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**A Matter of Consciousness:
Personal Identity in the Writings of Anna Barbauld
(1743-1825)**

by
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Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Ph. D. degree in English literature

University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Canada

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Abstract

My thesis explores the issue of personal identity in the literary career of Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825), situating her within the context of contemporary debate over the nature of identity and the self, first initiated by John Locke in the second edition of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1694), and his contention “that *self* is not determined by Identity ... of Substance ... but only by Identity of consciousness” (2.27.23). The term substance first appears in Aristotle's definition of man as a vital union of matter and substance, a definition later absorbed into the Christian view of man as a vital union of body and soul, or material and immaterial substance. Without denying the existence of substance, Locke considers it an inadequate foundation for a theory of personal identity. As he argues, substance is beyond the scope of human knowledge, and therefore cannot assure us of the continuity of the self. Only our knowledge of consciousness can give us confidence in the continuity of the self. Chapter one presents evidence of Barbauld's interest in the debate over personal identity, followed by a detailed account of Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness, and a discussion of its implications with respect to both class and gender.

Chapter two traces the history of Barbauld's engagement in the debate over personal identity. As I argue, Barbauld gradually adopts Locke's position on identity, while still upholding the essential truth of the orthodox Christian view of the self.

Chapters three and four investigate the way in which Barbauld's simultaneous endorsement of the theories of self-in-consciousness and self-as-substance informs both her political and feminist ideology.

In chapters five, six, and seven, I examine how the complex legacy of Locke's theory of personal identity influences the progress of Barbauld's literary career, as she draws upon it to consolidate her position as a woman writer, and to develop her aesthetic theory.

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Preface

My initial interest in Anna Letitia Barbauld was sparked when I was still an undergraduate, and she was beginning to achieve a recognized profile in a supplementary canon of British Romantic literature. In my third year Romantic Poetry course we looked at selections from a number of women writers. I was intrigued by the discovery that there were women writers who had once been as well known as, if not better known than, the six canonical male Romantic poets, but who had since been forgotten. I was highly impressed with the literary quality of poetry produced by women from this period, and particularly by Barbauld. We examined two of Barbauld's poems: "Washing-Day" (1797; 1825) and "To Mr. S. T. Coleridge" (1797; 1825), both of which immediately struck me with their originality and complexity.

My interest in Barbauld increased during my graduate years, when I had the opportunity in a seminar taught by my advisor to look more closely at female Romantic writers. Again, I was particularly impressed by Barbauld. I learned that she composed not only poetry, but also moral and pedagogical essay-writing, children's literature, polemical writing, and literary criticism, over a period of more than fifty years. The combination of her connections, intellect, and talent earned her preeminence in a large literary circle from early on in her career as a writer. Born into a prominent Dissenting family and married to a French Protestant minister, she moved in both radical and Establishment intellectual circles. Over the course of her long life she continued to cultivate an impressive cross-section of literary society, making friends with many important literary men and women of the day from a wide variety of backgrounds. I was equally impressed by the new respect that was again being

accorded to Barbauld with the revival of interest in eighteenth-century and Romantic women writers, and the publication of selections of Barbauld's poetry in several modern anthologies. In their reviews of Roger Lonsdale's anthology *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (1989), which featured over a hundred writers, Terry Castle and Margaret Doody both singled out Barbauld for praise. In the introduction to this anthology, Lonsdale himself took particular notice of Barbauld, identifying her as “[p]otentially the most versatile of women poets in the period.” He noted that “[t]here was no female precedent for the accomplishment of the blank verse in her *Corsica*” (xxxiii). In 1994, William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft published the first modern edition of Barbauld's complete poems, *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, declaring in the introduction that “[t]here is every reason to expect that those encountering the poetry of Anna Letitia Barbauld for the first time will greet it with enthusiastic delight,” and calling “the critical neglect of Barbauld's poetry ... baffling” (xxi). Within the last five years, Barbauld's poetry and prose have become routinely anthologized, making her an increasingly popular object for research, as well as an increasingly familiar figure in the classroom.

One of my original objectives in writing a dissertation on Barbauld was to contribute towards the recuperation of women writers. There still remains much work to be done on Barbauld. Despite a growing number of articles on her, there has as yet been no monograph devoted entirely to her. An in-depth study of Barbauld has much to add to our knowledge of women's lives in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Great Britain, as well as to our understanding of the character and production of women's writing during this period. Her early family life, and her marriage offer especially intriguing insights into female life of the

period. Her literary career serves effectively both to illustrate the difficulties facing women as they strove to become writing subjects, and to expose the kinds of strategies that they employed. The process of Barbauld's exclusion from the canon of great writers offers specific insights into the principles that govern canon formation. Her writings elucidate both the history of representations of women in literature, and the history of feminist thought. While Barbauld never produced a feminist treatise comparable to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), many of her writings speak to the situation of women in society. Moreover, she had a direct influence on the development of Wollstonecraft's feminist thought. In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft quotes a number of passages from Barbauld's poetry, selectively praising and condemning them depending on their perceived positive or negative implications for women. Barbauld's poem "The Rights of Woman" (1792; 1825) offers a reply to Wollstonecraft's criticism of her in the *Vindication*. In certain respects, Barbauld's views on the situation of women in society and male-female relations are more interesting and complex than Wollstonecraft's own. The mixture of radical and conservative opinions she expresses on women's issues makes her an intriguing, if sometimes frustrating, figure from a feminist perspective. Barbauld also displays special perspicuity in her awareness that sex is not a sufficient bond to unite women, and her refusal to generalize relations between men and women. Her close involvement in female education later on in life grants her additional importance in developing an understanding of the history of feminist thought. In the early nineteenth century, she produced a number of sophisticated treatises on female education, as well as lessons for female students.

A monograph-length study of Barbauld has value not only for feminists, however.

Barbauld deserves attention for her general historical significance. She is a noteworthy figure in late-eighteenth-century Dissenting culture. One of her great-grandfathers was among the original two thousand clergy who refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity in 1662. Her maternal grandfather John Jennings was the principal of a well-known Dissenting academy at Kibworth, where Philip Doddridge, one of the greatest figures in eighteenth-century dissent, was a pupil. Her father John Aikin attended Doddridge's academy, and after a brief career as a minister taught at the most famous Dissenting academy of all, the academy at Warrington, where his colleagues were William Enfield and Joseph Priestley. Barbauld grew up in the rich intellectual environment of the Warrington Academy, becoming close friends with both Enfield and Priestley. Her early romantic interests included the well-known philanthropist and prison reformer John Howard, and the French revolutionary Jean Paul Marat, who for a while worked as a French master at the Warrington Academy. After her marriage, Barbauld and her husband founded a successful school for boys at Palgrave, where both of them lectured, carrying on the tradition of her male ancestors. The school at Palgrave had a number of later celebrated students, including the Lord Chief Justice Thomas Denman; the archaeologist, antiquarian, and classical scholar Sir William Gell; James and Harriet Martineau's father Thomas; and the German translator and scholar William Taylor. Barbauld seems to have had a profound impact on the lives of these students. According to Lucy Aikin, after Barbauld's death Lord Denman continued to cherish her "memory most religiously." Aikin reports meeting Lord Denman at "a great public entertainment," where he came over to tell her "with a look of delight, 'I dreamed of Mrs Barbauld only last night!'" (Rodgers 74). Harriet Martineau attested to the impact that "the great school at Palgrave"

(Rodgers 75) had on her father. She also recorded her own fond childhood memories of Barbauld, who apparently took a lifelong interest in all the Martineaus. Taylor furnished perhaps the highest testimony to Barbauld's influence, famously referring to her as "the mother of his mind" (Rodgers 75). During the 1790s, Barbauld became prominently involved in a series of major political campaigns, including the abolition of the slave trade, and the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. In her poetry and polemical writing she boldly criticized government policy. She was also a vocal supporter of the American and French Revolutions. In 1812, she published her most ambitious piece of political writing, the poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1811; 1812), which condemned the British government for its war with France, and foresaw, with remarkable prescience, the ultimate decline of Great Britain and the rise of America. With this poem, she stirred up an immediate controversy in the press.

Barbauld has, in addition, specific significance in the context of literary history. As already mentioned, she remained preeminent in literary society for close to fifty years. With the success of the *Poems* (1772) and the *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (1773), she was welcomed into literary society in London. She socialized with the men and women associated with bluestocking society and the Literary Club. Her particular admirers included Elizabeth Montagu, Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, Charles Fox, and Hannah More, the last of whom remained a lifelong friend. Barbauld also joined the radical circle of writers that met at Joseph Johnson's, where again she had a number of admirers. During the 1770s and 1780s, she produced a series of literary pieces for children that played an important role in the early development of children's literature. She continued to make important literary connections,

becoming friends with the Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart. Through him, she had an indirect effect on the development of Scottish literature. Visiting Stewart in Edinburgh in 1794, she provided the catalyst for Sir Walter Scott's career when she dazzled Edinburgh society with her reading of William Taylor's translation of Gottfried August Bürger's "Lenore" (1774). She also met and influenced a number of the first generation male Romantic poets, notably William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The latter walked forty miles for his first interview with her. As a poet, Barbauld arguably played a seminal role in the transition from neoclassicism to Romanticism. Poems like "Washing-Day" (1797; 1825), composed around the time of her first acquaintance with Coleridge, effectively combine neoclassical and Romantic characteristics, shifting seamlessly from mock-epic to childhood reminiscence and abstract speculation in a way that strikingly anticipates Romantic lyric poetry. She was also friends with younger female writers like Maria Edgeworth and Joanna Baillie, whose literary careers she actively supported and promoted. She continued to affect the course of literary history after she turned her hand increasingly to literary criticism and editorial work. As a literary critic and editor, she was unquestionably important as one of the first critics who paid serious scholarly interest to the novel.

In my view, Barbauld's writing is worthy of study even without her general historical significance, or her specific consequence to literary history. She is a formidable and versatile writer, who composed poetry and prose on a wide variety of subjects in an impressive range of styles and forms. All of her writing exhibits an extraordinary ease and fluency. One of the aspects of her writing I find most appealing is her attractive balance of "head and heart," her combination of intelligence and intense, if sometimes subtly expressed, feeling, which works

effectively in her writing on both political and personal subjects. Two brief examples from her poetry will illustrate what I mean. “Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade” (1791; 1791)” strikes a powerful blow against the supporters of the slave trade by employing a rhetoric that is at once highly impassioned and perfectly controlled. The poet's memorable images of the devastating consequences of slavery for slave owners and slaves avoid sentimentality, offering practical as well as emotional reasons for putting an end to the slave trade. “To Mr. Barbauld, with a Map of the Land of Matrimony” (1774; 1825) offers a delicately poignant account of the Barbaulds' courtship, in which the poet reminds her lover of the “jealous Doubt,” “boding Fears,” and faintly shining “Hope” in the early stages of their relationship. The poet expresses painful uncertainty about the couple's prospects for future happiness together, worrying about Rochemont's possible resentment of their difficulties, and disappointment with married life. Yet the tone of the poem remains buoyant in spite of the weight of painful emotion. In communicating her anxieties, the poet cleverly, playfully, and imaginatively develops the familiar analogy of marriage as a voyage, comparing Rochemont to a sailor who has been bound captive. Accompanying the text is a wonderful map depicting the imaginary land of matrimony, which features such landmarks as “Coquet Island,” “Slave Coast,” “L'Amour River,” and “Cape Horn.” This little-known poem of Barbauld's is one of my favourites.

There are specific strengths that I admire in different forms of Barbauld's writing. I especially enjoy the powerful exercise of irony exhibited in her polemical writing; the shrewdness and sensitivity of her literary criticism; and the compelling “defamiliarization” of the ordinary in her poetry. Again, I will cite two of her poems to illustrate. The evocatively-

titled "To a little invisible Being who is expected soon to become visible" (c.1795; 1825) is perhaps one of Barbauld's most successful efforts at "defamiliarization." This poem captures, with striking effectiveness, the strangeness and mysteriousness of pregnancy, taking the opportunity in musing on pregnancy to explore large philosophical questions like the nature of the self and identity, and the acquisition of knowledge. Another excellent example of Barbauld's talent for "defamiliarization" is "The Caterpillar" (c. 1816; 1825), a poem composed close to the end of her life. Also a favourite of McCarthy and Kraft, "The Caterpillar" is written about the discovery of a caterpillar caught in the poet's sleeve when she is gardening. Drawing on this ordinary event the poet evokes an image of rare and exotic beauty. "I have scanned thy form with curious eye," the poet writes, "Noted the silver line that streaks thy back,/ The azure and the orange that divide/ Thy velvet sides ..." (3-6). The caterpillar becomes an object of increasing fascination as the poet watches it curl around her finger, at "its tip,/ ... with stretched out neck,/ Bending ... [its] head in airy vacancy,/ This way and that, inquiring" (10-12). The poet's experience of unanticipated compassion for the caterpillar, after having "sworn perdition" on its "race," leads her to ponder the nature of sympathy. The poet identifies sympathy as the result of the recognition of "individual existence, life" (26). Drawing a thought-provoking parallel between her sparing of the caterpillar, and the sparing of an individual enemy soldier, she concludes that sympathy is not virtue but "the weakness of a virtuous mind" (42).

My decision to approach Barbauld through the context of Locke's theory of personal identity requires a few additional words of explanation. This decision was partly a measure of the way in which my dissertation evolved as a recuperative project. Since the revival of

interest in eighteenth-century and Romantic women writers, critics have been preoccupied with the issue of subjectivity, devoting considerable attention to examining the construction of the self in women's writing of the period. Yet there had been very little attempt to understand the way in which women of the period would have understood concepts like the "self" and "identity." Reading through Barbauld's correspondence, I came across a letter to her brother John Aikin that explicitly addresses the subject of identity. In this letter, dated from Hampstead, 1791, Barbauld canvasses her brother and sister-in-law for their opinion concerning the problem of identity, demanding "Is continued consciousness the essence of identity?" (2: 160). I discovered that during the eighteenth century this problem was the subject of ongoing philosophical debate, which we can trace to the publication of the second edition of John Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1694). In a newly-added chapter, "Of Identity and Diversity," Locke sets out his theory of self-in-consciousness in apparent opposition to the orthodox Christian conception of the self as a vital union of material and immaterial substance, or body and soul. At the turn of the eighteenth century, a number of women philosophers, including Catherine Cockburn Trotter and Lady Damaris Cudworth Masham, participated directly in the early controversy sparked by the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity." When I carefully examined Barbauld's writing, I found compelling evidence of her engagement with many of the ideas that appear in the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity." By probing Barbauld's interest in the debate over personal identity, I hoped to place earlier research on eighteenth-century and Romantic women writers into new perspective.

I began a close investigation of Locke's theory of personal identity, which gradually

convinced me that it provided a key to understanding central aspects of Barbauld's thought. One of the greatest difficulties I found in trying to understand Barbauld's life and literary career was the apparent contradictions in her attitudes on the subject of class and gender. My research on Barbauld exposed her attitudes on class and gender relations as a bewildering mixture of radical and conservative opinions. I was particularly perplexed by her ambivalent attitudes towards female literary activity. In the course of her literary career, Barbauld expressed simultaneous support for women writers and anxiety concerning the potentially disruptive effects of increased female literary activity. Her writings suggested an intensely conflicted assessment of her own literary achievement. I saw in the debate over personal identity a possible explanation for some of the contradictions in Barbauld's thought. Locke's theory of personal identity invited certain inferences from the point of view of class and gender. By explaining identity in terms of consciousness instead of substance, Locke indirectly called into question assumptions about essential differences between members of different classes, and between men and women, posing a challenge to the existing social and sexual order. His theory of personal identity provided indirect justification for a levelling of the social order, and for the eradication of prescribed gender roles. Yet Locke never overtly rejected the orthodox Christian understanding of the self, leaving open the possibility of reconciling his theory of personal identity with orthodox Christian understanding of the self that underpinned the existing social and sexual order. Examining Barbauld in the context of Locke's theory of personal identity ultimately helped me to see the connections between her understanding of the nature and identity of the self, and her political and feminist ideologies. It also enabled me to grasp the contradictions in her attitudes on class and gender, and gave

me new insights into her life and literary career, particularly in her struggle to become a writing subject.

My aim in this project has been to establish Locke as one important context for examining Barbauld, but that I recognize that it is only *one* context. To illuminate the life and literary career of a late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century British woman writer of Dissenting background -- one who was extremely interested in politics, and the status of women in society -- the Lockean context is necessary simply because he is a touchstone in contemporary political discussion, particularly in Dissenting circles, as well as in the development of a tradition of Enlightenment feminism. It is simply not possible to understand Barbauld's conception of self and identity, her political and feminist ideology, and the shape of her literary career without being alert to the impact of Lockean ideas. Because of the lack of in-depth studies of her, I have faced many challenges in undertaking this project, beginning with the task of selecting and highlighting works from a literary career that spanned over fifty years. Yet in researching the complexities that I knew existed in Barbauld's life and literary career, I hope to have brought our new complexities that merit further discussion and research.

Chapter 1

Locke's Theory of Identity and its Influence

In a letter written to her brother John Aikin in 1791, Anna Letitia Barbauld (née Aikin, 1743-1825) enlists his aid in addressing an engrossing metaphysical problem. “I want you,” she instructs him,

to propose a metaphysical question to your society, which Mr. B-- and I have had great debates upon; and I want to know your opinion and my sister's. It is this: If you were now told that in a future state of existence you should be entirely deprived of your consciousness so as not to be sensible you were the same being who existed here, -- should you or should you not be now interested in your future happiness or misery? or, in other words, Is continued consciousness the essence of identity? (2: 160)¹

Barbauld's interest in this problem is striking, especially given the anxiety she expresses concerning the possible effects of philosophical speculation. In “Thoughts on the Devotional Taste and on Sects and Establishments,” the prefatory essay to the *Devotional Pieces* (1775), Barbauld observes that philosophy interferes with the practice of piety and devotion, and invites the possibility for skepticism, although she denies that she considers philosophy antagonist to religion. To the charge of inciting skepticism and weakening piety and devotion Barbauld adds in *Remarks on Mr. Wakefield's Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship* (1792) that philosophy too often embroils its followers in “intricacies of contradictory syllogism” (2: 445) that unprofitably consume all of their time.²

It thus appears that the relationship between identity and consciousness held some sort of special significance for Barbauld.³ In order to discover what this might have been, it is first necessary to clarify historical understandings of the term identity. Most twentieth-century readers probably understand the term identity in the sense of individuality. The OED

defines “identity” not only as “the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality” or “[p]ersonal or individual existence,” but also as “[t]he sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances.” It is in this latter sense that Barbauld employs the term in the letter to her brother. Her concern is with the continuity, rather than specifically with the individuality of the self, though they evidently cannot be fully separated.

Barbauld’s understanding of identity reflects the philosophical definition of identity employed by John Locke, in his discussion of identity in the second edition of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694). At the beginning of the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” Locke explains the philosophical problem of identity as follows:

[W]hen considering any thing as existing at any determin'd time and place, we compare it with it self existing at another time, and thereon form the *Ideas* of *Identity* and *Diversity*. When we see any thing to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure ... that it is that very thing, and not another, which at that same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable soever it may be in all other respects: And in this consists *Identity*, when the *Ideas* it is attributed to vary not at all from what they were that moment, wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present. (2.27.1: 328)

In other words, the philosophical problem of identity involves the criterion by which we determine the sameness of a thing existing at a particular time and place with itself at another time, as opposed to diversity, which involves the criterion by which we distinguish a thing

from another thing of the same kind.

In the eighteenth century, the relationship between identity and consciousness remained a subject of ongoing debate. The debate began when Locke, a man Barbauld recognized as having shaped “the opinions of the times” (2: 158) added a new chapter, “Of Identity and Diversity,” to the second edition of the *Essay*, in which he asserts “that *self* is not determined by Identity or Diversity of Substance ... but only by Identity of consciousness” (2.27.23: 345). Historically, this assertion challenges the accepted idea of self-as-substance, which had dominated philosophical discussions of identity up until this point.

The term substance first appears in Aristotle's definition of man as a vital union of body and soul, matter and substance (also referred to as matter and form).⁴ In his view, the soul or substance lends shape to the body. It is the knowable component of a man, both individual (belonging to each person) and universal (belonging to the species). The body (in the sense of matter) is unknowable outside of its union with the soul or form or substance. It only becomes knowable as a *substantial* body, that is, when it is joined to substance. The body is what serves to individuate a person, since no one simultaneously shares the same parcel of matter, though its role is essentially passive, since it is the soul that acts as the agent in parcelling out matter. The soul provides the person with continuity over time, in spite of changes affecting the body (in the course of the regular process of growth and decay, or as result of adventitious changes, such as, say, the accidental lopping off of limbs), while the body separates a person from the species, and from every other member of the species. Thus, substance serves to explain both identity and individuation.

During the Middle Ages, the Aristotelian notion of substance was absorbed into the

orthodox Christian view of the self as a vital union of the body and soul, or material and immaterial substance.⁵ Boethius sets the precedent for the medieval conception of identity in his view of the person as “the individual substance of a rational nature” (Fox, *Locke* 15). Like Aristotle, Boethius regards the person as a vital union between form and matter: the soul and the body, the soul granting continuity over time in the face of changes in matter, and the body individuating the soul.⁶ At the same time, he and his followers modify the Aristotelian view to argue, along Platonic lines, that the soul is the immortal and indestructible part of a person, the soul assuring not only personal continuity but also ontological permanence (Fox, *Locke* 15). In other words, identity resides in the soul, in close connection to the body, which is presumed, as the soul is, to survive death. Aristotle thinks that there is something indestructible in the soul, which he calls the *nous*, but his writings leave its nature ambiguous. Medieval philosophy adapts the Aristotelian notion of the substantial self to meet the central tenets of Christian thought, providing “the metaphysical certainty of our own persistence as a ‘permanent being,’” a unified and free agent, and assuring “that we will be held accountable for our actions” (Fox, *Locke* 16). It allows us to imagine a complete spiritual progress as the person passes from initial wholeness in life, when body and soul are joined together, to separation in death and final reunion by divine grace at the Final Judgement, when the material body and immaterial soul stand together once more to render personal account to God.

While not denying the existence of substance outright, Locke insists that we cannot know it; the body and the soul are beyond the reach of human knowledge. Since we cannot know them, he argues, we cannot rely upon them to explain the continuity of the self. Locke

finds a solution to the problem of identity in the concept of consciousness. Unlike substance, he points out, consciousness is knowable. It is from consciousness that we must accordingly derive our sense of identity.

With his theory of self-in-consciousness, Locke elevated personal identity into one of the great problems of modern philosophy. By seeming to challenge the orthodox Christian view of the self as a vital union between the body and the soul, Locke's theory of personal identity sparked a controversy that would long outlast his lifetime. By the time David Hume published *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), a little over fifty years before Barbauld's letter to her brother, he could remark that "*personal identity ... has become [a] great ... question in philosophy, especially of late years in England*" (1.6.7: 259).

Barbauld would probably have first come into contact with Locke's theory of personal identity in the lessons she received from her father, or from her reading in his library. According to David L. Wykes, "Not only did Locke's *Essay* ... become one of the main texts used by Rational Dissenters in their academies, but his ideas were to dominate their thinking"(118). Locke's name comes up fairly regularly in Barbauld writings. "On History" mentions Locke alongside Algernon Sidney, John Hampden, John Milton, and a number of British royalty, as those "who have illustrated her annals" (2: 400). Barbauld's preface to the *Correspondence of Richardson*, which she edited in 1804, specifically praises Locke's accessibility as a writer. In her view, his decision to write in the vernacular had placed him in a canon of English literary classics, evident in her remark that "the boy who has barely learned to read at a village school-dame's ... is in possession of a key which will unlock the treasures of Shakespeare and of Milton, of Addison and of Locke" (xxxiv). *Eighteen Hundred and*

Eleven, a Poem (1811; 1812), Barbauld's apocalyptic vision of imperial Great Britain's ruin, offers fellow citizens the comfort of their surviving intellectual legacy in the New World, proclaiming that, "Thy Lockes, thy Paleys shall instruct their youth" (89).

Barbauld would very likely have come across Locke's theory of personal identity in her reading of Joseph Addison. Addison was an early favourite. In later life, Barbauld edited a collection of his essays under the title *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, and Freeholder, with a Preliminary Essay* (1805). It was Addison who was most instrumental in disseminating Locke's theory of personal identity to an emerging middle-class mass reading public. Addison's *Spectator* papers contain one of the eighteenth-century's most widely read abridgments of the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity." Closely paraphrasing Locke's own words, Addison writes in *Spectator* No. 578 that

Mr. *Lock*, after having premised that the Word *Person* properly signifies a thinking intelligent Being that has Reason and Reflection, and can consider it self as its self; concludes, That it is Consciousness alone, and not an Identity of Substance, which makes this personal Identity or Sameness. (8: 103)

Barbauld would have known about the controversy surrounding Locke's theory of personal identity from her extensive philosophical reading. In the preface to her edition of Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1795), Barbauld significantly counts herself among "[t]hose who have studied the metaphysics of mind, and who are accustomed to abstract ideas" (vi), which she regards as necessary to appreciate Akenside's poem. For all her professed suspicion of the effects of philosophical speculation, she appears to have been familiar with the writings of a number of British philosophers: Lord Shaftesbury, Anthony

Ashley Cooper, George Berkeley, David Hume, William Paley, Francis Hutcheson, Joseph Priestley, James Beattie, and Dugald Stewart. She also seems to have read continental philosophers such as Voltaire, not to mention the ancient philosophers -- Plato in particular. All of these philosophers are specifically mentioned in her writings. Berkeley's *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) contain early rebuttals of Locke's theory of personal identity.

With these two treatises, Berkeley aimed to answer Locke's doubts concerning the substantiality of the self by rejecting the existence of matter. In *Remarks on Mr. Wakefield's Enquiry*, Barbauld expresses impatience with Berkeley's position, proposing that his extreme conclusions on the nature of substance are the product of isolated and unhealthy metaphysical speculation. "Berkeley," she conjectures, "probably, never doubted of the existence of the material world when he had quitted his closet" (2: 445).

Among the other philosophers with whom Barbauld was acquainted, Hume, Priestley, and Voltaire were also actively engaged in the debate over personal identity. Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques* (1733), Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), and Priestley's *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777) all essentially endorse Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness. Priestley's assertion of the importance, "[a]s far as the idea of identity is requisite," of "the *sameness and continuity of consciousness*" (159), drew him into conflict with Thomas Reid, whose *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) indicate plainly that he vehemently objected to any attempts to define identity in terms of continued consciousness. Priestley, of course, enjoyed a special influence over Barbauld. From 1761 to 1767, he was a colleague of her father at Warrington, the famous Dissenting Academy with

which the Aikin family remained closely associated until its closure in the early 1780s. While he was at Warrington Priestley married Mary Wilkinson, and he and his wife both became lifelong friends and correspondents of Barbauld. Barbauld expresses a consistently high regard for Priestley in her writings.

Although Barbauld makes no direct allusions to Locke in the letter to her brother, the phrasing of her question explicitly invokes the terms of his discussion in the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity.” The concern she expresses to Aikin about whether individuals should be interested in their future happiness or misery if they were told that in a future life they would be deprived of any consciousness of their former existence clearly echoes section 2.27.25 of the *Essay*, addressing the same issue of moral responsibility and accountability. As Locke asserts towards the end of “Of Identity and Diversity,” it is necessary to have a clear principle of explanation for the sameness of the self over time in order to guarantee that we will take responsibility for our thoughts and actions, and also that we will be held accountable for those thoughts and actions. Individuals acquire a sense of moral responsibility only if they can recognize themselves as the *same* selves who committed “such or such an Action some Years since, by which ... [they have] come[] to be happy or miserable now” (2.27.25: 345-46). This recognition of the dependency of moral responsibility and accountability upon identity is the guiding impetus for the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity.” From the terms of their own discussion, it appears that Barbauld and her husband appreciate the dependency of moral responsibility and accountability upon identity, which Priestley also emphasizes in his *Disquisitions*. It is perhaps a concern for preserving moral responsibility and accountability that lends an urgency to their debate.

The question remains, however, why a woman writer of the Romantic Age considered the debate over personal identity to be important, almost a century after Locke first proposed the connection between identity and consciousness. The issue of personal identity still occupies only a very small proportion of the philosophical writings Barbauld read. There are certainly other metaphysical problems that might have attracted her attention, but did not. It is this question that forms the starting point for my discussion.

In my view, a main reason for Barbauld's interest in the debate over personal identity has to do with her situation as an aspiring middle-class woman writer. The rest of this chapter explores some of the implications of Locke's theory of personal identity with respect to both class and gender, beginning with a detailed account of Locke's theory of personal identity, as set out in his chapter "Of Identity and Diversity." In the next chapter, I present evidence of Barbauld's engagement in contemporary debates over the nature of identity and the self. Barbauld, I argue, was attracted to Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness, even as she upheld the essential truth of the Christian orthodox view of the self as a vital union of material and immaterial substance. As discussed in chapters three and four, it is this simultaneous endorsement of the theories of self-in-consciousness and self-as-substance that fundamentally determines her attitudes on the subject of class, as well as on the subject of gender. In chapters five, six, and seven, I demonstrate how the complex legacy of Locke's theory of personal identity fundamentally informs the progress of Barbauld's literary career. Suffice it to say for now, that Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness was essential to her in the process of establishing herself as a woman writer. As Patricia Meyer Spacks notes, as eighteenth-century women writers struggled to express the self, they were also struggling to

be a self. Ultimately, Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness enables Barbauld to secure a model of self-hood that gives her authority and strength as a writer.

I.

Locke's theory of personal identity responds most immediately to the philosophy of René Descartes, though, as one might expect, there remains considerable ongoing debate in philosophical circles about the precise nature of the relationship between Locke's theory of personal identity and Cartesian philosophy. It was Descartes who provided the first major challenge to the traditional notion of the substantial self.⁷ At the beginning of the *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), Descartes insists that we should not automatically accept ontological claims that have been made regarding the existence of anything, including the self. By venturing to ask what it is possible to know about material substance, and how we discover what we know about substance, Descartes demonstrates that our knowledge is not as solid or as straightforward as had been previously thought. From the senses we learn only about the attributes of substance, not about substance itself. All of our knowledge of substance we glean through the faculty of reason. According to Descartes, we could be absolutely certain of what comes to us through reason. Yet the questions Descartes raises invites others to call into doubt the reliability of substance as foundation for a theory of personal identity.

This is not the conclusion Descartes himself reaches. He transforms the notion of the substantial self, rather than rejecting it outright.⁸ The most succinct expression of his views

occurs in the famous passage from the *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Reason and Reaching the Truth in the Sciences* (1637), where after proving satisfactorily to himself that he exists (“*I am thinking therefore I exist*”) Descartes turns to examine the nature of that existence:

Now I examined attentively what I was. I saw that while I could pretend that I had no body and that there was no world and no place for me to be in, I could not for all that pretend that I did not exist. I saw on the contrary than from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed quite evidently and certainly that I existed; whereas if I had merely ceased thinking ... I should have had no reason to believe that I existed. From this I knew I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is ... to think.

(127)

As this passage indicates, Descartes does not derive identity from the body or matter, whose existence is unknowable through the senses. Descartes locates identity exclusively in immaterial substance, the mind or soul (terms he uses interchangeably), which he describes as “a substance whose whole essence or nature is ... to think.” The act of thinking, as he sees it, implicitly attests to the existence of an underlying substantial self, as well as assuring the continued existence of that self over time. In this way, according to Christopher Fox, he “carried on the old theological vision: a vision that assured the individual of his ontological permanence at the same time it secured his moral accountability” (*Locke* 17). However, crucially, he shifted the locus of knowledge to the thinker herself, and makes introspection the methodological principle. He thus turned philosophy’s attention to the problem of

consciousness.

Locke was both inspired and troubled by the Cartesian account of identity. While, following Descartes, he accepts that there is “something” in each of us that thinks, he finds it more difficult to account for the nature of that “something” which contains thought. He feels that even if we accept that we exist as a thinking subject, we must still ask what constitutes this subject, and whether it has continued existence over time. As he insists, personal identity, “*far from being innate*, or born with us ... requires great Care and Attention, to form ... right in our Understandings” (1.4.3: 86). One of the difficulties Locke has with Descartes is the French thinker’s reliance on the act of thinking as evidence of an agent of thought, and therefore of the reality and continuity of a substantial self. Locke insists that the soul is *not* always thinking, and so the existence of such an agent cannot be inferred. “That there is something in us, that has a Power to think,” he allows, but warns, “whether that Substance perpetually thinks, or no, we can be no farther assured, than experience informs us” (2.1.10: 109). His own experience informs him that we are no more always thinking than always moving. “I confess myself,” he says, “to have one of those dull Souls, that doth not perceive it self always to contemplate *Ideas*” (2.1.10: 108), which leads him to conclude that thought is not the “Essence” but one of the “Operations” of the soul. From sections 2.1.11-19, Locke mentions several examples where souls experience thoughts that they cannot remember or where they apparently have none at all, such as during intervals of dreamless sleep.

Locke thinks that Descartes does not go far enough in exposing the limitations in our knowledge of substance. He agrees with Descartes that traditional accounts of identity had overrated human knowledge of physical substance, but goes farther in his claim that “[t]he

substance of Spirit is unknown to us,” as much as the substance of the body. As Locke contends in section 4.4.3 of the *Essay*, “the Mind ... perceives nothing but its own *Ideas*” (563). In these terms, he considers, “we are not capable of a philosophical *Knowledge* of the Bodies that are about us.” He warns his readers, “to a perfect *Science* of natural Bodies, (not to mention spiritual Beings), we are, I think, so far from being capable of any such thing, that I conclude it lost labour to seek after it”(4.3.29: 560). Our ideas of material substances are merely a collection of simple ideas of sensation, while our ideas of immaterial substances are merely a collection of simple ideas of reflection. We have taken as a self-evident truth that the soul is immaterial, he charges, but it is impossible for us to prove it. For all we know, the soul may not be immaterial at all, and thought not annexed to substance, since “GOD can, if he pleases, superadd to Matter's Faculty of Thinking” (4.3.6: 541).

Locke's reservations about human knowledge of the soul lead him to see identity as a philosophical problem in a way that it never appears to Descartes, as he is forced to dismiss both material and immaterial substance: the body and the soul, as unsatisfactory criteria for explaining the identity of the self. As he puts it bluntly towards the end of the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” “*self* is not determined by Identity or Diversity of Substance, which we cannot be sure of” (2.27.23: 345). However, as Locke appreciates, without any assurance of continuity, there is nothing left to insure the moral accountability of man, either in this world or the next. If we want to insure that we are the same responsible agents, it is necessary to have a clear principle of explanation for the sameness of the self over time. Indeed, in order to become responsible agents in the first place, it is necessary for us to be able to see the consequences of actions committed in the past, and to expect that we would

continue the same person in the future. The belief in an afterlife rests on the same expectation. It is Locke's desire to assuage such concerns that provides impetus for the composition of the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity."

Locke begins the new chapter in the second edition with an explanation of what philosophers mean by the terms identity and individuation. Typically, he claims, we apply the notion of identity and individuation to substances. We have the idea of three possible kinds of substance: "1. God. 2. Finite Intelligences. 3. Bodies." Each substance of the same kind necessarily has its own separate origin and occupies only one place at a time, with the exception of God. God exceeds normal spatial and temporal definitions of identity, since he "is without beginning, eternal, unalterable, and everywhere; and therefore concerning his Identity, there can be no doubt" (2.27.2: 329). Locke goes on to make a second distinction between substances that are indivisible or "simple," as he puts it, (a soul, for example, is a simple finite intelligence, an atom or aggregate of atoms is a simple body) and those that are divisible or "compounded" (a man is a compound finite intelligence, a plant or animal is a compound body). This second distinction invites some further conclusions on the subject of individuation. It appears that not only simple substances of different kinds, but also simple and compound substances can co-exist in the same place at the same time, while neither simple substances of the same kind, nor compound substances of any kind can exist together. Thus, God and a soul can co-exist, or a soul and a man, but not two souls, or an animal and a man. In the case of simple bodies, identity depends on the constancy of material substance. A mass made up of atoms will not be the same mass if atoms are lost or gained. In the case of "living creatures," plants and animals, identity lies not in material substance, since it can

survive changes in material substance, but in the “partaking of one Common Life” (2.27.4: 331).

It is in this context that Locke turns to consider the identity of human beings. He identifies three traditional explanations for “what is meant by ... the same individual *Man*”:

First, It must be either the same individual, immaterial, thinking Substance:

In short, the same numerical Soul, and nothing else.

Secondly, Or the same Animal, without any regard to an immaterial Soul.

Thirdly, Or the same immaterial Spirit united to the same Animal. (2.27.21:

343)

We can regard an individual as a simple finite intelligence (a soul), as a simple body (an aggregate of atoms), or as a compound finite intelligence.⁹ The last option Locke takes up at some length. Drawing a parallel between animals as compound bodies, and man as a compound finite intelligence, he declares that “the Identity of the same *Man* consists ... in nothing but a participation of the same continued Life, by constantly fleeting Particles of Matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body” (2.27.6: 331-32).¹⁰ He pauses to refute the opinion that the identity of man rests in the soul alone, affirming that identity rests in the union between the immaterial spirit and a particular body. If we define a man in terms of the “*soul alone*,” he protests, we have to accept that the same individual might be transferred to different bodies, or might be supposed to have existed in different time periods -- views which he considers untenable. Thus far, Locke upholds a standard conception of human identity, perfectly compatible with the orthodox Christian view of the self as a union between material and immaterial substance.

At this point, however, he posits a final possible explanation for the identity of individual man. We can categorize the individual, he suggests, not only in terms of identity of “*Substance*” and identity of “*Man*,” but also in terms of identity of “*Person*,” “three Names standing for three different *Ideas*” (2.27.7: 332). By identity of substance, Locke clearly means the identity of individual man as a simple body or as a simple finite intelligence, and by identity of man, identity as a compound finite intelligence, as he has just discussed. It is not immediately clear what he means by identity of person. After elaborating, for a few more sections, what constitutes identity of man Locke arrives finally to consider “*Personal Identity*.” A person, he states, is

a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive. (2.27.9: 335)

This passage discovers an explanation for personal identity in consciousness: an entirely different criterion from that used to explain identity of substance and identity of man.¹¹ As Locke insists, “It [is] not ... considered in this case, whether the same *self* be continued in the same, or divers Substances.” For Locke, it is consciousness alone, independent of substance (material or immaterial), which explains personal identity,

since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity*, i.e. the sameness

of a rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that *Person*; it is the same *self* now it was then; and 'tis by the same *self* with this present one that now reflects on it, that that Action was done. (2.27.9: 335)

In proposing the category of personal identity, Locke initiates a radical break with the accepted theory of self-as-substance. His definition of personal identity marks the first philosophical effort to understand identity of self apart from substance, material or immaterial. Essentially, Locke achieves this through a subtle transfiguration of Cartesian philosophy. As the two passages cited above confirm, Locke accepts the same proposition as Descartes that whenever we think, we are aware of “something” in us that thinks. Unlike Descartes, however, he does not regard this as proof of the existence and persistence of a *substantial* self. Instead, he proposes that it is this awareness or “consciousness” of “something” which convinces us of the existence and persistence of *a* self, regardless of the nature of that self, i.e. whether it is substantial or not. As such, Locke explicitly questions the status of the *cogito* as a thinking substance.

Aware of the novelty of his position, Locke moves quickly to consolidate it. He foresees the possibility that some will raise the same objections in connection to his account of identity as the ones he raises in connection to Descartes', namely that consciousness cannot any more than thought provide assurance of the sameness of substance. Yet he emphasizes that such objections are irrelevant to his theory of personal identity. It is “consciousness that makes a Man be himself to himself,” he insists, “*personal Identity* depends on that only, whether it be annexed only to one individual Substance, or can be continued in a succession

of several Substances” (2.27.10: 336).

Locke devotes the next portion of the chapter to clarifying the distinctions between personal identity, identity of substance, and identity of man. He acknowledges that the role of consciousness in the context of personal identity is in essential ways analogous to the role of life in the context of the identity of animals. He notes that “different substances, by the same consciousness (where they do partake in it) being united into one Person; as ... different *Identity* is preserved, in that change of Substances, by the unity of one continued Life” (2.27.10: 336). In other words, in the same way that life functions as “an organizing principle which unites a variety of ‘fleeting’ or ever-changing parts into one continuing animal,” consciousness functions as “a principle which unites what is at least possibly a variety of fleeting parts into one person” (Ayers 261). Yet there are important differences. Whereas the identity of animals (or man) persists despite changes in matter, the identity of a person persists despite changes in substance. Personal identity, unlike identity of substance (a simple body or a simple finite intelligence) or identity of man, is not bound to substance, whether “Spiritual or Material, Simple or Compounded.” Locke posits the existence of some connection between consciousness and substance, but insists that consciousness serves to maintain the individual's sense of sameness over time independent of changes in substance. As far as personal identity is concerned, it does not matter if “the same *self* be continued in the same, or divers Substances” (2.27.17: 341).

Locke follows up his discussion of the distinctions between these four forms of identity with some precise illustrations of instances where a person differs from a simple body, a simple finite intelligence, and a man. Through consciousness, he admits, we identify our

bodies as a part of us, and if a part of our bodies is separated from consciousness, such as when a limb is amputated, we no longer feel it to be a part of our *selves*. Nevertheless, “[t]here ... [is] no Question about the same Person, though the Limbs, which but now were a part of it, be cut off” (2.27.11: 337). In the same terms, consciousness invites a person to identify with an individual soul, and most probably, is tied to “one individual immaterial substance.” Yet, as Locke observes, it is possible to imagine scenarios where two souls are the same person, and one soul is two people. It is possible to imagine that a simple finite intelligence might appropriate the thoughts and actions of another simple finite intelligence, and in effect, become the same person as the other. It is equally possible to imagine that a simple finite intelligence might be transferred from one body to another without a simultaneous transfer in consciousness, such as is supposed to occur in transmigration. In this instance, the transferred soul would become a different person.

