. The poet wrote ambivalently about her country as she did about "women's poetry," like Swift mocking Irish stereotypes as well as promoting them. To John Barber, Lord Mayor of London, she wrote "on committing one of [her] Sons to his Care" that "in the wilds of *Hibernia* this boy was beset: And caught (as the natives are there) in a net"²² Her son, of course, is well mannered and has great potential. His talents, however, can only be developed in England, it seems. If one carries the analogy beyond the obvious parallel between her son's potential and Barber's own talent, we see the poet herself as being somewhat wild, caught, and contained in Ireland.

Another poem by Barber depicts Ireland as a mother, yet here, too, her righteous anger suggests both wilderness and forced confinement:

Nor see an Isle, by Nature bless'd,
By ill-judged Policy oppress'd:
Her trade usurp'd by foreign Lands,
Whilst *Albion* fast ties up her Hands,
Nor see her Sons in Science skill'd,
And yet her posts by Strangers fill'd.²³

England is both the beloved and the oppressor in Barber's poetry, reflecting her own physical movement to and from English society

Part of the persona Barber presented to the English was that of an Irish poetess, yet Pilkington endeavored to insinuate herself thoroughly into

England as though she belonged there. She did write of missing her own land, however, and criticized British exploitation of Ireland while in London, yet she was later chided by Cibber for "depreciating the natural blessings on your side of the water. What have you to boast of, that you want," he asked without a trace of irony, "but wealth and insolent dominion?"²⁴ After spending nine years in London the younger poet also returned home, and there referred tellingly to Ireland as "our most unpindaric climate" in a letter to Richardson.²⁵ Unlike Barber, however, Pilkington complained of encountering only malicious rumors and narrow minds at home. Significantly, she praised England in her poetry less as a motherland than as a heroine:

While foreign Climes are rent with dire alarms,
The Shout of Battle and the Clang of Arms,
Britannia, happy in her Monarch's Care,
Enjoys at once the Fruits of Peace, and War.²⁶

In matters of nationalism Grierson again differs markedly from her friends. Because she remained physically as well as poetically marginalized she did not experience being away from the center as acutely as they did. Her poem "To the HON. Mrs. PERCIVAL, On her desisting from the *Bermudan Project*" seems to indicate that although Grierson was aware of the problems in Ireland, her loyalties were more simple than the mixed feelings of her friends:

...To virtue, here, may thoughtless souls persuade,
Instruct the ignorant, the wretched aid:
Of these no realm, from *Lapland* to *Japan*,
Displays such numbers as *Hibernia* can.
Haste then, O haste! return, and bless our eyes,

Nor more the call of Providence despise:
 Let others still near *Albion's* court reside,
 Who sacrifice their country to their pride,
 And squander vast estates at balls and play,
 While public debts increase, and funds decay:
 While the starv'd hind with want distracted lives,
 Nor tastes that plenty which his labour gives.
 Let those alone to foreign countries stray,
 Who, with their wealth, their follies take away...
 Our gold may flow to *Albion* with each tide:
 But let them with that gold be satisfy'd:
 The Want of what we long have learnt to bear,
 But souls, like thine accomplish'd, cannot spare.²⁷

The poem shows Grierson as an eager student of the kind of patriotism Swift exemplified, but she is alone among the three women in her concern with the souls of Ireland, although like them she associates England with vanity and excess. Hibernia itself appears to fit Johnson's definition of chastity: although the land is rugged and uncultivated, it is also pure and uncorrupted.

The Ireland/England dichotomy as it appears in the poetry of all three women seems much like the relationship between the sexes, and as such it comments obliquely on the demands of chastity on learned ladies. The "weaker" sex, like the economically and culturally deprived Ireland, is also the more naturally "virtuous" of the two nations. The clearly defined and constricted roles that women play within society, and that which Ireland occupies as part of the British empire, both involve servitude and silence. Each becomes a foil for the stronger, more dangerous "other" whose existence defines their own territories, their provinces.

Also like Hibernia, however, women were commonly deemed to be in need of taming, and it was this unrestrained side of women that clearly

could not appear in print. Grierson's poem on Bermuda serves to illustrate the danger of forming judgments about her docility and her patriotism on the basis of her published poetry alone. Another poem concerning Bermuda, this one in her manuscript book, expresses Grierson's longing to experience the foreign and the exotic. Here, according to Elias, "she conjures up Bermuda, with all the imagined delights of studying philosophy and religion, only to reject them for her misery in 'the bleak Hibernia.'"