Locke concludes the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity” with a defence of consciousness as the only criterion which can adequately insure the moral accountability of man. In his view, “Nothing but consciousness can unite remote Existences into the same Person, the Identity of Substance will not do it” (2.27.23: 344). It is by consciousness alone that an individual “finds himself to be the *same self* which did such or such an Action some Years since, by which he comes to be happy or miserable now” (2.27.25: 345). It is therefore consciousness that forms the basis for “all the Right and Justice of Reward and Punishment” (2.27.18: 341), both earthly and divine. Consciousness determines the administration of earthly justice in forcing us to connect past actions and thoughts with present happiness and misery, and teaching us the difference between right and wrong. Through it we learn to hold

ourselves and others accountable for particular thoughts and actions. According to Locke, consciousness will determine the administration of divine justice in acquitting or condemning us at the Final Judgement. As Locke declares, “The sentence shall be justified by the consciousness all Persons shall have, that they *themselves* in what Bodies soever they appear, or what Substances soever that consciousness adheres to” (2.27.26: 347). Locke anticipates and dismisses the possible objection that we are not always conscious of our thoughts and actions. He notes that it is possible to “suppose two distinct incommunicable consciousnesses acting the same Body.” Among the examples he mentions specifically are those of waking Socrates and sleeping Socrates, the Mad Man and the Sober Man, the Drunk Man and the Sober Man, and finally, the Night-Man and the Day-Man. “[O]n the other side,” he claims, it is possible to suppose “the same consciousness acting by Intervals two distinct bodies” (2.27.23: 344).

Locke had already illustrated this possibility in the passage about the individual who appropriates the thoughts and actions of another. For him, such possibilities pose no problem at all from the point of view of justice. Locke simply reiterates his point that we ought to judge individuals according to their consciousnesses. Since consciousness is often an extremely difficult thing to prove one way or another, we must accept that there will be some errors of justice on earth. Nevertheless, we can be assured that there will be no errors in heaven.

II.

Although there was little public reaction in the months immediately following the publication of the second edition of the *Essay*, Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness found itself embroiled in controversy by the end of the seventeenth century.¹² The controversy began when Edward Stillingfleet, a fellow at St. John's College, Cambridge, and a bishop of Worcester, apprehensive about the way Locke's views on personal identity had been applied in some recent theological treatises, attacked Locke in *Discourse in Vindication of the Trinity* (1696), claiming that his definition of a person in terms of consciousness was both false and dangerous, since it raised fundamental doubts about the existence of substance. Unsettled by the stature of his antagonist, Locke defended his views in a series of high-profile pamphlets. Though it was generally agreed that Locke gained the advantage in the conflict, the whole affair served only to heighten the controversy. Within a few years of the turn of the century, pro-Lockean and anti-Lockean factions were firmly established.¹³ Initially, at least, Locke's opponents appeared to be in the majority. Some dismissed his argument as merely over-ingenious. Others regarded it as actually dangerous. For instance, Henry Home, Lord Kames writes in *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751) that

[i]f we can be prevailed upon, to doubt of the reality of external objects, the next step will be, to doubt of what passes in our own minds, or the reality of our ideas and perceptions. For we have not a stronger consciousness, nor a clearer conviction of the one, than of the other. And the last step will be, to doubt of our own existence. (240)

Locke's popularity on the continent did not help matters. The prominence that Voltaire gave to the Locke-Stillingfleet debate in *Lettres philosophiques*, and his own alignment of Locke with the deists contributed towards the image of Locke as a radical skeptic. This association between Locke and skepticism resulted in the banning of his books in some countries during the eighteenth century, and contributed to the decline of his reputation in the nineteenth.

In response to Locke's claim that we could not know substance, a number of eighteenth-century philosophers sought new assurances for the substantiality of the self. Perhaps the best-known attempt is that of Berkeley. As attested in the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues*, Berkeley accepts the empirical premise that our knowledge of material substance is limited. We do not apprehend the external world directly, but only "ideas" of it through the senses. Indeed, Berkeley feels that Locke underestimates the full extent of the limits in our knowledge of matter. Locke presumes that on the whole our "ideas" of the external world provide us with accurate information about that world, a presumption which Berkeley is reluctant to make. Instead, Berkeley regards the self as entirely isolated from the external world of which it has no direct knowledge. At the same time, Berkeley condemns Locke for failing to establish clearly the existence of immaterial substance. In a bold leap of logic, this self-proclaimed champion of common-sense upholds the existence of immaterial substance through a complete rejection of material substance. Essentially, Berkeley argues that there are no bodies, only the mind or soul and God. The mind or soul holds direct communion with the mind of God, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being" (2: 236), as he writes in the third dialogue between Hylas and Philonous, and God, in turn, grants the mind all the "ideas" we have of the external world. Berkeley believes that the self is more

than the sum of its ideas, declaring in the same dialogue, "I know or I am conscious of my own being; and that I myself am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking active principle that perceives, knows, wills, and operates about ideas. I know that ... I am ... one individual principle" (2: 233-234). Despite the increasing acceptance of Locke's theory of self-consciousness into the mainstream,¹⁴ there continued to be those throughout the eighteenth century who denounced his claims that we could not know substance. The most prominent late-eighteenth-century opponents to Locke's theory of personal identity are Reid and Beattie, who together formed the "Common Sense" school of philosophy. Both Reid and Beattie argue that the act of perception attests, in itself, to the substantiality of the self. In their view, there are no limitations in our knowledge of substance, material or immaterial. God grants human beings an intuitive grasp of the existence and identity of material and immaterial substance.

The same philosophers who denounce Locke's theory of personal identity for fostering skepticism also question the capacity of consciousness to uphold the continuity of the self. From their perspective, Locke had rejected the only sound principle of explanation for the sameness of the self, and in so doing, had unleashed the possibility for moral and spiritual chaos, imperiling "Right and Justice of Reward and Punishment." Consciousness cannot constitute personal identity, so the argument runs, for two reasons. First, a person can only be conscious of being the same person over time if he or she has actually been the same person during that time. In other words, consciousness presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity. Secondly, consciousness is not fixed but variable, and as such cannot assure the continuity of anything. In rejecting substance in favour of consciousness,

Locke had made the self, according to Joseph Butler, “not a permanent, but a transient thing.” The self, Butler claims, now “lives and dies, begins and ends continually,” and “no one can any more remain one and the same person two moments together, than two successive moments can be one and the same moment (1: 392). If individuals were not the same from moment to moment of their lives, it follows that they cannot be held accountable for their thoughts and actions. It also means that there can be no certainty that individuals will remain the same selves in the future. In these terms, Locke's theory of personal identity seems to eliminate the motivation for right action, and to threaten the foundation of society.

Locke acknowledges that under exceptional circumstances (sleep, extreme drunkenness, madness, and senility) there might be actions that an individual commits of which he or she is not afterwards conscious. This means that there are some actions and thoughts for which individuals might not be held accountable. Such a possibility does not appear to perturb Locke. He seems content to accept that personal responsibility extended only to identification with past action and thought. He recognizes the practical difficulties that this poses for legal administrators. It is a difficult matter to evaluate the sincerity of a defendant's claim that he or she no longer identifies with a past offense. For this reason, Locke warns, we cannot expect full and perfect justice until the afterlife. Locke's acceptance that individuals may, in exceptional circumstances, cease to be the same self (no longer responsible for past actions and thoughts) seems for some to contradict his initial aim. The initial aim of his theory of personal identity is to assure the continuity of the self in the face of the perceived inadequacy of substance, and, in turn, to assure moral accountability and the preservation of justice. Up to a point, it is successful. The chapter “Of Identity and

Diversity" explains how an individual might remain the same self in spite of gaps in thought, such as during periods of heavy sleep. It also explains how one might remain the same self after death. As Locke points out, the Cartesian account of identity, based on the continuous thought of immaterial substance, cannot explain the continuity of the self with the same degree of satisfaction, simply because the mind is clearly not always thinking. Nevertheless, one might still perceive the scenarios he discusses in section 3.27, where individuals cease to be the same selves, as a violation of moral responsibility and justice.

The question about whether knowledge of consciousness can actually provide assurance of continuity under normal circumstances is easier to resolve than the problems posed by such scenarios. It is quite true that consciousness fluctuates. Yet the fluctuation of consciousness has nothing necessarily to do with our identification with past action and thought.

Some of Locke's supporters, notably Hume, merely served to confirm the worst fears of his opponents. Hume devoted himself to developing the most troubling implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. In the *Treatise*, Hume follows Locke in maintaining we have no direct knowledge of material or immaterial substance. This leads him, like Locke, to dismiss substance as an adequate principle of explanation for personal identity, though he goes farther than Locke in daring to question the existence of immaterial substance, declaring that the soul is most likely a human invention. At the same time, Hume has many doubts about the ability of consciousness to establish both the identity and individuality of the self. His own efforts at self-examination make him less certain than Locke about the capacity of consciousness to discriminate the self from others, and to account for the sameness of the self

over time. He finds that he can never grasp the self “at any time without a perception, and never ... observe any thing but the perception” (1.4.6: 252). “Tis absurd,” he suggests, “to imagine the senses can ever distinguish betwixt ourselves and external objects” (1.4.2: 190). Where Locke assumes that he was explaining something real, the identity of individual persons, Hume attempts to expose the operations of the mind that produce the *fiction* of the self. His intention is not to set out the circumstances under which persons have identity as real individuals, but the errors in thought that result in the misconception that there is such thing as real individuals. The self appears to him as “a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement” (1.4.6: 252). This brings him to speculate that what we call the self is “fictitious.” From an analytical point of view, he discovers no logical basis for the idea of the self.¹⁵ Arguing from the premise that all ideas have some corresponding impression, he claims that there is no idea of the self since no single impression can account for it. It may be, he says, that the self is an illusion produced by some force, either spiritual or material, which convinces us that there is a unity in our impressions. At one point, he speculates that we acquire a belief in the existence and identity of the self through “the habitual operation of the imagination, acting in accordance with the principles of the association of ideas” (1.4.6: 253).¹⁶ Through the association of ideas, he proposes, we mistake apparently similar but actually distinct perceptions for one single continuous perception. Hume challenges the view that personal identity is in any sense connected to substance.

All of this served to complicate the reception of Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness. Yet the attacks against Locke's theory of personal identity are somewhat

misleading. Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness does not constitute a repudiation of the Christian orthodox conception of the self. Locke makes it clear that he challenges only our *knowledge*, and not the *being*, of substance -- "the obscure, indistinct, vague Idea of *something*" (40), as he puts it in *A Letter to the Right Reverend Edward L. Bishop of Worcester, concerning some Passages relating to Mr. Locke's Essay of Humane Understanding: In a late Discourse of his Lordships, in Vindication of the Trinity* (1697). Indeed, towards the end of the *Essay*, he affirms his belief in the existence of the self where he insists that "[i]n Every Act of Sensation, Reasoning, or Thinking, we are conscious to ourselves of our own Being, and in this Matter, come not short of the highest degree of Certainty" (4.9.3: 619). His early opponents insist that by challenging the knowledge of substance he effectively calls its being into question, but this is open for debate. In the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity," Locke explicitly affirms some connection between the self and substance, material and immaterial. While rejecting substance as a foundation for personal identity, he raises the possibility that consciousness may permeate and unite substance, both the unknown substance that constitutes the soul, as well as the peripheral parts of the body. There are many passages in the *Essay* which suggest that Locke sees a blurring of boundaries between the mind and body. In *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (1996), Jerome McGann proposes that Locke's blurring of boundaries between the mind and the body is an essential feature of his philosophy, which provided direct impetus for the discourse of sensibility. The *Essay* also contains many passages which specifically return to the notion of "a simple immaterial soul" as the underlying seat of consciousness, including section 2.27.25: 345, where Locke states that "the

more probable opinion is that this consciousness is annexed to, and the affection of, one individual immaterial substance.” Though resistant to a straightforward Cartesian identification of personal identity with the soul, Locke includes several scenarios in the chapter in which he closely identifies consciousness with the soul, notably that of the prince and the cobbler.¹⁷ Locke is not, as his opponents insisted, denying the existence of substance, or of some connection between consciousness and substance. He is merely asserting that we cannot be certain of the exact nature of that connection.

III.

With his theory of personal identity, Locke opened up a whole new range of possibilities for thinking about the self. For the first time, it was possible to conceptualize the self in terms other than the body and the soul, or at the very least, to re-conceptualize the relationship between the self and the body and soul. According to Felicity A. Nussbaum,

Heated rhetorical battles were waged throughout the century after [the publication] of [the second edition to] Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* ... in which the issues at stake were the meaning that each word [“identity,” “self,” “soul,” and “person”] would be granted and the implications of those words for individuals' legal, moral, and spiritual responsibility in relation to church and state. (38)

She suggests that “[t]he historical period of eighteenth-century England ... is a time when identity and character are in particular crisis,” allowing the emergence of “nonhegemonic

concepts about the self as well as new hegemonies in formation” (xiv). In my view, the special significance of Locke's theory of personal identity lay in the fact that it offered a means of re-conceptualizing the Christian orthodox view of the self in ways that harmonized with specific social, political, and economic changes taking place in eighteenth-century Great Britain.

The original appearance of Locke's theory of personal identity coincided with a shift from an absolute monarchy, an extremely rigid social hierarchy, and largely land-based economy to a constitutional monarchy, a more fluid social hierarchy and capitalist free-market economy. Locke fled to Holland when his patron, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, was charged with treason for his involvement in plots to exclude the Catholic James from the throne. When in Holland he was part of a group of English dissidents, some of whom were instrumental in bringing William and Mary to the throne. His *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) has long been read as an apology for the Glorious Revolution. However, his other major works, including the *Essay*, were also substantially written or revised during his five-year exile in Holland. In formulating his theory of personal identity Locke seems at least partly to have been responding to the events of the Glorious Revolution. His philosophical writings, and in particular, his theory of personal identity, appear to provide tacit justification for the Glorious Revolution.

Unlike the theory of self-as-substance, Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness rejects notions of natural superiority or inferiority that had helped to perpetuate the system of absolute monarchy, as the ruling class claimed its prerogative to rule on the basis of birth and “divine right.” Locke's generic definition of a person as “a thinking intelligent being that has

reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places” potentially affirms universal equality by prioritizing the connection between the self and the mind, assumed to possess universal faculties of reason and reflection. As Locke defines them in the *Essay*, reason is “the faculty of deducing unknown principles or propositions that are already known” (1.2.9: 51-52), while reflection is the “observation of the internal operations of our minds,” as distinct from sensation: the observation of “*external, sensible objects*.” Together, reflection and observation constitute the “two fountains of our knowledge, from which all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring” (2.1.2: 104). Locke's definition of a person suggests that the identity of the self is closely tied the acquisition of knowledge in the course of experience.

Underlying Locke's theory of personal identity is clearly his conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa* at birth. For Locke, it appears, the self is originally undetermined, fundamentally malleable, and continuously evolving as it comes into contact with different impressions from the external world, and applies the faculties of reason and reflection to evaluate what it encounters. Identity emerges through experience, as consciousness extends “backwards to ... past Action or Thought.” This is a strikingly different view from the theory of self-as-substance, according to which identity emerges not through experience, but in the persisting connection between material and immaterial substance.

Locke's theory of personal identity highlights the importance of education, which becomes the explicit focus of eighteenth-century calls for the rights of man. In directing the operations of the mind, education served effectively to constitute the self -- to make individuals who they were. In the opening section of *Some Thoughts on Education* (1693),

Locke asserts that “of all the Men we meet with, Nine Parts out of Ten are what they are, Good or Evil, useful or not, by their Education” (1: 83). The explosion in the number of educational treatises during the eighteenth century is testimony to the influence of Locke's views on education. Locke himself wrote a number of pedagogical treatises, intended to present practical advice to parents in directing the operations of the mind to acquire knowledge and to develop moral principles. He identifies the major obstacle to education in chapter 2.33 of the *Essay*: “Of the Association of Ideas.” In this chapter, he observes that some ideas have a natural correspondence and connection with each other, which “[i]t is the Office and Excellency of our Reason to trace, [but] there is another connexion of *Ideas* wholly owing to Chance and Custom,” which gradually assume the appearance of “natural correspondence and connection” (2.33.6: 396). In *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706), Locke states that the association of ideas not naturally connected “is as frequent a cause of mistake and error in us as perhaps anything else that can be named, and is a disease of the mind as hard to be cured as any, it being a very hard thing to convince anyone that things are not so, and naturally so, as they constantly appear to him” (41: 114-15).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Locke regards all members of humanity as equally vulnerable to this “disease of the mind” – especially during childhood, when the faculties of reason and reflection are the least developed, and the mind is most vulnerable to lasting impressions. While considering it as to some extent inevitable, he notes in section 2.33.3: 394 of the *Essay* that “[t]his sort of unreasonableness is usually imputed to education and prejudice, and for the most part truly enough.”

Parents and teachers unwittingly imparted ideas that came by chance or custom to

their students. They were also responsible for encouraging errors in reasoning that increased the susceptibility of the mind to the association of ideas. Children had too often been required simply to accept the precepts and examples presented to them, rather than taking the opportunity to learn how to think for themselves. “Few men,” Locke asserts in the *Conduct*, “are from their youth accustomed to strict reasoning and to trace the dependence of any truth in a long train of consequences to its remote principles and to observe its connection” (6: 47). Rather than teaching children to exercise the faculties of reason and reflection, many parents and teachers encouraged students to accept their arguments unquestioningly. It was a great mistake in education, Locke argues, “making ... [students] imbibe their teacher's notions and tenets by an implicit faith and firmly to adhere to them whether true or false” (41: 116), and encouraging students to think and act “according to the example of others, whether parents, neighbours, or ministers” without reflecting upon it. Other errors in reasoning included allowing students to put passion before reason, and to make judgements based on partial knowledge. Locke urges repeatedly that, as much as possible, “those who have Children, or the Charge of their Education ... diligently to watch, and carefully to prevent the undue Connexion of *Ideas* in the Minds of young People.” In the *Conduct*, he advises parents “to take heed, as much as may be that in their tender years ideas that have no natural cohesion come not to be united in their heads; and that this rule be often inculcated to them to be their guide in the whole course of their lives and studies” (41: 116).

At a number of points in his comments on education, Locke explicitly dismisses assumptions of essential differences between men on the basis of class or race. In section 2.4.2: 646 of the *Essay*, he insists that the “ancient savage *Americans* ... come no way short

of those of the most flourishing and polite Nations” in “natural Endowments and Provisions,” lacking only the same knowledge. In the *Conduct* he insists that men of different situations in life possess “equal parts; all the odds between them has been the different scope that has been given to their understandings to range in, for the gathering up of information and furnishing their head with ideas, notions and observations whereon to employ their minds and form their understandings” (3: 40).

It is possible to see the two *Treatises* as a working through of the some of the political implications of his theory of self-in-consciousness, setting out the libertarian and egalitarian ideals that provide the ideological underpinnings for an emerging constitutional monarchy and bourgeois capitalist system. The first *Treatise* attacks Robert Filmer's apology for absolutism. Filmer claims in *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings* (1680) that God in Genesis had granted absolute power to some men over others, just as he had granted absolute power to men over women, and parents over children. This absolute power amounted essentially to the right of property. Locke denies Filmer's reading of Genesis, observing that God made all men in his image, and granted Dominion to all of humanity, and not only to Adam, implied in the pronoun “them.” In the second *Treatise* he states explicitly that “the Lord and Master of them all,” has not “by any manifest Declaration of his Will set one above another” (2.4: 287). As he suggests in the second *Treatise*, humanity's possession of the gift of reason reflected precisely the opposite: “Creatures of the same species and rank ...born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same faculties, should be equal one amongst another without Subordination.” The statement in the second *Treatise* that “we are *born Free*, as we are born Rational” (2.61: 326) clearly invokes the assumption of

universal claims to rationality as the basis for demands for political rights and freedoms.

Locke emphasizes the necessity of providing opportunities to cultivate the faculties of reason and reflection in order to realize full equality and liberty. The second *Treatise* envisions an alternative political system operating upon the principle of reason rather than precedence or “customs of habit”— a state founded upon the “social contract,” which acts to secure “natural rights,” whereby each has a right to security of “life,” “liberty,” and “goods.”¹⁸ Locke describes the evolution of civil government out of a state of nature, where “[m]en liv[ed] together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, without authority to judge between them” (2.19: 298). In a state of nature, there always remained the possibility for conflict and inequity, since not everyone was equal in strength, or as able to defend himself or herself, and each served his or her own interest. Motivated by the reasonable desire for justice and peace, men decided to bind themselves to the social contract, by which they agreed not to “harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Goods” (2.7: 289), allowing others a right to protect themselves if any of these came under attack, and appointing a governor to arbitrate disputes which arose between different parties. In Locke's view, the governor was answerable to the will and determination of the people, and if there were a breach of trust on the part of the governor, power rightfully reverted to the people.

At the same time, Locke's acceptance of some connection between consciousness and substance allowed a continuing role for Providence and “natural constitution” in the development of personal identity. This served to qualify some of the most radical political implications of his theory of personal identity, which might otherwise have disturbed many of his readers. In its emphasis on the universality of the faculties of reason and reflection, and

the influence of environment and experience, Locke's theory of personal identity invited a potential levelling of society: the eradication of social or class distinctions. By allowing some connection between consciousness and material substance, however, Locke indirectly admits some continuing basis for social distinctions, acknowledging that there were differences between the minds of men that were not a product of experience, but of biology.

In his writings on education, Locke never entirely dismisses the role of matter in determining the moral and intellectual development of the self. "God has stamp't certain Characters upon Men's Minds," he observes in *Some Thoughts*, "which like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended, but can hardly be totally altered" (66: 122). In Locke's view, those involved in children's education "should well study their Natures and Aptitudes, and see, by often trials, what turn they easily take and what becomes them, observe what their Native Stock is, how it may be improved and what it is fit for," before they determine a specific course of study. In the conclusion to the same treatise, he writes that the mind is "white Paper or Wax to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases," but also that "each Man's Mind has some peculiarity that distinguishes it from all others" (217: 265). In the *Conduct* he asserts that "[t]here is ... great variety in men's understandings, and their natural constitutions put so wide a difference between some men in this respect, that art and industry would never be able to master." For this reason, there remains "[a]mongst men of equal education ... great inequality of parts." "[T]he woods of America," Locke notes, "as well as the schools of Athens, produce men of several abilities of the same kind" (2: 34). The recognition of this "variety in men's understandings, and their natural constitutions" suggests again his acceptance that individuals had been intended to fulfill different roles in life. While Locke

denied the superiority of members of one class over another, and supported the possibility for social mobility, he seemed to think it was only natural for individuals, once they had distinguished themselves from their fellows, and raised themselves socially and economically above them, to want to protect their position.

To some extent, Locke considers that education should be directed to preserving distinctions between the ranks. His writings on education frequently recommend the adaptation of education to suit a child's particular rank. At the conclusion of *Some Thoughts*, he observes "I think a Prince, a Nobleman, and an ordinary Gentleman's Son, should have different ways of breeding" (217: 265). In a letter to the Countess of Peterborough from 1697 he is even more explicit: "I have always thought that to direct a young gentleman's studies right it is absolutely necessary to know what course of life, either by the distinction of his quality or fortune, or by the choice and determination of his parents, he is designed to."

All of which suggests an underlying tension in Locke's thoughts on education, as he imagines it serving as a means not only to alter and improve, but also to stabilize and regulate. The two *Treatises* notably resist the most radical political implications of the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity." At no point in either *Treatise* does Locke insist on the establishment of a full democracy, appearing content with a constitutional monarchy where propertied citizens elect the king to regulate their affairs, and make decisions on their behalf.

IV.

Locke's theory of personal identity had specific implications for eighteenth-century

women. During the Restoration and eighteenth century, the de-stabilization of established social hierarchies raised the possibility that this might include sexual hierarchies. As Barbara Caine observes, “[t]he Enlightenment insistence on human rationality and its connection with natural rights inevitably suggested the need to assert the rationality and the natural rights of women,” though she adds, “at the very moment that this suggestion was being made, the intellectual, moral, and physical differences between men and women were constantly being asserted and elaborated” (19).

While Locke never mentions gender in the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” his theory of self-in-consciousness carries certain positive implications from a feminist perspective. By shifting the locus of personal identity away from the body and soul, and towards the mind, Locke indirectly distanced women from two concepts which had been historically implicated in arguments for women's subordination. He encouraged a regard for the sexes in less physical and more intellectual terms, which served as an indirect challenge to arguments for their subordination.

Traditionally, women had been defined in terms of the female body, a definition which provided sanction for their subordination on several grounds. It encouraged men to treat women as objects whose sexuality it was necessary to regulate. It fuelled essentialist arguments about their “natural” inferiority. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, essentialist views of the sexes continued to be widely taken up by prominent scientists such as Nicolas Malebranche, for instance, who saw evidence for women's intellectual inferiority in their fundamental physiological differences from men, and in particular, in the supposedly more sensitive nerve fibres in their brains. The Reverend

James Fordyce draws on this tradition of thinking in his *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), where he argues that women's minds, like their bodies, are softer than men's. Eighteenth-century conduct manuals continued to define women primarily in relation to their bodies, focussing on how women might transform themselves into objects of male desire. According to Vivien Jones, conduct writers tended to define women in binary terms either with “passive, asexual virtue,” or “active, and therefore suspect, sexuality” (57).¹⁹

Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness encouraged a regard for the sexes both in less religious and in more secular terms,²⁰ enabling readers to reject, or at least to put into perspective, the arguments of Christian moralists who justified women's subordination on the basis of Biblical precedent. Although there was a well-established Christian tradition of spiritual equality, which claimed that there was no sex in souls, the narrative in *Genesis* continued to be routinely invoked as evidence of women's spiritual and intellectual inferiority, and as vindication of their subordination. Eve was taken as proof that women were more credulous and easier to seduce than men. Women's inferiority of intellect was connected to a lack of vigour of soul.

Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness significantly avoids reaffirming essential differences between men and women, encouraging women to identify themselves with their minds, assumed not to be essentially different from men's. As set out in the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” Locke's definition of a person appears strikingly gender-neutral. The generic description of a person as “a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places” implies that women share the same faculties of reason and reflection as men. Indeed, Locke registers

no difference at all between the sexes. For him, there appears to be no such thing as a “male” or “female” consciousness. Personal identity emerges as individuals extend consciousness backwards to encompass past actions and thoughts, and in this way, acquire a sense of their difference from others, and of “sameness” with themselves. In other words, through consciousness, individuals achieve a sense of individuality as persons on the one hand, and of unity and continuity on the other. Personal identity, unlike identity of man, arises entirely out of experience, inviting the argument that men and women begin at the same point, and that differences between the male and female mind emerge as a result of experience, and more specifically, as a result of education.

Locke's assumption that women might claim the same faculties of reason and reflection as men was particularly important for women during the Restoration and eighteenth century. The significance of Locke's contribution did not lie in his emphasis on reason *per se*. It is true that from Aristotle onwards reason had been considered humanity's distinguishing characteristic. The prevailing Aristotelian tradition identifies the faculty of reason, and the related power of speech, as the faculty which elevates humanity above other creatures capable only of mere “sense” or “sensual taste.” Nevertheless, within the Aristotelian tradition, reason had never been considered a universal human faculty.²¹ Aristotle attempts to deny underprivileged classes of humanity, that is, women and slaves, full access to the faculty of reason, contending that they lack the deliberative faculty. Throughout the eighteenth century, there continued to be a common tendency to deny women's rationality -- to dismiss them as contradictory, frivolous and vain. Even those who accepted women's rationality often argued that women possessed a qualitatively different form of rationality from men, more associated

with wit, taste, intuition, or feeling. This might be a source of genuine admiration, but more often than not, it was an excuse for patronizing praise. Locke's recognition of women as fully rational human beings in the same terms as men was a necessary first stage in advancing the situation of women -- necessary for both moderate early modern feminists, whose interest was in improving women's education and discouraging women's preoccupation with fashionable and frivolous pursuits, and those whose interest was also in the achievement of equal social, economic, and political rights.²²

In a letter to a female acquaintance, Locke writes, "I acknowledge no difference of sex in your mind relating ... to truth, virtue and obedience" (Axtell 344), asserting that he would apply the same principles he has set out for sons in *Some Thoughts* to daughters, in both intellectual and physical exercise, though he suggests that girls need not be made quite so hardy as boys. "I think the father ought to strike very seldom, if at all to chide his daughters. Their governing and correcting, I think, properly belongs to the mother" (Axtell 346). He himself proposes no radical program for female education, contenting himself with the fairly modest wish that women master English thoroughly, know ordinary Latin and arithmetic, as well as acquire some general understanding of chronology and history, but his recommendation of Latin and arithmetic still went beyond what most of his contemporaries would endorse. He regretfully acknowledges that many men have difficulty with signs of female learning, and that women who devote themselves to intellectual achievement risk jeopardizing their chances of finding a husband, although he considers that an educated woman makes the best wife. Too many men, in his view, object if women display any understanding of the classical languages or of books.

With his support for improvements to female education, Locke indirectly raised the prospect of modifying or eradicating the existing sexual hierarchy. If it were possible to reduce or eliminate differences between the male and female mind, it followed that women should be regarded as equals within marriage, and potentially, within the state. Locke issues a partial challenge to the sexual hierarchy in the first *Treatise*. The first *Treatise* offers a simultaneous challenge to the hierarchical organization of the state and the family, as Locke questions those who see the authority of the king within the state and the father within the family as absolute and divinely sanctioned, and rebellion against this authority as not only an act of insubordination, but also one of impiety. Locke denounces the patriarchal system as one of tyranny within the family and within the state, implying that both constitute a violation of “natural rights.” In the first treatise, he considers Eve to have been included in the grant of “*Dominion over the Creatures, or Property in them*” (1.29: 161). He asserts further that God blames Adam and Eve equally for succumbing to temptation, and that the ascendancy of Adam over Eve as a result of her role in temptation is only accidental, as opposed to a reflection of her natural inferiority. According to Locke, when God tells Eve that as result of her role in temptation, “*I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; In sorrow thou shalt bring forth Children, and thy desire shall be to thy Husband, and he shall rule over thee*” (1.47: 173), he is merely foretelling what would come to pass, in the same way that he foretells the ascendancy of the Younger over the Elder in the story of Esau and Jacob. Certainly, declares Locke, God never grants Adam “a Political Power of Life and Death over ... [Eve], much less over any body else (1.48: 174).

In the second *Treatise*, Locke invokes the notion of the social contract as the basis for

relationships between the sexes, proposing a shift from a patriarchal to a contractual form of marriage. “*Conjugal society*,” he writes, “is made by voluntary Compact between Man and Woman” (2.78: 319), the purpose of which is not only “procreation,” but also “mutual Support, and Assistance,” suggesting that a wife should be regarded as companion and advisor rather than servant to her husband. In his view, marriage “leaves the Wife in full and free possession of what by Contract is her peculiar Right, and gives the Husband no more power over her Life, than she has over his.” Locke asserts, further, that “the *Wife* has, in many cases, a Liberty to *separate* from him; where natural Right, or their Contract allows it, whether that Contract be made by themselves in the state of Nature, or by the Customs or Laws of the country they live in” (2.89: 325). He emphasizes the priority of looking after the children, without granting either parent automatic custody, arguing that the “the Children upon such Separation fall to the Father or Mother's Lot, as such Contract does determine.” He grants the parents of both sexes equal authority over their children and servants, if there are any, rebuking Filmer for ignoring the fact that both parents are mentioned in the Fifth Commandment. Addressing the argument that parental power comes from generation, he insists even it were true, “This would give the *Father* but a joynt Dominion with the Mother over them [the children]. For no body can deny but that the Woman hath an equal share, if not the greater, as nourishing the Child a long time in her own Body out of her own Substance” (1.55: 180).

At the same time, Locke's acceptance of some connection between substance and consciousness qualifies the most radical feminist implications of his theory of personal identity. In supporting women's claims to the faculties of reason and reflection, and in

emphasizing the influence of environment and experience, Locke's theory of personal identity invited the possible eradication of boundaries between male and female activity. By allowing some connection between consciousness and material substance, however, Locke indirectly admits some continuing basis for distinctions between the sexes, suggesting that differences in male and female biology might have an effect in shaping the consciousness of men and women in the course of experience, adapting them to perform specific roles in society.

While Locke never suggests that women have a consistently different understanding from men, his writings on education emphasize the importance of differences in their "natural constitution." Though he considers that the same general principles apply in the education of sons and daughters, Locke states in *Some Thoughts* that "the principal aim of my discourse is how a young gentleman should be brought up from his infancy; which in all things will not so perfectly suit the education of daughters," observing that "where the difference of sex requires different treatment, it will be no hard matter to distinguish" (6: 86). In order to prepare themselves for their reproductive role, he claims, women should avoid pondering too much "abstract and speculative truths, the principles and axioms of science," and concentrate on "points of practice."

Locke seems to consider that women's role in reproduction restricted their lives, both politically and economically. In the second *Treatise*, Locke assumes that with the exception of female rulers women will allow their husbands to regulate their affairs, and to make decisions on their behalf, renouncing their own opinions where there is disagreement. "The husband and wife," writes Locke,

though they have but one common concern, yet having different

understandings, will unavoidably sometimes have different wills too; it therefore being necessary that the last determination -- i.e. the rule -- should be placed somewhere, it naturally falls to the man's share, as the abler and stronger. (2.82: 339)

Locke thus leaves women at the mercy of their husbands in determining what fulfills their "common concern," though he calls for a restraint on the authority of the husband over the wife, denying him power to violate her "natural rights." He imagines no independent life for women: nothing beyond the role of wife and mother. Women have no prospect for citizenship, propertied or un-propertied. While allowing women the right to retain property brought with them into the marriage, he grants them no control at all over the income they or their husbands generate after the marriage.

Locke has received a certain amount of censure from feminist critics who have accused him of perpetuating biological, or socio-biological arguments for men's dominance over women in his suggestion that women's role in reproduction renders them economically dependent on men, and subject to male authority. The phrase "abler and stronger" has in itself generated a certain amount of controversy from those who claim this as evidence that Locke endorsed the Aristotelian view of women. In fairness, if Locke did assume that there were some natural differences between the sexes, and some natural basis for male dominance, he apparently considered such differences minimal or irrelevant, spending virtually no time discussing them. While he deems that in principle women owe their husbands obedience, he maintains that they should not mindlessly defer to them. Any decision to obey should be made consciously and rationally. He did not assert women's right to participate in political

life, and seemed to accept their exclusion from government as a matter of course. Yet he did not deny, as others had, that women could govern. Nor did he say anything actively to discourage women from asserting rights beyond the private sphere, leaving open the possibility for more radical challenges from those who came after him.

Moreover, if Locke failed to offer women options outside of marriage, he introduced new possibilities for fulfilment in the role of wife and mother. He expected that as wives and mothers, women would not only act as companions and advisors to their husbands, but also manage the household, raise and educate the children, at least during the earliest stages of development. To assume responsibility over education involved, to some extent, an usurpation of masculine prerogative, as women took over what had formerly been the job of male tutors. By granting women responsibility over education, Locke allowed them a potentially enormous amount of influence. As we have already noted, his theory of personal identity had accorded new significance to education in the moral and intellectual development of the individual. Essentially, Locke placed women in control of the formation and development of personal identity, which granted women a genuine source of authority.²³ He is not oblivious to the implications of this gesture. It was his contention that as the primary teachers during the first eight to ten years of life, women contributed directly to the improvement of society.

It was his acknowledgement of differences in the “natural constitution” of men and women that made Locke such an important figure for eighteenth-century women.²⁴ In locating identity in consciousness apart from substance, Locke achieved something crucial for women, establishing the foundation for early modern feminism by challenging the existence of

essential differences between the sexes. However, his special appeal lay in allowing women to claim common faculties of mind without forcing them to renounce the activities they had fulfilled as wives and mothers. Though the eighteenth century saw increasing challenges to social arrangements between the sexes, the prevailing assumption was still that men and women were divinely ordained and biologically fitted to fulfill different functions in society. Locke's theory of personal identity encouraged a challenge to the existing sexual hierarchy while still recognizing differences between men and women.

V.

From the very beginning, women took a direct interest in the debate over personal identity. Locke's earliest supporters included several women who publicly championed his theory of self-in-consciousness. Among them were Lady Damaris Cudworth Masham, the daughter of Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth and by all accounts one of the most brilliant women of her day, though her importance in eighteenth-century philosophy has been seriously underrated, as Patricia Springborg has established.²⁵ She published two anonymous defences of Locke: *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God* (1694) and *Occasional Thoughts in Reference to a Virtuous Christian Life* (1705), which were mistakenly assumed to be Locke's. Catherine Trotter Cockburn published *A Defence of Mr. Locke's "Essay of Human Understanding"* in 1702 in response to an anonymous attack against Locke written by Thomas Burnet, a student of Ralph Cudworth's.²⁶ So passionately attached was she to Locke's cause that in 1726, long after she had given up literary pursuits to raise her extended

family, she came out of retirement to produce *A Letter to Dr. Holdsworth, in Vindication of Mr. Locke*. Mary Astell and John Norris published a correspondence together under the title *Letters concerning the Love of God* (1694), where Astell began by defending Locke's theory of personal identity. Though she gradually acceded to Norris's view that Locke's theory of personal identity raised the alarming prospect of materialism, she continued to find aspects of it appealing.

Locke's early female defenders Lady Damaris and Cockburn both emphatically insist on the compatibility of the theory of self-in-consciousness with the tenets of Christianity. When her friend Norris charges Locke with materialism in *Cursory Reflections upon a Book Called, an Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *Letters Concerning the Love of God*, Lady Damaris counters in *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God* with an objection to Norris's distinction between material and immaterial sensations. *A Discourse* becomes, in turn, one of the targets of Astell's criticism in *The Christian Religion, as Professed by a Daughter of the Church of England* (1705), along with Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). By that point, Astell had come to share some of Norris's reservations concerning the possible foundation Locke provided for materialism, though she continued to find his philosophy appealing. Lady Damaris reiterates her arguments concerning the compatibility of Locke's *Essay* with Christian orthodoxy in *Occasional Thoughts*. Cockburn's *Defence* insists that Locke never denied either the existence or immortality of the soul, and that “there is nothing in his principles, which at all weakens the main proofs of a future state” (Atherton 129). In her opinion, “Mr. Locke’s principles give us a sure foundation for, both of natural and revealed religion” (Atherton 146).

A Letter to Dr. Holdsworth, in Vindication of Mr. Locke specifically refutes charges that Locke's theory of personal identity precludes the possibility of resurrection.

As a result of its influence on these early female philosophers, Locke's theory of personal identity seems to have played a seminal role in the emergence of early modern feminism.²⁷ It continued to influence the development of feminist thought throughout the eighteenth century.²⁸ As Sheryl O'Donnell discusses, “[i]n form and in content, Locke's empiricism appealed to Restoration and eighteenth-century women who struggled with problems of epistemology and personal identity” (154). In her article “Mr. Locke and the Ladies: The Indelible Words on the *Tabula Rasa*,” O'Donnell addresses the debt to Locke in the writing of Lady Mary Chudleigh, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Hannah More, as well as Lady Damaris and Cockburn, though other eighteenth-century feminists, such as Elizabeth Montagu, Hester Chapone, Catherine Macaulay, and Mary Wollstonecraft, were evidently also familiar with Locke's writings. As I seek to establish in the following chapters, Barbauld serves as an important case study because her writings explicitly illustrate the connection between the debate over personal identity, and eighteenth-century class and gender politics.

Early modern feminists, from conservative to radical, universally assume women's claim to the faculties of reason and reflection.²⁹ There were differing opinions about the extent of similarity between the male and female mind. Not all went as far as Mary Robinson in *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799), who answers the question “In what is woman inferior to man?” with the declaration “In some instances, not always, in corporeal strength: in activity of mind, she is his equal” (Vivien

Jones 239), though all agreed that there were at least some women who had proven themselves capable of the same intellectual achievement as men.³⁰ The doubts Locke raised concerning the nature of the connection between consciousness and substance had made it possible to argue that woman's lesser corporeal strength did not have necessarily have any impact on the formation of her mind. In *Some Reflections Upon Marriage* (1700) Astell discredits the argument that “[s]trength of mind goes along with strength of body” by pointing out that no one has managed to explain the “odd accident” that “the sturdiest porter is not the wisest man” (122).

It seems that all of the early modern feminists share Locke's position concerning the inadequacy of women's education. Cockburn writes that “[i]t is not to be doubted that women are as capable of penetrating into the grounds of things, and reasoning justly, as men are, who certainly have no advantage of us, but in their opportunities of knowledge” (Nussbaum 55).³¹ In her *Occasional Thoughts*, Lady Damaris charges that men keep women deliberately in ignorance in order to maintain them in subjection. Because of their own ignorance, men regard education in women as a threat, and deny them “the improvements of reason” (166). The author complains that women with only enough knowledge to read are considered overly learned, and generally ridiculed. In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), Astell asserts that “[w]ere ... Men as much neglected, and as little taken to cultivate and improve them, perhaps they wou'd be so far from surpassing those whom they now dispise, that they themselves wou'd sink into the greatest stupidity and brutality” (142). A little later she states that “[t]he Cause ... of the defects we labour under is, if not wholly, yet at least in the first place, to be ascribed to the mistakes of our Education” (143). She urges

women to “[e]xpel that cloud of ignorance which custom has involv’d us in, to furnish our minds with a stock of solid and useful knowledge” (152) rather than “froth and emptiness” (146). In the preface to *Some Reflections*, she repeats her complaints concerning the relative effort devoted to male and female education, echoing Lady Damaris's speculation that men have denied women opportunities for learning in order to maintain their advantage over them. The statements among later eighteenth-century feminists concerning the inadequacy of female education are too lengthy to catalogue. As Mitzi Myers observes,

[i]n the nineties ... female educators of every stripe -- from radicals like Catherine Macaulay Graham, Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, and Anne Frances Randall (who was probably Mary Robinson), to moderates like Clara Reeve, Maria Edgeworth, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Priscilla Wakefield, and Mary Ann Radcliffe, to religionists like Sarah Trimmer, More, and Jane West -- vigorously attacked the deficiencies of fashionable training and values. (“Reform” 201)

A number of early modern feminists appear to extend Lockean assumptions about the mind to arguments about the body and soul. Anti-feminist literature had asserted women's intellectual inferiority based on the perceived weakness of their bodies and souls. Lady Damaris, Cockburn, and Astell challenge assumptions concerning the inferiority of the female soul, insisting that differences in male and female spiritual development are as much a product of education as those in male and female intellectual development. They urge the cultivation of women's faculties of reason and reflection for the purpose of spiritual as well as intellectual development. In their view, women's possession of souls demands that they be given equal

opportunities to cultivate the faculty of reason. As Lady Damaris puts it in her *Occasional Thoughts*, “if Christianity be a religion from God, and women have souls to be saved as well as men; to know what this religion consists in, and to understand the grounds on which it is to be received, can be no more than necessary knowledge to a woman, as well as to a man.” It is her claim that knowledge will enable women to defend their religion “against the attacks of the cavilling wits of the age, or the abuses of the obtruders of vain opinions” (169). Early modern feminists thus countered persisting arguments concerning the inferiority of the female soul. They indirectly problematized arguments like those of Royalist clergyman Richard Allestree, who in the preface to his extremely popular *The Ladies Calling* (1673) acknowledges that women's souls are equal to men's while insisting “that in respect of their intellects they are below men” (Vivien Jones 22). Mary Wollstonecraft is clearly indebted to the arguments of earlier feminists in her confident assertion in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that “there is no sex in the mind or soul” (106).³² Interestingly, late eighteenth-century feminists like Wollstonecraft and Catherine Macaulay also frequently parallel the effects of the forced inactivity of the mind and the body, complaining that women's bodies, like their minds, had been systematically prevented from achieving their full growth and strength.

At least partly due to Locke's influence, society had reached a general consensus by the end of the eighteenth century that women should receive better education. Debate continued about what subjects exactly should be taught, domestic, academic, decorative and artistic. Not many agreed with Catherine Macaulay that girls and boys “be brought up together ... their sports and studies ... the same” (Vivien Jones 114). Nevertheless, Locke

helped to enable “the striking improvements in female education which took place in the eighteenth century, the purpose and result of which was to make them better and more companionate wives” (Stone 266). In his landmark social history of the eighteenth century, Lawrence Stone remarks that

[w]hen serious pressure for a better education for women began about 1675, it was led by a group of middle-class women, with a little male help from John Locke, William Law and Jonathan Swift addressing the gentry and from John Dunton and Daniel Defoe addressing the bourgeoisie. (344)

During the Restoration period, it was considered an extraordinary accomplishment when a woman of even the upper classes could read and write. By the end of the eighteenth century middle and upper class women were expected to possess some measure of learning, and literacy rates had improved considerably among women as well as men of the lower orders.³³ Despite continuing sources of concern, late-eighteenth-century feminists recognized that female education was much better than it had been. In her essay “On Dissipation”(1777), More observes that

[k]nowledge is not, as heretofore, confined to the dull cloyster, or the gloomy college, but disseminated, to a certain degree, among both sexes, and almost all ranks. The only misfortune is, that these opportunities do not seem to be so wisely improved, or turned to so good an account as might be wished. (6: 271)

In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft prefaces a lengthy condemnation of the inadequacy of female education with the admission that “[t]he education of women has, of late, been more

attended to than formerly”(10).

In his challenge to the existing sexual hierarchy, Locke again served as a role model for the early modern feminists. Astell attacks the hypocrisy of those who accept Locke's arguments in connection to the state, without extending them to the family, asking in *Some Reflections*,

[i]f absolute sovereignty be not necessary in a state, how comes it to be so in a family? Or if in a family, why not in a state? ... Is it not then partial in men to the last degree to contend for and practise that arbitrary dominion in their families which they abhor and exclaim against in the state? ... *If all Men are born free*, how is it that all Women are born slaves?³⁴

While denying that it is her intention “to stir up Sedition of any sort” (76), she wonders, “can it be thought that an ignorant weak Woman shou'd have patience to bear a continual Outrage and Insolence all the days of her Life?” (117).

A number of eighteenth-century feminists promoted models of the rational and companionate marriage. Though she remained stolidly anti-marriage throughout her life, Astell might occasionally encourage marriage based not on desire for money, for beauty, or for romantic love, all motives which she see saw as flawed, but on proven and “well-established affection.” Astell distrusts material and sexual motives, “governed [as they are] by irregular appetites,” and romantic motives, leading as they do to false expectations, and leaving women vulnerable to the possible deceptions of their suitors. There are points when she suggests that marriage should be founded upon reason and friendship rather than love, money or wit, such as in her remark that a “Woman of any tolerable Sense” refuses to engage

herself to a man who “doats on Face,” who “makes money his Idol” or “who is Charm'd with vain and empty Wit” (104). It is her view that a wife is entitled to a “certain Civility and Respect” (112) as much as a husband, according to the promise of their wedding vows. She champions improvements to female education partly on the Lockean grounds that formal schooling would make women better wives, by making them more interesting and companionable for men. Conservative and radical feminists of the late eighteenth century are much more explicit than Astell in their support for a rational and companionate conception of marriage. In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft advocates improvements to female education specifically in order to encourage women to become “affectionate wives and rational mothers” (7). More affirms her support of the contractual and companionate marriage in her comments on “the degraded state of women in the polite ages of Greece” in *Hints towards forming the Character of a Young Princess* (1805),

Condemned to ignorance, labour, and obscurity ... [women were] excluded from rational intercourse; debarred from every species of intellectual improvement or innocent enjoyment; they seem never to have been the objects of respect or esteem; in the conjugal relation, the servile agent, not the endeared companion. (106)

Locke seems to have had a significant impact in changing attitudes towards marriage. Alice Browne observes a trend emerging towards the end of the seventeenth century, when “many writers either questioned the natural basis of male dominance, or asserted it so violently that they obviously felt it was threatened” (87). According to Lawrence Stone, Locke was a seminal influence in undermining “the psychological, although not the legal

foundations of domestic patriarchy in England” (266), as his contractual interpretation of marriage gradually gained popular acceptance, and marriage was regarded increasingly as a relationship not of mastery and servitude, but of mutual respect, where a wife freely vowed obedience in exchange for assurances that her interests would be taken care of, and husband and wife treated each other as companions and equals. Stone claims that while legally women remained the property of men throughout the eighteenth century, and most of society still saw women in that light, there was a growing number of people who saw women as co-owners of marriage property, with an equal say in their “common interest” (238). Locke indirectly inspired the creation of certain legal safeguards for women, specifically to protect their property after marriage. If no actual changes were being made to legislation, new legal precedents were set as women were beginning to ask for special clauses in their marriage contracts, which would confer on them separate jurisdiction over children and servants.

There is admittedly still considerable debate on the nature of marriage in the eighteenth century. Amanda Vickery has accused Stone of presenting an overly optimistic picture of eighteenth-century marriage. In her view,

[t]he patriarchal and the companionate marriage were not successive stages in the development of the modern family ... rather these were, as Keith Wrightson has sensibly argued, 'poles of an enduring continuum in marital relations in a society which accepted both the primacy of male authority and the ideal of marriage as a practical and emotional partnership.' (86)

Yet Vickery acknowledges that women at least were increasingly motivated by a desire to avoid male authoritarianism and to gain companionship and affection.

There has also been considerable debate over whether the advent of the rational and companionate marriage constituted a real improvement for women in the eighteenth century. Surveying the research that has been done in this area, Caine writes that “arguably this change brought a transformation of the form of patriarchal authority without reducing its power” (19), though it seems somewhat perverse to suggest that a woman might prefer to be regarded as the property rather than the companion of her husband, for all the danger of internalizing patriarchal authority.

Though it is difficult to trace a causal link between the debate over personal identity and women's involvement in politics during the eighteenth century, it is worth noting that the latter seems indeed to have increased, as Linda Colley among others have effectively established.

All this having been said, Locke's special appeal for the early modern feminists seems to have been his simultaneously advocating spiritual and social equality while still acknowledging differences in the “natural constitution” of men and women. Though the early modern feminists sought recognition as equals in some of the same terms as men, they accepted that men and women were divinely ordained and biologically fitted to fulfill different functions in society, though they increasingly disputed the assumed inferiority of that function. Astell considers the sexes as “different in their equivalence” and therefore “in their appointed tasks.” Late eighteenth-century feminists continued to accept that there were different spheres of activity for men and women, though the boundaries were increasingly blurred. It was, of course, still possible to argue that individual differences outweighed the differences produced by male and female biology, or to minimize the differences, like

Wollstonecraft. Yet even Wollstonecraft acknowledges that women's "apparent inferiority with respect to bodily strength, must render them, in some degree, dependent on men in the various relations of life" (11). While she advocates that women be educated in order to be able to support themselves financially, listing a number of professional careers that might be appropriate for women, she underscores women's responsibilities as wives and mothers. In their social history of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall note that "[i]deas of a woman's place were underpinned by legal, political, and social practices which subordinated women. This was combined, however, with a recognition of their domestic worth in the family enterprise" (25). There were many who argued that the "spheres were not hierarchical; the contribution of women in the home and family was quite as vital as that of men and the world outside" (115).

Like Locke, the early modern feminists display a certain tension over the priority of female education. On the one hand, they want to promote women's claims to reason and reflection and to encourage the cultivation of the female intellect; on the other hand, they want to deter women from disclaiming their responsibilities as wives and mothers. For them, it appears, female education has two, not fully compatible aims. It serves, on the one hand, to cultivate the female intellect, and on the other hand, to enforce distinctions between the sexes. Accordingly, the first feminists seek to harmonize the cultivation of the female intellect with the discharge of domestic duties. This is evident in Astell's statement: "If any object against a Learned Education, that it will make Women vain and assuming, and instead of correcting and encrease their Pride: I grant that a smattering in Learning may, for it has that effect on Men" (167), leading her to argue that a learned education would actually encourage women

reiterates a version of exactly the same argument. It is her contention in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) that “the enlargement of the female understanding” is “the most likely means to put an end to those petty and absurd contentions for equality which female smatterers so anxiously maintain,” and that “[t]he more a woman's understanding is improved, the more obviously she will discern that there can be no happiness in any society where there is a perpetual struggle for power” (3: 195). As she stresses, the “women of real genius and extensive knowledge” of her own acquaintance were, “in general, eminent for economy, and the practice of domestic virtues.” They had “risen superior to the poor affectation of neglecting the duties and despising the knowledge of common life, with which literary women have been frequently, and not always unjustly, accused” (3: 191). Earlier in the same treatise, she admits that “[t]here have not been wanting ill-judging females ... who have acted as if knowledge were to confer on a woman a kind of fantastic sovereignty, which should exonerate her from the discharge of female duties; whereas it is only meant ... more eminently to qualify her for the performance of them” (3: 189). On these grounds, she maintains that the only “profession of ladies, to which the bent of *their* instruction should be turned” is “that of daughters, wives, and mistresses of families” (3: 69). For this reason, there is a recurring insistence on the maintenance of certain differences in male and female education. Throughout the eighteenth century, feminist writers routinely recommend subjects they consider will prepare women for the role of wife and mother, although each has different ideas about what these subjects are.

Fear of the erosion of boundaries between male and female spheres of activity led some moderate late eighteenth-century feminists to affirm the existence of essential

some moderate late eighteenth-century feminists to affirm the existence of essential differences between the male and female mind, threatening to contradict their claims elsewhere that women shared the same faculties of reason and reflection as men. In the *Strictures*, More offers the following summary of her observations on the differences between the male and female mind:

[I]f I may so speak of the different capacities of the sexes, one may venture, perhaps, to assert, that women have equal *parts*, but are inferior in *wholeness* of mind, in integral understanding that though a superior woman may possess single faculties in equal perfection, yet there is commonly a juster proportion in the mind of a superior man. (3: 202)

She goes on say that women have the same degree of “fancy” and “memory” but not the same “faculty of comparing, combining, analyzing, and separating which goes to the bottom of a subject; nor that power of arrangement which knows how to think a thousand connected ideas in one dependent train, without losing sight of the original idea.” Men, consequently, have a wide, and women a narrow but detailed grasp of the world around them. In her eagerness to uphold the existence of essential differences between the sexes, More sometimes verges dangerously toward contradicting women's claims to reason and reflection.

If the early modern feminists insisted that women were educable, and encouraged female readers to develop certain qualities that had traditionally been regarded as “masculine,” they did not want to become exactly like men. To do so would be to renounce not only what they had disparaged in women and in female experience, but also what they had cherished. It would be to assume that men were the standard of perfection in everything, and

that all activities that had been traditionally associated with women held no value. A potentially more satisfying solution was to rehabilitate the role of wife and mother, endeavouring to give it the same dignity as the labours of man. Wollstonecraft allows that “[w]omen ... may have different duties to fulfill,” but insists that “the principles that should regulate the discharge of them ... must be the same” (51). In her view, for women to acquit their responsibilities as wives and mothers, “the exercise of their understanding is necessary.” Similarly, More argues that “[s]he who has the best regulated mind, will, other things being equal, have the best regulated family” (190). In the course of the eighteenth century there was an increasing valorization of domestic employment by feminist writers. Early eighteenth-century feminist writers equate domestic employment with humiliating servitude -- the “meanest drudgeries” (Reynolds 153) in Chudleigh's words. The late-eighteenth-century radical feminist Mary Robinson regards the “*domestic and useful occupations*” as “the more humble paths of life” (Vivien Jones 242), suitable for women without the intellectual resources to achieve a rigorously academic education, but is strikingly tolerant by comparison. The conservative More claims that domestic economy is not “unworthy of the attention of an highly cultivated intellect,” pointing specifically to its call for “the exercise of a sound judgment exerted in the comprehensive outline of order, of arrangement, of distribution” (3: 189).

Early modern feminists were quick to affirm women's jurisdiction over education. Astell closely echoes Locke in her insistence that men, “if they rightly understand their own interest, have no reason to oppose the ingenious Education of the Women, since 'twou'd go a great way towards reclaiming ... [them].” She claims that particularly “great is the influence

we have over them in their Childhood, in which time if a Mother be discreet and knowing as well as devout, she has many opportunities of giving such a *Form* and *Season* to the tender Mind of the Child, as will shew its good effects thro' all the stages of his Life" (168). It is her view that women might achieve a widespread social regeneration by managing the education of their own children, or if they remained unmarried, by implementing her plan of a women's college by running a boarding school for the daughters of wealthy families. Aware that not everyone shared her own opinion, she adds, "If some refuse to allow women the possibility of doing good, they must at least allow that she might harm a child." In her proposal to found a religious college for women she suggests that its inhabitants be given the responsibility of instructing the children of "Persons of Quality" (165), and daughters of gentlemen "who are fallen into decay" (166). At the end of the eighteenth century, Wollstonecraft identifies "care of children in their infancy" as "one of the grand duties annexed to the female character by nature" (152). The most important role More grants to women is also in connection to education. As she writes in the *Strictures*:

[T]he great object to which *you*, who are or may be mothers, are more especially called, is the education of your children. If we are responsible for the use of influence in the case of our children we are responsible for the exercise of acknowledged *power*; a power wide in its extent, indefinite in its effects, *inestimable* in its importance. (3: 44)

She imagines mothers as responsible for the early education of both sons and daughters, and perhaps the entire education of daughters.³⁵ The role of women as teachers provided a specific reason to support their claims to better education. As part of her defence of female

education in the *Occasional Thoughts*, Lady Damaris emphasizes that it will make a woman “capable of instructing her children in the reasonableness of the Christian religion and of laying in them the foundations of a solid virtue” (169). Similar reasoning prompts Wollstonecraft to ask in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1788): Can ... [women] improve a child's understanding, when they are scarcely out of the state of childhood themselves?” (Vivien Jones 55). In the *Vindication*, she notes that “this duty would afford many forcible arguments for strengthening the female understanding, if it were properly considered.” “To be a good mother” insists Wollstonecraft, “a woman must have sense” (152).

For the early modern feminists, women had a special contribution to make to society through the prerogative of education, as valuable as the contribution of men. In different ways, radical and moderate eighteenth-century feminists attempted to expand the jurisdiction of the mother-teacher to society as a whole. From Wollstonecraft's point of view, women's role as wives and mothers sanctioned direct interference and participation in political discussion. From More's point of view, it granted them “influence,” which she claims “they can scarcely rate too highly,” since “the general state of civilized society depends in large measure on the prevailing sentiments and habits of women” (3: 14). Her particular desire was to see them using their influence in the realm of morality and religion, but she acknowledges their possible influence in the realm of politics also. More certainly seems to be invoking politics as much as religion and morality in her declaration:

In this moment of alarm and peril, I would call on them with a 'warning voice,' which should stir up every latent principle in their minds, and kindle every

slumbering energy in their hearts: I would call on them to come forward, and contribute their full and fair proportion towards the saving of their country.

(15)

VI.

Locke's theory of personal identity had, in addition, special implications for women writers. While not necessarily granting men and women identical functions in society, it certainly granted them recognition as intellectual equals. If women possessed the same faculties of reason and reflection as men, then it followed that they too might aspire to become writers. By invoking Locke's theory of personal identity, women might confute the claims of those who continued to maintain either that literary activity was "unnatural" for women, or that women were incapable of producing genuine literature. Indeed, there was nothing to suggest that women might not, as men did, aspire to the highest literary achievement. As such, eighteenth-century women achieved tacit support for their claims as writers.

This was extremely important, given the authority with which literature was increasingly invested in the course of the eighteenth century. The rise of middle class, and the growth in the size of the reading public assured writers opportunities for considerable influence over society. During the eighteenth century, literature provided a new means of raising women to a position of influence in society, and of transcending the general limitations of female existence. While women continued to lack political representation literature might

serve women as a means for exerting some influence in the realm of politics. It might offer women a means of becoming, with men, the “legislators of mankind,” to use the phrase of Samuel Johnson.³⁶

Admittedly, Locke's assumption that women were bound to the roles of wife and mother might seem to deter women from writing. There is obvious concern in the eighteenth century, not limited to anti-feminist literature, that women would sacrifice domestic to literary activity. In John Duncombe's *Feminead: or, Female Genius* (1751), a well-known poetic celebration of eighteenth-century women writers that defended women's capacity for genius, the author warns: “husbands often experience to their cost/ The prudent housewife in the scholar lost” (85-86), advising that women devote only that time to study which would otherwise be wasted in unproductive social activities.

Yet if Locke lent indirect weight to the view that women should put their domestic before their literary activities, he also allowed the possibility that women might rationalize their writing as an extension of their role as mother-teachers. It is clear that Locke saw literature as an important component of education. In his view, writers might assist in cultivating the faculties of reason and reflection, ordering the impressions from the external world, both by precept and example. In *Some Thoughts*, Locke specifically points to the role of literature as a component of education in his comment that “[i]nstructive histories provided parents with a wealth of examples” (169). The possibility that readers might model themselves after characters they read about gave writers an added responsibility. As the eighteenth century wore on, there was an increasing view that one was what one read. The importance of literature in this context was heightened by the still generally limited

opportunities for formal education. At a time when the majority of the population was still denied access to formal education, books could serve as at least a partial alternative. If a particular book reached a wide enough audience, it might exert considerable influence in the direction of moral and intellectual improvement, by presenting characters who were morally and intellectually inspiring.

Locke clearly assumed that literature would exert a particularly strong influence over children, since they had not yet formed many impressions of the external world. In *Some Thoughts*, he makes a number of recommendations concerning the reading appropriate to children at different ages. According to Samuel Pickering, it is because of Locke's influence that children's literature first emerged and developed as a recognized genre during the eighteenth century. Before then, children and adults read cheaply printed and circulated romances and folktales. The only literature directed specifically at children were Calvinist pamphlets urging their readers to sanctify themselves, either through exhortation, or catechism, or accounts of the pious lives and saintly deaths of children. Beginning around the middle of the eighteenth century, there was an outpouring of children's books. "In the last quarter of the eighteenth century," as Pickering notes, "the publication of children's books became a serious business -- serious not merely because it was profitable but because it was taken for granted that children's books ... could greatly influence 'the Minds of Children'" (170). The view increasingly took hold that children's books deserved careful perusal since their influence was so pervasive.

Women writers took an active part in meeting the demands of this new market. From the mid- to late-eighteenth century, a number of women writers made important contributions

to children's literature.³⁷ The list includes Sarah Fielding, Mary Collyer, Sarah Trimmer, Eleanor Fenn, Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner, Anna Barbauld, Hannah More, Priscilla Wakefield, Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Catherine Ann Dorset, Maria Edgeworth, and Mary Martha Sherner. As Mitzi Myers discusses in her survey of eighteenth-century children's literature, women writers of the period deliberately sought to displace "male instructors with maternal guides" (35), often celebrating the activities of the mother-teacher in their narratives.

There is evidence of eighteenth-century women writers extending their jurisdiction as mother-teachers into other genres as well. In her discussion of eighteenth-century women novelists, Eleanor Ty identifies two main strategies used to justify their writing: invocation of maternal or what she perceives as "a kind of female aesthetics" (xi). According to Carol Shiner Wilson, eighteenth-century women writers, whether conservative or radical, shared a sense of "maternal mission" that allowed them to aspire beyond the domestic sphere ("Lost Needles"). The blurred boundary between the public and private spheres in the eighteenth century meant that women writers might legitimately claim the task of shaping the thoughts and manners of future generations based on their prerogative as mother-teachers. Women writers might aspire to almost anything, so long as motive was didactic, securing their position as "legislators of mankind" without violating the "natural" and Providential order.

In the course of the eighteenth century it seems that women writers increasingly promoted the cultural value of literature to instruct. During the Restoration and early eighteenth century, writers such as Aphra Behn and Delarivière Manley never pretend to any other purpose for their writing than entertainment or pleasure, even though their writings are

not entirely devoid of moral intent. Their contemporary Penelope Aubin writes intentionally inspiring life-and-adventure narratives that celebrate the triumph of virtue under adversity, but she sees herself as opposing the common tendency to write “more modishly” and “less like a Christian,” as she puts it in her novel *Charlotta du Pont* (1723), taking the opportunity to rebuke other female authors of the day. Elizabeth Rowe offers another early example of a woman writer who writes didactically, but later admirers such as Samuel Johnson and Isaac Watts regard her as an exception. Eliza Haywood, whose literary career extends from the early to the mid eighteenth century, effectively illustrates the increasing emphasis on the instructive value of literature. During the early phase of her literary career, Haywood's writings were routinely associated with Manley's. The author defends herself in the preface of *Lassalia; or the Self-abandoned. A Novel* (1724) from accusations that her intention is to “divert” rather than to “*improve* the Minds of ... Readers” (154) with the claim that she is offering her heroine's story as an example of what to avoid. When Haywood returns to fiction in the 1750s with *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1752) it is as a self-consciously didactic writer. She aligns herself explicitly with Fielding and Collyer, whose reputations as didactic writers were by this point well established. From the mid to late eighteenth century, the didactic tendency of women writers becomes increasingly pronounced. There is a decreasing tolerance in the course of the eighteenth century for other women whose writings lack a didactic purpose. The anonymous Philomela who composes the “Preface to the Reader” for Rowe's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1696) is prepared to forgive earlier women writers of dubious morality. She compares them to fallen angels, expressing the hope that her friend's “purity,” “virtue,” and

“piety” will redeem them. She still considers that they ought to be remembered for forcing men to “do Homage to our *Wit*, as well as our *Beauty*” (Vivien Jones 145). At the end of the next century, Clara Reeve in *The Progress of Romance* (1785) laments that there ever existed such women writers as Behn and Manley.

In developing my own position, I have taken into account arguments that Locke actually undermined the early modern feminist movement. According to Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, Locke laid the foundation for a new-style patriarchy in many ways more insidious, if less heavy-handed, than the form of patriarchy it replaced.³⁸ He enabled a shift from a form of patriarchy that emphasized paternal prerogative, hierarchy and the exercise of force, to one that appealed to reason, co-operation between the sexes and the non-coercive exercise of authority – which Kowaleski-Wallace relates to a shift in economic power from the aristocracy to the middle-class, and the construction of a domestic ideology that deceived women into embracing their own oppression. Certainly, I would not deny Locke's contribution towards the construction of a domestic ideology, which might be potentially limiting, as evidenced in the Victorian stereotype of the Angel in the House. Yet I would maintain that the valorization of the role of the wife and mother during the eighteenth century was not necessarily limiting. In the reactionary climate of the early nineteenth century, the authority that women obtained for themselves during the eighteenth century by invoking the role of the wife and mother seems to have been restricted. Though ultimately it was narrowed and limiting, the ideal of the rational wife and mother held initially attractive possibilities for women. In the process of the consolidation of this bourgeois ideal of womanhood, there were genuine opportunities for female fulfilment. By the end of the

nineteenth century, domestic ideology was again feeding into feminist ideology, as women were urged to leave the home and enter the community as an active social and spiritual force, and women writers were urged to exploit their power to regenerate the world. My own research has confirmed for me that ideology is never monolithic, nor monolithically interpreted. Eighteenth-century women were never simply mindless adherents to hegemonic constructions of femininity, brainwashed into complicity by their (only superficially) benevolent male oppressors. They consistently found opportunity for resistance, some of them aided by male supporters. Living during a period of transition in the history of subjectivity, women chose from available theories of personal identity one which offered them the possibility of overcoming at least some of the obstacles which prevented them from finding fulfilment.

Chapter 2

Barbault and the Essence of Identity

Despite her obvious knowledge of the debate over personal identity and interest in it, Barbauld never plainly articulates where she stands on this subject. In the letter cited in chapter one, in which she canvasses her brother and sister-in-law for their opinion regarding the relationship between identity and consciousness, she is teasingly ambiguous about what position she took up in the debate with her husband, though she hints that the discussion was lively. There are no other surviving references in her correspondence to the debate, or any information about how it was resolved by either the Barbaulds or the Aikins.¹ Indeed, there are no references to the terms consciousness or substance anywhere else in her surviving letters. Though her letters and writings attest to a wide philosophical reading, Barbauld is invariably cautious in her commentary on philosophical matters. Where she does venture opinions of criticism or commendation she very often fails to identify the texts, and sometimes even the philosophers, under discussion.

Yet careful examination of Barbauld's writings yields important evidence concerning her engagement in contemporary debate over personal identity. Her early poetry demonstrates a clear endorsement of the orthodox Christian view of the self, while also revealing an affinity with Locke's line of thought in the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity." Barbauld would almost certainly have read the chapter, either under the tuition of her father or on her own, during the course of her adolescence. By the time she writes "Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, and on Sects and Establishments": the prefatory essay to her collection of poems, the *Devotional Pieces, compiled from the Psalms and the Book of Job* (1775), the influence of Locke's theory of personal identity is definitely apparent. The debate with her husband over "whether continued consciousness [is] the essence of identity," presumably carried on with her brother and sister-in-law during the early 1790s, seems to have

consolidated her support for Locke's theory of personal identity. This appears most evident in *Evenings at Home; or, the Juvenile Budget Opened* (1793-95), an anthology of stories and dialogues for children written in collaboration with her brother. However, it also remains clear that at no point does Barbauld renounce her belief in the essential truth of the orthodox Christian conception of the self. It appears that Barbauld regards Locke's theory of self-consciousness not as superseding the theory of self-as-substance, but as functioning in conjunction with it. Barbauld's late poems conclusively demonstrate her simultaneous endorsement of Locke's theory of personal identity and the orthodox Christian conception of the self.

I.

Perhaps most effectively illustrating Barbauld's adherence to the orthodox Christian conception is her early poem "Address to the Deity" (1767; 1772). The poem recognizes an implicit link between identity and immaterial substance, as the speaker registers the changes that take place in the self over time through a series of references to the soul or spirit (both words used to describe immaterial substance). In line 12, the speaker acknowledges "an awful stillness thro' my soul;" line 16 describes her "hush'd spirit find[ing] a sudden peace;" in line 51, her "steady soul" perceives the goodness of God; and finally, in line 67, "hopes ... animate ... [her] drooping soul." The speaker recognizes herself as a union of material and immaterial substance in her exclamation, immediately after her initial achievement of peace,

But soon, alas! This holy calm is broke;

My soul submits to wear her wonted yoke;
 With shackled pinions strives to soar in vain,
 And mingles with the dross of earth again. (21-24)

Consumed with a familiar Christian longing for the soul's escape from the weakness of flesh, the speaker takes comfort that "our gracious master, kind, as just,/ Knowing our frame, remembers man is dust" (25-26).

The same orthodox Christian conception of the self clearly underlies her hymns. "Hymn I" specifically invokes the notion of man as a vital union between the body and the soul in the reference to "Th' eternal fire that feeds each vital flame" (51), while "Hymn II" assumes man's unified physical and spiritual aspects in the poet's expressions of gratitude to God from both the body and the soul, as she promises that "praise [shall] our tongues employ" (4), and her "soul shall raise/ Grateful vows and solemn praise" (19-20).² "Hymn V" picks up the notion of conflict between spirit and flesh, as the poet admonishes her soul to protect itself against "the powers of earth," as well as against the "powers of hell"(22). A later hymn, "Hymn VI"(1778?; 1792) articulates a similar desire that the soul be "[r]efine[d] from earth" (8), while a still later hymn, "Hymn [IX]" (n.d.; 1802) imagines temporary harmony of flesh and spirit through the agency of music.

Yet Barbauld's early religious poetry also indicates an agreement with the underlying premises of Locke's Chapter "Of Identity and Diversity." The starting point for Locke's theory of personal identity is his insistence on the limits of human knowledge. It is Locke's sense of the limits of human knowledge, and more specifically, of the limits of human knowledge of substance, material and immaterial, that stimulates his efforts to shift the

foundation of identity from substance to consciousness. While Locke never denies the existence of substance, he insists that it is beyond the scope of human knowledge to determine, and as such, an inadequate basis for a theory of personal identity. This leads him to posit an alternative theory of personal identity, which locates identity in what is knowable, that is, in consciousness. Only consciousness, he argues, is capable of assuring the continuity of the self.

Barbauld's poem "A Summer Evening's Meditation" (n.d.; 1772) at once affirms the orthodox Christian conception of the self, and insists upon humanity's restricted knowledge of both material and immaterial substance. Contemplating the night sky, "[o]ne boundless blaze; ten thousand trembling fires" (27), the speaker wonders at the mysteries of the physical universe, demanding, "From what pure wells/ Of milky light, what soft o'erflowing urn,/ Are all these lamps so fill'd?" (35-37). She sees in nature evidence of God's existence,

... he whose hand

With hieroglyphics elder than the Nile,
 Inscrib'd the mystic tablet; hung on high
 To public gaze, and said, adore, O man!
 The finger of thy God! (31-34)

As a number of critics have already pointed out, these lines allude to the notion of the Book of Nature or Book of Creatures, which Barbauld also invokes in lines 57-62 of "An Address to the Deity." During the Middle Ages and Renaissance there emerged a view that creation was a book from which it was possible to know God, the analogy of book emphasizing a parallel between nature and the Bible as the two main sources of our knowledge of God. Yet

despite yielding evidence of the existence of God, the physical universe remains profoundly mysterious to the poet. Her contemplation of the night sky culminates in an epiphanic recognition of the enigmatic nature of her soul. “At this still hour,” she relates,

the self-collected soul

Turns inward, and beholds a stranger there
Of high descent, and more than mortal rank;
An embryo GOD; a spark of fire divine. (53-56)

This passage on its own convincingly attests to Barbauld's debt to Locke's theory of personal identity. The notion of a “self-collected soul” violates the traditional Christian view of the self in imagining that the soul could divide against itself. More specifically, it is anti-Cartesian in denying the transparency of the soul to itself. At the same time, the poet expresses a Lockean skepticism in challenging our knowledge of the soul's nature without questioning the soul's divine source. While the soul connects the speaker to God and assures her of immortality, it remains for her fundamentally undeterminable — a mystery. Consciousness appears, paradoxically, both connected to and separated from immaterial substance.³

The enigmatic nature of the soul has an estranging effect upon the speaker. As the poem continues, she strives for some kind of revelation that will help her transcend her state of limited knowledge, but finds this difficult. She considers her future state uncertain.

Directly addressing the heavens, she cries,

Ye citadels of light, and seats of GODS!
Perhaps my future home, from whence the soul
Revolving periods past, may oft look back

With recollected tenderness ... (61-64)

The exact source of the poet's uncertainty is unclear. She may simply be cautious not to assume that she has earned her place in heaven, although the generic reference to "the soul" proclaims a general uncertainty about the fate of the soul after death. Such a reading is supported by a line in another early poem "The Invitation: To Miss B*****"(1762? or post-1766?; 1772), where the poet asserts that the task of a great religious preacher is to "launch our souls into the bright unknown" (182). Faith enables the speaker of "A Summer Evening's Meditation," momentarily, at least, to glimpse a vision beyond the normal scope of human perception, as she witnesses, in her mind's eye, "[t]he desarts of creation, wide and wild;/ Where embryo systems and unkindled suns/ Sleep in the womb of chaos" (95-97). The effort proves too much, however, and in the final lines the poet renounces her efforts to penetrate the mysteries of the universe. "Let me here," she declares,

[c]ontent and grateful, wait th'appointed time
 And ripen for the skies: the hour will come
 When all these splendours bursting on my sight
 Shall stand unveil'd, and to my ravish'd sense
 Unlock the glories of the world unknown. (119-22)

In book four of the *Essay*, Locke himself identifies the revelations of the Bible and nature as the two main sources of evidence available to us in religion, placing the greatest emphasis upon nature.⁴ In section 4.10.1: 619, he indirectly invokes the notion of creation as a book:

Though God has given us no innate ideas of himself, though he has stamped

no original characters on our minds, wherein we may read his being, yet having furnished us with those faculties our minds are endowed with, he hath not left himself without witness; since we have sense, perception, and reason, and cannot want a clear proof of him, as long as we carry ourselves about us.

In his view, nature clearly attests to the existence of “*an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being*” (4.10.5: 620) who created it. Though we have compelling evidence for the existence of God, however, we have no idea of his nature, or, for that matter, of our own natures. We have no idea if we are – as the orthodox Christian asserts – a vital union of matter and spirit: material and immaterial substance. Since “the Mind ... perceives nothing but its own *Ideas* ... we are not capable of a philosophical *Knowledge* of the Bodies that are about us.” We must therefore conclude that “to a perfect *Science* of natural Bodies, (not to mention spiritual Beings) ... it [is] lost labour to seek after it” (4.3.29: 560). All that we really know about ourselves is consciousness: the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions which provide us with a sense of continuity over time. We will not know anything beyond that until we die. Throughout the *Essay*, Locke routinely appeals to heaven to sort out the metaphysical problems he raises. He also makes a careful distinction between knowledge and assent (that is, between seeing a proposition to be true, and taking it to be true). According to him, faith is essentially a species of assent, and we must accept most tenets of Christianity as a matter of faith. He is careful to emphasize that faith should not be at odds with reason, urging his readers to exploit the faculties of reason and reflection in order to direct faith, rather than allowing themselves to be carried away by enthusiasm. As he argues, it is up to us to examine the grounds of probability for a proposition, by establishing and appraising the

evidence that is available to us, and to adopt a degree of assurance in proportion to the established and appraised evidence (4.15).

Barbauld's "Thoughts on the Devotional Taste" appears equally in line with Locke's own position in the *Essay*.⁵ "Thoughts on the Devotional Taste" locates itself explicitly within a tradition of rational piety, beginning with its warning that the "religious affections" are apt to run into "strange excesses," which are particularly dangerous "if directed by a melancholy or enthusiastic faith" (2: 233). It is Barbauld's view that faith should be governed by reason, and she accepts that "[f]ree inquiry is undoubtedly necessary to establish a rational belief" (2: 235). Yet she is also careful to warn that "a disputatious spirit, and a fondness for controversy, give the mind a sceptical turn, with an aptness to call in question the most established truths." In her opinion, those who dispute upon religious subjects are simply perpetuating unresolvable controversies, which far from bringing them any closer to the truth, cause them to doubt "established truths," which they should accept on faith.⁶

Barbauld's discouragement of disputation upon metaphysical matters sets her apart, to some extent, from fellow Dissenters such as Priestley, as he was quick to note in a letter he wrote to her from Calne on December 20, 1775.⁷ Soon after the *Devotional Pieces* appeared, Barbauld had canvassed her friend for his opinion of her essay. Responding with typical candour, Priestley declares: "I am sorry to say ... [my ideas on devotion are] in almost every respect the very reverse of those in your essay. And really, Mrs. Barbauld, all my more serious and judicious acquaintances, who are among your best friends, are, without exception, of the same opinion" (279-80). One of the particular objections Priestley raises to the essay is Barbauld's caution against disputation upon religious subjects. Though accepting that there

are many parts of the providential plan that are mysterious, Priestley places considerably more confidence than Barbauld or Locke in the capacity of reason to resolve the metaphysical mysteries of the universe. His confidence leads him in his *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777) to take Locke to task for not carrying some of his ideas far enough in his discussion of the nature of the self. According to Priestley, the impetus of the *Disquisitions* comes directly from Locke's suggestion that for all we know, we might all simply be one substance with thought superadded (4.3.6), and not a vital union of material and immaterial substance. Priestley criticizes Locke for not exploring this idea further. It is his argument that matter and spirit are not two separate substances, but one substance. In his view, the self is constituted by consciousness, superadded to a single substance. This misses Locke's point. Locke's position is not an endorsement of materialism, but simply a caution that we should not rule out different explanations of the nature of substance, given how little we know. Locke had no real interest in developing these different explanations into a comprehensive theory of metaphysics.⁸

Whether it was Barbauld's deliberate intention or not, her essay challenges her friend's attempts to resolve metaphysical matters such as the nature of the substance. It is quite possible that in her caution against "disputation upon religious subjects" in her essay Barbauld did have Priestley specifically in mind. By 1775, Priestley had already been frequently embroiled in religious controversy. He had also set out the basis of his metaphysics in his republication of David Hartley's *Observations of Man*, in the preface of which "he drops the suggestion ... that he is 'inclined to think' that man does not consist of two things so entirely different as matter and spirit" (Holt 112). In his letter to Barbauld from December of 1775,

Priestley seems to take her comments regarding “disputation upon religious subjects” personally. Almost immediately, he identifies himself as one “whose religious sentiments have undergone what you call (p. 9) ‘a total revolution’” -- an allusion to Barbauld's comment that a man who “undergoes a total revolution” in his religious system cannot often “recover ... [the] original tone and vigour” of “his religious feelings.” He makes an attempt to turn the tables on Barbauld by accusing *her* of “a total revolution” in her ideas with respect to devotion. Later on in the same letter, he cites himself as evidence to refute Barbauld's claim that “disputation upon religious subjects is prejudicial to the feelings of a devout heart.” After invoking the example “our Saviour,” “St. Paul,” “the primitive Christians,” “the first reformers,” and “the Puritans,” he writes that “my own acquaintance,” and, “My own evidence, if that might be allowed to have any weight, (and few persons now living have had more to do with religious controversy than myself,) would [also] decide clearly against you” (284).

Barbauld's disagreement with Priestley later invited criticism from those sympathetic to him. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Canon Alfred Ainger accuses Barbauld of embracing an “idolatry of commonsense” (381) -- an evaluation which is neither fair nor accurate. While one might argue that Barbauld is commonsensical in her assessment of the extent of human knowledge, her insistence on the limits of human knowledge serves to encourage whimsical speculation on metaphysical subjects. Like Locke, Barbauld feels free to entertain different metaphysical theories -- simply not to make pronouncements.⁹ She and her brother share a special interest in theories of life after death, which contributes to some of her most playful and engaging verse.

Perhaps the best example is “The Mouse’s Petition” (1771; 1772), written during a visit to the Priestleys at Leeds, where Joseph was conducting what would become his famous experiments on gases. A footnote informs the reader that the poem was discovered “[f]ound in the trap where ... [a mouse] had been confined all night by Dr. Priestley, for the sake of making experiments with different kinds of air” (36). Adopting the perspective of the mouse, the poet advances a strategic argument for the mouse’s release on the basis of two possible scenarios of life after death, the first in accordance with the Eastern (and Pythagorean) doctrine of transmigration, and the second in accordance with the position of the established church. “If mind [is],” the mouse declares,

... as ancient sages taught,
 A never-dying flame,
 Still shifts through matter’s varying forms
 In every form the same;

Beware, lest in the worm you crush
 A brother’s soul you find;
 And tremble lest thy luckless hand
 Dislodge a kindred mind.

Or, if this transient gleam of day
 Be *all* the life you find;
 Let pity plead within thy breast

That little *all* to spare. (29-40)

In other words, if the soul passes into a new body, to kill any fellow creature may be to kill “a kindred mind,” and if the soul only inhabits one body, to kill a fellow creature is to destroy its one opportunity for life.

A couple of decades later, John Aikin takes up the doctrine of transmigration in his story “The Transmigration of Indur,” featured in *Evenings at Home*. “The Transmigration of Indur” is based, according to the author, on an ancient Brahmin text. This piece recounts the story of a man named Indur, renowned both for his altruism and his interest in animals, who saves a monkey from being poisoned by a snake, only to succumb to the poison himself. As it turns out, the monkey is actually a fairy named Perizinda, who offers to grant him any wish concerning his future state. Without a moment's hesitation, Indur makes the following request:

in all my transmigrations may I return a rational soul, with the memory of the adventures I have gone through; and when death sets me free from one body, may I instantly animate another in the prime of its power and faculties, without passing through the helpless state of infancy. (106)

After experiencing life as an antelope, goose, dormouse, elephant, whale, bee, rabbit, and mastiff, in the last instance again sacrificing his life for another, Indur comes full circle. He awakes, as if from a trance, to discover himself once more in human form. Having renewed “his innocent life” (116) as a Brahmin, he composes an account of his transmigration to pass down to posterity.

Indirectly, Barbauld and Aikin's interest in transmigration provides evidence of an

ongoing preoccupation with the question of personal identity. In the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” Locke exploits transmigration as the basis for a number of puzzle cases he uses to clarify the distinction between personal identity and the identity of man. The first occurs in section 14, after he claims to have met a man who was persuaded that “his had been the Soul of *Socrates*,” adding “how reasonably I will not dispute. This I know, that in the Post he fill'd, which was no inconsiderable one, he passed for a very rational Man.” The memory of this acquaintance leads him to ponder the case of someone who believes that he has “the same Soul” as “*Nestor* or *Thersites*, at the Siege of *Troy*.” Locke asks how a man who has “no consciousness of any of the Actions either of *Nestor* or *Thersites* ... can ... conceive himself the same Person with either of them ... be concerned in either of their Actions ... [or] [a]ttribute them to himself?” (2.27.14: 339). A section later, Locke again takes up the doctrine of transmigration to illustrate the distinction between a person and a man, wondering,

should the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, enter and inform the body of a cobbler, as soon as deserted by his own soul, everyone sees he would be the same *person* with the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions; but who would say it was the same *man*? (2.27.15: 340)

Clearly, once the prince's soul enters the body of the cobbler, he ceases to be the same man, since his immaterial spirit is no longer joined to the same body, but he remains the same person, since he retains the same consciousness. It is tempting to read Barbauld and Aikin's literary treatments of transmigration as part of their mutual engagement with Locke's theory

of personal identity. Together, “The Mouse's Petition” and “The Transmigrations of Indur” correspond to the two main scenarios of transmigration Locke discusses in “Of Identity and Diversity.” “The Mouse's Petition” presents a scenario of transmigration in which the soul is distinct from consciousness, and identity of man and person are separate, while “The Transmigrations of Indur” presents a scenario of transmigration in which the soul and consciousness correspond, and the identity of the man and person are the same. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, Oriental tales had been invoked in the debate over personal identity. *The Spectator*, no. 578, recounts the story of King Fadlallah and the dervish who possesses the “Power of reanimating a dead Body, by flinging ... [his] own into it” (104), expressly to illustrate the application of Locke's theory of personal identity.