Significantly, the poem also focuses on a romantic love as futile as her desire for escape. Here Grierson addresses "Theodosius." Elias explains that the poet employs a transparent "literary veil from *The Spectator* no. 164," because the lovers' names are Theodosius and *Constantia*. Whomever Grierson longed for (Elias suggests either the printer George Grierson or George Berkeley), her candor in using her own name proves the private nature of her poetry, as well as her reluctance to adopt a persona by which to distance herself from her writing, and the absence of a reason for doing so:

Ah Theodosius could mankind but see
 How much Constantia's bliss depends on Thee...
 They'd ask no more why I the charms despise
 Of glorious projects and indulgent skies.²⁸

As evidence has shown, Grierson acknowledged certain audiences. Some of her poems, like that praising Mrs. Percival, were addressed to persons who would undoubtedly share them with friends and family. Barber maintained that Grierson urged her to use the verses that appear in

Poems on Several Occasions. Elias finds little of Swift's influence in her manuscript writings, although in the latter poem she adopted Swift's habit of praising with feigned anger. Here she was motivated not by a conscious wish for concealment, however, but by the desire to engage in specific poetic exercises.

Another mystery surrounding the mild, almost angelic Grierson, surfaces in "a scurrilous poem of 1727, calling her "dear Pug-nasty" with "Face of crab." Here some early attempt to make her poetry known is evident, since *The Grubstreet Cavalcade* mentions her involvement in a dispute with a writer named Eyre. Grierson, then "Miss Crawley," is depicted in an ironic footnote as "a Lady of notable Abilities, that sets up for a profound *Critick on Ancient and Modern Authors*," who is "no less famous for her Poetical Productions, than for her Skill in Midwifery."²⁹ Apparently she is not fit for the first, most elevated of enterprises, and the second is unworthy of discussion. Since she "set up" for a critic, the mere mention of midwifery alongside poetry is clearly a jest. Her silence during the years of her marriage, the absence of anything but translations appearing in print during her lifetime, indicate that she chose to opt for a strictly non-authorial persona. It was the name Grierson, which included "scholar" and excluded "poet."

III

Although she did not engage in professional writing, the act of composition was obviously a serious matter for Grierson, an undertaking that influenced the writer in her lifetime and beyond. In her poem praising

Barber and encouraging her in her efforts to obtain subscribers Grierson discusses two unnamed women, whose writings cast aspersions on their characters even after death.

Cou'd ***. or *** from the tomb,
Which shades their ashes till their final doom.
The dire effects of vicious writings view,
How wou'd they mourn to think what might ensue!"

These women, one of whom is probably Aphra Behn, would "blush at their works" now, though it is unclear whether this is because, being dead, they have witnessed the licentiousness they encouraged, or because the present age is a more virtuous one than their own.³⁰ Grierson's concern with virtue as something which can be taught sustains the picture her friends paint of her as humble and sincere: that this poem was intended for publication in Barber's collection makes her comment as self-defining, however, as it is a laudatory of Barber. Neither of them intends to blush at what they write, and the offense they feel at what earlier female writers composed points to the evidently sad state of chastity in literature. The vilification of earlier female writers was a necessary pretext next to which their own modesty could shine. Not only modesty, but extravagant modesty was part of the necessary authorial posture-- one of the rules of the game.

A woman's appearance in print was interpreted as an expression of freedom, yet actually constricted the wordplay and innuendo in which she might otherwise have engaged. Play manifested itself in the face of these restrictions as a variety of self-definitions within all genres. Patricia Meyer Spacks maintains that "the sexual attitudes displayed in eighteenth-century fiction and autobiography in women- the obsession with innocence... the

anger at men, the longing to *be* a man or a child- emphasize that lack of freedom [to make their own decisions]."³¹ Pilkington obviously revelled in playing at masculinity in Swift's parlor, as well as in relating his first impression that she was a "child." Curiously, this illusory shape-shifting (woman=child, woman=man) allowed her to define herself at times not as woman, but as one for whom chastity was in either case not an issue for discussion.

By her insistence on the "twelve watchmen" that her husband brought to testify against her, and the "twelve clergymen" with whom she supped as an honorary man at the Deanery, Pilkington seems to have identified strongly with Christ, the questionably titled "Son of Man." She also identified with the Virgin Mary, who was "scarce... higher blest, / When visited by a coelestial Guest" than when the poet was promised a visit by Dr. Mead.³² Again and again, she confuses sexuality and innocence, in order to draw a portrait of self that made the issue of chastity second to that of intellect.

Clearly, fiction and autobiography were not the only genres that demonstrated women's confused sexual attitudes. Though poetry was made to seem a way of ordering their lives, their lives were already too ordered, too regulated. Whereas private writing may have provided a catharsis for these women, composing for the public created a tension between a traditionally manly game, and women's play.