It is possible that “The Mouse's Petition” and “The Transmigration of Indur” reflect Barbauld and Aikin's efforts to work through the complexities of the debate over personal identity. Barbauld, at least, retained her interest in transmigration until the end of her life. After dining on turkey at Stoke Newington, 1815, she writes: “I cannot tell where the spirit [of the turkey] went; but I hope it is animating some other vehicle, and rising by degrees in the scale of existence, till perhaps it may come at length (who knows) to eat turkeys itself” (99). Barbauld also wrote a late essay, *On Being Born Again*, which was printed for the American Unitarian Association in 1830, in which she invokes the analogy of transmigration to describe the experience of full embracing Christianity. “Epitaph on a Goldfinch,” one of her pieces in *A Legacy for Young Ladies consisting of Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse* (1825), of uncertain date of composition, expresses a variation of the same thought as “The Mouse's Petition,” where the author hopes that “the gentle shade of this unfortunate

captive, the natural though uncertain hope of animating some happier form” (105).

Significantly, *Evenings at Home* contains two dialogues that touch explicitly on the philosophical problems of identity and individuation. “A Lesson in the Art of Distinguishing” and “On Man” form two consecutive parts of an ongoing dialogue between a young boy, Charles, and his father.¹⁰ Lucy Aikin attributes “The Art of Distinguishing” to her aunt, and “On Man” to her father, suggesting that these two pieces are perhaps products of Barbauld and Aikin’s own debate on the subject of personal identity.¹¹

In “A Lesson in the Art of Distinguishing,” Charles learns from his father the meaning of what Locke would call the principle of individuation, which the author refers to more simply as the principle of sameness and difference, that is, what identifies something as the member of a particular species, and what distinguishes it from all other members of that species. His father explains that there are two main classes of things that exist in creation: living or animate creatures, including animals and man, and inanimate creatures, including plants, stones, and metals. There are numerous species that fall into each of these categories. Together, father and son explore some of the different means of identifying members of the same species. Charles’ father cites Plato’s definition of man as “a two-legged animal without feathers” (140) to illustrate the difficulty of identifying accurate distinguishing features. After some consideration, father and son eventually arrive at a definition for a horse: “an animal of the *quadruped* kind, whole-hoofed, with short erect ears, a flowing mane, and a tail covered in every part with long hairs” (143).

“On Man” follows up the discussion of “A Lesson in the Art of Distinguishing” with a specific inquiry into what constitutes man. When Charles asks his father for a definition of

man, his father encourages him to try to apply the same procedures they had used earlier to define a horse. It is Charles's conclusion, "I suppose then we must call him a digitated quadruped, that generally goes upon its hind legs." His father notes that this definition would please a naturalist well, but if we accept it, he says, we must rank man in the same category as "apes, macocos, and bats." This observation alarms Charles, who makes it clear that such a categorization fails to meet his conception of the dignity of man. His father agrees that man needs to be distinguished further, and proposes that they appeal "to the other part of human nature -- the *mind*." "Man," he observes, "is an animal possessed of *reason*, and the only one. This, therefore, is enough to define him" (184). If it is enough to define animals in terms of material substance, he suggests, it is not enough to define man. Indirectly, he points to the source of Plato's difficulty, in his definition of man as "a two-legged animal without feathers." Charles himself identifies a limitation with his father's new definition, pointing out that animals often demonstrate reason in a limited form. A dog that comes upon a deserted hut in the jungle might, like a man, expect to find people nearby, based on its contact with other forms of human habitation. Charles' father acknowledges that this is true. He admits that it is more accurate to state that animals are *primarily* ruled by instinct rather than reason, while man is *primarily* ruled by reason. Reason grants man certain special faculties. While animals have some methods of communication, for instance, they "cannot *discourse*, or communicate ideas stored up in memory," and they cannot make instruments. Man is unique as "an *improvable* being, the wisdom and experience acquired by one individual being thus transmitted to others, and so on in an endless series of progression." Charles' father quotes approvingly the Shakespearean definition of man as "a creature 'made with large discourse,

looking before and after” (185).

In many points, this definition of man reflects Locke's discussion of identity in his chapter “Of Identity and Diversity.” Like Locke, the authors dismiss material substance as an inadequate basis for defining man, and like him also, avoid the traditional theological definition of man as a union between body and soul. The emphasis on reason is not uniquely Lockean, reason having been invoked as man's distinguishing characteristic at least since Aristotle, though the description of reason as “the faculty by which we compare ideas, and draw conclusions” (184) closely echoes Locke's own definition of reason in the *Essay* as “the faculty of deducing unknown principles or propositions that are already known” (1.2.9: 51-52). While the authors make no direct allusion to the term *consciousness*, their delineation of man as a rational being with a capacity to stretch the mind backwards into the past and forwards into the future, enabling him the possibility of progress, both as an individual, and as a species, strikingly resembles Locke's definition of a person as “a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.” The connection between identity and moral responsibility emerges indirectly in “On Man” in the allusion of Charles' father to “a future state” (186).

For all this, “On Man” is careful to affirm a continuing belief in the orthodox Christian conception of the self. The discussion concludes with an explicit reminder of man's connection to immaterial substance. In the final section of the dialogue, Charles ponders his father's remark that man is “an *improvable* being,” noting that “many nations have been a long time in a savage state without improvement.” His father clarifies himself with the statement that “[m]an is always *capable of improvement*; but he may exist a long time, in

society, without *actually improving* beyond a certain point.” In their “superior ardour after knowledge,” Europeans “may be said to be *most man*.” They “may apply to themselves the poet’s boast: -- “Man is the nobler growth these realms supply,/ And souls are ripened in our northern sky” (187). This substitution of the term soul for man in the last line of “On Man” suggests a clear association of identity with the soul. The poet of the unidentified couplet in this passage is, significantly enough, Barbauld herself. The couplet is taken from lines 153-54 of her poem “The Invitation: To Miss B *****” (n.d.; 1772), which she composed in tribute to the Warrington Academy as “[t]he nursery of men for future years” (82). Throughout “The Invitation: To Miss B *****,” the poet refers to the soul in a sense that clearly implies her belief in the orthodox Christian conception of the self. This appears, most strikingly, in the lines describing the physician’s capacity to “call back the flitting soul, and still the throbs of pain” (165). The physician’s simultaneous treatment of the body and soul unmistakably registers the notion of a vital union between material and immaterial substance. Locke’s theory of personal identity appears not to have deterred Barbauld from thinking about the self in terms of substance. With Locke, she accepts the premise that substance, material and immaterial, is unknown, and that the most reliable foundation for a theory of personal identity is consciousness. She also accepts, as a matter of course, that the self is a vital union between the body and the soul. The fact that the nature of the body and soul is unknown is not reason, in her mind, to doubt their existence.

That Barbauld, in later life, had fully reconciled Locke’s theory of personal identity with the orthodox Christian view of the self appears clearly in her poem “Life” (c. 1812; 1825). She prefaces “Life” with a Latin motto, which William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft

identify as a line from a poem popular during the eighteenth century, “long attributed to the dying emperor Hadrian (A. D. 76-138).” They note Pope's two adaptations of the poem, “‘The Heathen to his Soul,’ in which the dying heathen does not know what will become of his soul, and ‘The Dying Christian to his Soul,’ in which the Christian welcomes death as his soul's entrance into heaven.” The motto, “*Animula, vagula, blandula,*” Pope translates as “Ah fleeting Spirit! wand'ring fire.” By prefacing “Life” with this motto, Barbauld immediately raises Locke's distinction between knowledge and faith. The emperor Hadrian, famed for his learning and accomplishment, represents both the pinnacle and the limits of human knowledge, in contrast to the Christian, who represents knowledge illuminated by faith. In aligning herself with the heathen who does not know what will become of his soul, Barbauld emphasizes her reluctance, in spite of her faith, to offer conclusions on metaphysical matters.

The poem itself opens with the exclamation

Life! I know not what thou art,
 But know that thou and I must part;
 And when or how, or where we met,
 I own to me's a secret yet ... (1-4)

The poet, it appears, presumes not to understand the nature or source of life; that is beyond the scope of human knowledge, and relatively unimportant as we face the prospect of death. In the *Essay*, Locke too avoids any attempt to explain the nature or source of life, defining it merely as the force that constitutes the identity of compound finite intelligences (men) and compound bodies (plants and animals). Without knowledge of life, the poet expresses

considerable doubt on the issue of substance, and in particular, on the fate of the body and soul after death. The poet clearly believes in the existence of substance, and in the Christian conception of the self as a union of matter and spirit, as a matter of faith, evident in the allusion to “this compound I” in the last line of the stanza, which evokes initial definition of man in the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity” -- the term “compound” referring to the compound of material and immaterial substance.¹² Barbauld's belief in the essential truth of the Christian conception of the substantial self determines some of her assumptions about what will happen to her after death. For instance, the poet assumes that her body and soul will be reunited at some point in an afterlife, wherever that might be. Barbauld also assumes that her soul will not be reunited with the body she has on earth, evident in her assertion that “[n]o clod so valueless shall be,/ As all that then remains of me” (7-8). Otherwise, she is at a loss. “O whither, whither dost thou fly” (9), the poet asks Life, “Where bend unseen thy trackless course ...?” (10-11).

In the second stanza, she considers two specific scenarios for life after death, demanding Life,

To the vast ocean of empyreal fame,
 From whence thy essence came,
 Dost thou thy flight pursue, when freed
 From matter's base encumbering weed?
 Or dost thou, hid from sight,
 Wait, like some spell-bound knight,
 Through blank oblivious years th' appointed hour,

To break thy trance and reassume thy power? (13-20)

As McCarthy and Kraft note, the first four lines of this passage reflect a “traditional dualist” explanation of death, “in which the soul separates from matter at death,” while the last four reflect a Priestleyan explanation, “in which the soul and body die together, and both are resurrected into eternal life” (319). Traditionally, Christianity had regarded the body and the soul as distinct substances, one material and the other immaterial, joined in life and severed in death. In the *Disquisitions*, as we have discussed, Priestley directly challenges the dualist separation of body and soul, arguing that we have accepted an artificial distinction between matter and spirit as a result of the importation of certain foreign religious ideas early on in the history of the Christian church.¹³ It is his aim to restore us to an “original” Christian conception of the body and soul as elements of the same substance, or more specifically, as slightly different manifestations of a single substance.¹⁴ Barbauld significantly refuses to choose between the orthodox Christian and Priestleyan explanations of death. The only opinion she ventures is that she has difficulty separating the self from consciousness. The second stanza concludes with the poet's plaintive demand, “Yet canst thou, without thought or feeling be?/ O say what art thou, when no more thou'rt thee?” (21-22). Barbauld wonders a little at the possibility of a long interruption in consciousness between the moment of death and the resurrection. It seems inconceivable to her that the self might exist without consciousness. “To a little invisible Being who is expected soon to become visible” furnishes similar proof of Barbauld's support for Locke's theory of personal identity, as the speaker struggles to conceive the self before consciousness, exclaiming:

What powers lie folded in thy curious frame

Senses from objects locked, and mind from thought:

How little canst thou guess

To grasp at all the worlds the Almighty wrought! (5-9)

The final stanza of "Life" rearticulates the poet's acceptance of the limits of human knowledge, as the poet bids a formal farewell to Life:

Life! We've been long together,

Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;

'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;

Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;

Then steal away, give little warning,

Choose thine own time;

Say not Good night, but in some brighter clime

Bid me Good morning. (23-30)

This passage effectively reiterates and elaborates the final moral of "A Summer Evening's Meditation." The combination of resignation to ignorance in this life, and anticipation of revelation in the afterlife, is increasingly common in Barbauld's later poetry. Such is also the moral of "Lines written at the Close of Year" (c. 1823; 1825), where the poet affirms that in spite of the sometimes bewildering events we experience in life, we receive enough "Of light from reason's lamp and light from heaven" (19) to guide us effectively to our rest, though elsewhere she finds resignation difficult to attain. In a letter dating from January, 1824, Barbauld exclaims, "the powers of man strive how vainly! -- to penetrate the veil; to pierce the thick darkness that covers the future" (2: 135). Reflecting on life past the age of eighty

late in October, 1825, she remarks “I only find that many things I thought I knew, I find I have forgotten; many things I thought I knew, I find I know nothing about; some things I know, I have found not worth knowing; and some things I would give -- O what would one not give to know? Are beyond the reach of human ken” (2: 148).

Barbauld's simultaneous endorsement of Locke's theory of personal identity and the orthodox Christian concept of the self is, of course, perfectly compatible with the position Locke sets out in the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity.” There is nothing to suggest that Locke envisions the theories of self-in-consciousness and self-as-substance as mutually exclusive, even though a number of eighteenth-century thinkers, including Thomas Reid, considered the theory of self-in-consciousness as irreconcilable with the orthodox Christian conception of the substantial self. It is true that Locke posits a quite different basis for the continuity of the self. It is also true, however, that he seems to consider consciousness and substance as largely overlapping, consciousness co-existing with a union between the body and soul. He calls attention to the restrictions of human knowledge without denying the existence of substance. Indeed, it seems that he did not consider the existence of substance as a subject for debate. He could not have agreed with Hume's suggestion that identity is only an illusion, an artificial construction, and that there is no connection between identity and substance. For Locke, as for Barbauld, personal identity is real, and closely tied to substance, if the specific nature of that tie is uncertain. As I argue in the following chapters, Locke's theory of personal identity appealed to her because she saw in it a possible means of challenging established class and gender hierarchies without ever directly violating established orthodoxy.

Chapter 3
Identity and Politics

As already established, Locke's theory of personal identity was profoundly implicated in the late-seventeenth-century shift from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy, a primarily land-based to an increasingly capitalist economy, and a relatively fixed to an increasingly fluid social hierarchy. The Lockean definition of a person provides tacit impetus for this shift in its suggestion that individuals are not initially different from each other, and that differences emerge only in the course of experience. In Locke's view, the mind operates according to universal principles of reason and reflection. We acquire ideas as we apply reason and reflection to the impressions we receive through the senses. As such, we all share the same capacity for moral and intellectual improvement. With opportunities to exercise the faculties of reason and reflection, we all share, indeed, a capacity for unlimited moral and intellectual improvement, hindered only by the imperfections of the faculties of reason and reflection themselves, to which, however, all minds are equally susceptible. In the two *Treatises*, Locke explicitly draws out the political implications of his theory of personal identity, arguing that we are all born free and equal as we are born rational -- a premise that forms the basis for his social contract theory.

Beginning with her early poem "Verses written in the Leaves of an ivory Pocket-Book, presented to Master T{urner}" (1769; 1825), it appears that Barbauld, in accordance with Locke's theory of personal identity, sees the self as initially undetermined and fundamentally malleable, rejecting the doctrine of innate ideas to argue that the mind is a *tabula rasa* or blank slate at birth. There are subtle signs, in this poem, of the influence of Locke's theory of personal identity on Barbauld's developing political ideology. *Evenings at Home* (1793-95), written during the decade of Barbauld's most intense involvement in politics, clearly sets out the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. From

Evenings at Home, as well as from her political writings of the 1790s, it appears that Barbauld endorses the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. With Locke, she upholds the shift from absolute to constitutional monarchy, condemning instances of tyranny and oppression. She denies the existence of essential differences between members of different classes, which she sees are the result of upbringing and education. Instead, Barbauld endorses a system that entitles all citizens to the same basic political, social, and economic advantages. Yet from the beginning there is a tension in Barbauld's political beliefs, which is traceable to the eighteenth debate over personal identity. From one of Barbauld's early contributions to the *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (1773), "Against Inconsistency in our Expectations," we see that Barbauld accepts that there will always be a degree of political, economic, and social inequality in this life, since men have been constituted to fulfill different functions in life. While always placing the greatest emphasis on the influence of education and environment, Barbauld accepts the role of nature in the formation of the self. As she grows older, she comes to see the role of nature in the formation of the self as increasingly important. At the same time, she becomes more and more pessimistic concerning the possibility for achieving liberal political reforms, finding consolation in the anticipated achievement of full equality in heaven.

Of all Barbauld's early poems, "Verses written in the Leaves of an ivory Pocket-Book" most clearly reveals the poet's conviction of humanity's equal capacity for moral and intellectual improvement. As the title suggests, the governing trope of the poem is Locke's conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa*. According to William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, Barbauld gave the ivory memorandum book alluded to in the title as a gift to William

Turner, the son of a Protestant Dissenting minister she was visiting in Wakefield, when Turner was between seven and eight years old. After she was gone, the family discovered these lines written inside, which are worth transcribing in full:

Accept, my dear, this toy, and let me say,
 The leaves an emblem of your mind display —
 Your youthful mind, uncoloured, fair, and white,
 Like crystal leaves, transparent to the sight,
 Fit each impression to receive, whate'er
 The pencil of instruction traces there.
 O then transcribe into the shining page
 Each virtue that adorns your tender age;
 And grave upon the tablet of your heart
 Each lofty science, and each useful art!

But with the likeness, mark the difference well;
 Nor think complete the hasty parallel.
 The leaves by folly scrawl'd, or foul with stains,
 A drop of water clears with little pains;
 But from a blotted *mind* the smallest trace
 Not seas of bitter tears can e'er efface —
 The spreading mark for ever shall remain,
 And rolling years but deepen every stain.

Once more a difference let me still explain:
The vacant leaves thus ever will remain,
Till some officious hand the tablet fill
With sense or nonsense, prose or rhyme, at will.
Not so your mind without your forming care;
Nature forbids an idle vacuum there:
Folly will plant her tares without your toil,
And weeds spring up in the neglected soil.

But why to you this moralizing strain?
Vain is the precept, and the caution vain —
To you, whose opening virtues bloom so fair,
And well reward the prudent planter's care —
As some young tree, by generous juices fed,
Above its fellows lifts its branching head,
Whose proud aspiring shoots incessant rise,
And every day grow nearer to the skies.

Yet should kind Heaven your opening mind adorn,
And bless your noon of knowledge as your morn —
Yet were your mind with every science blest,
And every virtue glowing in your breast —

With learning meekness, and with candour zeal,
 Clear to discern, and generous to feel —
 Yet should the graces o'er your breast diffuse
 The softer influence of the polish'd muse —
 'Tis no original, the world can tell,
 And all your praise is but — to copy well.

The first stanza of this poem combines the Lockean idea of the mind as a *tabula rasa* with the Biblical image of the book of life in the analogy of the mind as a memorandum book. The image of the “crystal leaves” containing a record of individual experience that will be held up for judgement evokes the passage in Rev. 20: 12-15: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.” Yet the emphasis on the initial blankness and the malleability of the mind is distinctly Lockean. The poet celebrates the young boy's unlimited prospects, urging Master Turner to seize every occasion to develop his mind to its fullest potential, both morally and intellectually. As the poet adjures him, he should impress his mind with virtue, his heart with knowledge. It is interesting that Barbauld extends the analogy of the *tabula rasa* at this point to the heart, emphasizing the affective component of moral and intellectual development, which Locke tends to pass over, or to regard as an obstacle to moral and intellectual development. Despite the slight shift in emphasis, however, Barbauld's conception of the process of moral and intellectual development is essentially Lockean. As set out in this stanza, it appears that the mind is at once passive and active in the course of its

development.¹ To a certain extent, the mind circumscribes what it receives through its application to study. The individual has thus a certain amount of control over the formation of his mind. Barbauld signals some apprehension that Master Turner might fail to control his impressions sufficiently, as her exclamation “O” elevates the last four lines of the stanza from advice into exhortation. Master Turner must be cautious, she warns, since there is a possibility, if his education is not managed properly, he will grow up badly.

In the second stanza, the poet qualifies the analogy of *tabula rasa*, noting certain important distinctions between the mind and the memorandum book.² The poet warns the boy that if the pages of the memorandum book are blotted accidentally, they are easily wiped clean, but this is not true of the mind. The mind is a clean slate only once, at birth. The fact that the mind does not share the same unlimited possibility as an actual blank slate voices another tacit warning to her readers that they take the process of education very seriously. This assumption that impressions make an indelible imprint marks an interesting departure from the views expressed in Barbauld's earliest preserved poem “On Mrs. P{riestley} Leaving Warrington” (1767; 1994), where the poet worries precisely that impressions are not permanent, but only fleeting. Faced with the prospect of the Priestley's imminent departure, the poet fears that their daughter, Sarah Priestley, then about four years old, will forget all about her. “New forms,” she tells the young Sarah in the concluding lines of the poem,

... and changing scenes shall soon remove
 Each soft impression of thy early love,
 Nor shall thy mind retain the smallest trace
 Of the loved accent, and the well known face. (107-110)

It is striking that Barbauld's reversal, rather than easing her misgivings, merely redirects them. The variation in attitudes suggests further evidence of the poet working through the implications of Locke's theory of personal identity.

The third stanza underscores the necessity of taking education seriously. Elaborating the distinction between the mind and the memorandum book, Barbauld makes the point that the mind, unlike the memorandum book, requires continual care and management. The memorandum book, the poet notes, remains blank until someone comes along to fill it, whether with "sense or nonsense." After birth, the mind, unlike the memorandum book, is never blank. Whether an individual attempts to take active control over the mind's development or not, it is continually caught up in that process. The mind cannot remain in its original pristine state, continually bombarded as it is by impressions from the outside world. In these terms, the memorandum book fails as a perfect analogy for the human mind. It is more appropriate to compare the mind to a plant than to a memorandum book, since it is in a continual state of growth, whether someone is cultivating it or not, as appears in the lines "Folly will plant her tares without your toil,/ And weeds spring up in the neglected soil" (25-26). The echo of the Biblical parable of the wheat and the tares in line 25 incidentally emphasizes the poet's interest in the moral aspect of the mind's development. The analogy between the mind and a plant is more appropriate than that of the memorandum book for another reason, unstated though implied. The letters on the slate, unlike the thoughts that pass through the mind, have no continuity. The letters on the slate constitute simply a random record of disconnected impressions. In contrast, the analogy between the mind and a plant does allow the possibility for continuity. This analogy appears in other early poetry by

Barbauld, including “On the Birth of a Friend's Eldest Son” (1768?; 1825).

At this point, the poet recalls the circumstances of the boy she is addressing, and her anxiety dissipates. She is confident of the care that is being taken in Master Turner's education. Taking up the analogy of the tree once more, she predicts the boy's triumphant fulfilment of his early potential through the conscientious efforts of his parents. The celebratory tone of the fourth stanza gives way a little in the concluding stanza, as Barbauld reminds her readers that despite the possibilities for developing our mental faculties, human achievement remains limited. The concluding lines of the poem: “Tis no original, the world can tell,/ And all your praise is but -- to copy well” (44), seem to preclude, or at least, to restrict human claims to originality. Barbauld suggests her final reliance upon Providence in the allusion to “kind Heaven” (35), as she expresses the hope that it will continue to bless the course of Master Turner's education.

“Verses written in the Leaves of an ivory Pocket-Book” tacitly explores the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity in its choice of subject. As a tribute to the potential achievements of William Turner, the son of a middle-class Protestant Dissenter, and pupil at the Warrington Academy, the poem conveys a subtle political statement concerning the challenge posed by middle-class Protestant Dissenters and Non-conformists to the eighteenth-century establishment.

With *Evenings at Home*, Barbauld and Aikin explicitly guide their readers towards the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. The dialogue “On Man” in *Evenings at Home* follows its Lockean definition of man with an exchange between Charles and his father, where Charles points to the apparent differences between men such as the

Hottentots and those of European nations. Charles' father denies inferiority on the basis of race and class, observing that apparent differences between the Hottentots and European nations are great, "but we agree in the most essential characters of *man*, and perhaps the advantage is not all on our side." Later on in the same speech he insists that the Hottentot's "inferiority lies in those things in which many of the lowest class among us are equally inferior to be instructed" (186), thus attributing differences among men of different races and classes to education. Barbauld had already hinted at such a position in the *Hymns in Prose*, which instructs children in Hymn VIII to cherish "all beings" as "creatures of God," asserting that "the Negro woman, who sittest pining in captivity" and "the monarch, that ruleth over a hundred states" (166) are equally members of God's family.³ In the dialogue "On Man," Charles' father notes further that the Hottentots have attained the first important stage in the development of society, establishing "some sort of government for the protection of the weak against the strong," which sounds strikingly like Locke's history of the emergence of the social contract in the second *Treatise of Government*. "On Man" touches on some of the specifically social and economic implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. Charles' father associates the faculty of reason with man's unique capacity to "make use of *instruments* in any of his actions" (185) -- a capacity necessary for social and economic advancement. He states that man "is a *tool-making* and *machine-making* animal -- by means of this faculty alone he is every where lord of creation" (186). He emphasizes that man must have the opportunities to develop this capacity, observing that "[s]ociety sharpens all the faculties, and gives ideas and views which never could have been entertained by an individual" (186). In his discussion of the Hottentots, he notes that they have fabricated "weapons, tools, clothing, and

furniture” (186). Education, he suggests, would enable the Hottentots to develop not only politically, but also socially and economically.

Another contribution that connects Locke's theory of personal identity to politics is Aikin's “A Globe-Lecture.” Conceived as a dialogue between a father and daughter called Lucy, “A Globe-Lecture” condemns “despotic governments” (372) that rule over most of the globe, noting that the “nobler West enjoys in most of its states more or less freedom” (374). The same piece emphasizes the existence of a universal human nature, where Lucy's father states that “no part of the world is void of our human brethren, who, amid all the diversities of character and condition are yet all *men*, and that “[h]aving all a common nature, we must necessarily agree in more things than we differ in” (374). Earlier in the same dialogue he expressly insists that there are no differences between men on the basis of race, in the declaration, “I know nothing that colour has to do with mind” (370), emphasizing throughout the importance of environment in determining the character of a people.

Barbauld's piece “On Manufactures” elaborates the social and economic implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. Like “On Man,” “On Manufactures” is a dialogue between father and son, in which the father associates man's faculty of reason with his capacity to use instruments and tools. In “On Manufactures,” Henry's father states that, “[m]an is as much superior to the brutes in his outward form by means of the hand, as he is in his mind by the gifts of reason ... When Nature gave man the hand, she said to him, ‘Exercise your ingenuity and work.’” In his view, “[a]s soon as ever a man rises above the state of a savage, he begins to contrive and to make things, in order to improve his forlorn condition.” Henry remarks that “[i]t must require a great deal of knowledge ... for so many curious

works” (133), indirectly underscoring the fact that men require education in order to advance socially and economically. His father goes on to celebrate the current social and economic opportunities available in Great Britain through the development of commerce and manufacture, declaring that “in this country every one is free to rise by merit” (134). To illustrate his point, he includes an account of Sir Richard Arkwright, a barber turned inventor, who, through his ingenuity, managed to accumulate the greatest fortune in the country, as well as a title.

Barbauld's radical pamphlets of the 1790s continue to explore the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790) combines a protest against an instance of governmental tyranny in Great Britain: the discriminatory legislation against Dissenters and Non-conformists, with support for the turn of events in France. Insisting that the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts constitutes not the accordance of an advantage, but the elimination of a disadvantage, Barbauld argues that the practice of religion according to the dictates of personal conscience is a right akin to a man's right “in the use of his limbs, in the disposal of his private property,” or in Locke's terms, the right to security of “liberty” and “goods” (2: 359).⁴ As she wants to make clear, Dissenters and Non-conformists tolerate the establishment, not the other way around. Faced with the recent defeat in parliament of a bid to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts, she “appeal[s] from Philip intoxicated to Philip sober” (2: 370) for redress. The phrasing of Barbauld's plea indirectly affirms her continuing engagement with Locke's chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” which discusses several scenarios of the drunk man and the sober man, as part of an ongoing effort to clarify the

distinction between personal identity and identity of man.⁵ According to Locke, the location of identity in consciousness invites the conclusion that individuals might commit acts in moments of madness or inebriation, which they did not remember, and ideally, for which they should not be held accountable, since they were not the same person who had committed these acts -- only the same man. In Section 2.27.20: 342 Locke writes that a man might have “distinct incommunicable consciousness at different times,” making

the same Man ... at different times ... different Persons; which, we see, is the Sense of Mankind in the solemnest Declaration of their Opinions, Humane Laws not punishing the *Mad Man* for the *Sober Man's* Actions, nor the *Sober Man* for what the *Mad Man* did, thereby making them two Persons; which is somewhat explained by our way of speaking in *English*, when we say such an one *is not himself*, or *is besides himself*, in which Phrases it is insinuated ... the *self* same Person was no longer in that Man.

It is Locke's contention that the drunk man must be thought of as separate from the sober man, just as the mad man from the sober man, suggesting that Barbauld prefers to regard England's recent failure to champion liberty as an aberration -- a momentary lapse into “drunkenness” or “madness” -- as opposed to a reflection of its “true” self. She imagines that England will be recalled to its “true” self by “the increasing light and knowledge” (2: 371) in the world. In Blakean, or rather Miltonic language, Barbauld announces that “[t]he genius of Philosophy is walking abroad, and with the touch of Ithuriel's spear is trying the establishments of the earth” (371).⁶ Liberty, she observes, “diffuses her blessings to every class of men; and even extends a smile of hope and promise to the poor African” (2: 372). It

is Liberty, in her view, that has wrought the French Revolution. Barbauld laments that “England -- which used to glory in being the assertor of liberty and the refuge of the oppressed” (2: 373), and which “has long reproached ... [France] with being a slave, now censures her for daring to be free.” The poet celebrates the French Revolution as a victory over despotism, rejoicing that France’s “dungeons ... exist no longer, the iron doors are forced, the massy walls are thrown down; and the liberated spectres, trembling between joy and horror, may now blazon the infernal secrets of their prison-house” (2: 374). She urges France “never to lose sight of the great principles ... [she] has held forth, -- the natural equality of men” (2: 376).

The *Address to the Opposers* significantly also contains explicit support for capitalism in granting new opportunities to members of the lower and middle classes. Barbauld identifies political tyranny with the remnants of a fixed social and economic hierarchy that privileges those with connections to the aristocracy and the establishment, demanding “Why should not the fair field of generous competition be freely opened to everyone?” Speaking on behalf of the Dissenting community, she asserts, “We wish to bury every name of distinction in the common appellation of citizen” (2: 361). It is her claim that if the Corporation and Test Acts had been repealed “We should have sought places of trust -- by no unfair, unconstitutional methods ... but in the open and honourable rivalry of virtuous emulation” (2: 362). She accuses members of the establishment of operating out of greed in attempting to preserve an unfair monopoly over wealth and power. Refusing to be discouraged, however, she urges Dissenters and Non-conformists to renew their determination to exploit the opportunities that are available to them in order to distinguish themselves. According to

her, Dissenters and Non-conformists will continue to perfect themselves morally and intellectually, establishing schools and producing authors that must be universally respected -- a variation of the sentiment of "Verses written in the Leaves of an ivory Pocket-Book," where the poet expresses the hope that Master Turner, as the son of a Dissenting minister will raise himself above his contemporaries. The author asserts further, "If your restraints operate towards keeping us in that middle rank of life where industry and virtue most abound, we shall have the honour to count ourselves among that class of the community which has ever been the source of manners, of population, and of wealth" (2: 362). By contributing to the economic prosperity of the nation, Dissenters and Non-conformists must, in her view, eventually win the respect of the establishment, and then perhaps its support.

There is, though, a certain hint of anxiety that emerges in Barbauld's statements on the emergent capitalist system. While praising the opportunities potentially opened up by capitalism, the author evidently fears the corrupting effects of materialism.⁷ She takes a perverse comfort in the continuing enforcement of the Corporation and Test Acts, since it will act to check "a spirit of worldliness, which of late has gained but too much ground amongst us" (2: 367), noting that Dissenters need no "bars across ... [their] path" -- only "golden apples ... to make ... [them] turn out of the way" (368).

From the beginning of her literary career, however, Barbauld's political ideology seems to have been complicated by her acceptance that God or nature had intended people to fulfil certain stations in life, as appears clearly in an early essay collected in *The Miscellaneous Pieces*, entitled "Against Inconsistency in our Expectations." On the one hand, the author declares her confidence that "a steady and vigorous exertion of our faculties, directed to one

end, will generally insure success” (2: 185) in our endeavours. In her remarks on wealth, she emphasizes that “[t]housands have become ... [rich] from the lowest beginnings by toil, and patient diligence, and attention” (2: 186). On the other hand, she advises readers to reconcile themselves to their limitations, averring that “upon accurate inspection, we shall find, in the moral government of the world, and the order of the intellectual system, laws as determinate, fixed, and invariable as in Newton's Principia” (2: 184).⁸ It is her contention that “[t]he progress of vegetation is not more certain than the growth of habit; nor is the power of attraction more clearly proved than the force of affection or the influence of example” (2: 184-85). In other words, the mind, constituted as it is by matter, operates by the same sorts of laws that apply to all matter. The author goes on to say that “[t]he man ... who has well studied the operations of nature in mind as well as matter, will acquire a certain moderation and equity in his claims upon Providence” (2: 185). A little later, she states that “[t]here is a different air and complexions in character as well as in faces” (2: 192), insinuating that an individual's moral and intellectual development is at least partly circumscribed by the natural constitution of his or her mind.

As already established, Locke himself accepts some connection between consciousness and substance, allowing a continuing role for Providence and “natural constitution” in the development of personal identity. In his writings on education, he never entirely dismisses the role of matter in determining the moral and intellectual development of the self. There are signs that Barbauld is taking her cue from Locke in her insistence on the role of nature, as well as of environment, in determining the moral and intellectual development of the self. The statement that “[t]here is a different air and complexions in

character as well as in faces” seems significantly to echo Locke's assertion in *Some Thoughts* that “God has stamp't certain Characters upon Men's Minds, which like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended, but can hardly be totally altered.”

Following through the political implications of this statement, Barbauld makes clear her opposition to social levelling, complaining that “[i]t is the fault of the present age, owing to the freer commerce that different ranks and professions now enjoy with each other, that characters are not marked with sufficient strength: the several classes run too much into one another” (2: 193). Equally to blame, in her view, is education. “Every one,” the author alleges,

is expected to have such a tincture of general knowledge as is incompatible with going deeply into any science; and such a conformity to fashionable manners as checks the free workings of the ruling passion, and gives an insipid sameness to the face of society, under the idea of polish and regularity. (2: 193-94)⁹

It is clear not only that Barbauld has no desire to level society, but also that she has hopes of reviving certain social distinctions.

There emerges a certain anxiety concerning the influence of education, which she continues to acknowledge as more powerful than nature -- and a certain tension in her attitudes concerning the purpose of education. Education, it appears, is supposed at once to efface and to reinforce social differences, by encouraging individuals to develop their “ruling passion.” Barbauld's reflections on rank lead her to conclude that “[w]e are often hurt by the brutality and sluggish conceptions of the vulgar; not considering that some there must be to

be hewers of wood and drawers of water, and that cultivated genius, or even any great refinement and delicacy in their moral feelings, would be a real misfortune to them.” At the same time, the author is careful to state that one profession is not necessarily superior or inferior to another, and “should not throw out illiberal and commonplaces censures against another” (2: 194) – an essentially democratic sentiment, though one that potentially might be turned into an apology for the *status quo*, and an excuse to deny education to some members of society. Barbauld urges “Let us then study the philosophy of the human mind. The man who is master of this science ... will know what to expect from everyone” (194), explicitly connecting philosophy and politics.

The whole tenor of “Against Inconsistencies” explains the perhaps surprising admission from the Tory Samuel Johnson, who after reading *The Miscellaneous Pieces*, said that of all those who had attempted to emulate him, Barbauld “ha[d] done it the best; for she ha[d] imitated the sentiment as well as the diction” (Boswell 854). Johnson himself managed to combine a reverence for rank (though not without some instances of criticism), with an appreciation for the contribution, as well as the humour and rough manners of the lower orders (perhaps in part because he was not without some roughness of manner himself). It was his conviction that the need for a literary education had been overrated, even among members of the middle class. Barbauld and her brother certainly never shared Johnson's admiration for members of the aristocracy. The members of the middle class, whom John Aikin calls “the most virtuous, the most enlighten'd, the most independent part of the community” (Rodgers 110), were, for them, the role models for the rest of society. Yet in the general sentiment of “Against Inconsistency” Barbauld and Johnson's views are surprisingly

consonant.

Evenings at Home, for all its emphasis on man as an improvable being, and its instances of liberal political sentiments, displays the same ambivalence as “Against Inconsistency.” There are especially strong echoes of “Against Inconsistency” in two of Aikin's fables, “The Boy without a Genius,” and “Nature and Education.” In “The Boy without a Genius,” the schoolmaster Mr. Wiseman acknowledges that there is such a thing as natural genius, though he suggests that in the scheme of things, it is relatively unimportant. Comforting the parents of a student who has displayed no early signs of genius, he advises that real genius is rare, and unnecessary for either success or happiness. All the boy needs is application, of which he has displayed ample proof in the time he has been at the school — advice that evokes Barbauld's own that “a steady and vigorous exertion of our faculties, directed to one end, will generally insure success.” Yet there is also a hint that the boy will have to reconcile himself to certain limitations, which is the other component of Barbauld's advice in “Against Inconsistency.” The schoolmaster has no illusions that the boy will ever display brilliance, which is simply beyond his capacity, though, just like Barbauld, he emphasizes the value of different contributions to society. The fable “Nature and Education” describes two sisters, the personified figures of Nature and Education, out walking together one day, and falling into dispute over which of them has the greatest influence in the development of living things. In order to resolve the dispute, they decide on a contest, each of them attempting to grow a tree without the other's aid. Instead of establishing the ascendancy of either one of them, the contest forces them to realize their mutual dependence. Aikin still places greater emphasis on the importance of environment than on that of

constitution or predisposition, including a number of environmental factors in the category of nature. It is clear from his description of nature's activities that what he means by nature involves not only constitution, that is, the quality of the acorns, but also external conditions such as the amount of nourishment and water, while education involves only man's attempts to manipulate growing conditions. The analogy between the mind of a child and an acorn is one Barbauld uses herself in the *Hymns in Prose* to make the point concerning the mutual contribution of nature and education to human development. Hymn X – the same hymn that insists upon the initial blankness of the mind – also asserts that “[t]he mind of a child is like the acorn; its powers are folded up, they do not yet appear, but they are all there. The memory, the judgment, the invention, the feeling of right and wrong are all in the mind of a child, of a little infant just born; but they are not expanded” (170).

There are, notably, two fables in *Evenings at Home* written by Barbauld that indirectly advise the consideration of natural constitution in making one's “choice in life,” to use the Johnsonian phrase. In “The Goose and Horse,” a goose claims her superiority over a horse because she is capable of supporting herself in three elements: earth, air, and water, while the horse can only support himself in one. The horse retorts that if the goose ranges through three elements she distinguishes herself in none of them, while he distinguishes himself with grace and strength in the one element for which he was formed. Thus, Barbauld suggests that it is better to be exceptional in one area than to be mediocre in many areas, counselling her young readers to find out the skill they have a talent for and to perfect it. In “The Flying-fish,” an ordinary fish, disgruntled with her lot, prays to Jupiter that she might be able to soar with the birds. Jupiter grants her prayer. Although at first triumphant, the fish soon

discovers that the ability to fly has drawbacks. She finds herself vulnerable to new enemies in the air, and often so fatigued by the effort flying that it is increasingly difficult for her to escape her old enemies in the water. "More unhappy than before," she addresses Jupiter again, only to receive stern rebuke concerning her "proud and restless disposition." Jupiter refuses to take back his gift, informing the fish, "what you begged as a favour, keep as a punishment" (14). The moral of this fable for young readers is clearly not to aspire to what is beyond one's natural capacity, with the added warning that the achievement of such an aspiration would only be a source of unhappiness anyway.

Aikin brings the morals of "The Goose and the Horse" and "The Flying Fish" into the human realm with his fable "Flying and Swimming," where a young boy wants to fly. The boy's father convinces him of the impracticality of his wish, explaining that man has not been made physically capable of flight. He advises the boy to apply himself to learning how to swim, which is a useful skill he might learn.

A number of contributions to *Evenings at Home* specifically echo the same political opinions as "Against Inconsistency in our Expectations." Aikin's "On Things to be Learned," a dialogue between Kitty and her mother, and "On Different Stations in Life," a dialogue between Sally Meanwell and Mrs. Meanwell, both approve of attempts to advance socially and economically, but also accept the existence of rank and property as a matter of course. In "On Things to be Learned," Kitty's mother goes so far as to assert that "it is the purpose of all education to fit persons for the station in which they are hereafter to live" (69), which is what Barbauld implies in her complaints concerning the recent failure of education to distinguish the different professions. In "On Different Stations in Life," Mrs. Meanwell takes up

Barbauld's argument that there are no inferior or superior stations, insisting that station in life has nothing to do with virtue, which serves as a prelude to her warning that though industry generally permits one to advance it is best not to form any expectations. She tells her daughter that she hopes the sight of those less fortunate will "make ... [her] cheerful and contented in ... her] station, which ... is so much happier than that of many other children" (93). Another interesting contribution in this context is "A Secret Character Unveiled," about a self-made man, Mr. Mortimer, who employs his fortune to relieve cases of private distress, where he has heard good reports of character. On the one hand, the narrator applauds a man's rise to wealth through application, and his attempts to use his fortune selectively to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor, claiming that "Rank and property is one principal cause ... of the ills of life" (365). On the other hand, he insists that rank and property is "necessary." "A Globe Lecture" similarly celebrates the achievements of men through industry, but also suggests the advisability of "filling the station in which their Creator has placed them" (374).

The same political writings of the 1790s that set out the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity also reveal an anxiety concerning the implementation of liberal reform. *Address to the Opposers* reveals a certain fear that the French Revolution might disintegrate into mob rule. At the same time as Barbauld signals her support for France she also issues a plea for moderation. Barbauld shared the qualms of many in Great Britain concerning the violence of the revolution, which made her fear it might not live up to her expectations. While she had deplored the tyranny of Louis XVI in the Affair of the Diamond Necklace, she never condoned his execution, and like her fellow Dissenters shared the general

horror over the bloody massacres which followed.

The same tension in Barbauld's political ideology emerges even more starkly in another pamphlet published the same year, *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation; or, a Discourse on the Fast, appointed on April 19, 1793* (1793). *Sins of Government*, written almost immediately after England's declaration of war against France, attests to Barbauld's continuing concern over instances of governmental repression, most strikingly attested in the suspension of the *habeas corpus* and the treason trials of the 1790s. One of Barbauld's main targets is the British legal system, which she accuses of colluding in various forms of tyranny. After asserting that nations, like their citizens, are sometimes guilty of crimes, she denounces as one of the most serious crimes that “of permitting oppressive laws and bad government to remain ... by which the poor are crushed, and the lives of innocent are laid at the mercy of wicked and arbitrary men” (2: 385). She demands laws that treat all citizens equally, “accessible to rich and poor,” and “calculated rather to check and set bounds to the inequality of fortunes than to increase them” (2: 391). There is more criticism of discrimination against religious minorities in the allusion to the “frequent, unnecessary, and ensnaring oaths, which life like stumbling blocks in every path of business and preferment,” as well as against the slave trade, in the allusion to the continuing mistreatment of “some darker-coloured children of the same family” (2: 392). Nevertheless, though urging citizens not to regard government as beyond their control to reform, Barbauld admits “One of the most fruitful sources of evil in the transaction of national affairs is a spirit of insubordination. Without a quiet subordination to lawful authority, peace, order, and the ends of good government, can never be attained” (2: 388).

Towards the end of the decade, Barbauld composes the essay: "On Education" (1798), which reveals the full complexity of her position on the development of the self. To a large extent, "On Education" reflects the Lockean emphasis on the malleability of the self. "On Education" is ostensibly written for the benefit of a friend who has canvassed the author's advice on a plan of education for his son. Having acquired all "the books of education ... that were worthy [of] notice, from Xenophon to Locke, and from Locke to Catherine Macaulay" (2: 305), the author's friend attempts to sort out "all the systems before him." "I gave him my thoughts with the utmost freedom," the author tells us, "and after I returned home, threw upon paper the observations which had occurred to me" (2: 306). In the author's view, a "human being is formed to be what he is" through education, which she defines broadly as environment. Barbauld explicitly rejects the doctrine of innate ideas in the observation that education begins "[t]he moment ... [a child is] able to form an idea" (2: 307). Like Locke, she emphasizes the continually evolving nature of the self, writing that "education goes on at every instant of time; it goes on like time; you can neither stop it nor turn its course" (2: 307). As she advises parents, education is impossible to control completely -- there are simply too many external factors. Parents cannot expect to raise a child to be exactly like themselves, precisely because so many external factors are different from one generation to the next. What they can expect to give is cultivation, and, "in a great degree, personal habits" (2: 317), through precept, but more importantly, through example. Barbauld's statement that "[t]here will always be an essential difference between a human being cultivated and uncultivated" (2: 316) suggests the Lockean assumption of the importance of education in moral and intellectual development. Otherwise, Barbauld advises, parents must look to Providence.

Education, she claims, “important as it is, is only a part of a more comprehensive system.”

“Providence,” she declares, “takes our child where you leave him. Providence continues his education upon a larger scale, and by a process which includes means far more efficacious”

(2: 319). The notion of Providence again indirectly invokes Locke, since it is clear that what Barbauld effectively means by it is the experience of the individual directed by God.

“On Education” clearly pursues some of the political implications of the Lockean conception of the malleable self. In “On Education,” the author supports universal access to education, proclaiming that “education is a thing necessary for the poor and for the rich” (2: 318). As Lucy Aikin notes, “On Education” provides “examples such as discreet and virtuous parents in any situation in life are enabled to give” (1: lxxvii-viii) in the emphasis on the importance of normal life in the process of education. Barbauld advises her readers, “Do not regret that you are not rich enough to provide tutors and governors, to watch his steps with sedulous and servile anxiety” (2: 318). “On Education” also contains a tribute to opportunities for social and economic advancement in the tribute to the author’s gentleman friend, who “rose in the world by honourable industry” to amass a considerable fortune, and then “married, rather late in life, a lady to whom he had been long attached, and in whom centered the wealth of several expiring families” (2: 305). There is a certain anxiety regarding the effects of wealth and consequence, as the author emphasizes the impossibility of raising her friend’s son to appreciate the same values that enabled her friend to achieve what he did. Her disapproval of aristocratic life comes to sound so vehement that at one point she is fearful that she might have offended, observing, “I would not be understood to inveigh against wealth, or against the enjoyments of it; they are real enjoyments, and allied to many

elegancies in manners and in taste” (2: 310).

For all this, “On Education” undeniably recognizes the contribution of “natural constitution” to an individual's moral and intellectual development. Barbauld stresses that parts are not necessarily connected to rank, demanding, “how many shining and excellent characters start up every day, from the bosom of obscurity, with scarcely any care at all?” (2: 318) -- though of course differences in talents provide an implicit foundation for social distinctions. “On Prejudice,” written at the same time as “On Education,” emphasizes the importance of education in cultivation the most fundamental faculty of reason, noting that “[a] reasoning child is not yet a reasoning being” (2: 324), but also speaks routinely of “parts,” “temperament,” “genius,” and “abilities.”

In “On Education,” the author accepts the existence of rank as a matter of course. “On Education” assumes that it will be part of every child's education to learn the consequence of rank. While expressing a certain regret over the importance accorded to rank, often without regard for vice or virtue, Barbauld sees class differences as inevitable. Indeed, she urges that children be given “the instruction and accomplishments which their situation in life requires” (2: 318). The concluding appeal to Providence, while serving to emphasize the role of experience in moral and intellectual development, also suggests a certain degree of stoical resignation on Barbauld's part, as she tacitly looks to the afterlife for the achievement of full equality in society. The argument for the final eradication of distinction in heaven is of course central to the thought of conservatives such as Edmund Burke, but it could evidently be held by disillusioned radicals or moderates as well, however we want to classify Barbauld. That Barbauld anticipates a state of perfect equality in heaven

appears as early as her poem “An Address to the Deity,” before God, where the speaker declares that “[w]orms, angels, men, in every different sphere/ Are equal all” (6-7). Her late poem “On the King's Illness” (1811; 1811) asserts that when “the load of weary life [is] laid down,/ The peasant and the king repose together” (3-4).

“The Life of Samuel Richardson, with Remarks on his Writings,” Barbauld's prefatory essay to her edition of the *Correspondence of Richardson* (1804), displays the same tension in Barbauld's attitudes towards the moral and intellectual development of the self, which continues to inform her political ideology. Throughout the “Life of Richardson” Barbauld affirms her support for Locke's theory of personal identity in her consistent emphasis on the role of environment in the formation of the individual. A large part of the biography of Richardson is taken up with efforts to trace the effects of his background and upbringing on the growth of his personality, as well as on the evolution of his writing. Barbauld specifically highlights the importance of education in individual development, devoting particular attention to the opportunities opened up by education. After observing that Richardson received only “common school-learning” (xxxii) as a result of a decline in family fortune, and probably never achieved more than a cursory knowledge of the classical languages, or learned any other modern languages besides English, Barbauld insists that he absorbed much through a private and intensive course of reading. According to her, it was possible by the early eighteenth century to acquire considerable knowledge from English vernacular writers, and Richardson made the most of his opportunities, showing from an early age an appetite for reading, which in part determined his choice of apprenticeship to a printer.

“The Life of Richardson” goes on to develop the political implications of its Lockean

emphasis on the malleability of the self in its open declaration of the equality of men among different classes. Discussing Richardson's childhood, Barbauld remarks that “[h]uman nature is human nature in every class (xl),” and that the “lowbred girls, in, probably, an obscure village” were the early models for the author's upper-class heroines Clarissa and Clementina. A little later, she takes the opportunity to praise the current political, social and economic system for the opportunities that it allows men to raise themselves above initially humble origins. Richardson, she notices approvingly, could “make that comfortable provision for a rising family, which patient industry, judiciously directed, will, generally, in this country, enable a man to procure” (li), though she also regretfully acknowledges persisting obstacles. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu earns criticism for her dismissive comment of Richardson that “the doors of the great were never open to him” (clxxiii). According to Barbauld, such a comment merely exposes the snobbery and ignorance of Montagu and the other members of her circle. Barbauld laments that “in England ... men are classed ... more by similarity of fortune than by other circumstance,” though she is also quick to point out the irony “that she whose talents, not her rank, have transmitted her name to posterity, should not have experienced a more kindly fellow feeling towards talent” (clxxv). Earlier on in the “Life of Richardson,” Richardson himself comes under attack for according too much respect to rank and riches. One of Barbauld's major complaints against *Pamela* (1740-41) concerns “the excessive humility and gratitude” expressed by the heroine and her parents when Mr. B- finally makes an offer in marriage, demonstrating “a regard to rank and riches beyond the just measure of an independent mind” (lxvi). As she insists, it is Mr. B- and not Pamela who is unworthy of the marriage, and the abasement of the heroine and her parents is irritating.

Towards the end of the “Life of Richardson,” Barbauld notes that in his own life the author “loved to be the obliger, especially if his friends were of rank and fortune superior to his own,” which she attributes to “a jealous fear of being treated otherwise than equal, and ... a painful consciousness of inferiority of station prompting that fear; for he possessed the dignity of an independent mind” (clvii), tacitly reproaching Richardson for not granting the same “dignity of an independent mind” to his fictional characters. The recurrence of the expression “independence of mind” serves indirectly to underscore that it is the mind that is the basis of men's equal dignity, regardless of superficial marks of distinction.

Yet as Barbauld makes clear, the mind is not entirely a product of environment or education. There are intellectual capacities that simply cannot be cultivated. Richardson would not have been able to overcome “the disadvantages of obscure birth, and the want of a liberal education” (xxi) without genius, though he “was not one of those who make genius an excuse for idleness” (xliv). On the subject of self-taught geniuses, Barbauld writes,

We know very well they had a seed, but we are ignorant by what accidental circumstances the seed of one has been conveyed by the winds to some favourable spot, where it has been safely lodged in the bosom of the ground, nor why it germinates there, and springs up in health and vigour, while a thousand others perish. (xxxv)¹⁰

The image of genius as a seed requiring a certain fortuitous set of conditions in order to flower stresses the simultaneous contribution of nature and environment towards human development. According to Barbauld, a man's possession of genius significantly determines the course of his development. “Where there exists strong genius,” she states, “the bent of

the mind is imperious, and will be obeyed" (clxxviii). Indeed, Barbauld cites one instance where the whole turn of a man's mind appears to be the product of nature. Comparing Richardson and William Cowper, Barbauld comments that "Cowper's reserve was constitutional. Richardson's, probably, was owing to the want of an early familiarity with genteel life" (cxcii). Cowper's tendency to severe depression was by then fairly well known. Barbauld's own husband suffered from a different kind of mental disorder, which perhaps highlighted for her the fact that there were aspects of the mind beyond the influence of environment, sometimes seriously restricting the possibility for human achievement.

In the "Life of Richardson," there again appear certain limits in her criticism of differences in rank and fortune, which emerges clearly in her comments on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. While praising Richardson's achievements, and attacking Montagu for snobbery, Barbauld also acknowledges the entitlement of the aristocracy, and passes judgement against Montagu for compromising her position through inappropriate behaviour. One of her charges against Montagu is that she speaks of Richardson "in terms as little suited to the decorum of her own rank and character, as to the merit and respectable situation in life of the person she speaks of" (clxxiii). Alluding obliquely to the scandal involving Montagu and the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, Barbauld declares that "the public will judge which was most estimable, she whose conduct banished her from those whom birth entitled her to associate, or he who, by his merit, raised himself above the class whence he drew his humble origin" (clxxv).¹¹ Though condemning the over-valuation of rank in *Pamela*, Barbauld never challenges the existence of class hierarchy. As in "Against Inconsistency," she defends the merit of the lower orders, praising Pamela's parents for illustrating "English low life, in its

most respectable garb; made respectable by strict honesty, humility, patience of labours, and domestic affection; the whole rendered saintly and venerable by a touching air of piety and resignation which pervades all their sentiments” (lxi).

There are hints in the “Life of Richardson” that Barbauld looks forward to a final eradication of worldly distinctions in heaven. Amidst her praise of Richardson's writings is the claim that they enable us to “rise better prepared to meet the ills of this life with firmness, and to perform our respective parts on the great theatre of life” (xxi). The notion of life as a theatre recurs at a number of points in Barbauld's writing. The speaker of “An Address to the Deity” bids “earth's gay pageants cease” (18). “To the Baron de Stonne, who had wished at the next Transit of Mercury to find himself again between Mrs. La Borde and Mrs. Barbauld” refers to the “pageant” (59) and “passing show” (60) of life, while “An Autumnal Thought, 1795” looks forward to the time when “[t]he curtain drops, life's day is o'er” (28). “Washing-Day” concludes with an allusion to Jacques' famous speech comparing all the world to a stage. Collectively, Barbauld's repeated invocation of the notion of life as a theatre suggests a perception of life as essentially the performance of assigned roles which we might look forward to relinquishing in heaven. The “Life of Richardson” ends with a reminder of the vanity of human life, and an anticipation of heaven.

Barbauld's editorial commentary for *The British Novelists* (1810) recapitulates the tensions of the “Life of Richardson.” As in the “Life of Richardson,” the author devotes significant effort to evaluating the effects of environment -- and especially to evaluating the effects of education -- on the development of the character and literary career of different authors. A particularly striking example occurs in the biography of Henry Fielding.

Recounting the interruption of Fielding's studies at Leyden due to "pecuniary difficulties," Barbauld contends that "had Fielding continued at Leyden he would have been a different person" (18: ii). She sees the direction of Fielding's literary career as largely determined by his classical education, separating him markedly from writers such as Daniel Defoe or Richardson. Of Defoe, Barbauld observes in *The British Novelists* that his "education was a common one, and none of his works bear (sic) any marks of that polish and elegance of style which is the mingled result of a classical education and of associating with the more cultivated order of society" (16: i).

Barbauld's literary analysis in *The British Novelists* also reflects an awareness of the effects of the environment and education on the formation of the self. One of Barbauld's problems with Johnson's *Rasselas* has to do with its insistence upon the difficulty of making a "choice of life," which she sees as a failure to recognize the influence of circumstance over the course of human development. Barbauld agrees that it is difficult for "an insulated being, detached from all connexions and all duties" to decide on a "choice of life" based purely on the faculty of reason. In her view, "a merely reasoning man will be likely to make no choice." Nevertheless, it is her point that "no man is so insulated: we are woven into the web of society, and to each individual it is seldom dubious what *he* shall do" (26: iii). Like the "Life of Richardson," *The British Novelists* praises the achievements that might be realized through education. Robert Bage, we are told, like Richardson, never received much of a formal education, but through books managed to teach himself a number of modern languages, as well as advanced mathematics. His academic accomplishments provoke the reflection, echoing the "Life of Richardson," that "[a] man is seldom so closely employed in business as

not to have leisure for reading, if he has acquired a love for it" (48: i). The editorial commentary of *The British Novelists* is a little less explicit than that of the "Life of Richardson" in drawing out the political implications of the Lockean conception of the self. While recording the political affiliations of different writers, Barbauld is generally careful to preserve editorial impartiality. For example, when she describes Bage's *Hermesprong* (1796) as "democratical in its tendency," noting that "[i]t was published at a time when sentiments of that nature were prevalent with a large class of people, and it was much read" (48: ii), there is no clue that Barbauld was among that "large class of people." She cannot entirely avoid showing her own convictions. Alluding to accusations that Defoe sometimes sacrificed his Whig principles for monetary reward, Barbauld remarks, "it is to be feared his integrity was not quite equal to his abilities" (16: iv). In her discussion of Defoe's poetry, she singles out for commendation his "Reformation of Manners," which denounces the slave trade in "strong invective." Her prefatory material to *Joseph Andrews* (1742) takes particular note of Fielding's pamphlets addressing the problem of crime and the need for a system of poor relief. Her analysis of characterization in *Tom Jones* (1749) comes the closest to affirming the universal equality of man in her ridicule of Squire Western's conception of the rich and the poor as "beings of a different species" (18: xxii). Like the "Life of Richardson," however, *The British Novelists* series accepts nature's direction of human development. Genius or intellect again is something that is inherent, as are certain aspects of temperament. We hear, for instance, that Defoe is "a man of truly original genius" (16: i), and that Bage "was early distinguished for the vigour of his intellectual powers and his love for knowledge" (48: i). Barbauld distinguishes Fielding's "disposition for sensual pleasures" (18: ii). She sees Tobias

Smollet's "high independent spirit" not so much a "matter of principle" as one of "temper"(30: xiv-v). In her analysis of Johnson's *Rasselas* she asserts that we must consider not only a man's "particular position," and "his early associations," but also "his honest partialities," and "his individual propensities" in recommending a "*choice of life.*"

Accepting the role of nature in human development, *The British Novelists* takes the opportunity, on a few occasions, to sound a cautionary note on the subject of political reform. In her discussion of Elizabeth Inchbald's novel *Nature and Art* (1797), which introduces two young male protagonists, "one of whom is educated in all the ideas and usages of civilized life; the other (the child of Nature) without any regard to them," in order to set out democratic principles, she accuses Inchbald of promoting utopian schemes, noting that it is easy to criticize the social system, but difficult to come up with viable reforms. In her view, Inchbald's

remarks [are] more epigrammatic than logical, on the differences between the rich and the poor, the regard paid to rank, and such topics, on which it is easy to dilate with an appearance of reason and humanity, while it requires a much profounder philosopher to suggest any alterations in the social system, which would not be rather utopian than beneficial. (28: iii)

A Legacy for Young Ladies (1825) offers a kind of summary of Barbauld's reflections on the development of the self. The collection contains a selection of pieces chosen by Lucy Aikin from different points in Barbauld's literary career, some of which had been published already, and others which were discovered among Barbauld's papers after her death. Barbauld's complex understanding of the development of the self emerges perhaps most

clearly in the playful composition, "Letter from Grimalkin to Selima," written as parting advice to a kitten from her mother. On the one hand, Grimalkin emphasizes the shaping of her daughter's character through education, urging Selima not to forget her early lessons. She dwells at greatest length upon the values of self-restraint and industry, which will assure her daughter of success in her new household. By way of encouragement she tells her daughter that the most luxurious food and plate "could never give you such true enjoyment as the commonest food procured by the labour of your own paws" (114). On the other hand, Grimalkin accepts that the development of the self is circumscribed by nature. "Being grave is in my nature," she informs her daughter, "I have pored by moonlight over Locke and Edgeworth and Mr. Hamilton, and the laws of association, but after much cogitation, I am only convinced of this, that kittens will be kittens, and old cats old cats" (115). Her acceptance of the role of nature in the development of the self underlies her repeated advice to her daughter never to forget her station in life. She was furnished with the resources to catch rodents, and that is her primary purpose. One of the reasons she should not accustom herself to luxurious food is that it is beyond her station. In "On Expense: A Dialogue," written as a conversation between father and daughter, Barbauld translates into human terms some of the same points as "Letter from Grimalkin to Selima." "On Expense: A Dialogue" offers yet another tribute to capitalism, where the father tells the story of a couple who lived about a century ago in one of "our rich trading towns," recounting "they soon got forward in the world, as industrious people generally do, and were able to purchase one thing after another" (150). Accentuating the importance of industry and self-governance, he echoes Grimalkin almost word for word in his statement that "[w]e do not receive pleasure long

from any thing that is not bought with our own labour" (149).

Another piece in the *Legacy*, "The Rich and the Poor: A Dialogue," specifically highlights the ambivalence of Barbauld's position on rank. The dialogue begins with the young Harriet Beechwood's scandalized report to her mother that Lady Mary's gardener has declined an offer to put his daughter in a charity school, declaring that he prefers to pay for her education through the efforts of his own labour. After establishing that the gardener has so far managed to pay for his daughter's education perfectly well, Mrs. Beechwood praises the gardener, arguing that his action "indicates something of a noble and generous spirit" (34), expressing the wish that "the lower classes had more honourable pride" (35).

According to her, there are degrees of rank among the poor as among the rich that should be observed. It is a sign of disrespect when the rich fail to observe the degrees of rank among their servants. She insists that "[b]etween the greater part of those we call the different classes, there is only the difference between less and more ... but there is a real and essential difference between the man who provides for his family by his own exertions, and him who is supported by charity" (36). When her daughter mentions the complaints of the rich against the perceived extravagancy of the poor, she defends the right of the poor to dispose of their income as they see fit. In her view, all ranks might be accused of extravagancy, and "[t]he only security against improper expense is dignity of mind, and moderation; these are not common in any rank; and I do not know why we should expect them to be more common among the lower and uneducated than among the higher" (37). To charges that the poor make themselves ridiculous to the rich with their vulgar attempts at emulation, she responds that taste is largely subjective. The poor do not make themselves ridiculous to those they

seek to impress. If the rich display a superior taste to the poor it is only because they have had proper opportunities to cultivate it, and have had the money to realize it. "The feelings of vanity are exactly the same in a countess' daughter dancing at court, and a milkwoman figuring at a country hop" (38). Thus, Barbauld affirms once more the existence of a universal human nature. In her view, feelings and motivations are the same in every rank. Throughout the dialogue she consistently registers the effects of education in generating distinctions between the rich and the poor that serve to blur this fact. She insists that the poor have an entitlement to the same respect as the rich. They are not to be patronized even by benevolent superiors. The preoccupation with the education of the gardener's daughter suggests a hope that through education the poor will improve their lot. Barbauld again praises the values that enable social and economic advancement, including industry, as well as, in this instance, self-reliance. At the same time, she also demonstrates a lack of tolerance for those who make no contribution to society. Indeed, she accuses the majority of those whose families must be supported by charity as "idle," "profligate," and "dissolute." Neither they nor their families should be allowed to starve, she believes, but they should not be accorded the same respect as those who can support themselves. "To be a pauper," says Mrs. Beechwood, "is often the consequence of vice; and where it is not, it justly degrades a man from his rank in society" (35). It is Barbauld's assumption that there are opportunities in the current system for those who want them, downplaying any inequities. Significantly, rather than an eradication of rank, she advocates a more careful observation of it, tacitly suggesting that the observation of degrees of rank functions as an incentive to get ahead. She clearly regards rank as, potentially at least, a reflection of merit, and as such, something that is

desirable.¹²

In all of this, Barbauld remains clearly within the frame laid out by Locke. In the two *Treatises*, Locke derives a thesis concerning the fundamental political equality of man based on the assumption of certain common human faculties of mind. Implicitly drawing upon his definition of a person in the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity” in the *Essay*, he seeks to guarantee universal rights to “Life, the Liberty, Health, Limb ... [and] Goods” (2.6: 289). Sharing “the same common Nature, Faculties and Powers,” men, in his view, “ought to partake in the same common Rights and Priviledges, till the manifest appointment of God ... can be produced to shew any particular Persons Supremacy, or a Mans own consent subjects him to a Superior” (1.67: 208). Yet Locke readily admits the existence of many degrees of difference between men, which entitle them to different degrees of wealth and power.

“Though I have said,” he writes,

[t]hat all Men by Nature are equal, I cannot be supposed to understand all sorts of *Equality*: *Age* or *Virtue* may give Men a just Precedency: *Excellency of Parts and Merit* may place others above the Common Level: *Birth* may subject some, and *Alliance* or *Benefits* others, to pay an Observance to those to whom Nature, Gratitude, or other Respects may have made it due; and yet all this consists with the *Equality*, which all Men are in, in respect of Jurisdiction or Dominion one over another, which was the *Equality* I ... spoke of, as proper to the Business in hand, being that *equal Right* that every Man hath, *to his natural Freedom*, without being subjected to the Will or Authority of any other Man. (2.54: 322)

Chapter 4

Identity and Feminism

Within the relatively short history of renewed critical interest in Barbauld's writing, feminist evaluations of her have been strikingly mixed. A number of critics have labelled her unfeminist, claiming not only that she co-operated in her own oppression as a woman, but also that she actively contributed to the oppression of other women, in upholding patriarchal assumptions about what was appropriate for each of the sexes. Others have located her within a tradition of rational enlightenment feminism alongside such figures as Catherine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft.¹ Certainly, Barbauld would have hesitated to label herself a feminist. While dissatisfied with the position of women in eighteenth-century Great Britain, she did not associate herself with the female radicals. Her writings expose an initially somewhat perplexing stance on the subject of sexual difference, at some points seeming to affirm, and at other points seeming to deny the existence of essential differences between the male and female mind. Placing her statements on sexual difference in the context of eighteenth-century debate over personal identity serves to clarify the tensions and occasional seeming contradictions in her thought on this subject. As becomes clear, it is possible to trace Barbauld's ambivalent statements on the subject of sexual difference to her simultaneous allegiance to different philosophical theories of identity.

In shifting the foundation of identity from substance to consciousness, Locke's theory of personal identity had special implications for women, as we have already discussed. The concepts of the body and the soul were both implicated in misogynist arguments that had been invoked to perpetuate women's subordination, as women's intellectual and moral inferiority was assumed on the basis of medical understandings of the female body, and on the basis of evidence from the Bible. Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness encourages women to identify themselves with the mind as opposed to the soul or the body, while at the same

time calling into question the existence of essential differences between male and female mind. The definition of a person as “a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places[,] ... which it does only by ... consciousness,” suggests that the minds of men and women develop according to the same principles, applying reason and reflection to analyse the information coming in through the senses. This definition implicitly rejects the Aristotelian claim that women lack the same faculties of reason and reflection as men. Indeed, Locke entirely rejects the possibility of essential differences between the minds of the sexes in the suggestion that the self has no existence apart from experience, and identity emerges as consciousness extends backwards to encompass past action and thought. Such an assumption raised attractive possibilities for eighteenth-century women, in offering a basis for challenging a rigid sexual hierarchy. Women could claim equality with men on the basis of a shared capacity for reason and reflection. They could dismiss apparent evidence of women's intellectual inferiority as a product of inadequate education, calling for reforms to female education in order to realize a relationship of equality with men. Taken to its logical conclusion, Locke's theory of personal identity invited a complete re-visioning of gender roles, indeed, a possible eradication of prescribed gender roles, though no one in the eighteenth century was prepared to go that far.

At the same time, Locke's acceptance of the essential truth of the Christian orthodox conception of the self, and his suggestion of some connection between consciousness and substance, though he refused make any pronouncements about what the exact nature of that connection might be, made him appealing to those who wanted to uphold a modified vision of

the orthodox Christian conception of the self -- to reform relations between the sexes without essentially disturbing existing social arrangements.

My survey of Barbauld's writings has already revealed her ongoing and complex negotiation of the theories of self-in-consciousness and self-as-substance, and the connections between that negotiation and her political ideology. There are equally important connections between Barbauld's engagement in the debate over personal identity and her feminist ideology, which will be the purpose of this chapter to clarify.

Beginning with her earliest poetry, there is evidence of an intersection between Barbauld's engagement in the debate over personal identity and her reflections on sexual difference and social arrangements between men and women -- an intersection which is intermittently reaffirmed throughout her literary career. Based on her early poetry, it appears that Barbauld supports women's claims to the same faculties of reason and reflection as men. A number of poems from her days at Warrington celebrate a "social circle" in which men and women interact as intellectual equals. Yet Barbauld's early poetry also reveals her acceptance of women's primary responsibility as wives and mothers, and their general exclusion from professional life. There are some signs of struggle. Barbauld only gradually reconciles herself to the constraints of female existence. At the same time, she makes a consolidated attempt to valorize the activities of women as wives and mothers. The writings composed at Palgrave after her marriage to Rochemont suggest that by this point the reconciliation is complete. The reconciliation seems to have been partially disturbed by Barbauld's voyage to the continent in 1785-86. At least one of her political pamphlets written in the 1790s expresses the hope that liberal political reforms will carry over into the institution of marriage.

Provoked, apparently, by Wollstonecraft's attack against one of her poems in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Barbauld denounces women's calls for rights in another poem, "The Rights of Woman" (1792; 1825), although in later writings seems to recover her equilibrium. Her literary criticism in the early decades of the nineteenth century consistently champions female learning, although also contains relatively little protest against the restrictions of female existence. *A Legacy for Young Ladies* (1825), which contains a selection of writings spanning Barbauld's entire literary career chosen by her niece Lucy Aikin, effectively recapitulates her attitudes on sexual difference and relations between the sexes. It also indirectly reconnects Barbauld's feminist ideology to her engagement in eighteenth-century debate over personal identity by including several pieces in which Barbauld wrestles with the problem of personal identity.

I.

In the last chapter, I cited Barbauld's earliest surviving poem, "On Mrs. Priestley's Leaving Warrington" (1767?; 1994), as evidence of her working through the implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. As already discussed, the description of the Priestleys' daughter at the end of the poem invokes the Lockean conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, seeming to affirm Barbauld's support for Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness. Earlier on in the poem, however, the poet signals her endorsement of the Christian orthodox view of the self in imagining the subject of the poem as a "winged soul" ascending "beyond the cloud-wrapt sky" (97). There is a possible attempt to reconcile the theories of self-in-

consciousness and self-as-substance in the allusion to the “conscious soul” (86), attesting to an overlapping of consciousness and substance. In the opening description of Joseph Priestley's wife Mary, the poet uses the terms mind and soul interchangeably, referring to her subject as “[a] soul refined, exalted far beyond/ The common level of a blameless mind” (27-28).

The same poem sets out Barbauld's earliest thoughts on the subject of the sexual difference and relations between men and women. The poet offers a tribute to Amanda, Barbauld's poetic name for Mary Priestley, whom she befriended when the Priestleys lived at Warrington during the 1760's. Barbauld describes her friend in the following terms:

As some tall lily rears its graceful head
 And breathes its sweetness in the silent shade,
 So bloomed Amanda in the green retreats
 Of Erthig's woods, and Wrexham's peaceful seats --
 Blest was that day when Hymen's happy pow'r
 Transplanted to our plains so fair a flower
 And bid each eye that could discern approve,
 And every bosom that could feel to love --.
 Such early virtue in so bright a form!
 So cool a judgement, and a heart so warm.
 A soul refined, exalted far beyond
 The common level of a blameless mind,
 With various fancy's lively powers endued,

With steady patience, and calm fortitude --
 Generous without one thought of mean allay,
 Clear as the light, and open as the day --
 By every muse, by every grace inspired,
 By taste enlightened, and by genius fired -
 Such, Warrington, was once thy proudest boast,
 Thy sorrow now -- to thee for ever lost. (17-36)

This description of Amanda suggests a careful negotiation. In her display of “[s]o cool a judgement,” Amanda clearly attests to women's capacity for reason and reflection. Indeed, she affirms women's potential achievement of the highest standard of moral and intellectual development.² In her moral and intellectual development, she has been Warrington's “proudest boast.” She has presided over “a social circle” anticipating the bluestocking salons in which Barbauld later participated in London. As the poet recounts,

... none within that circle's magic bound,
 But sprightly spirits move[d] their chearful round.
 No cold reserve, suspicion, sullen care,
 Or dark unfriendly passions enter there,
 But pleasing fires of lively fancy play,
 And wisdom mingles her serener ray. (44-48)

Amanda's gatherings have provided an opportunity for men and women associated with the Warrington Academy to interact as equals. It was at Warrington that Barbauld engaged and held her own in intellectual discussions with male scholars much older than herself, including

Joseph Priestley and William Enfield, both colleagues of her father. Barbauld's language in this passage indirectly recalls Pope's description of the Cave of Spleen in *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), inviting an implicit contrast between the male and female interaction in that poem and this one. "Dark unfriendly passions" seem effectively to characterize the relationship between the belles and the beaux in *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), and between the belles as well, when Clarissa takes the Baron's side against Belinda. The image of the circle in Barbauld's poem indirectly underscores the democratic nature of male and female interaction in this society. Amanda herself anticipates the bluestocking hostess Elizabeth Vesey, as described in Hannah More's *The Bas Bleu; or, Conversation* (1786), exhibiting an almost an admirable ability to generate social cohesion. In *The Bas Bleu*, More characterizes Vesey an "enchantress"(180) dispelling "dull ceremony" (186) and successfully amalgamating apparently disparate elements of society.

Yet the poet is careful to make no extreme claims on behalf of women. Despite her moral and intellectual attainments, Amanda remains a picture of femininity, as emphasized in her resemblance to a "tall lily," and her association with feeling, fancy, and taste. The social circle over which she has presided retains a discernibly domestic aspect, which appears in the poet's observation that the "social genius of gay liberal mirth/ Still hover[s] round its favourite seat of rest/ Mourn[ing] like a dove disturbed from its loved nest" (62). When the poet expresses her good wishes for the Priestleys' future life together, she hopes that Amanda will enjoy "friendship's social charms" along with "[e]ach pleasing care, and soft domestic joy" (92). Barbauld thus takes a significantly expanded view of the domestic sphere, quite different, for instance, from the view of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, though she too

acknowledges a fundamental division in the spheres of male and female activity. In a letter from London, 1771, Barbauld applauds married women who remain “open to ... other endearing relation and friendly sentiment” (2: 59), continuing to participate in a wide social circle, and to cultivate friendships. The delineation of Amanda's activities as wife and mother demonstrates an early attempt to elevate the importance of women's contribution to society, despite their general exclusion from professional careers. The lines “While lisping tongues thy precepts shall repeat,/ And little hearts with growing fondness beat” (93-94) specifically emphasize Amanda's employment in educating her children.

The same tension in Barbauld's views on sexual difference and relations between the sexes emerges in “To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she neglected him, October 20th 1768” (1768; 1994). The occasion of this poem was Barbauld's failure to answer a letter from her brother while he was away studying surgery at Manchester. After begging her brother's forgiveness, the poet confesses that his complaint has made her half-triumphant, since it confirms the special bond between them, which they have shared since they were infants. As the poet reminds her brother,

In life's young dawn the impulse first begun,
 And gather'd strength from ev'ry circling sun:
 The first warm impulse which our breasts did move,
 'Twas sympathy, before we knew to love.
 As hand in hand with innocence we stray'd
 Embosom'd deep in Kibworth's tufted shade;
 Where both encircled in one household band,

And both obedient to one mild command,
 Life's first fair dawn with transport we beheld,
 And simple pleasures, hardly since excelled.
 How like two scions on one stem we grew,
 And how from the same lips one precept drew:
 "Let love for ever join your hearts." (21-29)

Barbauld thus contradicts the existence of essential differences between the sexes. As infants, brother and sister appear virtually identical: "two scions on one stem," obeying the same commands, and sharing the same activities. At this point, they have no conception that there is any difference between them; they are oblivious to the very notion of sexual difference. The poet, significantly, envisions this time of obliviousness to sexual difference as one of prelapsarian innocence and joy. The image of the poet and her brother innocently straying "hand in hand" through nature evokes Milton's descriptions of Adam and Eve before the fall in *Paradise Lost*. There is only a subtle sign of what it is to come in the overshadowing figure of the mother who looks after the children and oversees their instruction.

At this point, the poet rebelliously mourns that she and her brother no longer share the same academic pursuits. As she recounts, "[t]hose hours are now no more, which smiling flew/ And the same studies saw us now pursue" (48-49). Instead, she observes to her brother,

Our path divides -- to thee fair fate assign'd
 The nobler labours of a manly mind:
 While mine, more humble works, and lower cares,

Less shining toils, and meaner praises shares. (50-53)

The image of the dividing path indirectly sustains the Miltonic echo, evoking the image of the path at the end of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which Adam and Eve embark upon when they are expelled from Eden, though theirs is not divided. The allusion to "fate" rather than providence hints at a degree of arbitrariness, or at least, a perception of arbitrariness, in the assignment of different male and female roles in society. In this context, the adjective "fair" achieves only a slightly softening effect; indeed it may also convey a subtle irony. The poet not only mourns but also to some extent resents the change that has taken place. This appears clear in the poet's following exclamation, "Yet sure in different moulds ... [our minds] were not cast/ Nor stamp'd with separate sentiments and taste" (54-55). In these lines, Barbauld most explicitly rejects the view that the mind is inherently gendered. For all this, however, the poet still fundamentally accepts that men and women have different designated roles in society. Having uttered these lines, she immediately admonishes herself,

But hush my heart! Nor strive to soar too high
 Nor for the tree of knowledge vainly sigh;
 Check the fond love of science and of fame,
 A bright, but ah! A too devouring flame.
 Content remain within thy bounded sphere,
 For fancy blooms, the virtues flourish there. (56-61)

This passage exposes the poet's struggle to subdue her feelings of resentment and sorrow, and to achieve a state of proper resignation. The struggle is difficult, given that she shares her brother's "fond love of science and of fame." Yet the allusion to "the tree of knowledge"

declares her belief that it is providence after all that dictates men and women's respective roles in society. The poet concedes that she must reconcile herself to the constraints of female existence. There is no sign, however, that she regards this act as proof of women's inferiority. She acknowledges that God has assigned different places to men and women in society, but interprets this assignment as accidental, which she indirectly implies in her repetition of the phrase "fair fate," in the lines "To thee, fair fate the pleasing task decrees,/ To bring the sick man health, the tortured ease" (61-62). If we recall, Locke takes much the same position in the first *Treatise*. Without contesting that God in Genesis sets Eve below Adam, as punishment for her greater transgression, he strategically reinterprets the implications of that act in section 47. In his view, God's punishment of Eve is not a mark of women's inferiority to men. The subjection of women he considers to be merely accidental, and as such, not necessarily permanent. As he insists, God "only fortels what should be the Womans Lot, how by his Providence he would order it so, that she should be subject to her husband, as we see that generally the Laws and customs of Nations have ordered it so" (1.47: 192). He does not believe that God wants women to remain forever in their state of subjection, or to take no steps to improve their lot. As a woman, Barbauld has more difficulty than Locke has in accepting separate spheres of activity for men and women. There remains a continuing sense of frustration with the limited opportunities for fulfilment within the domestic sphere, underscored in the adjective "bounded."

In Barbauld's early poetry, we see her most fully working through the complexity of her views on the subject of sexual difference and arrangements between men and women in her "Characters," the majority of which have been dated to her years at Warrington during the

early 1770's, though published at different points.³ These are “{A Character of Sarah Hallowell Vaughn};” “{A Character of Joseph Priestley};” “{Susannah Barbauld Marissal};” “{Martha Jennings};” “{Sarah Taylor Rigby};” “{Sarah Rigby};” “{Elizabeth Rigby};” “{Mr. and Mrs. Edwards};” “{Mary Holland Enfield};” “{William Enfield};” “{Mrs. Fenton};” “{John Aikin};” and “A Character ('Be this Philander's praise').” There are also a number of other poems from Barbauld's days at Warrington not explicitly identified as characters, but which qualify as such: “On the Death of Mrs. Jennings”(1770; 1772); “On a Lady's Writing” (n.d.; 1772); “To a Lady, with some painted Flowers” (n.d.; 1772); and “Verses on Mrs. Rowe”(n.d.; 1772).

If we catalogue the words and phrases Barbauld employs to describe her “Characters,” we discover some revealing patterns. The poet attributes an “active mind,” “sense” and “genius” to both male and female “Characters,” testifying that she sees the sexes as sharing at least some of the same faculties of mind. Two of Barbauld's male “Characters,” “{A Character of Joseph Priestley}” and “{John Aikin}” offer early tributes to the poet's own interaction with men as intellectual equals. In “{A Character of Joseph Priestley};” the poet fondly remembers the “social circle” celebrated in “On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington” in the allusion to “the vacant smile, the social hours/ Which charm'd us once, for once those scenes were ours” (15-16), leading her to mourn the “absent friend” (18). “{John Aikin}” evokes her early intellectual conversations with her brother in the allusion to the “hours/ Of still domestic leisure,”

Of friendship, peace, and elegant delight

Beneath poetic shades, where leads the Muse

Through walks of fragrance, and the fairy groves

Where young ideas blossom ... (6-11)

Indeed, we might see the “Characters” as issuing a challenge to eighteenth-century assumptions concerning essential differences between the sexes. Two of the early “Characters,” one male and one female, illustrate a particularly striking balance of “masculine” and “feminine” attributes. The first is written in tribute to Martha Jennings, Barbauld's first cousin and sister-in-law. The poet represents Martha Jennings as “Of gentle manners, and of taste refin'd,/ With all the graces of a polish'd mind” (1-2), while always speaking “[c]lear sense and truth” (3). She marvels,

So pois'd her feelings, so compos'd her soul,

So subject all to reason's calm controul,

One only passion, strong and unconfi'd,

Disturb'd the balance of her even mind:

One passion rul'd despotic in her breast,

In every word, and look, and thought confest;

But that was Love, and Love delights to bless

The generous transports of a fond excess. (9-16)

The terms of description suggest a kind of compromise, as the poet insists upon her subject's possession of the faculties of reason and reflection while at the same time she remains obviously feminine. It is worth noting that Wollstonecraft was sufficiently impressed with “{Martha Jennings}” to include it in her anthology *The Female Reader* (1789). Like “{Martha Jennings},” “A Character ('Be this Philander's praise'),” balances the head and

heart. The poet praises Philander for “a well-tuned mind,/ Lofty as man, and more than woman kind[,]” (1-2), as well as “[a] virgin soul ... spotless yet and bright” (3). We are told,

Virtue in him from no cold precept flow'd,
 But with a vigorous, genuine ardour glow'd;
 So pure his feelings and his sense so strong,
 Seldom his head, his heart was never wrong;
 Gentle to others, to himself severe,
 And mild from pity only, not from fear.
 Tender yet firm, and prudent without art,
 The sweetest manners and the gentlest heart.
 In so fair a mind there reign'd a fault,
 'T was sensibility too finely wrought,
 Too Quickly roused, too exquisite for peace,
 Too deeply thoughtful for unmingled ease.
 His griefs were like his joys, too far refined
 To reach the dull or touch the selfish mind ... (5-18)

The description of Philander offers the same kind of careful balance of opposites as that of Martha Jennings, encouraging men and women to modify their behaviour to conform more closely with one another.

Yet in the “Characters” Barbauld also applies certain terms exclusively to one sex or the other, in a way that suggests that she sees certain differences between the sexes, though whether natural or cultivated it is not clear. The most common adjectives used to designate

only female characters are “winning,” “soft,” “fair,” “gay,” and “mild.” The most common nouns are “grace,” “beauty,” “love,” and “pride.” Some of the adjectives used to designate only the male “Characters” include “lofty,” “philosophic,” “vigorous” and “firm.” Barbauld thus affirms a basis of similarity between the sexes while also aiming to preserve a certain distinction between them that justifies their continuing relegation to separate spheres of activity.

Other writings from the same period emphasize the differences rather than the similarities between the sexes. Barbauld's essay “On Monastic Institutions” (1773) makes passing allusion to “the softness and compassion of the sex” (2: 212), while “An Inquiry into those kinds of distress which excite agreeable sensations” (1773) suggests that women are “more susceptible of that sudden swell of sensibility which occasions tears” (2: 225) than men. Indirectly, such passages serve to validate the relegation of men and women to different spheres of activity. Women's affectionate and sentimental turn of mind fits them perfectly for the domestic sphere, while men's independent and unsentimental turn of mind enables them to function effectively in the public sphere. Again, it is not clear whether Barbauld regards identified differences between the male and female mind as essential or not. Certainly, it is possible that her views on this point fluctuated. Whatever her views were, however, she is evidently anxious that feminist reforms not be carried too far. In “Against Inconsistency in our Expectations” (1773), Barbauld insists that “[t]here is a cast of manners peculiar and becoming to each age, sex and profession; one, therefore should not throw out illiberal and commonplace censures against another. Each is perfect in its kind. A woman as a woman; a tradesman as a tradesman” (2: 194). She disapproves of what she regards as an increasing

failure in society to preserve the character of separate ranks and professions, as well as of different sexes.