This tension could also produce exciting effects since, as Foucault believes, "all writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind."³³ Pilkington achieved a kind of omniscient, androgynous persona by including both love poetry written for women from men and from women to men in her *Memoirs*. In one poem "A

Female, moderately fair" asks the company of a gentleman for "a sacred Banquet of the Mind," but when the poet impersonates a man she adopts a rakish air:

Fair one, can you forgive the Art
Which did your Wrath provoke?...
Alas! far distant from my Heart
Was that rash Word I spoke.

And know, this Passion only shew'd
New Graces to my Sight,
Your Cheeks with brighter Beauties glow'd
Your Eyes flash'd keener Light...³⁴

The woman in this poem is reminiscent of Pope's *Belinda*, whose flashing eyes make even anger seem a beautiful emotion, yet it is Pilkington, and not her female subject, who is disguised. As the "self" in her *Memoirs* she openly wonders that "Men should be severe in their Censures on our Sex, for a Failure in Point of Chastity: Is it not monstrous, that our Seducers should be our Accusers?" Yet she seems to bring nothing of her own experiences as a woman to her impersonation of Worsdale, whom she refers to in the *Memoirs* as "the supposed author" of the love poem.³⁵ In one sense, the completeness of her authorial disguise indicates skill and perfect irony. In another, her pose suggests a holding back, the absolute exclusion of self from the authorial voice of the poems. The respect in which poetry was held by her society and herself offers a partial explanation for this split authorial personality. In a later poem written to Colley Cibber the profound distinction between autobiographical and poetic personae is hinted at with

an astounding faith in poetry: Though poets "seldom deal in Gems or Plate." Pilkington writes, "Yet Verse can consecrate a Name."³⁶

In spite of the love poetry, Adburgham argues that Pilkington "emerges from her Memoirs as an intellectual prig and a bit of a prude," and this conclusion is partially justifiable.³⁷ As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, Pilkington vacillated between the revelation and the concealment of her own experience. In a moment of typical camouflaging, the poet wrote of Delavriere Manley and Eliza Haywood: "what extraordinary Passions these Ladies may have experienced, I know not: far be such Knowledge from a modest Woman..."³⁸

Barber distanced herself from "such knowledge," as well, by insisting that she required correction from Swift and even hinting that her husband was in some, albeit vague, way necessary to her poetry, and Grierson channelled her extraordinary knowledge away from her own personally reflective passions toward scholarship. Unlike Pilkington's poetry, which identifies directly both with men and children, what little remains of Grierson's verse usually depicts both men and children as lost or absent persons. Her desire for Theodosius and her longing to be with her dead infant signify a longing for an unknown part of herself, for somewhere she had never been.

IV

Sexual issues were —are— inherent in the relationship between gender and literature, and Barber and Pilkington could not publish without creating gender-related tension in the literary community. Pollack argues that for Swift, "even more persistently than Pope, the issue of gender cannot be

fully disentangled from the larger network of textual relations inscribing selfhood, representation, and the more general notion of difference."³⁹ Men wrote the vast majority of books, and men were still judged capable of reading them with the most taste and discernment. How much more confused does gender therefore become in the poetry of women, for whom writing itself, regardless of content, was an act of self-representation that contradicted the fundamentals of self they had grown up reading about? Pilkington was reading the works of Pope by the age of five. That she alternately quotes and criticizes, worships and demeans him in her *Memoirs* could reflect not only her knowledge of him from Swift and her husband, but an early awareness of the tradition of misogynist literature whose stereotypes were mediated by Pope.

Part of the self she and her companions had been taught was that women were "by nature, insatiably oversexed and indefectibly spiritual."⁴⁰ Finding themselves at neither of these extremes, when they came to write they variously defended women, attacked the flippancy and the waste of time with which women were associated, and sought comfort in the discourse of spirituality, which Elias deems overly polished in Barber's work and sincere in poems by Grierson. The veracity behind their professions of faith is indeterminable, however, and polish can be the result of continued efforts to transform the faintest hope into marketable comfort. Pilkington's last written words, included in the appendix by her son, offer a moment of pathos and timorous faith:

My Lord, my Saviour, and my God,
I bow to thy correcting Rod;
Nor will I murmur or complain,
Tho' ev'ry Limb be fill'd with Pain:

Tho' my weak Tongue its Aid denies
And Day-light wounds my wretched Eyes.⁴¹

John Pilkington mentions a contemptible rumour following his mother's death that she had died an atheist. Such a rumour would not discredit her memory; those who felt compassion for her would consider the source, and those who had denounced her could only feel more disgust. The accusation of atheism could have been an attempt to disenfranchise her from a community she had not allowed to forget her. The faith she wrote about in several poems seems to have combined Grierson's sincerity, and the polish Barber exercised for print. Considering her relationships with her father and later with Swift, and the religious and social questions she poses, her often-mentioned faith in a loving Father is believable, though complex. From her last written words we can be sure of only two things. The last thing to die in a woman was not her tongue, and Swift was not her ultimate judge.