Barbauld's descriptions of the activities of her male and female "Characters" affirm the view that men and women have different roles to fulfil in society. The poet celebrates the achievements of male "Characters" in their professional capacities, most notably those of Joseph Priestley and John Aikin. She bids Priestley "[p]ursue the track thy ardent genius shows" (7), "[t]ravel the various map of science o'er,/ Record past wonders and discover more!" (10). She speaks of John Aikin, "[c]alm, philosophic, thoughtful .../ With stores of various knowledge" (4), investigating "the powers/ That trace our secret causes, and unveil/ Great Nature's awful face" (5-6). In contrast, Barbauld celebrates the achievements of female "Characters" as daughters, wives and mothers. "{A Character of Sarah Hallowell Vaughan}" honours its subject as "great in useful works, hung o'er the loom (3)," "[o]bscure, in sober dignity retir'd" (5), declaring that she "more deserved, than sought to be admired" (6). "{Sarah Taylor Rigby}" celebrates the "matron grace" and bustling domestic activity of its subject. "{Mary Holland Enfield}" presents an idealized picture of motherhood in the figure of Maria, whose "two smiling infants" she describes as "[m]ore lovely fruit than all Pomona's store/ Her ruddy orchards, or her golden pride" (7-8).

A number of Barbauld's other early poems also celebrate women in the role of daughters, wives, and mothers. "To Miss R{igby}, on her Attendance upon her Mother at Buxton" (1769?; 1772) praises a young female friend who renounces possible conquests during the prime of her beauty in order to nurse her sick mother. As the poet advises her friend, "[n]ot with the transient praise those charms can boast,/ Shall thy fair frame and gentle

deeds be lost” (35-36). Wollstonecraft is perhaps thinking of the description of Sarah Rigby in line one of “To Miss R{igby}” as a “blooming beauty in the noon of power” in the following question she poses in the *Vindication*: “And why do ... [women] not discover, when 'in the noon of beauty's power,' that they are treated like queens only to be deluded by hollow respect, till they are led to resign, or not assume, their natural prerogative?” (56).

The general prevalence of images of childbirth and motherhood in Barbauld's early poetry conveys a sense of the overwhelming and inescapable force of biology. As well as the number of poems dedicated to mothers, Barbauld routinely exploits the analogy of motherhood and childbirth in her early poetry, including “An Address to the Deity,” “An Inventory of the Furniture in Dr. Priestley's Study” (1771?; 1825), “The Groans of the Tankard” (n.d.; 1772), and “A Summer Evening's Meditation.”

In the “Characters,” there is a discernible effort to dignify the traditional activities associated with women, and particularly the role of the mother-teacher. We see this effort perhaps most strikingly in “{A Character of Sarah Hallowell Vaughan}.” The poet sees in her subject a descendant of “the dames of old heroic days” (1), “[t]he mighty mothers of immortal Rome” (4), who “[b]ade lovers, brothers, sons aspire to fame;/ In the young bosom cherish'd virtue's seed,/ The secret springs of many a godlike deed” (12-14). As such, “{A Character of Sarah Hallowell Vaughn}” anticipates Wollstonecraft's instrumental feminist arguments in the *Vindication* that women should be educated based on their role in raising and influencing male citizens, granting women indirect impact over public affairs through their relationships with men. Wollstonecraft goes farther than Barbauld in occasionally suggesting that women might have the same professional careers as men if they so desired, and that

women's achievements, as men's, were actually impeded by marriage. Interestingly, there are hints in Barbauld's "Characters" that she might have at least sometimes shared Wollstonecraft's reservations on marriage. "{Mary Holland Enfield}" contains a suggestive allusion to the myth of Atalanta. The poet compares her friend's two beautiful infants to the apples that lose Atalanta her race to Hippomenes, forcing her to marry her competitor and to renounce the racing and hunting activities that once earned her inclusion in the Calydonian boar-hunt.

Other early poems by Barbauld elevate motherhood to an even higher level than the "Characters." "Address to the Deity" (1767; 1772), and "A Summer Evening's Meditation" (n.d.; 1772) both envision God as a mother. Towards the end of "A Summer Evening's Meditation," the poet declares to God, "thou hast a gentler voice,/ That whispers comfort to the swelling heart" (109-110). This declaration follows soon after her vision of space in distinctly maternal terms, alluding to "embryo systems and unkindled suns" that "[s]leep in the womb of chaos" (96-97). "Address to the Deity" envisions God specifically in the capacity of the mother-teacher. Towards the end of "Address to the Deity," the poet exclaims,

Thy hopes shall animate my drooping soul,
 Thy precepts guide me, and thy fear controul.
 Thus shall I rest, unmov'd by all alarms,
 Secure within the temple of thine arms ... (66-70)

To some extent, Barbauld's "Characters" might be seen generally to valorize the "feminine" above the "masculine," as the poet honours both male and female characters most highly in their capacity to be gentle, soothing, and pleasing to others. The phrases

“[knowing] how to please,” “form'd to please,” and “born to please;” “gentle manners,” “gentle to others,” “gentlest heart;” and “sooth the heart” are attributed variously to men and women. Barbauld most admires her brother as someone “[w]hose tender hand, lenient of human woes,/ Wards off the dart of death, and smooths the couch/ Of torturing anguish ...” (12-14).

For all this, Barbauld's early poetry also reveals a persisting frustration with the opportunities available to women in the eighteenth century. “Bouts Rimés in Praise of old Maids”(c. 1770; 1828) effectively exposes the drawbacks of both married and single life for women. As Barbauld points out, most of a married woman's life is spent in managing and supervising the running of a household, which demands a great deal of tedious and often difficult labour, highlighted in the line “No household cares your free enjoyments Saddle” (3). When the poet addresses the subjects of her verse: “Yet shall you never mourn your husband Fickle/ Or children cropt by death's untimely Sickle” (9-10) the rhyme is exaggerated, but the point is not. While she believes that marriage grants women much more satisfaction than single life, she is not blind to the problems married women face.

Barbauld's poetic treatments of love expose it as a frequently irrational, unstable and destructive force. Her series of pastoral *Songs*, first published in Aikin's *The Origins of Song-Writing* (1772) illustrate this with particular clarity. In “Song IV,” for instance, a youth mourns that he has fallen out of love with Celia, “gentle,” “good,” “kind” and “true,” and in love with Chloris, “false and vain” (16), renouncing an attachment “[r]eason and taste approv'd” (3) for one he knows will be the cause of his ultimate destruction, and has already assured the destruction of Celia. “Song V” focuses specifically on the vulnerable position of

women in the love relationship, using the familiar scenario of the forsaken maiden to make the point that “beauty's empire is no mean,/ And woman, either slave or queen,/ Is quickly scorn'd when not ador'd” (16-18). It is this poem, significantly, Wollstonecraft quotes in chapter four of the *Vindication*: “On the State of Degradation to which Woman is Reduced by Various Causes,” to warn her female audience not to place too much faith in the affections of men. After quoting the above lines from Barbauld, Wollstonecraft observes that since “the adoration comes first ... the scorn is not anticipated” (56).

Yet Barbauld has no illusions about the likely prospects of fulfilment for a woman who remains single. Written as an ostensible celebration of the advantages of single female life, Barbauld's “Bouts Rimés in Praise of old Maids” (c. 1770; 1828) actually exposes the emptiness and frustration of the lives of unmarried women. While asserting that single women avoid the cares of marriage and motherhood, and the consequent sacrifice of their liberty, allowing them access to “pleasure's full career” (15), the poet simultaneously hints at the typical frivolity and triviality of their existence, as they seek to mask their feelings of isolation and irrelevance in a whirlwind of social activity, and a preoccupation with fashion. The most important relationship in the life of Barbauld's old maid is significantly with “dear Pug” (14). The bleakness of this portrait of unmarried older women is striking, particularly given Barbauld's familiarity with Sarah Scott's novel *A Description of Millennium Hall* (1762), which presents an account of a group of single women leading a utopian life on a rural estate together, devoting themselves to study and to worthy charitable projects. There is some evidence that Barbauld intends “Bouts Rimés in Praise of old Maids” as a response to Scott's novel. One of the copies of the poem, entitled “The Old Maid's Doom,” includes a

prefatory address to William Enfield, signed from “Millennium hall” by eleven invented female names, which have been thought to represent Barbauld and her friends at Warrington. In contrast to Scott, Barbauld seems to see little means of fulfilment for women outside the context of marriage and motherhood, and to some extent, she also questions the possibility for fulfilment within marriage.⁴

Like the “Bouts Rimés,” Barbauld's poem “Epithalamium” (c.1772; 1825) also mourns the constraints of women's married and unmarried life. The poet presents the bride as the virgin sacrifice for the sufferings of love, a position with which Barbauld perhaps identified. After her engagement, Barbauld was warned by a friend of Rochemont's tendency to madness. She insisted on going forward with the match, out of fear that breaking it off would make him go mad. The poem suggests that marriage is still preferable to single life. The envy of the bride's maiden friends, and the cheerfulness of the bride's mother are encouragement to go through with the ceremony. Yet marriage is clearly not *much* preferable to single life.

“To a Lady, with some painted Flowers” (n.d.; 1772) reiterates the poet's struggle with the constraints of female existence. This is the poem Wollstonecraft singles out for criticism in chapter four of the *Vindication*. Acknowledging her approval of some of Barbauld's other poetic lines, she wonders that Barbauld could employ the “ignoble comparison” between women and flowers: She observes that women's education had been based on a

sensual error ... which robs the whole sex of its dignity, and classes the brown and fair with the smiling flowers that only adorn the land. This has ever been

the language of men, and the fear of departing from a supposed sexual character, has made even women of superior sense adopt the same sentiments.

After quoting the poem in full, she comments, "So the men tell us; but virtue, says reason, used to be acquired by *rough* toils, and careful struggles with worldly *cares*" (54). In this analysis, Wollstonecraft overlooks the point of the poem, which is to celebrate the importance of femininity and to valorize a feminine sphere of activity. At the same time, she is right to complain that the poem reinstates a sexual hierarchy that inadvertently trivializes women. The poem praises women for sweetness, gaiety, delicacy and beauty, through which they provide "pleasure" and "delight," asserting that

[t]o loftier forms are rougher tasks assign'd;
 The sheltering oak resists the stormy wind,
 The tougher yew repels invading foes,
 And the tall pine for future navies grows ... (9-12)

The effect of these lines is implicitly to devalue the importance of women and female activities. Indirectly, the poem also suggests Barbauld's frustrated sense of the limitations of female existence in its opening echo from *Hamlet*. The phrase "[f]lowers to the fair" conflates Ophelia's musings upon flowers during the scene of her madness, and Gertrude's line "Sweets to the sweet!" (5.1.232) as she scatters flowers over Ophelia's grave. This allusion to the story of a woman destroyed by the political machinations of men who were supposed to protect serves to cast a shadow over the image of beautiful, but delicate womanhood that the poem celebrates. The allusion to the flowers in the garden of paradise subtly underscores Barbauld's persisting dissatisfaction with the limitations of female existence, as she recurs to a

time before the original foundation of the sexual hierarchy.

The same tension in Barbauld's views on the subject of sexual difference and social arrangements between the sexes informs her earliest remarks concerning female education. In a letter to Elizabeth Montagu from Warrington, 1774, in which Barbauld declines an invitation to establish a literary academy for young ladies, the author writes, "A kind of Academy for ladies, where they are to be taught in a regular manner the various branches of science, appears to me better calculated to form such characters as the *Précieuses* or *Femmes Savantes* than good wives or agreeable companions." In her view,

[y]oung gentlemen, who are to display their knowledge to the world, should have every motive of emulation, should be formed into regular classes, should read and dispute together, should have all the honours and, if one may so say, the pomp of learning set before them, to call up their ardour ... But young ladies, who ought only to have such a general tincture of knowledge as to make them agreeable companions to a man of sense, and to enable them to find rational entertainment for a solitary hour, should gain these accomplishments in a more quiet and unobserved manner ... (1: xvii)

On the one hand, Barbauld acknowledges women's claims to the faculties of reason and reflection, urging an education that will allow women to be intellectual companions to their husbands, and as she suggests later on in the letter, speaking of the importance of "the care of a mother" (1: xx), effective mother-teachers. In concluding the letter, she admits, "I am sensible the common schools are upon a very bad plan, and believe I could project a better," though she insists "I could not execute it" (1: xxiv). She actually criticizes certain

aspects of Montagu's plan for failing to provide a solid enough intellectual grounding for her female students, noting "I should have little hopes of cultivating a love of knowledge in a young lady of fifteen who came to me ignorant and uncultivated: it is too late then to *begin* to learn" (1: xx). She believes that beginning about the age of nine girls should be taught academic subjects, including "geography, those languages it may be proper for them to learn, grammar, &c." (1: xix).

On the other hand, Barbauld plainly considers that female education should differ from male education in order to prepare girls and boys for the different roles they will assume in life. In order to prepare them to be wives and mothers, she recommends that women submit to a domestic course of study set out by a male relative, along the lines established by Rousseau for his heroine Sophie. She dismisses her own education as "peculiar," and "no rule for others," declaring, "I am full well convinced that to have a too great fondness for books is little favourable to the happiness of a woman" (xix), perhaps an allusion to her mother's disapproval of her own early studies. While Barbauld assumes that men and women share the same faculties of reason and reflection, and both deserve some opportunity to cultivate those faculties, in order to realize a companionate marriage, and perhaps to assert a place of respect and recognition in mixed society, she fears in the cultivation of the female intellect a possible violation of the ideology of the separate spheres.

Perhaps partly from her own course of education, she had inherited an impression of femininity as something that was dangerously fragile. Barbauld's own intellectual precociousness was part of family legend. As a child, Barbauld was attracted to what had been considered traditionally "masculine" subjects, convincing her father to give her lessons in

Greek and Latin, once she had mastered French and Italian. With the help of books from her father's library, she pursued an independent course of studies highly unusual for a young woman of the eighteenth century, in both its range and its depth. Barbauld's intellectual gifts were a source of both pride and anxiety in her parents. Much coaxing was needed before her father would agree to give her lessons in the classics. Her mother never approved of the decision, fearing that her daughter's classical education, combined with her upbringing in a largely masculine environment would compromise her femininity. By way of compensation, Jane Aikin rigorously discouraged any signs of "masculine" behaviour in her daughter, encouraging her devotion to domestic activities, which would prepare her for future life as a wife and mother.⁵ According to Lucy Aikin, this attempt to safeguard Barbauld's "femininity" seems to have given "her a double portion of bashfulness and maidenly reserve; and she was accustomed to ascribe an uneasy sense of constraint in mixed society, which she could never entirely shake off, to the strictness and seclusion in which it had thus become her fate to be educated" (viii). Inadvertently, it would also have made the point to Barbauld concerning the artificiality of established gender categories. Like her mother, she seems to have believed that girls needed to be brought up carefully in order to avoid acquiring characteristics of the opposite sex. She thus regarded female education as a means not only of promoting female improvement, but of preserving sexual difference. Men would be distinguished from women by their being given specialized knowledge they might apply to a particular profession.

Barbauld's wedding on May 26, 1774 marked an opportunity to realize some of the views she expressed to Elizabeth Montagu on marriage. The signs did not initially seem propitious. Her family had long opposed the match. Her brother was particularly suspicious

of Rochemont, expressing a distaste for Rochemont's extravagant declarations of his passion for Barbauld. According to Lucy Aikin, he blamed Barbauld's attraction to Rochemont on her admiration for Rousseau's *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). There was, of course, also the threat of Rochemont's hereditary madness. Nevertheless, it seems that until Rochemont's final decline the Barbaulds enjoyed a relationship of mutual affection and intellectual affinity. Two poems written during the early years of their marriage, "To Mr. Barbauld, with a Map of the Land of Matrimony" (c. 1773; 1825), and "To Mr. Barbauld, November 14, 1778" (1778; 1825)" provide testimony to their bond, both emotional and intellectual. "To Mr. Barbauld" dispenses anxiety over her husband's satisfaction with their marriage with a witty acknowledgement of the vicissitudes of married life and an affirmation of her own attachment to the match. "To Mr. Barbauld" playfully mocks the conventions of courtly love as the poet orders a temporary cease in their studies, urging that they enjoy "[a] thousand pleasant arts" (21) together "[t]o add new feathers to the wings of Time" (22) and "make him stop to view/ Our studies, and our follies too" (26-27). Another poem from Barbauld's days at Palgrave, "Love and Time" (c. 1778; 1825) celebrates a love oblivious to the ravages of time upon female beauty, suggestive given the lateness of her own marriage. In an article published in the *Monthly Repository* not long after Rochemont's death, Barbauld makes some telling comments on her husband's powers of argumentation: "His reasoning powers were acute, and sharpened by exercise; for he was early accustomed to discussion, and argued with great clearness, with a degree of warmth indeed, but with the most perfect candour towards his opponent" (xlv), attesting to the frequency of their debates together. Her observations upon his evaluations of literature, philosophy, and religion affirm a close

familiarity with the workings of Rochemont's mind, obviously acquired through years of intellectual conversation together.⁶

For at least the first few years of her early marriage, Barbauld was thwarted in her desire for children of her own, for what reason exactly is unclear. Whether or not it was a deliberate decision on her part to avoid pregnancy, childlessness was a source of disappointment, since she regarded children as important -- even necessary -- for a woman to achieve fulfilment in marriage. After reading a published collection of Elizabeth Montagu's letters, Barbauld makes some interesting observations to a female friend in a letter from Stoke Newington, September 1813,

She married not Mr. Montague from affection. It is evident she looked upon him as a wise and kind friend, but nothing more; -- a little *too* wise sometimes, when he kept her in the country longer than she liked. To a person so married, nothing will fill the mind and give a permanent interest to life, but children.

She lost her child ... (2: 139)

It was fortunate for her that Aikin and his wife were amenable to her proposal to adopt one of their children. Charles Aikin was sent to live with the Barbaulds in 1777, at the age of two, and Barbauld immediately devoted herself to the task of raising and educating him.

In 1774, the Barbaulds had opened a school for boys at the village of Palgrave in Suffolk, where she was already engaged in the business of pedagogy, and where Charles became a pupil. William McCarthy provides a comprehensive account of Barbauld's employment at Palgrave in his article "The Celebrated Academy at Palgrave: A Documentary History of Anna Letitia Barbauld's School." According to him, pupils at Palgrave ranged

from two to sixteen years of age and even older. One of the earliest student records at Palgrave shows the median age to be just over 11.5. Pupils came from widely differing social backgrounds, and the curriculum was aimed at preparing “[y]outh ... for any of the Professions, or Trade” (296). It included “Latin, French, English and Accompts, and, if any desired it, Greek, Algebra, Geometry and Geography” (296). As well as acting as accountant and treasurer for the school, Barbauld “taught ... reading and religion to the youngest pupils,” and “geography and history, English composition and oratory, and natural science” (298) to some of the older boys. McCarthy suggests that Barbauld and her husband “adopted Charles in part because they wished to ‘follow [their] own plans’ in education” (305). Barbauld perhaps also wanted a child in whom she might take a special maternal interest, and through whom she might legitimize her activities at the Palgrave boarding school as an extension of her role as a mother-teacher.

In the letter to her brother and sister-in-law in which she proposes to adopt one of her brother's children, she expresses a distinct preference for a boy, a fact which demands a moment's consideration. Barbauld explains to Montagu that one of the reasons she is unfit to run a school for girls is her association from an early age almost exclusively with boys. It is perhaps the same reason that determines her preference for a boy, and her decision to assist at her husband's school for boys rather than setting up her own school according to Montagu's plan. Through the education of boys, however, Barbauld might also have hoped to achieve the greatest fulfilment as a mother-teacher, in having the most direct impact over public affairs. McCarthy attests to the efforts of the Barbaulds to educate their pupils for citizenship, managing “the school as a polity whose members, the pupils, were citizens”

(294). Interestingly, Rochemont Barbauld's definition of the "true patriot" as one who expresses a "love towards the rising generation" (295) at least potentially includes women. At the same time, Barbauld's awareness that a woman might not find the same fulfilment in the education of girls as she would in the education of boys signals her appreciation of the limitations of female existence.

In general, the attitudes Barbauld expresses on the subject of sexual difference and social arrangements between the sexes during her years at Palgrave seem somewhat more conservative than those expressed at Warrington. A letter to her brother written from Palgrave, 1774, in which she discusses male and female attitudes towards sentiment and passion, suggests the assumption of an essential male and female nature, though the tone is admittedly playful. Whereas "women ... may be led on by sentiment to passion," Barbauld argues, "men must be subdued by passion before they can taste sentiment." This she attributes to the more social disposition of women than men, identifying as she does a direct link between sociability and sentimentality. As she insists to her brother,

when man, haughty, independent man, becomes sensible to all the delicacies of sentiment, and softens his voice and address to the tones of *les manières douces*, it is much to be suspected a stronger power than friendship has worked the change. *You* are hardly social creatures till your minds are humanized and subdued by that passion which alone can tame you to "all the soft civilities of life." (2-3)

In her view, the same is simply not true of women, who express sentiment in the context of many relationships that are not romantic.

During her years at Palgrave, Barbauld continued to compose “Characters” illustrating her attitudes on the subject of sexual difference, including “{Lines to Robert Alderson upon his Departure from Warrington Academy}” (1773-1774?; 1994); “{A Character of John Mort}” (1778; 1778); “To Mrs. Marissal” (1779; 1825); “A Portrait” (n.d.; 1782); and “{Lines on the Death of Philip Meadows}” (1783; 1877). The only female “Character” from the years at Palgrave, “To Mrs. Marissal,” strongly emphasizes the femininity of its subject, comparing her to a “gentle” and “soft-eyed dove” seeking shelter from “the splendid city's throng” (11) in a “low-roofed cot” (10). While “To Mrs. Marissal” describes its subject retreating into privacy and domesticity, the male “Characters” written at Palgrave describe their subjects venturing into the world and participating in politics. The only exception is “{A Character of John Mort},” John Mort's years evidently entitling him to live in retirement. “{Lines to Robert Alderson}” compares its subject to a “tall built vessel” (12) setting out to sea while the spectators on the beach, at once cheerful and anxious, watch it “ride th' unsteady wave” (16) until it passes out of sight, underscoring the separation between the female poet and her friend, while the conventional gendering of the ship as female disguises perhaps an unconscious wish that their positions might be reversed.

Hymns in Prose for Children (1781) at once affirms that men and women have been assigned different roles on earth, and attempts to dignify the roles of women. “Hymn VIII” bids young readers observe that the husband works outside while the wife prepares “the wholesome meal,” and that “[t]he father, the mother, and the children, make a family; the father is master thereof” (165). At the same time, “Hymn III” celebrates motherhood, announcing, “The mother loveth her little child; she bringeth it up on her knees; she feedeth

its mind with knowledge” (157). Lynne Vallone, in her analysis of the *Hymns*, emphasizes Barbauld's vision of God as father and sovereign. Yet “Hymn V,” like “Address to the Deity” and “A Summer Evening's Meditation,” sanctifies motherhood by comparing God to a mother. We are told that

[a]s the mother moveth about the house with her finger on her lips, and stilleth every little noise that her infant be not disturbed; as she draweth the curtain around its bed, and shutteth out the light from its tender eyes; so God draweth the curtains of darkness around us; so he maketh all things to be hushed and still, that his large family may sleep in peace. (161)

The “Characters” composed at Palgrave betray some attempt to valorize the “feminine” above the “masculine” in praising male subjects for demonstrating certain “feminine” qualities. To John Mort, the poet advises,

not unobserved shall pass
 Thy bashful virtues; for the Muse shall mark,
 Detect thy charities, and call to light
 Thy secret deeds of mercy; while the poor,
 The desolate and friendless at thy gate. (10-14)

To Robert Alderson, she hopes, “On thy tongue/ May strong perswasion hang, and words that cleave/ The inmost heart, that the sick soul may take life from they lips” (5-8). Her commemoration of Richard Meadows includes the observation that he was “[b]orn with a heart that joy'd to soothe distress” (3), taking into his special protection “the poor” (4) and “the helpless orphans” (5).

Meanwhile, Barbauld takes the opportunity, in other poems composed at Palgrave, to criticize masculine pursuits traditionally regarded as heroic. Adapting the familiar Christian theme of *contemptus mundi*, "Written on a Marble" (1774-1785; 1825) exploits a pun on the word marble, and an analogy between empire-builders and school-boys in order to dismiss the achievements of heroes. "Your heroes are overgrown school-boys," writes the poet,

Who scuffle for empires and toys,
 And kick the poor ball as they please.
 Now Caesar, no Pompey, gives law;
 And Pharsalia's plain,
 Though heaped with the slain,
 Was only a game of *taw*.⁷

Yet, as at Warrington, Barbauld expresses a certain struggle with the limitations of female existence. Her correspondence from Palgrave reveals a fascination with women who violate convention and seek some kind of active role in the public sphere. Witness, for instance, her comments regarding the women who campaigned in the election of 1784:

I thought the newspapers had exaggerated; but Mr. -- says he himself saw the two Lady --'s and Miss --'s go into a low alehouse to canvass, where they staid half an hour; and then, with the mob at their heels offering them a thousand indignities, proceeded to another. These he mentioned as unmarried ladies, and therefore less privileged. The Duchess of --, Mrs. --, and many others equally expose their charms for the good of the public. (2: 25)

The tone of Barbauld's comments is somewhat ambiguous. There is an obvious degree of

disapproval. The passage underscores the vulnerability of the female canvassers, as they place themselves in sexually compromising and dangerous situations. Yet it is not clear that Barbauld considers female involvement in politics as improper in itself. The description of the female canvassers exposing “their charms for the good of the public” implies skepticism about their methods. Yet it is not clear whether Barbauld is questioning the ability of women to canvass, or simply criticizing the female canvassers for relying on their “charms” to influence men, as opposed to winning them over through intellectual debate. Despite the skepticism, the passage as a whole conveys a tone of excitement, suggesting Barbauld approves, if not the actions of these women, at least their intentions, as they willingly risk their reputations and their physical safety for a political cause in which they believe.

Barbauld's travels to the continent after she and her husband had given up the school at Palgrave seem to have been important in underscoring for her the effects of custom in determining, at least up to a point, arrangements between the sexes. While in Geneva, for instance, she came into contact with strikingly different notions of sexual propriety. In a letter written from Geneva, October 31, 1785 to her friend Elizabeth Kenrick, Barbauld confides that she is gradually getting used to “seeing gentlemen, perhaps perfect strangers, enter ... [her] room without ceremony when ... [she] is in ... [her] bedgown” (2: 65). In the same voyage, however, she also discovered that it was not acceptable in many places outside England for husbands and wives to share the same bedroom, at least not openly. She describes giving a tour of her lodgings to a Frenchwoman, who asked when she came to the bedroom whether it belonged to her or her husband. As she relates, “I protest I felt quite out of countenance to think we had but one” (2: 65). It is no doubt bolstered by her experiences

abroad that Barbauld later states in "On Prejudices" (1798) that "[i]deas of female honor and decorum ... [are] impressed first as prejudices" (2: 270).

Barbauld's appreciation of the role of custom in determining arrangements between the sexes never led her, as it did Wollstonecraft, occasionally to imagine the possibility of independent female existence. On at least one occasion in the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft remarks that the greatest works accomplished by women, just as the greatest works accomplished by men, were by those who were single. Yet Barbauld anticipates some of the arguments of the *Vindication* in criticizing women's cultivation of the body at the expense of the mind, and in urging women's opportunities for fulfilment as wives and mothers. A letter dated to Paris, June 7, 1786, offers a telling juxtaposition of the fashionable ladies of Paris and the women of England. "When I see the Parisian ladies," the author writes,

covered with rouge and enslaved by fashion, cold to the claims of maternal tenderness, and covering licentiousness with the thin veil of a certain factitious decency of manners, my thoughts turn away from the scene, and delight to contemplate the charming union formed by deep affection and lasting esteem, -
- the mother endowed with talents and graces to draw the attention of polite circles, yet devoting her time and cares to her family and children. (2: 103)⁸

Though her radical pamphlets of the 1790s generally avoid addressing the subject of contemporary arrangements between the sexes, Barbauld takes the opportunity in at least one place to extend her opposition of tyranny in politics into the domain of marriage. As she admonishes in *Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790): "Let public reformation prepare the way for private. May the abolition of domestic

tyranny introduce the modest train of household virtues, and purer incense be burned upon the hallowed altar of conjugal fidelity” (2: 375). It is significantly the *Address* which, of all Barbauld's radical pamphlets of the 1790s, most clearly probes the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. Barbauld's connection of public and private reformation in the *Address* suggests evidence of her extending the political implications of Locke's theory of personal identity to consider the situation of eighteenth-century women.

Like the *Address*, *Evenings at Home* indirectly connects Barbauld's attitudes on the subject of sexual difference and relations between men and women to the debate over personal identity. If we remember from chapter two, “On Man” offers the collection's fullest exploration of the issue of personal identity, documenting Aikin and Barbauld's simultaneous endorsement of the theories of self-in-consciousness and self-as-substance. There is no reference to women in “On Man,” but Aikin's definition of man, like the definition of a person in Locke's chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” seems to include women as well as men, recognizing no essential differences between the minds of men and women.

Another of Aikin's contributions, “Presence of Mind,” unambiguously asserts women's claims to the same faculties of reason and reflection as men. A dialogue between mother and daughter, it opens with a young girl Eliza coming upon her mother, Mrs. F., while she is being bled. The horrified Eliza seeks immediately to withdraw, but her mother insists that she remain, afterwards explaining that “[w]e have all naturally a horror at everything which is the cause of pain and danger to ourselves or others; and nothing but habit can give most of us the presence of mind necessary to enable us in such occurrences to employ our knowledge to the best advantage” (193). As she insists, “Reason teaches us to face smaller dangers in order to

avoid greater, and even to undergo the greatest when duty requires it. Habit makes us less affected by particular dangers which have often come in our way” (197). In “Presence of Mind,” there are a number of instances cited in which women display remarkable presence of mind, including a woman who saves a man from bleeding to death after he accidentally slices an artery with a sickle, another who saves herself and a female companion from being gored by a bull by staring it down, and yet another who saves “a party of pleasure” (196) in the East Indies from being mauled by a tiger, frightening it away by opening an umbrella in its face.

Barbauld herself makes the same point concerning women's capacity to acquire presence of mind in *The British Novelists* series, where she praises Robert Bage's characterization of Miss Carlill in *Man as He Is* (1792). Of *Man as He Is*, she remarks that: “the best sustained character is that of Miss Carlill, a Quaker, in which the author has exceedingly well hit off the acuteness and presence of mind and coolness in argument” (48: iii) supposed to characterize adherents of that sect.

At the same time, “Presence of Mind” acknowledges important differences in “bodily constitution” that determine, to some extent, the development of the male and female mind. In the course of the dialogue, Eliza's mother establishes that there are two different kinds of courage: “one the gift of nature, the other of reason and habit” (196). Because of differences in “bodily constitution,” men have naturally more courage than women when confronted with situations of danger, though courage “may in some manner be acquired by everyone” (197). Men's natural courage means that they are suited for certain activities for which women are not. Aikin's acceptance of the effects of “bodily constitution” in shaping the development of the male and female mind indirectly points to his assumption of some link between

consciousness and substance -- the product of his simultaneous endorsement of the theories of self-in-consciousness and self-as-substance.

In one of her own contributions to *Evenings at Home*, Barbauld acknowledges differences in the “bodily constitution” of men and women that produce different turns of mind in them. In “Live Dolls,” a young girl's maiden aunt tells her that “affection [is] one of the characteristics of the sex.” Especially, she claims, “[w]omen are made to love children.” She contradicts herself a little in her advice, “[T]hey should begin to love them while they themselves are children; nor is there any surer way of learning to love a being than by doing good to it” (45). As in her letter to Elizabeth Montagu, it appears that Barbauld sees female education as a means not only of promoting female improvement, but of preserving sexual difference, pointing to a still unresolved tension in her assessment of essential differences between men and women.

In a different contribution, “The Phenix and the Dove,” Barbauld underscores the satisfaction to be had in the role of the wife and mother. The fable of the phoenix and the dove describes an encounter between a phoenix, “who had long inhabited the solitary deserts of Arabia” and a tame dove, intended to represent the lady of fashion and the domestic woman. The phoenix affects to pity the dove, whom she regards as confined for a short life “to a single spot, and sunk in domestic cares ... continually employed either in laying eggs or providing for ... [her] brood,” while she lives a long life “exempt from toil, care, and misfortune,” able to travel wherever she likes whenever she likes, splendid and independent. The dove disclaims any pity, however, protesting, “I know that my life will be short, and therefore I employ it in raising a numerous posterity, and in opening my heart to all the

sweets of domestic happiness. I am beloved by my partner; I am dear to man; and shall leave marks behind me that I have lived." Hers will have been, she insists, a life of "comfort and usefulness" (145), unlike that of the phoenix. For Barbauld, a woman's most important function in the domestic sphere was her involvement in the instruction of her children.

There is in *Evenings at Home* more effort to valorize the "feminine" above the "masculine." Barbauld's "True Heroism" questions the greatness of figures historically recognized as heroes: Achilles, Alexander the Great, Charles of Sweden, accusing them of selfish motives, and holding up as an example of a true hero the prison reformer John Howard. Her "Things by their Right Names" presents a dialogue between a father and son, in which the father teaches his son that a battle is simply a euphemism for "bloody murder."

It is significant that at no point in the 1790s does Barbauld's support for a democratic form of government translate into support for the enfranchisement of women. As already observed, Wollstonecraft included an attack against Barbauld's "To a Lady, with some painted Flowers" in the *Vindication*, and "The Rights of Woman" seems to have been written at least partly as a response. It is Barbauld's claim in "The Rights of Woman" that it is ridiculous to discuss rights in connection to relations between the sexes. The first two lines, "Yes, injured Woman! Rise, assert thy right!/ Woman! too long degraded, scorned, opprest," invoke the argument of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*. But the poet quickly checks any impression of an allegiance to Wollstonecraft's argument, intimating that the rights of women will be achieved if women resume their "native empire o'er the breast" (4). It is Barbauld's contention that women's only source of authority over men is through love, which they have lately neglected, presumably in their call for the rights of woman.

In stanza two, the poet urges women who desire power over men to “[g]o forth arrayed in panoply divine,/ That angel pureness which admits no stain” (5-6). “Go bid proud Man his boasted rule resign/ And kiss the golden sceptre of thy reign[,]” the poet declares,

Go, gird thyself with grace; collect thy store
Of bright artillery glancing from afar,
Soft melting tones thy thundering canon's roar,
Blushes and fears thy magazines of war. (7-12)

The military imagery of stanzas two and three, as the poet describes women's defeat of men through virtue and grace, exploits a familiar analogy between courtship and battle, which Pope famously develops in *The Rape of the Lock*. Barbauld seems now tacitly to embrace Pope's vision of relations between the sexes, which she rejected in “On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington.” Her use of military imagery aims perhaps also to signal a disapproval of what she regards as Wollstonecraft's declared war against the male sex, and an attempt to underscore the incongruity between male and female calls for rights, since women could not properly raise arms against men. The image of man kissing “the golden sceptre” of woman's “reign” envisions woman in the conventional role of courtly mistress, subverting perhaps what Barbauld saw as Wollstonecraft's contestation for women's superiority over rather than equality with men.

In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft, of course, was not recommending any such course of action, repeatedly reiterating that women were physically weaker than men, and as such to some extent necessarily dependent upon them. She makes it clear that she is not insisting on a literal call to arms, despite the dedication of the *Vindication* to the French revolutionary

leader Talleyrand. Nor would she have perceived herself as declaring war upon the male sex. The reforms she calls for are intended to benefit society as a whole. She would likewise have objected to accusations that she was contesting for women's superiority over men. In her view, the relationship between men and women had been that of master and slave, women tyrannizing over men in courtship, and enslaved in marriage.

Stanza four of "The Rights of Woman" reiterates the accusation that Wollstonecraft is contesting for women's superiority over rather than equality with men in the ironic observation "[t]hy rights are empire" (13). The poet implies a lack of logic in women's call for rights, referring to them as "[f]elt, not defined, and if debated, lost" (14). Indirectly, she demonstrates her allegiance to other conservative feminists of the eighteenth century, like Hannah More, who in the *Strictures* identifies the call for women's rights as "the wild metaphysical discussion which has ever obtruded under the name of reason and philosophy; which has unsettled the peace of vain women, and forfeited the respect of reasonable men." The phrase "rights of woman," More dismisses in itself as "metaphysical jargon," attempting to highlight its inherent absurdity in her pretended anticipation of further treatises "on the rights of youth," "the rights of children," "the rights of babies" (3: 200).

Stanza five encourages woman, "Try all that wit and art suggest to bend/ Of thy imperial foe the stubborn knee" (17-18), underscoring again that women cannot use force to gain authority over man, and therefore are unfitted to demand rights in the same terms as men. Her advice here echoes Rousseau's recommendation that women use guile to get what they want from men. Arguing against Rousseau, Wollstonecraft encourages women to win over men through rational argument, asserting that guile merely serves to poison relationships

between the sexes. The concluding lines of stanza five, "Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend;/ Thou mayst command, but never canst be free" (19-20) suggests that a contestation for rights actually enslaves women, locking them into a power struggle that is impossible to resolve.

By gaining men's love, women might "[a]we the licentious, and restrain the rude;/ Soften the sullen, clear the cloudy brow" (21-22), as the poet puts it in stanza six. Barbauld's emphasis on women's capacity to promote virtue and happiness in society through love distances her farther from Wollstonecraft, who expresses a recurring suspicion of love.

In stanza seven, Barbauld warns women that they cannot remain the "courted idol of mankind" (25). "Subduing and subdued," she writes, "though soon shalt find/ Thy coldness soften, and thy pride give way" (27-28).

The poem concludes:

Then, then, abandon each ambitious thought,
 Conquest or rule thy heart shall feebly move,
 In Nature's school, by her soft maxims taught,
 That separate rights are lost in mutual love. (29-32)

Unlike Wollstonecraft, Barbauld does not consider it women's destiny, in seeking love from men, to be worshipped and then scorned. In love, she envisions the achievement of reciprocity and unity, which disregards notions of "separate rights." The vision is an attractive one, though it ignores the disadvantages faced by women under eighteenth-century British law as a result of a concept of marriage that ignores "separate rights," treating husband and wife as one person before the law, as Janelle Greenberg discusses in her

excellent article “The Legal Status of the English Woman in Early Eighteenth-Century Common Law and Equity.”

Nevertheless, Barbauld's poem “Washing-Day” (post-1783; 1797) captures a persisting tension in the poet's attitudes towards the ideology of the separate spheres: her desire, on the one hand, to recognize the value of women's activities in the domestic sphere, and her sense, on the other hand, of the limitations of female existence in this sphere. Barbauld prefaces “Washing-Day” with an excerpt from Jacques' famous speech about the “seven ages of man” in *As You Like It*: “...and their voice,/ Turning again towards childish treble, pipes/ And whistles in its sound.” The lines come from the description of the sixth stage of man: “the lean and slippered pantaloons,/ with spectacles on nose and pouch on side” (2.7.159-160). It is during this stage man begins the process of decline, as he loses his vaunted virility, exhibited during his days as a soldier and then as a member of justice, and becomes like a child again, anticipating his complete infantilization during the seventh stage. The poet thus presents “Washing-Day” as a specimen of the declining years of poetry, when verse no longer records heroic deeds or affairs of state, but domestic scenes. This is the point of the opening lines, “[t]he Muses are turned gossips; they have lost/ The buskin'd step, and clear high-sounding phrase,/ Language of gods” (1-3), which leads the poet to invoke the “domestic Muse,/ In slipshod measure loosely prattling on” (3-4)” as the source of inspiration for her verse. All of this suggests an immediate tension in the poet's aims. On the one hand, the poet locates “Washing-Day” within the mock-epic tradition, deploying epic conventions in order to underscore the triviality of her subject. On the other hand, she defends the importance of her subject in the suggestion that in an age when heroic deeds are

past, and affairs of state are no longer an interest, the greatest matters of concern are the domestic, and as such, the domestic is worthy of poetry. "Washing-Day" thus simultaneously trivializes and elevates its subject. The phrase "slip-shod measure" in itself underscores the tension in the poet's attitude towards her subject, as the poet evokes the line from Pope's *The Dunciad*, "[a] slip-shod Sibyl led his steps along" (3.15), which he applies in the description of Colley Cibber, having been crowned the king of poets by the goddess of Dulness, now conveyed to the "Elysian Shade" to witness the past and future conquests of dullness. The evocation of Pope indirectly highlights the difference between *The Dunciad* and "Washing-Day." Unlike Pope, Barbauld identifies with the subject she is ostensibly disparaging. The invitation to her domestic Muse to sing "Of farm or orchard, pleasant curds and cream,/ Or drowning flies, or shoe lost in the mire,/ By little whimpering boy, with rueful face" (5-7) suggests the poet's familiarity with and affection for her subject, which again calls into question the intention of her verse. With the introduction of "Washing-Day" as the focus of the poem, there emerges another dimension of the poet's attitude to her subject, as she recognizes the frequently oppressive demands of domestic activity. "Come, Muse," declares the poet,

... and sing the dreaded *Washing-Day*.

-- Ye who beneath the yoke of wedlock bend,

With bowed soul, full well ye ken the day

Which week, smooth sliding after week, brings on

Too soon.... (8-12)

Overturning a series of epic conventions, the poet describes the events of a typical washing-

day. Instead of a marching army of Trojans or Greeks, we have an army of washer-women; instead of a ritualistic feast we have a “silent breakfast-meal ... soon dispatch'd” (19). The traditional oracle before battle is replaced with a consultation of the weather, and the catalogue of deaths with a catalogue of potential laundry disasters. In all of this, Barbauld's use of the mock-epic achieves a dual effect. It illustrates both the separation between the masculine realm of war and the feminine realm of domesticity, and the arduous nature of domestic enterprise. The description of the male reaction to the events of washing-day: the houseguest who suffers “[t]he silent breakfast-meal ... soon dispatch'd” (19) and the master who prefers to endure various inconveniences rather than to risk annoying the army of washer-women, highlights the separation between the world of traditional epic and the world of “Washing-Day.” In the world of “Washing-Day,” women dominate the action, while the men are peripheral: merely unhelpful distractions. This particular inversion of epic convention is familiar from other mock-epic poems such as Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. Whereas Pope treats women's dominance of the action in mock-epic as essentially another source of satire, underscoring the dystopia of the world he has created, Barbauld treats it only in a partly satirical light. Underlying the ridiculous image of the affronted houseguest and of the master attempting unsuccessfully to flee the chaos of washing-day is a serious point about the dependence of masculine pursuits upon female labour.⁹

In the second verse paragraph, “Washing-Day” shifts entirely away from mock-epic and into lyric. The poet recollects her childhood impressions of washing-day, which struck her, she tells us, with awe and confusion, as she found herself, like the men of the household, marginalized and ignored. She describes seeking refuge with her grandmother by the parlour

fire, from where she tracked the progress of the washer-women. "At intervals," she recalls,

... my mother's voice was heard,
 Urging dispatch; briskly the work went on,
 All hands employed to wash, to rinse, to wring,
 To fold, and starch, and clap, and iron, and plait. (73-76)

The staccato effect of lines 75 and 76 effectively conveys the strenuous demands of the tasks they describe. This passage marks the first serious description of domestic activity in the poem, and the first direct affirmation of the importance of women's activities in the domestic sphere. At the same time, the poet acknowledges the oppressive aspect of domestic labour. The sight of her mother and the other women of the household on washing-day provokes the poet, as a child, to "ponder much/ Why washings were" (78-79). The poet wonders about the necessity of labour, and perhaps, though she never states it explicitly, about the division of labour. "Washing-Day" closes with the poet's memory of herself as a child blowing bubbles in the parlour, "little dreaming then,/ To see, Montgolfier, thy silken ball/ Ride buoyant thro' the clouds." This prompts the final observation,

... so near approach
 The sports of children and the toils of men.
 Earth, air, and sky, and ocean, hath its bubbles,
 And verse is one of them -- this most of all. (82-86)

The poem comes full circle with an echo of the same speech that prefaces the poem. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft have identified the final lines as a paraphrase of lines in *Macbeth*: "The earth hath bubbles, as the water has" (1.3.79); they also evoke Jacques'

reference to the “bubble reputation” (2.7.153), which he identifies as the aim of men in their prime. In this final observation, the poet reiterates the same sense of conflict between the desire to valorize women's activities in the domestic sphere, and the recognition of the restrictions they impose upon female existence. The poet emphasizes the dependence, not only of “the sports of children,” but also of “the toils of men” upon the domestic labour of women. More than this, she suggests an element of vanity and triviality about male achievement, when viewed in comparison with the results of women's domestic labour. Ann Messenger regards the poem as a satire against masculine endeavour and a glorification of “the endless drudgery of women” (186). Donna Landry praises the poem likewise for its disdain of masculine endeavour and its presentation of a “scene of women's power,” though she also criticizes it for its failure to grant a voice to “the red-armed washers.” Steven Shankman sees “Washing-Day specifically as mocking male literary achievement, offering “a spoof of the quest for the purity of the sublime” (160). Yet, as Kraft points out, Barbauld also suggests an awe and appreciation of male achievement. In her view, the poem cannot be understood as a simple effort to gain approval or respect for women's work. Significantly, the poet allies herself ultimately not with her mother and the other women of the household, but with their dependents. While familiar with the routine of domestic labour, setting it out in detail for the reader, she remains removed, both as the child within the poem, and as the poet describing as opposed to participating directly in domestic labour. In “Washing-Day,” Barbauld clearly recognizes that poetry, as a product of the imagination, does not have the same immediately tangible result as physical labour. Barbauld's grandmother enjoys a well-deserved exemption from domestic labour, still performing the useful task of looking after the

children, and keeping them from interfering with their mothers' work. The poet has no such excuse. In the final lines of the poem, Barbauld questions the value of verse. The description of verse as a "bubble" is ambiguous. On the one hand, it might be read to suggest that verse is something beautiful, but ephemeral and superfluous. On the other hand, it might be read to suggest that verse is something important in its capacity to transform and to transport the reader. The invitation of two quite different readings in itself underscores the tension in Barbauld's attitudes to women's relegation to the domestic sphere. The fact remains, whatever her evaluation of poetry, that she has chosen to write, suggesting some desire to escape the responsibilities of the domestic sphere, even as she perhaps rebukes herself for experiencing that desire. Kraft has read the poem as partly about "the inevitability of duty," in its vision of the ages of woman, represented in the figures of the poet as a child, her mother, and grandmother. Yet it appears that Barbauld was extremely conflicted on this issue.

The first decade of the nineteenth century saw Barbauld's renewed interest in the subject of female education. Barbauld had taken on her first female pupil after she and her husband settled at Hampstead in 1787. The pupil's mother had actually moved there with the express purpose of acquiring Barbauld as a teacher.¹⁰ Perhaps as a result of her new involvement in the business of female education, Barbauld became increasingly vocal in encouraging women to cultivate their minds. Women were, in her view, starting to take some steps in the right direction. After attending a lecture at the Royal Institution, she reports in a letter from Hampstead 1800 that she "was very much pleased to see a fashionable and very attentive audience, about one third ladies, assembled for the purposes of science and improvement" (2: 67).

Barbauld's literary criticism consistently champions improvements in female education. In *The Correspondence of Richardson* (1804), Barbauld expresses high praise for Samuel Richardson as an enlightened man who promoted women's intellectual development. Speaking of Richardson's friend Lady Bradshaigh, Barbauld remarks that “[l]adies, at that period, were far from enjoying those advantages of education which offer themselves to the present generation,” and that, “at a distance from the metropolis especially, a reading female was a sort of phenomenon” (cciii). For this reason, Barbauld explains, Lady Bradshaigh, a “clever active woman” though not “polished” or “literary,” hid her correspondence with Richardson from her neighbours. According to Barbauld, Richardson was “[a] friend to mental improvement in women” (cxliii). He was also “all his life-time, the patron and protector of the female sex” (cbxxviii). From an early age, he preferred the company of women to his own sex. He conducted some of his printing business in partnership with women. His daughters “were carefully educated and engaged his fondest affection” (xliv). As his literary reputation grew, he acquired a coterie of female admirers around him, including extremely cultivated women like Susanna Highmore, Mary Delany, Sarah Fielding, and Jane and Mary Collier. He also met and associated with other men with enlightened views of female learning, including John Duncombe, author of *The Femiinad* (1754). In his correspondence with Hester Mulso, he “loved to draw out her reasoning powers, then beginning to unfold themselves” (cxcvii). In his correspondence with Lady Bradshaigh, he made an effort to combat “the narrowness of her notions on the subject of female learning” (ciiii). Though Barbauld quotes Johnson's comment that Richardson “took care always to be surrounded by women, who listened to him implicitly, and did not venture to contradict his

opinions” (clxxii), she qualifies it with insistence that “[n]o man sought criticism with more diligence, or received it with more candour than Richardson”(clxxiii).

Richardson is not entirely exempt from criticism. Barbauld observes that he “prided himself on being a moral and religious writer; and, as Joseph Addison did before him, he professed to take under his particular protection that sex which is supposed to be more open to good or evil impressions” (xxii), the phrase “supposed to be” implying that Richardson was guilty of a degree of condescension. There is also the problem that “he seemed to think women had a great deal to hide, and though his chief intimacies were with ladies, he sometimes betrays a mean opinion of the sex in general” (cl). Barbauld also expresses disappointment that Richardson's contact with fashionable society seems to have made him less rather than more favourable towards female learning, which she sees in the different educations of his heroines Clarissa Harlowe and Harriet Byron. As she notes, “Clarissa has been taught Latin, but Miss Byron is made to say, that she does not even know what are meant by the learned languages, and to declare, that a woman who knows them is an owl among birds” (cxliii). Barbauld also accuses Richardson of “high notions of filial as well as conjugal obedience” (clxi), which prevented the formation of any intimate attachment with his daughters, and led to a certain querulousness in his relationship with his second wife. She criticizes these notions as they appear in his fiction. Barbauld complains, in connection to *Pamela*, that Mr. B-'s “ideas of the authority of a husband are so high, that it is not easy to conceive of Pamela's being rewarded by marrying him, unless her regard for external circumstances was greater than the author would wish to have supposed” (lxiii). She also blames *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1751-54) for promoting high notions of

parental authority, the subject of Richardson's debate with Hester Mulso. In general, she considers that Richardson's "writings rather tend to inspire a certain bashful consciousness, and shrinking reserve, than the noble simplicity of truth and nature, in the intercourse between the sexes" (cl). Closer to the end of the "Life of Richardson," she mentions that "[w]omen who resided at his house, acquired a certain degree of fastidiousness and delicate refinement, which though amiable in itself, rather disqualified them from appearing in general society, to the advantage that might have been expected" (clxxxviii).

In the preliminary essay to *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, and Freeholder* (1805), Barbauld develops her praise of Addison in his contribution to the mental improvement of women in the eighteenth century. According to her, "[w]hen those who now are old were young, no books were so popular" as the *Spectator* papers, "particularly with the female sex." The *Spectator* papers were "the favourite volumes in a young lady's library," from which she acquired her "first relish for wit," her "first standard of taste," and her "first idea of manners" (iii-iv), though they now seem to suffer a little from vulgarity and lack of refinement. Barbauld thus approves Addison's role in assisting women to mould themselves into what Katherine M. Rogers describes as the "rational, educated woman who could take her place in cultivated society" (34). She also appreciates the fact that Addison treats marriage with respect, unlike his contemporary writers of the stage.

Also like Richardson, however, Addison receives a certain amount of censure in his attitudes towards women. His "advice to the female part of his reader" contains is a little too much courtly raillery for Barbauld's taste, though she admits that it was "the fashion of the age to address women in a style of gallantry, under which was often concealed a sly ridicule"

(196). In her view, the “pleasantries” of both Swift and Addison “betray a contempt for a sex they probably considered in a very inferior light.” She makes the following distinction between the two:

Both are perhaps in reality equally severe ... yet such is the charm of manner, that the Spectator has ever been the favourite of the toilette and the dressing-room; while it requires no common strength of mind in a lady to overcome the disgust excited by the supercilious harshness of the Irish Dean, and to profit by lessons delivered with so much roughness. (193)

Significantly, Addison emerges in a better light than Swift because even when he expresses contempt for women, he manages more effectively to contribute to their improvement.

In *The British Novelists*, Barbauld continues to evaluate the contribution of male writers to female improvement, most notably in her preliminary essay on Henry Fielding. Though not as contemptuous of Fielding as she is of Tobias Smollett, whom she dismisses with the comment “He could not draw an interesting female character” (30: ix), she evidently resents Fielding's low opinion of the female intellect, and disparagement of female learning. She observes that in Fielding “[a]ny portion of learning in women is constantly united with something disagreeable” (xxv), citing the example of Jenny and Mrs. Western in *Tom Jones*, and Mrs. Bennet and Miss Mathews in *Amelia*. Indeed, Mrs. Bennet “seems introduced purely to show the authors dislike for learned women” (xxx). “Learning in women may be inimical in some parts of the feminine character,” she allows, “but certainly does not lead to the vices he has given to Mrs. Bennet” (xxx), noting that “[a] man of licentious manners, and such was Fielding, seldom respects the sex.” Barbauld cannot resist speculating that

“[p]robably the coterie of literary and accomplished ladies that generally assembled at ... [Richardson's] house had its share in fostering this aversion” (xxv). The heroines of Fielding's novels, she argues, promote a model of weak and compliant femininity that panders to male fantasies of exploitation. Barbauld identifies the heroine of Fielding's sentimental novel *Amelia* as exactly the wife a man “conscious of a good many frailties and vices, usually wishes for” (xxviii). Amelia is “[f]aithful, fond, and indulgent,” observes Barbauld, “the prospect of immediate ruin cannot draw from her one murmur against her husband, and she willingly sacrifices to him her jewels and every article in her possession” (xxxix). This assessment is all the more telling, since Amelia was commonly known to have been modelled on Fielding's own wife Charlotte.¹¹

The British Novelists series also reveals that Barbauld has been unable to repress a certain amount of dissatisfaction with the limitations of female existence. In her discussion of the novel in the prefatory essay “On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing,” she identifies the real danger of the novel as its tendency to raise false expectations in women whose lives are most likely not going to live up to them. The novel encourages romantic passion and sentimental delicacy, but in the real world there are “few minds susceptible of ... delicate influences.” By and large, people are motivated by the stronger considerations of duty, prudence, and practicality. The author warns that “[t]hough young and beautiful ... [a woman] may see her youth and beauty pass away without conquest,” and that female readers who identify too closely with the heroines of romance will jeopardize their chances for happiness, as “[t]he monotony of ... life ... appear[s] more insipid when contrasted with scenes of perpetual courtship and passion” (51-52).

The pieces collected by Lucy Aikin in *A Legacy for Young Ladies* (1825) as a post-humus tribute to her aunt provide the final testimony to her reflections on the subject of sexual difference and social arrangements between the sexes. Of all the pieces in the collection, "On Female Studies" offers the fullest treatment of the subject, recapitulating many of the same tensions we have already discovered. At the beginning of "On Female Studies," the author emphasizes that "[e]very woman should consider herself as sustaining the general character of a rational being, as well as the more confined one belonging to the female sex." As rational beings, she claims, women share nearly the same "motives for acquiring general knowledge and cultivating the taste" as men: "the improvement of ... [the] mind" (24). "On Female Studies" concludes with a tribute to the cultivated woman, in her capacity "to discern between pretenders to science and men of real merit," and to judge men by their systems, distinguishing "the modest, the dogmatical, the affected, the over-refined," and bestowing "her esteem and confidence accordingly." As Barbauld argues, the cultivated woman might "give the tone to the conversation even when she ch[ose] to bear but an inconsiderable part in it" (31).

Another contribution to the *Legacy*, "A Dialogue of the Dead between Helen, and Madame de Maintenon," represents a tribute to the shift from a patriarchal to a companionate conception of marriage. The dialogue begins with Helen wondering that "beauty" no longer produces the same "extraordinary effects" as it did when she was alive. In her view, Madame de Maintenon's achievements, as impressive as they were, could not compare to her own.¹² Madame de Maintenon responds by dismissing Helen's role in the Trojan War, asserting that she was simply an excuse for hostilities. In the course of the dialogue, she highlights the

improvement that has taken place in relations between the sexes. Helen enjoyed no affection in her relationships with men. She was treated essentially as an object. Menelaus, Madam de Maintenon informs Helen, “took you as a possession that was restored to him, as a booty that he had recovered, and he had no sentiment enough to care whether he had your heart or not” (141). Women in ancient Greece and Rome were generally regarded as possessions, and not the greatest of possessions. There was no such thing as a “pure, sentimental attachment or delicate passion” (141). Helen afterwards admits that Paris was not even been faithful to her. Barbauld here raises one of the same points as Wollstonecraft in the *Vindication*. According to Wollstonecraft, when a man regards a woman merely as an object of desire it is inevitable that he will tire of her. She must secure his friendship if they are to have an enduring relationship. In contrast to Helen, Madame de Maintenon won the affection of her lover when she was past her prime, convincing him to make her his wife. She emphasizes the effect that she had in reforming Louis. While Helen “seduced Paris from his duty,” she “recovered Louis from vice” (140).

Among the pieces collected in the *Legacy* are some of Barbauld's strongest condemnations of society's preoccupation with the female body, which she blames for encouraging women to sacrifice intellectual pursuits in order to pursue fashion. The author most strikingly illustrates the devastating consequences of women's pursuit of fashion in “Fashion: A Vision.” Reminiscent of Pope's *The Dunciad*, “Fashion: A Vision” combines satire and allegory in an imaginary account of the speaker's visit to the court of Queen Fashion. Unlike the horrifying Goddess of Dulness, Queen fashion is physically attractive. According to the speaker, Queen Fashion wears a dress that looks as if it were made from

continually shifting clouds, and carries a rouge-box and distorting optical glasses. However, as her costume and attributes indicate, her outwardly pleasing form disguises caprice, vanity, and self-deception. The speaker relates her account of the court of Queen Fashion as a warning to a young female acquaintance, Flora, whom she suspects of succumbing to the allurements of fashion. Fashion, she warns Flora, is one of the most insidious forms of oppression, since it wins the voluntary collusion of its victims. If women want to claim a place of equality with men, the speaker intimates, they must free themselves from it. This is the obvious sub-text of the speaker's opening declamation:

To break the shackles of oppression and assert the native rights of man is esteemed by many among the noblest efforts of heroic virtue; but vain is the possession of political liberty if there exists a tyrant of your own creation, who, without law or reason, or even external force, exercises over us a most despotic authority; whose jurisdiction is extended over every part of private and domestic life ... (Ellis 2: 427)

Indirectly, this passage suggests the role that fashion has played in perpetuating assumptions of female intellectual inferiority, as it seems that women voluntarily enthrall themselves to a tyrant. Indeed, as Barbauld was undoubtedly aware, it was common in eighteenth-century anti-feminist literature to interpret women's interest in fashion as a sign of their mental inferiority and frivolity, and therein, an excuse for their subordination. Barbauld perhaps also objected to fashion as a phenomenon associated with the aristocracy, now increasingly imitated by upwardly mobile bourgeois families. The passage aligns issues of class and gender in the reference to "the native rights of man," as Barbauld denounces different forms

of tyranny, both public and private, associated with the aristocratic establishment. She urges both men and women to develop the faculties of reason and reflection in order to achieve a state of freedom and equality -- men within the state and women within the family. As in the *Address*, she suggests that reforms within the state must go hand in hand with reforms within "private and domestic life," going as far as to insist that reforms to "private and domestic life" must precede reforms to the state.

Barbauld concludes another prose piece in the *Legacy*, "The Rich and the Poor," with a similar condemnation of fashion as "an arbitrary and capricious tyrant, who reigns with the most despotic sway over that department which Taste alone ought to regulate" (38), identifying yet more of its debilitating consequences for women. While pretending to exhibit a woman's features to full advantage, fashion actually inhibits the freedom of the body, and in many instances, risks a woman's health and beauty if she dare not disobey its commands. As such, it accomplishes precisely the opposite of its ostensible purpose.

Despite encouraging women's intellectual achievement, however, Barbauld still clearly accepts that there are different spheres of activity appropriate for men and women. Following her statement that "[e]very woman should consider herself as sustaining the general character of a rational being, as well as the more confined one belonging to the female sex," she announces that "[m]en have various departments in active life; women have but one, and all women have the same, differently modified indeed by their rank in life and other incidental circumstances. It is, to be a wife, a mother, a mistress of a family" (25). While seeking to ameliorate arrangements between the sexes, she wants no fundamental alteration. Barbauld, significantly, never claims that women are intellectually incapable of fulfilling the same

functions as men. She simply accepts as self-evident that men and women are intended to perform different roles, presumably because of their different biological functions, and the dictates of Christianity. Consequently, she advises that male and female education should be different. “The line of separation between the studies of a young man and a young woman,” she declares, “appears to me to be chiefly fixed by this, -- that a woman is excused from all professional knowledge” (24). While men require specialized knowledge to qualify themselves for a particular profession or business, women require knowledge to “adorn[] and improv[e] the mind ... refin[e] the sentiments, and supply[] proper stores for conversation” (25), in other words, such knowledge as will fit them to be effective wives, mothers, and mistresses of families. In “On Female Studies,” she argues that one of the primary aims of women's education is to prepare them to make decisions in raising and instructing their children. A woman who has followed a rigorous course of study, she claims, “will know with whom to confide the education of her children, and how to judge of their progress and the methods used to improve them” (31). Though she advocates men and women's interaction as intellectual equals, she considers that men should take the lead in conversation and discourages her female reader “from an unnecessary display of what she knows” (31).

In “Pic-nic,” also in *A Legacy for Young Ladies*, a mother and daughter survey a scene of men and women in conversation together. The mother celebrates the picnic as an opportunity for men and women to bring not only a dish, but a special talent or area of knowledge to exhibit and share with others in conversation. Yet she singles out for special praise a woman with a talent for drawing others out rather than seeking to shine herself, while expressing disapproval of another woman, “declaiming with ... enthusiasm, in the midst of a

circle of gentlemen,” remarking that some of her comments almost violate the boundaries of feminine modesty and propriety. As such, “Pic-nic” might be compared to Hannah More’s *The Bas Bleu*, which celebrates conversation between men and women at the bluestocking salons, but concludes, somewhat incongruously, on a note of advice to “the letter’d, and the fair,/ And chiefly ... the wit” (402-03) that they be careful with what they exhibit in conversation. The poet argues that women’s participation in conversation should be largely tacit. “Mute angel, yes,” she exclaims,

... thy looks dispense

The silence of intelligence;

Thy graceful form I well discern

In act to listen and to learn. (420-23)

“True Magicians,” an allegory in the *Legacy* attempting to inspire young female readers with the wonders of such subjects as geography, history, and chemistry concludes by encouraging them to meekness, patience, and cheerfulness.

In “On Female Studies,” Barbauld distinguishes herself from more conservative writers on the subject of female education in stressing academic subjects above ornamental accomplishments and housewifely skills, as well as in maintaining a fairly broad conception of what academic subjects were necessary to fit a woman for life as a wife and mother. Her specific recommendations include, first of all, the languages. French she considers particularly important, given the connections at that time between Great Britain and France. Italian she considers less important than French, but praises it for opening a rich store of music and poetry. Women do not need to know the classics, in her opinion, although she

thinks that if a young woman has sufficient leisure, and particularly if she has literary connections, she should be encouraged to learn Latin. She regards Greek as too time-consuming, and too impractical, to warrant effort. Other subjects she recommends for female study include history, geography, natural history, astronomy, botany, experimental philosophy, chemistry, and physics. Another piece, "On the Uses of History," notes that it is "particularly proper that *ladies* who interest themselves in the events of public life should have their minds cultivated by an acquaintance with history, without which they are apt to let the whole warmth of their natures flow out, upon party matters, in an ardor more honest than wise, more zealous than candid" (403). The author concludes with some attempt to valorize a non-professional education, claiming that "[i]n no subject is ... [woman] required to be deep, -- of none ought she to be ignorant" (285).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the introduction of academic subjects into the female curriculum had been generally accepted. Yet, as Linda C. Hunt notes, "[t]here was considerable debate on the amount of learning a woman could absorb without becoming 'masculine' as well as disagreement on just what subjects of study were suited to the feminine mind" (11). Barbauld's list of subjects for female study suggests her belief that women could absorb a fair amount of knowledge without becoming too masculine, making up in breadth what they lacked in depth. There was a general consensus that women should be allowed to study English language and literature, geography, ancient and modern history, French, and perhaps Italian. Barbauld went farther than most in allowing Latin, though not as far as she might have. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had encouraged Greek as well as Latin, and in the previous century, Anna Maria Schurman had encouraged Greek and Hebrew. Barbauld also

went farther than most in recommending the sciences. In Hannah More's novel *Coelebs in Search of Wife*, the hero approves of women's learning of Latin, but expresses distaste for a wife "who was always dabbling in chemistry, and who came to dinner with dirty hands from the laboratory" (291). More claims in her correspondence that though she had "frequently heard ladies using philosophical and technical terms ... it did not inspire her with any desire to dabble in the sciences, which would have consumed much time without any of that good which was the result of a thorough acquaintance with a few things" (317). Barbauld's insistence that women should be knowledgeable in politics, in order to maintain an objective perspective, invited some potential objections. The bluestocking gatherings significantly outlawed discussion of politics, though the women who participated in them were by no means ignorant of national and international affairs, or without opinions.

Like some of the writings discussed earlier, the pieces collected in the *Legacy* display an attempt to dignify women's activities as wives and mothers, and particularly their activities as mother-teachers. Barbauld foregrounds the role of the mother-teacher in a number of pieces within the collection. "On Female Studies," "True Magicians," "The King in his Castle," "On the Uses of History," and "Allegory on Sleep" are all written in the form of epistolary addresses to young female friends, with the obvious purpose of instruction. A number of others involve dialogues between mother and daughter, including "A Lecture on the Use of Words," "Pic-nic," and "Grimalkin to Selima." The lessons which mothers provide in the *Legacy* effectively demonstrate the knowledge and cultivation, not to mention the confidence, required to acquit the role of mother-teacher successfully. A mother must be able not only to convey information on academic and other necessary subjects to prepare

women for their entry into society and marriage, but also to expose the errors of common practice, and to encourage children to exercise judgment rather than feeling. The *Legacy* of course also includes the *Hymns in Prose*, whose attempt to dignify women's roles as wives and mothers is discussed above.

Small signs of Barbauld's dissatisfaction with the limitations of female existence still persist in the *Legacy*. The strongest expression emerges in "A Dialogue of the Dead between Helen, and Madame de Maintenon," where Madame de Maintenon, after favourably contrasting her life with that of Helen's, admits that she was not entirely happy, having continually to exhaust all her ingenuity in order to amuse Louis. As she observes, her devotion to Louis meant that she necessarily limited her literary accomplishments.

As well as recapitulating Barbauld's views on sexual difference and relations between the sexes, the *Legacy* also invites us to reconnect those views to the debate over personal identity. Lucy Aikin makes the editorial decision to include a number of poems in the *Legacy* yielding evidence of Barbauld's engagement in this debate, including "Verses written in the Leaves of an ivory Pocket-Book, presented to Master T{urner};" "To ***** Occasioned by his Poem to the Sun;" and "Epitaph on a Goldfinch." At least one contribution in the *Legacy* brings evidence of Barbauld's engagement in the debate over personal identity explicitly together with her feminist ideology. The riddle "The King in his Castle" describes the mind as a "monarch who lives in a sumptuous castle, raised high above the ground and built with exquisite art." This monarch, we are told, "transacts everything by means of his ministers," never appearing himself, but living "in so retired a manner that ... it has often excited the curiosity of his subjects" -- a direct allusion to the debate over personal identity.

Significantly, the author insists that the king's "residence is hidden," and "it has never been discovered with any certainty which of the chambers of the castle he actually inhabits" (20). The description of the mind's intangibility and elusiveness suggestively evokes Locke's concept of consciousness. The subsequent account of how the king acquires intelligence from his ministers recalls Locke's description of how the mind receives information about the external world from the senses, while the emphasis on the mutual dependence of mind and body affirms a connection between consciousness and substance. The riddle concludes with a direct address to a young woman, Lucy: "As you, my dear ... have had more conversation with this king than most of your age have been honored with, I dare say you will be at no loss in pointing him out" (24). Barbauld thus exploits the debate over personal identity as an occasion to reaffirm women's command of the faculties of reason and reflection, as well as to encourage them to develop them. Indeed, as a riddle that evidently demands considerable exercise of the faculties of reason and reflection the debate over personal identity emerges in itself as an opportunity for women's intellectual improvement.

Ultimately, it seems that Barbauld's attitudes on the subject of sexual difference and relations between the sexes were matters of ongoing negotiation. Like Locke, she consistently affirmed women's claims to the same faculties of reason and reflection as men, arguing that apparent differences between the male and female men were the product of an inadequate education. She advocated reforms to female education in order to challenge the sexual hierarchy and to improve relations between the sexes. At the same time, she expressed a consistent desire that matters might not be carried too far. Locke himself displays the same desire in the two *Treatises*. Just as he accepts the compromise of constitutional monarchy as

opposed to demanding a democracy, so he accepts a contractual arrangement between the sexes, in which the man acts as the final arbiter in matters of common concern, rather than insisting on the eradication of traditional gender categories. It is clear that Barbauld did not want an abolishment of the separate spheres, which she regarded as a violation of God's plan. The result is a certain ambivalence in her writings on education, as she conceives a course of female study as both a means of improvement and a mechanism of control: a way of preserving differences between the sexes. Barbauld's anxiety over the potential violation of prescribed gender categories led her sometimes to affirm the existence of certain essential differences between the male and female mind. She attempted to reach a compromise of sorts in her promotion of the ideal of the rational wife and mother. It was her aim not simply to reinstate the same sexual hierarchy. She makes various attempts to valorize the role of the wife and mother, though she never completely banishes her dissatisfaction with the limitations of female existence.

Chapter 5

Early Poems and Prose 1767-1774

As has by now been well established, Barbauld was writing during a period of unprecedented female literary activity. The increased amount of leisure enjoyed by middle and upper class women had made large numbers of them, for the first time, readers and writers. Women composed novels, poetry, drama, translations (from Old English, French, Italian, German, Latin, Greek), anthologies, autobiography, biography, diaries, letters, travel writing, and treatises on religion, philosophy, and politics. By the late-eighteenth century women writers had gained an audience and remarkable level of acceptance, dominating the market of fiction and poetry, both as writers and readers. Dale Spender, among others, has argued convincingly that one of the single most important literary developments of the eighteenth century was the emergence and establishment of the professional woman writer.

There remained, of course, many obstacles facing women seeking to establish themselves as writers. According to Vivien Jones, the simple act of writing could still be construed as a violation of sexual decorum for women, creating “a troubling confusion of gender roles” (142). Joyce Fullard observes that “[i]f ... [women poets] published under their own names, their work was likely to be dismissed as frivolous and irrelevant 'women's verse,' or attacked ... and labelled immoral or unfeminine” (xxii). Patricia Meyer Spacks contends that eighteenth-century women of letters faced a continual struggle between the desire for self-assertion and the need for self-suppression, struggling to achieve respect and recognition in the literary world without violating common assumptions regarding appropriate female behaviour. She notes that it was characteristic of eighteenth-century women writers to “offer weakness, harmlessness, youth, ill health, lack of ambition, financial need -- in short, femaleness -- as excuse for presumption” (59). As well as enduring the continuing stigma attached to female literary activity, women writers continued to lack female role models as

they struggled to displace male-centred models of creativity.¹

Despite such obstacles, Barbauld managed to achieve an impressive degree of recognition and respect for herself as a writer. From the beginning, she sought to be ranked next to male contemporaries. Her first literary models were men. Her early poetry was most obviously indebted to Pope and Goldsmith, and it was her adolescent exposure to the “superior strain” of Priestley’s verse that first inspired her to turn her own hand to poetry. In the introduction to their edition, *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft remark upon the difficulty of classifying Barbauld’s poetry in gendered terms. While Barbauld favours “what might be considered ‘typical’ women’s verse – celebrations of domestic life and character, nature poetry, hymns and prayers ... she also wrote biting satire, riddles, odes, and poems in the mock-heroic style.” In their view, “[h]er sensibility can be called neither masculine nor feminine; they are not categories that enlighten a reading of her verse” (xxiii).² Much of her prose suggests the same eclecticism. For example, her contributions to the *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (1773) include the Bunyanesque allegory the “Hill of Science,” the Ossianic fragment “Seláma,” the Addisonian literary criticism, “On Romances: an Imitation,” and “An Inquiry into those Kinds of Distress which excite agreeable Sensations,” as well as the Johnsonian moral essays, “Against Inconsistency in our Expectations,” and “On Monastic Institutions.” It appears that Barbauld had no difficulty mastering and assimilating the rhetoric of male writers. In achieving widespread respect and recognition as a writer, Barbauld stood in striking contrast to other talented women of the same period, such as Catherine Blake and Dorothy Wordsworth, who never escaped the handmaiden’s role in their relationships with literary men.

Yet it appears that Barbauld never entirely conquered her anxiety as a woman writer. Despite the respect and recognition she received for her writing, Barbauld remained fearful that she might be perceived as transgressing prescribed boundaries of feminine activity. The most cursory examination of her literary career suggests a perplexing combination of confidence and diffidence. Barbauld undertakes an impressive range of genres and subjects in the course of her life, but also demonstrates recurring signs of insecurity over her writing. Her poetry, in particular, is characterized by apologies, disclaimers and disparaging references to her literary talents. In the well-known letter to Elizabeth Montagu on the establishment of a female academy, Barbauld complains that “the thefts of knowledge in our sex are only connived at while carefully concealed and if displayed, punished with disgrace” (1: xviii). In the context of *The British Novelists*, Barbauld provides an account of Fanny Burney's apprehensions as young female writer that is suggestively autobiographical.³ Like Burney, Barbauld was at first reluctant to show her writing to others. Priestley had no idea that Barbauld wrote poetry until his departure from Warrington. When he urged her to send “Corsica” through a mutual acquaintance to James Boswell, whose *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to that Island, and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (1768) had greatly impressed her, she hesitated. He eventually took the initiative, reading the poem aloud to Boswell at their club on April 9, 1772. It seems to have taken equally great effort to convince Barbauld to publish. According to Lucy Aikin, John Aikin and William Enfield prevailed upon Barbauld to contribute to their collections, not the other way around, and Aikin was also the driving force behind the *Poems*. When he found that after all the preparations had been made his sister “still hesitated and lingered ... he procured the paper,

and set the press to work on his own authority” (1: xii). Throughout her literary career Barbauld relied on her brother to arrange her writing for printing, though she always retained the choice to reject or accept his decisions.

I would argue that the same tension we see in Barbauld's attitudes on the subject of sexual difference, which we have connected to contemporary debate over competing theories of personal identity, emerges specifically in her attitudes towards female literary activity. The next three chapters will trace the development of that tension through the three main phases of Barbauld's literary career. The first phase encompasses Barbauld's years at the Warrington Academy, before her marriage to Rochemont Barbauld on May 26, 1774. It was during these years that Barbauld produced over a third of her poetic corpus. Barbauld's next phase dates from her marriage to about 1795, during which period she established her reputation as a children's writer. Her final phase begins with her prefaces to Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* (1795) and the *Odes of Collins* (1797), which signal her increasing turn to literary criticism.

We will begin our discussion in this chapter with a re-examination of “On Mrs P{riestley's} Leaving Warrington” (1767?; 1994). As established in chapter four, this poem provides an indirect link between the debate over personal identity and Barbauld's attitudes on the subject of sexual difference and relations between the sexes. The same poem serves to connect the debate over personal identity to a tension in Barbauld's attitudes towards female literary activity, as it records her attempt to negotiate a desire for recognition as a writer without regard for her sex, and a fear of violating prescribed gender categories.⁴ Other poems from Barbauld's days at Warrington exhibit the same tension. The tension increases as

Barbauld comes to appreciate the power of poetry to influence the thoughts and actions of the reader, and seeks increasingly to become, with male poets, a “legislator of mankind.” It appears that in her growing conception of the power of poetry Barbauld is significantly influenced by Locke's theory of personal identity. As she realizes, Locke's theory of personal identity indirectly invests literature with new cultural significance. The capacity of literature to mimic the flow of consciousness through narrative enables writers to capture the effect of identity in a sense they had never been able to before, and to exert an unprecedented influence over the thought and actions of their readers, through the process of sympathetic identification. Locke's theory of personal identity thus both assists Barbauld in establishing herself as a woman writer, and informs her aesthetic theory. At the same time, it fails ultimately to assuage her anxiety as a woman writer over her possible disruption of prescribed gender categories. Her writings continue to betray a struggle between a desire for unbiased respect and recognition as an author, and a fear of overstepping the line of prescribed gender activity -- unresolved during the first phase of her literary career.

I.

“On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington” opens with an address to “Amanda,” Barbauld's poetic name for Mary Priestley. “O will Amanda to these lines attend,” the poet demands, “[w]arm from the heart, the wishes of a friend,/ And not repress the fond, presumptuous claim,/ Which dares to call her by that sacred name?” (1-4). Barbauld's choice of this particular poetic name for her friend, which in Latin means “the loved one” or

“beloved,” tacitly signals her desire to be ranked alongside male writers in its demonstration of her knowledge of the classics. A significant proportion of Barbauld's early poems employ Latin names, and many begin with quotations in Latin. At the same time, the address to Amanda indirectly sanctions Barbauld's writing as a private expression of female friendship, hinting at a certain hesitation in claiming a place next to male writers. In the next lines, the poet expresses the concern that Mary Priestley, accustomed “to a superior strain” (7), might condemn her own “feeble verse” (8). The reference to the “superior strain” is of course to the poetry of Joseph Priestley, Barbauld's earliest poetic role model. While expressing an anxiety at the prospect of being compared with Priestley, the poet appears to court it as well, indirectly affirming a desire to be ranked alongside male contemporaries. Perhaps apprehensive about how the readers will interpret her courting of comparison to Priestley, the poet reinvokes her friendship with Mary Priestley as sanction for her writing. Acknowledging that sorrow is not the best inspiration for poetry, she begs her friend's indulgence, claiming that she hopes to find emotional relief in verse for her sorrow over her friend's departure. Hers is a “trembling muse” (12) seeking to assuage her grief at the departure of her friend. The hope is that by writing this poem she will “sooth her griefs and hush her rising sighs” (14), and finally, she will “charm” away her sadness. The poet celebrates the Priestleys' marriage, which brought them to Warrington in the first place, extolling the perfections of her friend. Barbauld's description of Mary Priestley in itself highlights the tension between the poet's ambition to compete alongside her male contemporaries, and her desire to uphold her femininity. Amanda affirms women's claims to the same intellectual faculties as men, including the highest faculty of genius. The line “Such, Warrington, was once thy proudest

boast” (35) suggests that Amanda's genius rivals, perhaps even exceeds that of her husband and the other the men at Warrington. Yet the poet emphasizes throughout the passage that her friend's intellectual accomplishments have in no sense compromised her attractions as a woman. As discussed in chapter four, Barbauld's description of her friend provides evidence of her working towards a compromise between the theories of self-in-consciousness and self-as-substance, balancing women's claims to the same intellectual faculties as men with an affirmation of some essential differences between men and women.

In the second verse paragraph, the poet shifts from the present to the past, recalling the many days she spent over at the Priestleys, enjoying their pleasant social circle, where the men and women associated with the Warrington Academy met and interacted. Surveying the chaos of the Priestleys' former home in the midst of the move, the poet observes that the “social genius of gay liberal mirth/ Still hover[s] round its favourite seat of rest/ Mourn[ing] like a dove disturbed from its loved nest” (62). The comparison of the “social genius of gay liberal mirth” to a dove is striking. Indirectly, it underscores the poet's continued effort to reconcile her ambition for recognition as an intellectual equal without compromising her femininity. The comparison to the dove serves to emphasize the domestic character of the Priestleys' gatherings, suggesting that she was not, in her interaction with the men at the Warrington Academy, transgressing against prescribed boundaries of male and female activity. The poet's remark, “Our silent prayers shall her path pursue” conveys her longing to escape the narrow realm to which she has been consigned once more, with the departure of the Priestleys, and her wish to participate with them in a broad social network. The poem concludes with a benediction, as the poet hopes that each year will bring Amanda some

source “[o]f pleasing thought and grateful memory,” supplying new food for “[t]he conscious soul's unfading rich repast” (86). The poet expresses her particular hope that her friend will continue to balance “friendships social charms, and soft domestic joy” (91-92). Indirectly, this affirms her final compromise between the desire for recognition as an equal in society and her recognition of the claims of marriage and motherhood. What begins as a tribute to female friendship and a wide social circle thus ends with a tribute to the claims of the family, in the description of the Priestleys' daughter, the “[d]ear object of Amanda's tenderest care” (104).

Another early poem strikingly illustrating the same tension as “On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington” is “The Invitation: To Miss B *****” (1762? or post-1766?; 1772), published by William Enfield in *The Speaker* (1774) under the title “The Warrington Academy.” The variance in the poem's title offers the first hint of the poet's struggle between yearning for respect and recognition alongside her male contemporaries and avoiding the charge of transgression against prescribed categories of gender activity. The title “The Warrington Academy” encourages the poem to be located within an illustrious line of eighteenth-century loco-descriptive verse; the title “The Invitation” encourages the poem to be regarded as a tribute to female friendship, in this instance to the poet's second cousin and lifelong friend, Elizabeth Belsham, later Kenrick, who was a frequent visitor at the Warrington Academy during the poet's years there.

Of course, loco-descriptive poetry was a genre itself fraught with the tension between aspiration for universally-recognized poetic fame and fear of over-ambition and transgression against divine prerogative.⁵ Pope's *Windsor Forest* (1713) begins with the following quotation from Virgil's *Eclogues*:

Non inussa cano: Te nostræ, Vare, Myricæ

Te Nemus omne canet; nec Phæbe gratior ulla est

Quam sibi quæ Vari præscripsit Pagina nomen[,] (Eclogues, vi, 9-12),

which Geoffrey Tillotson translates as “I was venturing from my pastoral into epic poetry when Apollo, god of poesy, warned me back. It will be a rural poem, then, that I shall present to you, Varus, my soldier friend. But even a rural poem can bestow a lasting fame.”

Virgil's *Eclogues*, and eighteenth-century loco-descriptive poems such as Pope's *Windsor Forest*, reflect a mixture of competing genres, pastoral, epic and satire, affirming, on a formal level, an underlying tension between poetic aspiration and fear of over-ambition and transgression.

In “The Invitation,” Barbauld's anxieties as a woman writer thus only serve to heighten a tension already inherent in the loco-descriptive mode. It is perhaps because of this already inherent tension that the poet finds this particular mode appealing and accessible as she first embarks on her literary career. The poet affirms the status of “The Invitation” as loco-descriptive verse in the opening quotation from Virgil's *Eclogues*, “*Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori,/ Hic nemus: hic ipso tecum consumere aevo,*” meaning “here are cold springs, Lycoris, here soft meadows here woodland;/ Here, with thee, time alone would wear me away” (McCarthy and Kraft 226).

“The Invitation” itself opens with a benediction reminiscent of the one that concludes “On Mrs. P{riestley} Leaving Warrington,” as the poet wishes her friend health, calm, joy, peace, hope, and “fair ideas all her fancy fill” (8). Next is a typically pastoral celebration of the advantages of rural existence over the hectic life of the city, which the poet characterizes

by its “mimic grandeur and illusive light” (10). The poet implicitly contrasts the affection that she and Delia share with “the hollow friendships” (12) of the city, and the simple and virtuous pleasures of life at the Warrington Academy, situated amidst the glories of nature, with the “sickly joys” and falsely “glittering scenes” of urban life.

There follows a lengthy and lyrical description of the beauties of the natural world during the springtime, with which the poet presumably hopes to tantalize her friend. The description culminates with a reiterated invitation from the Muse to Delia at the beginning of the next section, urging her to “haste away/ And ... sweetly waste the careless day” (51-52) in the poet's pastoral retreat.

The tone of the poem shifts as it becomes clear the poet's intention is not merely a celebration of pastoral beauty but also a tribute to the local, manmade features of her rural home along the banks of the Mersey river. In a passage reminiscent of Virgil's descriptions of Carthaginian ingenuity in Book One of the *Aeneid*, the poet describes the environs of the Warrington Academy, and more specifically, the elaborate system of canals whose construction was overseen by the Duke of Bridgewater.

The Virgilian echo serves as an effective transition into the description of the Warrington Academy itself, which carries the reader from the pastoral into the epic. “[N]obler praise awaits our green retreats[,]” the poet declares, “The Muses here have fixt their sacred seats” (79-80), indirectly identifying Warrington Academy with Mount Olympus, which was the traditional residence of the Muses. The poet celebrates the contribution of the Warrington Academy to the continuing glory of Great Britain, describing the studies in which the students are currently engaged, and envisioning the future accomplishments of its students

as leaders, politicians, poets, academics, soldiers, explorers, physicians, and divines. For this reason, the poet claims, the river Mersey, upon whose banks the mansion of the Warrington Academy resides, “dares to emulate a classic tide” (90). The description of the Warrington Academy, “the nursery of men for future years” (82), indirectly underscores the division between the world to which the two female friends have access and the world of men. It is possible for the women only vicariously to participate in the lives of men and their professional achievements.