V

I would like to be able to say that one of these three women wrote "The Gentleman's Study" as a form of anonymous revenge on Jonathan Swift, who took such liberties with the notions of the mind and body of the fair sex while they were his close companions— reciprocal correction, perhaps. I doubt very much that this was the case. Swift offered his corrections because it was asked of him, and spent time, energy and money (ten subscriptions) on Barber's efforts to support her family. If his poetry at times offended his protégées, or if they envied his freedom to write his mind and sell his words, they also sought him out for advice and guidance.

He did not always encourage them to venture into print uncorrected, if at all, yet Pilkington's description of the Dean's behavior and the critique of the male world that still surfaces in Barber's poetry lend weight to Margaret Anne Doody's assertion that "the effect of Swift's humour, was not to silence the woman, but to force her into utterance."⁴²

Ellen Pollack argues that Swift resisted "eighteenth-century strategies of fictionalizing women" in his writing, whereas Pope "insistently worked to justify" these tactics.⁴³ In the meanwhile, eighteenth-century writing female fictionalizing, and realizing, themselves. Horace had long between the rules of self-fashioning that Swift and Pope practiced. The de, haste, nebulous as they were, certainly prevented women from adopting the same, worldly stance that their mentors mastered and personalized.

The alternative to accepting defeat was that of playing with the many roles assigned to them: daughter, wife, and mother, and combining these with that of the poetess. As in all play, this merging of women's roles and authorial personae involved guessing, hiding, and seeking. Like the self-fashioning of male poets, theirs was a search for the self in other, and other in the self. Unlike men, however, they had been taught to consider themselves as other all their lives. A persona was therefore potential reality, and pure magic.

One can only play outside the rules as long as the judges or critics are distracted enough to allow it, however, and the regulations for what constituted modest expression for women only seemed to multiply throughout the eighteenth century. The all-encompassing notion of chastity had to appear in a woman's poetry to prove she was virtuous in spite of her writing, and to share this virtue was one of the reasons she wrote. As Mary

Barber learned with her quest for publication. Lactitia Pilkington discovered through a series of hardships, and perhaps Constantia Grierson knew best of all, unless she rewrote herself with the utmost caution, a woman's appearance in print was not worth the expense of paper, another instance of "talents misapply'd."

-Notes-

Introduction

1. John Boyle, Earl of Orrery, "Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift." *Swiftiana* 11 (New York: Garland, 1974 facsimile of the 1752 edition), p. 128.
2. Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, no.63 (original no. 85), ed. Lewis Gibb (London: Everyman, 1968), p. 115.
3. Samuel Johnson, *Johnson's Dictionary* (5th ed. Montreal: H. Ramsay, 1854), p. 58.
4. Elizabeth Montagu, quoted in "Bibliographical Note," *The Memoirs of Mrs. Laetitia Pilkington, Written by Herself*, ed. Iris Barry (London: Routledge, 1928), pp. 471-72.
5. Jonathan Swift, "Cadenus and Vanessa," *Swift's Poems*, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon, 2nd edition, 1958), III: 564, ll.170-171.
6. Lord Bathurst to Pope, 20 July, 1732, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, (5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), III: 299.

Chapter One

1. Untitled poem by Dr. Patrick Delany, circa 1730, *Memoirs of Mrs. Pilkington*, 3 Vols. *Swiftiana*, 17-19 (New York: Garland, 1975 facsimile of Vols. I-III, 1748-1754 editions) II: 66. All further references to Pilkington's memoirs will be to this edition: Sapphira: Barber, Letty: Pilkington; Constance: Grierson.
2. John Cartaret Pilkington, *The Real Story of John Cartaret Pilkington. Written by himself* (London, 1760), p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
4. Laetitia Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 65.
5. A.C. Elias suggests this stationer may well have been George Grierson, who later became Grierson's husband. See "A Manuscript Book of Constantia Grierson's," *Swift Studies*, 2, 1987, pp. 33-56: 39.
6. Roger Lonsdale, ed., "Commentary," *Eighteenth Century Women Poets*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.91.
7. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I:27. See also Mackie L. Jarrell, "Mrs. Constancia Crawley (Crowley?) Grierson," *Notes & Queries*, 210, 1965, p.1920. Until the discovery of satiric lines on "Miss Cr-wley" in *The Grubstreet Cavalcade*, Dublin, 1727 (Foxon, G305), Grierson's maiden name was believed to have been Phillips, even by the Grierson family.
8. Elias, "Manuscript Book," p. 36.
9. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 28.
10. *Journals*, House of Commons, Kingdom of Ireland, III, 3 January 1729/30. (Dublin: George Grierson 2nd, 1796), p. 631 .
11. George Ballard, ed. *Memoirs of Several Ladies* (London: 1775), p. 393.

12. Although only ten of Mrs. Grierson's poems are extant, three of which appear in Pilkington's *Memoirs* and six in Barber's *Poems on Several Occasions*, with another, as yet undetermined attribution to her on "The Art of Printing," Elias' recent discovery of a manuscript book "doubles her known output from ten poems to twenty (perhaps more realistically from nine to nineteen), and from two short prose pieces to five." "Manuscript Book," pp. 33-56. Myra Reynolds claims that "The Art of Printing" was actually a poem by Henry Brooke, written as "a eulogy of Mrs. Grierson." See Myra Reynolds' *The Learned Lady in England: 1650-1760*, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920.)

13. Elias, "Manuscript Book," pp. 38, 46.

14. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 34.

15. Swift to Lord Bathurst, October 1730, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), III: 411-412.

16. John Cartaret Pilkington, *The Real Story*, p. 6.

17. Irvin Ehrenpreis, *Swift: the Man, his Works, and his Age*, 3 vols. (London: Methuen, 1962-67), III: 635; Although Ehrenpreis gives Barber's age at this time at "about fifty," she was probably closer to forty, according to Bernard Tucker, who has recently published an edition of Barber's poetry. See *The Poetry of Mary Barber 1690?-1757*, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press), "Mary Barber- An Introduction," pp. 1-32: 3. See also Dr. Delany's letter of 27 February, 1731 to Lady Suffolk, in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, ed. Rt. Hon. Lady Llanover, 3 vols. (London, 1861), I: 321-3.

18. Swift to Andrew Fountaine, 30 July 1753, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, IV: 186.

19. Iris Barry, "Introduction," *The Memoirs of Mrs. Laetitia Pilkington, Written by Herself* (1928), pp. 1-24: 4, 7.

20. *Ibid.* See also *The London Evening Post*, 2 February, 1734: "On Wednesday Morning [30 January] Mrs. Mary Barrber [sic] was taken up by two of his Majesty's Messengers, on the Information of the Rev. Mr. Pilkington, Chaplain to the late Ld. Mayor, on account of an Epistle to a Lady, lately publish'd: She was examined yesterday in the Evening, and admitted to Bail."

21. Swift to Mrs. Pendarves, 29 January, 1735-36, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, III: 456.

22. Swift, "Dedicatory Letter," *Barber's Poems on Several Occasions* (London: 1734), p. 5.

23. *Ibid.* p. 4

24. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 123.

25. Bolingbroke to Swift, 12 April, 1734, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, III: 405.

26. quoted by F. Elrington Ball in "The Rev. Matthew Pilkington," *Notes & Queries*, (27 July 1912), pp.65-66.

27. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 230.

28. *Ibid.*, II: 176

29. *Ibid.*, II: 217

30. *Ibid.*, I: 301

31. Mary Hays, *Female Biography; or Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of all ages and countries*, (London: 1803), p. 98.

32. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 86.

33. Ball, "The Rev. Matthew Pilkington," pp.65-66.

34. Although Barber wrote that the death occurred in 1733 and Constantia was 27. Elias also argues that Pilkington's dates are incorrect, and that Pilkington at least was older than she claims to have been when she met Grierson. Elias, "Manuscript Book," p. 36.

35. Elias, p. 45. See also note #12, above regarding "The Art of Printing."

36. Elias, p. 52.

37. Mary Hays, *Female Biography*, 56.

38. Colman and Thornton, Commentaries in *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, 2 vols. (London: 1755). I: B, 242; II: 234.

39. Emile Pons, *Swift*. (Strasbourg: Alsacienne, 1925), p. 9: "Ces deux petits volumes de Mrs. Laetitia Pilkington, épouse du Révérend Mathieu Pilkington, sont si peu négligeables qu'ils ont été utilisée ou pillés presque chaque fois par ceux qui en ont parlé avec le plus de mépris. L'austère Churton Collins lui-même tout en répudiant aussi dans sa préface l'autorité de cette menteuse commère emprunte, sans mot dire, un de ses témoignages au cours de son livre."

40. Ehrenpreis, III: 637.

41. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 46.

42. John Cartaret Pilkington, *The Real Story*, p.135

43. Laetitia Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 50-51, 47,49

44. *Ibid.*, I: 52.

45. Ehrenpreis, p. 638.

46. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 59.

47. *Ibid.* I: 89.

48. *Ibid.* I: 107.

49. *Ibid.* I: 219, 220.

50. Diane M.A. Relke, "In Search of Mrs. Pilkington," *Gender at Work: Four Women Writers of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Ann Messenger (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), pp.114-160: 126.

51. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I:119.

52. 12 June, 1732, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, III: 293.

53. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 171.

54. 23 Feb. 1730-1; 29 January, 1735-6, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, II: 440; III: p. 56.

55. February, 1733, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, III: 109.

56. Tucker, "Mary Barber - An Introduction," p. 4.

57. July 21, 1931, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, II: 479.

58. Mary Delany, *Mrs. Delany at Court and Among the Wits*, ed. R. Brimley Johnson (London, 1925), p. 157.

59. 23 February 1730, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, II: 440.

60. Swift to the Earl of Orrery, 20 August, 1733, *Correspondence*, IV: 191.

61. Barber, Dedication, *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 41.

62. Pilkington, "To the honourable Mr. ****," *Memoirs*, I: 291-293, ll.17-24.

63. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 108.

64. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Gramville, Mrs. Delany*, I: 89.

65. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 86.

66. Swift to Pope, Feb. 6th, 1729, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, II: 369; Swift to Pope, 2 May, 1730, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, II: 107.
67. quoted by Elias, Appendix, "Manuscript Book," p. 55, ll.13-16.
68. Elias, "Manuscript Book," p. 44.
69. Ballard, *Memoirs of Eminent Ladies*, p. 394.
70. 20 April 1731, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, II: 457.
71. Pope and Bolingbroke to Swift, 15 September, 1734, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, III: 432.
72. Alexander Pope, "Epistle II. To a Lady: Of the Characters of Women," *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 560-569, l. 2.
73. Alexander Pope, "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, pp. 597-612, l.114.
74. Bolingbroke and Pope to Swift, 20 March, 1731, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, III: 184.
75. See Sarah Green, *Mental Improvement for a Young Lady: on her Entrance into the World; Addressed to a Favourite Niece* (London, 1793), pp. 95-96.
76. Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), p. 94.
77. Swift to Pope, 26 February 1730, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, III: 93.
78. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 69.
79. Swift to Pope, 26 Feb. 1730, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, III: 93.
80. John Boyle, *Remarks*, p. 128.
81. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 161.
82. Miss W., "The Gentleman's Study," *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, p.130, ll.1-6.; quotation from "Thoughts upon Reading the Lady's Dressing Room and the Gentlemen's Study" in the Commentary by Lonsdale on the unknown Miss W., *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, p. 129.
83. Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*. Trans. Anita Barrows (New York: Urizen, 1979), pp.35-36.
84. Robert Halsband, "Ladies of Letters in the Eighteenth Century," *The Lady of Letters in the Eighteenth Century: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar, January 18, 1969*, 31, eds. Irvin Ehrenpries and Robert Halsband, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1969), pp. 1-30: 27.
85. Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 71-72.
86. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 73-74.
87. Harriet Guest, "A Double Lustre: Femininity and Social Commerce, 1730-1760," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23, 4, Summer 1989, pp.479-501: 486.
88. Colman, *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, I: B.
89. Virginia Woolf, "The Lives of the Obscure: II Laetitia Pilkington," *The Common Reader*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1925), pp.168-174: 169.

Chapter Two

1. Mary Barber. "To a Lady who commanded me to send her an Account in Verse, how I succeeded in my *Subscription*." *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, pp. 199-205, ll.1-4.
2. Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Guidebooks for Women, 1475-1640*. (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982), pp. 142.
3. *Ibid.*, 211.
4. Jonathan Swift, *Gullivers Travels*, (facsimile of a 1726 edition, Delmar, N.Y: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977), Part IV, chapter VIII, p. 129.
5. Dale Spender, *Women of Ideas & What Men Have Done to Them* (London: Pandora, 1982), p. 85.
6. Valerie Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 161.
7. See also James Boswell's, *Life of Johnson* (1 vol. Oxford ed.: 1970), p. 73. Johnson was reading parts of his tragedy *Irene* to a Mr. Walmsley: "When he [Johnson] had finished some part of it, he read what he had done to Mr. Walmsley, who objected to his having already brought his heroine into great distress, and asked him, "How can you possibly contrive to plunge her into deeper calamity?" Johnson, in sly allusion to the supposed oppressive proceedings of the court of which Mr. Walmsley was register, replied, "Sir, I can put her into the Spiritual Court!"
8. Edward Young, "The Universal Passion. Satire VI: On Women." *The Complete Works*, ed. James Nichols, (2 vols. London: William Tegg, 1968 facsimile of the 1854 edition, first published 1728), I: 389-409, ll. 191-194. Young also argued that "Naked in nothing should a Woman be./ But veil her very Wit with Modesty," ll. 107-108.
9. Mary Barber. "To a Lady who commanded me to send her an Account in Verse, how I succeeded in my *Subscription*." *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 205, ll.129-134.
10. Swift to Andrew Fountaine, 30 July, 1733. *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, II: 186.
11. Rebecca Gould Gibson, "My Want of Skill": Apologias of British Women Poets, 1660-1800," *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts*, Eds. Frederick M. Keener and Susan E. Lorsch (New York: Greenwood, 1988): 79-86, p. 81.
12. Barber, "The Preface." *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 49.
13. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, II: 252.
14. Barber, "Written for My Son, and Spoken by him at his first putting on Breeches," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, pp. 72,73, ll.1-4,13,14.
15. Barber., "Written for my Son..." ll. 27-28.
16. Barber. " A Letter written for my Daughter, to a Lady who had presented her with a Cap." *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 98,99, ll. 27-32, 23.
17. Anon., "To Mr. Rose: sent in the Name of the Honourable Mr. Barry, one of his Schoolfellows." *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 116, ll.1-2, 7-8.
18. Barber, "The Conclusion of a Letter to the Rev. Mr. C—" *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, pp. 100-103, ll. 49-50, 52-54, 20-22.
19. Barber, "The Prodigy. A Letter to a Friend in the Country." *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 77, ll. 20-22.
20. *Ibid.*, ll. 1-2

21. Mary Wortley Montagu to Sir James Steuart, 5 Sept., 1758. *Mary Wortley Montagu Letters* (London: Everyman, 1992, ed.), p. 506.
22. Barber, "The Prodigy," *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, I:17-20. ll.61-64.
23. Mary Delany, *Mrs. Delany at Court and Among the Wits*, p.90; *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, p. 327.
24. Rebecca Gibson, "My Want of Skill": Apologias of British Women Poets, 1660-1800." *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts*, eds. Frederick M. Keener and Susan E. Lorsch. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 79-86: 81.
25. Pope, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, pp. 597-612. ll.135-136, 138.
26. Barber, "The Preface," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 51.
27. Elias, "Manuscript Book," p. 35.
28. Constantia Grierson, "Occasioned by Mrs. Barber's son speaking Latin in school to less advantage than English," *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, I: 246-248, ll. 7-8, 14-15, 41;
29. Lord Ponsonby, "Letitia Pilkington (1712-1750) – A Curiosity of Literature," *English*, 1, No. 4 (1937), pp. 297-306: 298; Pilkington, *Memoirs* I: 38.
30. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 39.
31. *Ibid.* I: 39
32. For a further comment on the juxtaposition of newlyweds and hunting, see Thomas Gainsborough's painting, "Mr. and Mrs' Robert Andrews," c. 1748-50. I am indebted to April London for bringing this work to my attention.
33. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, I: 105.
34. *Ibid.* I: 91-92.
35. Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 72-73.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
37. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III:148-149.
38. Barber, "The Preface," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p.48.
39. John Cartaret Pilkington, "On the DEATH of my BELOVED MOTHER," Laetitia Pilkington, *Memoirs* II:249: "Preface," p. iv.
40. Elias, p. 45.
41. 1) Mehetaphel Wright, "To an Infant Expiring the Second Day of its Birth," p. 115. ll. 17-20, 2) Elizabeth Boyd, "On the Death of an Infant of five Days old, being a beautiful but abortive Birth. p.135, ll. 3-5, 9-10, *Eighteenth Century Women Poets*.
42. Ball, *Notes and Queries*, II, July 27, 1912. pp. 65-66.
43. Pilkington, "Sorrow," *Eminent Ladies*, II: 255.
44. *Ibid.*, ll. 17, 39-40.
45. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 161.
46. Susan Stanford Friedman, "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse," *Feminist Studies*, 13, 1, 1987. pp. 49-82: 51, 49.
47. John Cartaret Pilkington, "Dedication," Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs*, III: p. iv.
48. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 178.
49. *Ibid.*, III: B(1), 2.
50. *Ibid.*, III: 6.
51. *Ibid.*, III: 172.

52. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Part I, chapter VI, p.105.
53. Elias, "Manuscript Book," p. 55.
54. Barber, "To Mrs. Frances Arabella Kelly," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, pp. 151-153, ll. 1-6, 23-24, 27-28.
55. Barber, "The Recantation," p. 153, ll. 1-6.
56. quoted by Elias, "Manuscript Book," p. 48.
57. Ibid. pp. 56,47.
58. Barber, "To Mrs. Frances-Arabella Kelly," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, pp. 151-153, ll. 31-32.
59. quoted in *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, III, n.108.
60. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 177.
61. *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Anna Lactitia Barbauld. (6 vols. London: 1805), p. 165.
62. Matthew Pilkington, "The Candle," *Poems on Several Occasions*, (London: 1731), pp.56-60, ll. 47-58.
63. John Cartaret Pilkington, "Appendix," Laetitia Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 243.
64. Barber, "Stella and Flavia," *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, pp. 36-37.
65. July, 1733, p. 142; December 1747, p. 164, *Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*.
66. quoted by Lonsdale in *Eighteenth Century Women Poets*, p. 119.
67. *Poems by Eminent Ladies* I, epigraph, title page.
68. Mrs. Jones, "Extract of a Letter from Mrs. Jones to the Hon. Miss LOVELACE," reprinted in *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, p. 6.
69. Barber, "To a Lady who commanded me to send her an Account in Verse, how I succeeded in my Subscription," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, pp. 199-205, ll. 11-14.
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71. Tucker, "Mary Barber: An Introduction," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, pp.1-32: 29.
72. Barber, "To a Lady who valu'd herself on speaking her Mind in a blunt Manner, which she called being sincere," *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 189.
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74. Ibid., III: 86.
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76. Helen Molitor, "Women in the Reading Circle," *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 13, 3, (November 1989), pp. 59-77.
77. Relke, "In Search of Mrs. Pilkington," p.115.

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1. Constantia Grierson, "To Mrs. Mary Barber...Occasioned by the Encouragement she met with in England to publish her POEMS by Subscription," *Poems by Eminent Ladies* I: 244-246: p. 245, l. 34.
2. Anon., *London Journal*, 4 December, 1725.
3. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, III: 116.

4. Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. (New York: Seabury, 1975). 65.
5. Nussbaum. *The Brink of All We Hate*. pp. 4-5.
6. June 19, 1745. *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*. II: 127.
7. Penelope Aubin. *The Life and Adventures of the Lady Lucy*. (London: J. Darcy, 1726; reprinted in the series *Foundation of the Novel*. New York, Garland Publishers, 1973). p. 130.
8. Alison Adburgham. *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women's Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria*. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972). p. 94.
9. Pilkington to Richardson. December 1745. *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*. II: 137.
10. Ellen Pollack. *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1985. p. 67.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
12. Pilkington. "The Statues: a Fable." *Poems by Eminent Ladies*. II: 239-246. p. 246.
13. Roger Lonsdale. "Introduction." *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. xxiii.
14. Barber. "Written for my son, and spoken by him in school, upon his master's first bringing in the rod." *Poems by Eminent Ladies*. I: 21. ll.9-14.
15. Barber. "To Mrs. Strangeways Horner, with a Letter from my Son: wherein he desires me to accept his first Prize of Learning, conferr'd on him by the University of Dublin." *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, I: 40. l. 8-12. 37-38.
16. Barber. "A Letter from my son to one of his School-fellows." *Poems by Eminent Ladies* I:28-29. ll.7-8, 21-22.
17. Anon., printed in John Cartaret Pilkington's "Appendix." Laetitia Pilkington. *Memoirs*. III: 254.
18. John Cartaret Pilkington. *The Real Story*, p. 1.
19. Diana M. Relke, "In Search of Mrs. Pilkington." p.136.
20. John Cartaret Pilkington. *The Real Story*, p. 216.
21. Barber. "Written upon the Rocks at Tunbridge, on seeing the Names of several Persons written there," *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, I:38-39. ll. 1-12.
22. Barber. "On sending my son as a present to Dean Swift, on his birth-day." *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, I: 35-36. ll. 9-10.
23. Barber, "To Mrs. Strangeways Horner. Written in my Sickness," quoted by Tucker in his Introduction to *The Poetry of Mary Barber*, p. 31.
24. Colley Cibber to Laetitia Pilkington, Monday, June 29, 1747. *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*. II: 166.
25. Dublin, May 1749. *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*. II: 156.
26. Pilkington, "Prologue" to "The Roman Father, a Tragedy." *Memoirs*. II: 320. ll.1-4.
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29. *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 53.
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32. Pilkington. "To Doctor Mead." *Memoirs*, II: 195, ll.1-2.
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35. Pilkington. *Memoirs*, I:167.
36. Pilkington. *Memoirs*, II: 244, ll. 14, 21.
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39. Ellen Pollack. *The Poetics of Sexual Myth*, p. 159.
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41. included in John Cartaret Pilkington's "Appendix." Laetitia Pilington. *Memoirs*, III, pp.224-268: 236.
42. Margaret Anne Doody. "Swift among the Women." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Volume 18, 1988, ed. C. J. Rawson. (Leeds: Mancy & Sons), pp. 68-92: 72.
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