The last section concludes with another shift in tone, epic giving way to pastoral, as the poet abruptly announces:

Here cease my song. Such arduous themes require
 A master's pencil, and a poet's fire:
 Unequal far such bright designs to paint,
 Too weak her colours, and her lines too faint,
 My drooping Muse folds up her fluttering wing,
 And hides her head in the green lap of spring. (183-88).

In this passage, the poet renounces the desire for recognition and respect in the same terms as her male contemporaries, disclaiming the possession of “[a] master's pencil, and a poet's fire,” and deprecating her verse as “weak” and “faint,” although she is of course claiming that her powers are insufficient to accomplish what she has essentially just accomplished. The image of the Muse concealing “her head in the green lap of spring” exposes the poet's fear of censure and hope of reconciling her writing with conventional femininity, perhaps under the tutelage of some maternal figure. At the same time, it suggests perhaps a nostalgia for a time

before the demarcation of gender differences, as the poet regresses into childhood.

Barbauld continues to negotiate her desire to be ranked next to male poets and her fear of jeopardizing her femininity. "To Mrs. P{riestley}, with some Drawings of Birds and Insects" (1767?; 1792) is Barbauld's first poem to address the aims of poetry directly. The poem begins with a disclaimer. "Amanda bids," announces the poet," at her command again/ I seize the pencil, or resume the pen" (1-2). The poet's attitude is somewhat more confident than in "On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington," as it appears that she now has secured her friend's approval of her artistic efforts, but the poet's apparent need for a disclaimer signals again a certain anxiety as a woman writer.

Barbauld's simultaneous engagement in painting and poetry leads her, in the next section, to venture her opinion concerning the difference between the two media, observing that

[p]ainting and poetry are near allied;
 The kindred arts two sister Muses guide;
 This charms the eye, that steals upon the ear;
 There sounds are tun'd; and colours blended here:
 This with a silent touch enchants our eyes,
 And bids a gayer brighter world arise:
 That, less allied to sense, with deeper art
 Can pierce the close recesses of the heart;
 By well set syllables, and potent sound,
 Can rouse, can chill the breast, can sooth, can wound;

To life adds motion, and to beauty soul,
 And breathes a spirit through the finish'd whole:
 Each perfects each, in friendly union join'd;
 This gives Amanda's form, and that her mind. (4-18)

Invoking the common eighteenth-century conception of poetry and painting as the “sister arts,” the poet emphasizes the different principles of operation involved in each, as painting captures a static image of the exterior world, while poetry traces the movement of the interior world: the mind.⁶ While envisioning a mutually enhancing relationship between the two media, Barbauld tacitly privileges poetry over painting. As she suggests, it is the capacity of poetry to trace the movement of the mind that grants it the power to “rouse,” “chill,” “soothe,” or “wound” its audience.⁷ Indeed, it is this that gives poetry the illusion of capturing the “soul” or “spirit.” Barbauld's overlapping of the “soul,” “spirit,” and “mind” indirectly affirms her sense of connection between personal identity and identity of man: consciousness and substance. In privileging poetry over painting, Barbauld distinguishes herself from a whole line of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory that privileges painting over poetry, and identifies the power of poetry exclusively in its visual effects. She allies herself with Johnson, who, in *The Rambler No. 168*, 16 October, 1751, defines the “force of poetry” as “that force which calls new powers into being, which embodies sentiment, and animates matter” (Tillotson 1004).

Barbauld picks up the same distinction between poetry and painting in a poem from the last phase of her literary career, entitled “On a Portrait” (1801?; 1825). Initially, the poet expresses awe at the “magic powers” of painting to bring her “Brother nigh” (2), “by colours

into canvass wrought” capturing “[t]he hue of sentiment, and tinge of thought” (4). As she gazes upon the portrait of her brother, she “almost expect[s] the opening lips to pour/ With usual flow the treasured mental store” (11-12). From her point of view, painting is fully capable, if not of representing the life of the mind, of intimating its existence. Nevertheless, the poet also reveals a sense of the defects of painting, apparent in her suggestion that painting captures only a transient moment in an individual's life, and a concern that the portrait will only accurately render her brother for a short while, during this period of youthful happiness. She imagines the despair she will feel gazing on the portrait in the future, once “the living form [has] decay[ed]” (16).

In its view of poetry, “To Mrs. P{riestley}” marks a significant advance upon “On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington.” In “On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington,” the poet sees poetry not as a public statement, but as a private exercise to relieve the poet's emotions. Though she expects to produce no “pleasing sounds” from her “languid fancy,” the poet begs her friend's indulgence, claiming the need to assuage her sorrow over her friend's departure in verse:

Yet let a trembling muse indulge her woe,
 That in low notes and broken accents tries
 To sooth her griefs and hush her rising sighs,
 That seeks in verse if any charm can dwell
 To soften that unpleasing word farewell ... (11-16)

The aim of poetry in “To Mrs. P{riestley}” is no longer merely for the emotional relief of the poet; instead, it is to elicit emotions from the members of its audience.

In the context of "To Mrs. P{riestley}," Barbauld yet disclaims any ambitious attempt to exploit the "potent sound" of poetry. At the beginning of section three, the poet states that "humbler things my artless hand requires/ Nor higher than the feather'd tribe aspires" (20-21). Her own artistic talents, she suggests, are not adequate to capture Amanda's complexity. Such a disclaimer is perhaps somewhat ingenuous, since the poet has already given a description of her friend in "On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington," and in the context of this poem, gives all of the birds and insects she describes distinctly human characteristics. She portrays the eagle, for example, as a warrior-king, and the pheasant as a "beauteous captive." Her attribution of "souls" to the songbirds further blurs the distinction between animals and humans. The annual migratory flight of a large species of birds she describes as "marshall'd by some skilful general's hand" (64). The "filmy web" (75) in which many breeds of insects hibernate she compares to the tomb. Most interesting is her description of the insects bursting through "their silken shell" (80), and the observation "[s]o when Rinaldo struck the conscious rind,/ He found a nymph in every trunk confin'd" (86-87).⁸ This allusion to Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) implicitly contrasts the female poet's modest claims with those of the male poet, and his description of the epic adventures and deeds of heroes. Barbauld suggests that it is the jurisdiction of the male poet to exploit the "potent sound" of poetry in his narratives of heroes. It is up to the male poet to form the judgement and the taste of the readers by arousing emotions on behalf of his heroes. However, her subsequent portrait of the "giant of the beetle race," with "shining arms and polish'd limbs," conveys her longing to follow in the footsteps of male poets such as Tasso.

There is a possible link back to Locke's theory of personal identity in Barbauld's use of

the phrase “conscious rind.” With this phrase, Barbauld affirms her adherence to the Lockean view that consciousness is a distinguishing feature of humanity. It is her assumption that the tree is alive on its own, but only conscious with a nymph imprisoned inside of it. When a tankard mysteriously acquires the power of speech in another early poem, “Groans of the Tankard” (n.d.; 1772), it significantly becomes “the conscious vessel” (84).

The poem concludes with another address to Amanda, echoing “On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington.” The poet claims that fundamentally she is attempting to assuage her loneliness “with song, or paint.” It is her contention that so long as her artistic efforts have Amanda's praise, she aspires to nothing else. “I envy not,” she says, “nor emulate the fame

Or of the painter's, or the poet's name:

Could I to both with equal claim pretend,

Yet far, far dearer were the name of FRIEND. (125-128)

This concluding abjuration of literary fame again conveys a certain anxiety as a woman writer.

The autobiographical poem “To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she neglected him, October 20th 1768” (1768; 1994) reiterates Barbauld's yearning to follow in the footsteps of male poets, as well as an anxiety lest she overstep the boundaries of prescribed female activity. Towards the end of the poem, the poet launches into a lengthy praise of the twin gifts of Apollo, medicine and poetry, which her brother commands, and with which he will be able to cure the ills both of body and of mind. Barbauld tells her brother that as a doctor, “Thy words of balm shall cure the wounds of strife,/ And medicine all the sharper ills of life” (82-83). She imagines that by combining the professions of medicine and poetry, her brother will triumphantly extend the range of his “words of balm.” Barbauld's enthusiastic predictions

of her brother's success as a doctor and a poet indirectly articulate her own sense of frustrated ambition. The poet makes an effort to assuage her sense of frustrated ambition, rationalizing that her brother has inherited a greater share of talent than hers:

For both our breasts at once the Muses fir'd,
 With equal love, but not alike inspir'd
 To thee, the flute and sounding lyre decreed,
 Mine, the low murmurs of the tuneful reed ... (90-94)

The poem concludes with an expression of gratitude to her brother for encouraging her to exploit her full talents as a writer. "Yet when fair friendship shall unloose my tongue," she assures him, "My trembling voice shall ne'er refuse the song;/ Yet will I smile to see thy partial praise,/ With lovely error crown my worthless lays" (94-97).

Indirectly, the conclusion suggests an element both of resignation and of hope. The poet gently reproves her brother for his failure to perceive the changed circumstances of their situations. As a man who has never faced the prospect of having to limit his ambitions Aikin has not understood the strictures imposed upon her. The special bond that they shared, the affinity of sentiment and taste, is still there, but she no longer has the same means of expressing it as he does. Barbauld thus provides a tacit excuse for her lapse in letter-writing. Her brother now pursues his professional training to become a surgeon, while she stays at home. Her silence is not a sign of envy, or of a diminishment in her affection for him. Certainly, Barbauld takes a generous pride in all of Aikin's accomplishments. It *is* symbolic of her ongoing struggle to stifle her own ambitions, aware as she is that her participation in his life can now only ever be vicarious.

There remains a hint that Barbauld has not entirely stifled her ambitions in her continuing willingness to employ her pen to assist whatever cause her brother urges. While she disparages her own literary talents, she takes obvious pride in her brother's opinion that, like him, she might exploit "the potent sound" of poetry to benefit society. Earlier on in the poem, she significantly insists that "fancy blooms" and "virtues flourish" within women's "bounded sphere," suggesting that writing is an activity from which she is not cut off by the constraints of female existence. Indeed, the poet raises the possibility that she might escape the constraints of female existence, and extend her influence beyond the "bounded sphere" through her collaborative literary efforts with her brother.⁹

Another poem from the same period, "Prologue to *The Man of Pleasure* by John Aikin." (1771?; n.d.), further develops Barbauld's views concerning the aim of literature, asserting that it is "[t]o wake new feelings in the callous mind,/ With skill to set distorted judgments right/ To purge the taste, and clear the mental sight" (25). As Kraft and McCarthy point out, these lines sustain an implicit analogy between John Aikin's twin vocations of medicine and poetry. "Surgeons *set* broken bones, *clear* the eyes of obstructions, and prescribe *purges* for the bowels" (252). The suggestion is that writers are capable of mending the mind just as surgeons are capable of mending the body. According to the poet, her brother was impelled to write his first comedy because

[t]oo oft ... the Comic muse had wrought
 A tempting poison, and a beauteous fault;
 Too oft distorted in her magic glass,
 The broken images of things would pass;

Unreal scenes in fairy colour colours drest,
 And sacred forms disguised in motley vest,
 The simple hearted stripling to beguile
 And point at worth, the sly sarcastic smile. (29-36)

The result was a vow that “[h]is talents, were they e'er so great or small,/ Shou'd sacred be -- to virtue sacred all” (37-38). John Aikin determined that “mimic scenes in sweet enchantment drest/ Should point their battery at the feeling breast” (43-44), drawing up his two-act comedy as a “prescription” or “gilt pill.” Again, Barbauld recognizes the power of literature in its capacity to rouse the feelings of the reader -- or in this instance, the audience -- principally through the characters it represents.

Interestingly, Oliver Goldsmith, who had also practised as a physician, employs precisely the same analogy between medicine and literature in the prologue to *She Stoops to Conquer, or the Mistakes of the Night* (1773), offering his play as “five draughts prepared” (36) to cure the excesses of sentimental comedy. It is his claim that if the audience “swallows” it comedy will be cured, but if the audience refuses it her case will be “desperate.” Anticipating resistance from those who question his moral aims, he promises that “No *poisonous drugs* are mix'd in what he gives”(42).

Barbauld is notably more emphatic than Goldsmith in asserting the importance of the instructive aim of literature. In her view, as well as that of her brother, literature should exploit its hold over the emotions in order to improve the judgement and the taste of the audience, as well as to inspire it to virtue -- not merely to avoid vice.¹⁰ There is evident anxiety that literature might just as easily undermine as support the development of

judgement, taste, and virtue, because of the malleability of the mind.

In her emphasis on the instructive aim of literature, Barbauld indirectly raises the possibility of reconciling her ambitions as a poet with her responsibilities as a woman. An emphasis on the instructive aim of literature suggests that Barbauld might still participate in some of her brother's endeavours without violating prescribed gender categories, by treating her literary activities as an extension of her activities as a mother-teacher. By the time she wrote the "Prologue to 'The Man of Pleasure,'" Barbauld had already composed "{A Character of Sarah Hallowell Vaughan}" (1770; 1825), in which she celebrates her subject for emulating "[t]he mighty mothers of immortal Rome" (4) in bidding "lovers, brothers, sons aspire to fame" and in cherishing virtue "[i]n the young bosom," inspiring "many a godlike deed" (12-14). It seems not unlikely that Barbauld was already thinking about making her literary activities compatible with her activities within the "bounded sphere."

In the context of her early verse, Barbauld never clearly adopts the role of the mother-teacher to authorize her writing. Instead, she identifies herself consistently with the muse. The poet associates herself as a "trembling muse" in "On Mrs. P{riestley}'s Leaving Warrington," a "drooping Muse" in "The Invitation," a "British muse" in "Corsica," "the faithful muse" in "The Groans of the Tankard" (n.d.; 1772), and "th' enchanted Muse" in "Verses in an Alcove" (pre-1762; 1772).¹¹

Yet Barbauld increasingly follows her brother in exploiting the capacity of poetry to influence the thoughts and actions of the readers by presenting them with improving "examples."¹² This is an obvious underlying purpose of the "Characters." The poet holds the "Characters" up as patterns, both for herself, and for future generations of readers to

emulate. In the context of the “Characters,” Barbauld explicitly champions the effectiveness of example over precept. “{William Enfield}” urges its subject to cease poring over “dark scholastic lore” (6), teaching not by “precept” but by his own example. “A Character (‘Be this Philander’s praise’)” praises its subject for a “virtue [that] from no cold precept flow’d” (5).

During her days at Warrington, Barbauld draws upon the “potent sound” of poetry on a number of occasions to venture into the realm of politics. Her early poems on political subjects operate upon essentially the same principles as her “Characters.” In *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation* (1793), Barbauld asserts that nations are subject to “the same bad passions, the same pride, selfishness, and thirst of gain, by which individuals are led to transgress the rules of duty” (2: 385), and must be subjected to the same restraints. Too often, she claims, we fail to demand the same standards of conduct from nations as we do from individuals. From the beginning, it appears that Barbauld accepts an analogy between the collective and the individual. Her poems on political subjects assume that the thoughts and actions of nations might be influenced according to the same principles as the thoughts and actions of individuals -- simply on a different scale.

The best example is perhaps “Corsica” (1768-69; 1772). The occasion for “Corsica” was the French invasion of Corsica in 1769. Under the leadership of General Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807), Corsica had been struggling to obtain independence from the Italian state of Genoa, when in 1768 Genoa turned Corsica over to France. While France prepared to invade and conquer the island, Joseph Priestley, among others, canvassed the British government to assist Corsican resistance against the French. When the British government failed to respond,

he helped to raise a private subscription, which he delivered to Paoli in March of 1769, only a few months before the Corsicans were overwhelmed by the French at the Battle of Pontenuovo. According to William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, it was probably during Priestley's efforts to raise a subscription that Barbauld composed the first part of "Corsica" -- some time between December of 1768 and March of 1769 -- and shortly after the defeat of the Corsicans that she completed the last section.

Barbauld prefaces the poem with some lines from "Autumn" (1730), the third section of James Thomson's *The Seasons*, which describe the Scots as

[a] manly race

Of unsubmitting spirit, wise and brave;

Who still thro' bleeding ages struggled hard

To hold a generous undiminish'd state;

Too much in vain! (897-99, 902-03)

This opening parallel between Caledonia and Corsica effectively evokes their common plight as nations that have unsuccessfully struggled to retain their independence against the imperial interests of powerful neighbours. Implicitly, the poet rebukes Great Britain both for its own past tyranny in the pursuit of conquest, and its present acquiescence to the tyranny of other powerful nations bent on the same aim. In both instances, Great Britain has compromised its reputation as a champion of liberty. The line "Too much in vain!" provides some hope, suggesting the possibility that both Caledonia and Corsica might yet redress themselves, as they continue to preserve a sense of identity as nations in the history of their struggles "to hold a generous undiminish'd state." Significantly, Barbauld holds up Caledonia and Corsica,

despite their failure to retain their independence, as examples for other nations to emulate. It is clearly her aim not only to rouse the emotions of her British readers on behalf of Corsica, but also to inspire them to remodel their own nation along the same lines.

The first verse paragraph opens with a direct address:

Hail generous CORSICA! unconquer'd isle!

The fort of freedom; that amidst the waves

Stands like a rock of adamant, and dares

The wildest fury of the beating storm. (1-4)

This description indirectly serves to emphasize the similarities between Great Britain and Corsica, as island-nations that have both fought for independence against a line of would-be conquerors, and bastions of liberalism surrounded by hostile nations with despotic governments, intent on enlarging their empire and extending the range of tyranny. The poet thus suggests that in denying assistance to Corsica, Great Britain is not only betraying its Whig tradition of championing liberty, but also, to some extent, betraying itself. She also suggests that Corsica, in remaining true to the cause of liberty, has now usurped Great Britain's former status as a model for the rest of the world. Corsica has become essentially a fledgling Great Britain.

This point is made explicit in verse paragraph two. Offering a passing apology to the surviving "tow'ring growths of virtue" (6), the poet expresses wonder that liberty might still be found "in this late sickly age," "[i]n this lone speck of earth" (12). The poet recalls the glorious days of "old Greece," when liberty flourished, indirectly invoking another of Thomson's poems -- his epic-length *Liberty* (1735-36), in which a personified Liberty narrates

her progress through Greece, Rome, and Great Britain. It is the poet's suggestion that as the Olympic torch of liberty once passed from Greece to Great Britain, it has now passed from Great Britain to Corsica. The poet expresses the hope that in witnessing the example of Corsica Britons will again “catch/ The warm contagion of heroic ardour,/ And kindle at a fire so like their own ...” (15-17).

Verse paragraph three offers a tribute to James Boswell, declaring that “[s]uch were the working thoughts which swell'd the breast/ Of generous BOSWELL” (18-19). The repetition of the adjective “generous” affirms that Boswell, at least, found inspiration in the example of the Corsicans. The poet describes how Boswell

...with nobler aim

And views beyond the narrow beaten track
 By trivial fancy trod ... turned his course
 From polish'd Gallia's soft delicious vales,
 From the grey reliques of imperial Rome,
 From her long galleries of laurel'd stone,
 Her chisel'd heroes, and her marble gods,
 Whose dumb majestic pomp yet awes the world,

towards the “animated forms of patriot zeal” of Corsica, “[w]arm in the living majesty of virtue,/ Elate with fearless spirit, firm, resolv'd,/ By fortune nor subdu'd, nor aw'd by power” (23-30). The contrast between “the grey reliques of imperial Rome” and “animated forms of patriot zeal” indirectly picks up Barbauld's discussion of painting and poetry in “To Mrs. P{riestley}.” While the poet acknowledges the power of visual art in the statement that it

“yet awes the world” with its “majestic pomp,” she emphasizes that it is “dumb.” As such, she suggests, visual art cannot compete with the “animated forms of patriot zeal,” which Boswell captures in *An Account of Corsica*, and Barbauld attempts to recapture in “Corsica.” As in “To Mrs. P{riestley},” Barbauld subtly privileges poetry over the visual arts, which can capture the “form” of a thing but not its “spirit.”

Verse paragraph four shifts into topographical or loco-descriptive mode, as the poet, with “raptur'd fancy,” “warm in thought,” traces “the pictur'd landscape” (31-32). The shift into loco-description immediately after the poet's reference to the visual arts is interesting. There is a suggestion that Barbauld is attempting to raise poetry even higher than she had in “To Mrs. P{riestley},” as she demonstrates the capacity of poetry to capture the “form” as well as the “spirit” of Corsica. The poet's description of Corsica's “form” is initially sweeping, as she takes in the “rocky, deep indented shores,/ And pointed cliffs,” “winding bays,” “sheltr'ing ports,” and “ample harbours,” around the edges of the island, gradually moving inland to the “numerous streams,” “hamlets brown,” “craggy hanging cliffs,” “swelling mountains,” and “various trees.” The poet's focus narrows, as she takes in more and more minute detail. There is an explicit echo of “To Mrs. P{riestley}” in the allusion to “the green leaf/ Which feeds the spinning worm” (57-58), implicitly calling attention to Barbauld's heightening ambitions as a poet in the contrasting subject matter of the two poems.

Having made an attempt to describe Corsica's “form,” the poet turns her attention to describing Corsica's “spirit,” imagining “the mountain goddess,” “LIBERTY,” roaming the landscape of Corsica. The poet suggests that the goddess of liberty prefers the sublime landscape of Corsica to

[t]he green enamel'd vales, the velvet lap
 Of smooth savannahs, where the pillow'd head
 Of luxury reposes; balmy gales,
 And bowers that breath of bliss. (78-81)

The allusion to the Bower of Bliss destroyed by Sir Guyon, the Knight of Temperance in book two of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96) points up a contrast between the sublime landscape of Corsica, which now harbours liberty, and the tropical scenery that is part of the British Empire. The poet suggests that Great Britain has sacrificed liberty to its imperial aspirations, and succumbed to the luxury that has come with the successful acquisition and exploitation of colonial territory, and subjection of the native population. This is a sentiment Barbauld reiterates more explicitly in "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade" (1791; 1791) and *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1811; 1812). The poet exploits the figure of Liberty not only to direct a veiled reproach to Great Britain, but also to strengthen the reader's sympathy for Corsica. She imagines Liberty as a mother, like the ancient mothers of Sparta, raising her sons to fight with patriotic valour. Readers who might not feel sympathy for Corsica as a nation would evidently find it more difficult to ignore the plight of the "genuine sons" of Liberty. In her analysis of "Corsica," Laura Mandell identifies the personification of Liberty as the focus of Barbauld's strategy in attempting to rouse her readers to action on behalf of the Corsicans ("Limbs").

The poet next provides a compressed history of Corsica, observing that the islanders have resisted the onslaught of the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Goths, the Saracens, and

the Ligurians. More recently, she claims, the Corsicans have “withstood/ With single arm, the whole collected force/ Of haughty Genoa, and ambitious Gaul” (98-100). The purpose of this historical *précis* seems to be an affirmation of Corsica's identity as a nation, despite its history of subjection. Barbauld's conception of national identity betrays an indirect debt to Locke's theory of personal identity, although certainly mediated through other sources. Barbauld's assumption that the identity of a nation resides in the annals of its history suggests some relation to Locke's notion that personal identity resides in consciousness, and the identification with past action and thought. The poet again attempts to rouse sympathy by personifying Corsica, this time as a prisoner who will sacrifice his life to be free.

The poet next devotes herself to a portrait of general Paoli. As in her portrait of Corsica, she attempts to capture both the “form” and the “spirit” of her subject. He is “just, as great;/ The soul of counsel, and the nerve of war;/ Of high unshaken spirit” (109-10), which he combines with “soft urbanity, and polish'd grace,/ And attic wit, and gay unstudied smiles” (112-13). At the same time, he has been endowed with “eye sublime; the searching glance/ Keen, scanning deep, that smites the guilty soul” (118); a brow “[s]erene, and spacious”(119); and a smile “benign.” The focus upon Paoli suggests another tactic to rouse the sympathy of the reader. The poet implies that if readers might not be brought to sympathize with Corsica as a collective, they cannot help but sympathize with a man such as Paoli. The description of Paoli concludes with a benediction, as the poet wishes success to his “fair hopes.” The poet's confidence in her prophecy of victory for the Corsicans momentarily wavers. She refers to herself as a “British Muse/ Tho' weak and powerless, [who] lifts her fervent voice,/ And breathes a prayer for her success” (133-5), lamenting that she cannot

assure victory for the Corsicans. If the poet privileges poetry over the visual arts in “Corsica,” she also clearly recognizes the limitations of poetry. Poetry has the power to alter the thoughts of the readers, and potentially their actions, which might have a significant impact over the realm of politics. Yet there will always be factors poetry is powerless to influence. While it is possible that Barbauld might win her readership over to the Corsican cause, she cannot control the outcome of the battle between the Corsicans and the French. When it comes down to it, she knows, liberty must “be bought with blood” (143). There is a vision of the anticipated battle between the Corsicans and the French, which the poet sees as a struggle between liberty and tyranny, virtue and vice. Having acknowledged the limitations of poetry, the poet attempts to make her hopes materialize in a vision of Corsican victory over the French, followed by “the shining train/ Of peaceful years in bright procession on” (170-71). The verse paragraph concludes with the imagined tributes to Paoli. The poet declares

Thine, PAOLI, with sweetest sound shall dwell
 On their applauding lips; thy sacred name,
 Endear'd to long posterity, some muse,
 More worthy of the theme, shall consecrate
 To after ages, and applauding worlds
 Shall bless the godlike man who sav'd his country. (178-83)

At this point, there is a break in the poem signalled by a series of asterisks. The poet resumes with news of the outcome of the battle between the Corsicans and the French, mourning Paoli's defeat. The poet must face the fact that her prophecy in favour of the

Corsicans has been proven wrong. “So vainly wish'd, so fondly hop'd the Muse:/ Too fondly hop'd ...” (184-185).

In the final section, the poet attempts to console herself, and her readers, over the failure of Corsican resistance to the French, with the notion of the “freedom of the mind.” “Corsica” rhapsodically concludes with the assertion,

There yet remains a freedom, nobler far
Than kings or senates can destroy or give;
Beyond the proud oppressor's cruel grasp
Seated secure; uninjur'd; undestroy'd;

Worthy of Gods: The freedom of the mind. (197-201)

In this final section, the poet reveals a slightly different debt to Locke's theory of personal identity. She seems to suggest a possible source of comfort to the Corsicans in the independence of consciousness. When attempts to gain political liberty fail, she implies, we must remember that there is a freedom no one can take away from us. The mind provides refuge in the face of political oppression. Perhaps the poem as a whole is an attempt to preserve the identity of Corsica now that “Cyrnus is no more.” According to the terms of Locke's theory of personal identity, identity cannot be obliterated by oppression so long as an individual or a nation continues to have a sense of its own history. Despite having won the battle, the French cannot destroy Corsica's identity as a nation if poets continue to preserve its history.

“The Times. *Tempore Georgii IIIi*” (late 1760s; 1994) operates according to the same principles as “Corsica.” The editors date this poem to a period when the liberal

opposition regarded the monarchy as becoming increasingly tyrannous, and there was a prevailing fear that George III had plans to interfere in the running of Parliament.

In "The Times," the poet's tactic is to hold up Great Britain as a warning for itself. The poet compares the contemporary situation of Great Britain to that of Rome during the first century B.C., when Julius Caesar seized power as a dictator, destroying the Roman Republic. It is her contention that the situation in eighteenth-century Great Britain is more dangerous than that of classical Rome. Then it was possible to lay "the Tyrant low" (8) through "one well aimed blow" (7). The poet sacrifices historical reality a little here to rhetorical effect, conveniently overlooking the fact that the assassination of Julius Caesar hardly ended tyranny in Rome. However, she effectively exploits the image of Caesar's wound to invoke the old notion of the body politic, suggesting that tyranny itself is a wound to the body politic. She sustains the analogy of the wound in her description of the contemporary situation in Great Britain:

But when corruption tries her deeper art
 To poison, not to stab, each honest heart,
 When Virtue is so rooted from the ground
 That hardly can one generous Vice be found,
 And lust of gold in every sordid breast,
 Like Aaron's rod has swallowed up the rest,
 When sickly calms the nerveless land oe'rsread,
 With treacherous smiles of partial plenty feed
 Then exclaim "Oh hapless Times indeed";

For deeper is the wound that does not bleed. (9-18)

As the poet contests, tyranny in Great Britain is less obvious than it was in ancient Rome, but no less pernicious. The problems of Great Britain lie not merely in the political machinations of the monarchy, but in the general failure of liberal principles, as commercial interests increasingly dominate. Capitalism has brought with it not merely an expansion of trade, but a descent into exploitation. It has become a form of tyranny that is slowly poisoning Great Britain. The poet obliquely connects capitalism to colonialism in the allusion to “sickly calms the nerveless land oe'rsread,” hinting at the negative effects of luxury acquired through exploitation. Through the analogy of the wound, the poet conveys a visceral sense of the effects of this tyranny in Great Britain. As a whole, the poem relies on the capacity of poetry to rouse the emotions of the reader through sympathetic identification, as the poet personifies Great Britain -- with its wounded breast -- a suffering victim of its own tyranny. At the same time, the poet fears that the materialism of the times has already begun to interfere with the process of sympathetic identification through which she hopes to enact change.

There is some slight evidence in connection to Barbauld's early poetry on political subjects that she hoped to reconcile her literary efforts as “legislator of mankind” with the prerogative of the mother-teacher. In a letter to Barbauld from Leeds, 13 June, 1769, Joseph Priestley reports Boswell's opinion of “Corsica” that “[i]ts being written by a *lady* ... will be a circumstance very much in ... [its] favour.” He never explains what Boswell means exactly by this statement. Boswell could merely be saying that Barbauld's sex will give her an advantage because it would be unchivalrous to criticize a lady. Yet there seems to be more to it than this. Boswell seems to be speaking to a notion of female influence that was beginning to have

increasing currency in the late eighteenth century. He seems to be urging Barbauld to promote her poem by exploiting her position as a woman appealing to the conscience of the male citizen. Priestley himself significantly refuses to attach any importance to Barbauld's gender, telling her, "you are as much a general as Tyrtæus was, and your poems (which I am confident are much better than his ever were) may have as great an effect as his" (Le Breton 35).

Following the composition of "Corsica" and "The Times," Barbauld's anxiety as a woman writer seems to have re-surfaced in a couple of poems celebrating female achievement, "On a Lady's Writing" (n.d.; 1772), reprinted by Mary Wollstonecraft in *The Female Reader* (1789) and "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" (n.d.; 1772), about the early eighteenth-century poet, Dissenter, and religious writer Elizabeth Rowe.

"On a Lady's Writing" opens with the following description:

Her even lines her steady temper show;
 Neat as her dress, and polish'd as her brow;
 Strong as her judgment, easy as her air;
 Correct though free, and regular though fair;
 And the same graces o'er her pen preside
 That form her manners and her footsteps guide. (1-6)

On the one hand, the poet praises the lady's writing for achieving qualities that might be considered masculine, such as strength, ease, and freedom. The adjectives "steady," "correct," and "regular," convey an impressive degree of self-mastery that challenges stereotypes of female flightiness and irregularity. On the other hand, the recurring emphasis

upon constraint neutralizes any sense of danger associated with the figure of the female writer. The allusions to the lady's "dress," "brow," "air," "graces," "manners," and "footsteps" in "On a Lady's Writing" evoke women's traditional position in poetry as object of gaze, assuaging possible fears that the lady's literary activity might disrupt that dynamic. The sustained analogy between the lady's writing and her physical appearance reduces the writing itself to an object of gaze, drawing attention to its form rather than to its content. Indeed, it is unclear in the context of the poem whether the poet is registering the content of the writing at all, or merely admiring the script.

Like "On a Lady's Writing," "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" celebrates female literary activity that manages to transcend straightforward categorization based on sex without compromising the writer's femininity. Barbauld invokes a consistent parallel between Rowe's life and her verse, referring to them simultaneously as "faultless" and "smooth," as well as full of "worth" and "grace." Rowe herself combines "[t]he Christian's meekness and the Poet's fire/ Learn'd without pride, a woman without art," possessing "[t]he sweetest manners and the gentlest heart" (6-8). Although a woman of the highest genius and learning, who belongs to an intellectual circle that comprises both men and women, she devotes herself foremost to her husband, and after his death, to charity, which Hannah More and the other bluestockings identify as the proper jurisdiction of women. Significantly, it is Rowe that Barbauld identifies as the model for her own literary career, imploring her shade, "[b]right pattern of thy sex, be thou my muse;/ Thy gentle sweetness thro' my soul diffuse" (39-40).

Together, "On a Lady's Writing" and "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" contradict Carol Shiner Wilson's claim, in the context of the "Characters," that "the artist's pencil, the housewife's

needle, and the writer's quill rest equally, without tension" (83). Shiner Wilson is no doubt thinking of the description of Martha Jennings, whose "ready fingers plied with equal skill/ The pencil's task, the needle, or the quill" (7-8). Yet this poem too betrays a tension. The poet's comment that all of her subject's thoughts and actions are subject to "reason's calm controul" (10), like the adjectives used to describe the lady's writing in "On a Lady's Writing," convey both an impressive degree of self-mastery, and a sense of careful restraint.

Barbauld's contributions to the *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (1773) extend her reflections on "the potent sound" of poetry to other forms of literature. In the preface to the *Miscellaneous Pieces*, reprinted independently under the title "On Romances: an Imitation," Barbauld displays an increasingly sophisticated understanding of how literature exercises its influence over the reader, identifying its power specifically in the reader's sympathetic identification with the characters represented in it. Indeed, she ventures the opinion that, of all forms of literature, the novel enjoys the greatest impact over the reader in its almost exclusive appeal to feeling, observing that "few can reason, but all can feel, and many who cannot enter into an argument, may yet listen to a tale" (2: 172). She notes that "to taste the beauties of Homer it is requisite to partake his fire; but everyone can relish the author who represents common life, because everyone can refer to the originals from whence his ideas were taken" (2: 173-74). The only limitation of the novel, hinted at in "On Romances," concerns the common motives of novel-reader. In Barbauld's opinion, novel-readers are primarily motivated by a desire for entertainment.

In the concluding paragraph of the essay, Barbauld investigates the underlying cause of sympathetic identification, dismissing the arguments of those who "suppose that we take

upon ourselves this burden of adscititious sorrow in order to feast upon the consciousness of our own virtue;" that "[w]e commiserate with others ... [to] applaud ourselves; and [that] the sigh of compassionate sympathy is always followed by the gratulations of self-complacent esteem." "But surely," she exclaims, "they who would thus reduce the sympathetic emotions of pity to a system of refined selfishness, have but ill-attended to the genuine feelings of humanity." According to her, in reading of the misfortunes of a literary character, "so far from being indifferent to the miseries of others, we are, at the time, totally regardless of our own" (2: 175). It is through this loss of self, she suggests, that a character exerts an influence over the reader. Barbauld thus distinguishes her conception of sympathy from that of the unnamed "metaphysical moralists" she mentions in a late letter from Stoke Newington, 1824. "I do not like these metaphysical moralists," Barbauld writes, "who, by a refinement of subtle investigation, assert that our anxiety for our friends proceeds only from a wish to avoid, *for ourselves*, the pain we are conscious we should feel whenever they suffer" (2: 100).

"An Inquiry into those Kinds of Distress which Excite Agreeable Sensations," also published in *The Miscellaneous Pieces*, continues Barbauld's examination of the process of sympathetic identification. Barbauld asserts that "[w]e have ... a strong sympathy with all kinds of misery" (2: 187), but only experience a "melting sorrow," a "thrill of tenderness," which we call pity, under certain conditions. Pity, in her view, requires "love, esteem, the contemplation of virtue." She advises that literature representing scenes of distress should attempt to evoke pity, and not merely sympathy. She reiterates the responsibility of literature to teach, criticizing the "modern writers of romance and tragedy ... [who] seem to have drawn this inference, -- that, in order to please, they have nothing more to do than to paint

distress in naturally striking colours” (2: 186). It is her conviction that in order to promote virtue romances and tragedies must evoke pity. She regrets that some representations of suffering evoke merely fear and revulsion, declaring that “no scenes of misery ought to be exhibited which are not connected with the display of some moral excellence or agreeable quality” (2: 189). She lists a series of rules that will best enable the writers of tragedies and romances to evoke the pity of the reader. “An Inquiry” ends with a repeated expression of concern over the effect of the tragedies and romances, even when they are intent upon inspiring virtue, though she affirms their value as a source of pleasure. As the author observes, “[t]he awakenings of remorse, virtuous shame and indignation, the glow of moral approbation, -- if they do not lead to action, grow less fervid” (2: 198-99). It is perhaps significant that Barbauld never turned her own hand at tragedies or romances, despite the personal pleasure she took in them.

On the basis of her early publications, Barbauld came to command respect that seemed in some ways to transcend consideration of her sex. Following the publication of the *Poems*, William Woodfall in the *Monthly Review* 48 (1773) contends that “[i]n some of the pieces we have a smoothness and harmony, equal to that of our best poets; but what is more extraordinary, in others, we observe a justness of thought, and vigour of imagination, inferior only to the works of Milton and Shakespeare” (54). He declares, “We congratulate the public on so great an accession to the literary world, as the genius and talents of Miss Aikin. We very seldom have an opportunity of bestowing praise with so much justice” (137). Indeed, the least sympathetic reviewer, writing for the *Critical Review* 35 (1773), nevertheless admits that “Miss Aikin ... possesses talents for poetry, the cultivation of which will, probably,

redound much to her reputation” (192). In *The Female Advocate*, Mary Scott praises Barbauld “for her taste, spirit, wit, and learning” (Sylvia Myers 275). In a letter dated from Calne, December, 1775, Priestley refers to Barbauld as “an acknowledged genius” (285). After quoting a long section from John Duncombe's *Feminiad* (1751; 1754), the author of “Observations on Female Literature in General, including some Particulars relating to Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Barbauld,” in *The Westminster Magazine* (June 1776), attributes to Barbauld “the effusions of a genius under the immediate inspiration of the Muses” (284). Of her poetry, he observes, “there is a masculine force in them, which the most vigorous of our poets has not excelled: there is nothing, indeed, feminine belonging to them, but a certain gracefulness of expression ... [h]er style is perfectly *Horatian*, elegantly polished, and harmoniously easy” (285). Describing her first encounter with Barbauld's *Poems* in her *Memoirs* (1801), Mary Robinson relates, “I read them with rapture; I thought them the most beautiful Poems I had ever seen, and considered the woman who could invent such poetry, as the most to be envied of *human* creatures” (1: 102) [my emphasis]. Hannah Cowley in *The Scottish Village* (1786) praises “glowing BARBAULD,” “powerful Barbauld,” in her capacity to generate sublimity with “her magic glass” (18). The *Lady's Monthly Museum* of 1 (Sept. 1798) writes that the *Poems* “are now in the possession of every person who has any pretensions to taste.” While acknowledging that not every piece has the same merit, it insists that

most of them are evidently stamp'd with an ardour of genius, an unity of design, an expansion of intellect, a boldness, a dignity, a compass of expression, as well as a copiousness and harmony of numbers, seldom surpassed by either

Dryden, Pope, or any of their imitators. Indeed, little or nothing, in the same species, has ever appeared in our language, to which her poems ought to give place. (“0” 173)¹³

By the end of the 1780s, Barbauld had gained undisputable recognition in the canon of popular poets. Her *Poems* had run through five editions by 1777. A sixth came out in 1792, and a special American edition in 1820. The *Catalogue of Five Hundred Celebrated Authors of Great Britain* for 1788 mentions the *Poems* as having achieved exceptional acclaim. Nine of Barbauld's poems were included in Vicesimus Knox' *Elegant Extracts in Poetry* (1789), constituting over a quarter of the entire volume.

Barbauld's contributions to the *Miscellaneous Pieces* also received praise that seemed to overlook her sex. The *Annual Review* attributes to her prose writing “poetical richness and brilliancy of allusion, aptness of remark, and sagacity of discrimination” (Rodgers 136). The *Monthly Review* sees the *Miscellaneous Pieces* as granting Barbauld “an indisputable claim to originality,” distinguishing her “as a genius of the highest order” (Rodgers 61).

The praise Barbauld received in her early career as a writer seems to have been partially enabled by her strategy of publication. Barbauld published a number of collaborative works with her brother, in which individual pieces were not attributed, including *Essays on Song-Writing* (1772), *Miscellaneous Pieces* (1773), and later on, *Evenings at Home* (1793). There is no evidence that Barbauld favoured collaborative publication with the aim of securing a reputation as a writer on equal footing with men. The partnership was a natural one, given Barbauld and Aikin's close intellectual relationship and appreciation for each other's writing. Throughout their lives, brother and sister regularly corresponded upon

literary subjects, which would have served as a spontaneous starting point for collaboration. Indeed, there is evidence that the idea of collaborative publication was actually a strategy of John Aikin's to coax his sister into putting her words into print.¹⁴ Yet the fact remains that collaborative publication did assure Barbauld an initially objective evaluation of her writing, and generated a certain amount of consternation when her authorship of certain pieces was revealed. Charles Fox recounts his embarrassment at a dinner with Aikin, not long after the publication of *Miscellaneous Pieces*. Fox attempted to compliment Aikin by identifying the most brilliant pieces in the collection, only to discover that each piece he named had actually been written by Aikin's sister.¹⁵

Nevertheless, it is true that some of Barbauld's early male admirers expressed an anxiety concerning aspects of her writing that might be perceived to transgress against feminine propriety. Almost from the beginning of Barbauld's literary career, her writings were perceived as threatening by male reviewers, including those who counted themselves among her admirers. A sense of threat informs William Woodfall's review of the *Poems*. After declaring that the *Poems* reflect "a justness of thought and vigour of imagination, inferior only to the works of Milton and Shakespeare," Woodfall adds that "[w]e [yet] hoped the *Woman* was going to appear; and that while we admired the genius and learning of her graver compositions, we should be affected by the sensibility and passion of the softer pieces" (54). Woodfall especially mourns the fact that Barbauld never touches on the theme of love, or delineates "the peculiar traits of this passion in a female mind." "There is a sex in minds as well as in bodies," he asserts, "and the contest for superiority arises from our ignorance of this truth, and is managed on both sides by a mongrel breed of disputants who are neither

male nor female.” While not including Barbauld among this class, he complains that she has suffered in having received an education that has encouraged her to tread “too much in the footsteps of men.” He wishes that she might have “taken her views of human life from among ... female companions.” If it had been so, he contends, “we should have been as much enchanted with her feminine beauties, as we are now ... astonished by the strength of her imagination the variety of her knowledge, and the goodness of her heart” (137). Woodfall is content to leave off there, failing to perceive exactly to what extent Barbauld undermines his position that there is “sex in minds as well as in bodies,” and more specifically, to what extent his discussion of the effects of Barbauld's education exposes the precariousness of such a claim. If gender characteristics are as malleable as Barbauld's education attests, it appears that mental differences between the sexes are not at all as deeply ingrained as Woodfall would like to suppose.

There is some evidence during the early part of Barbauld's literary career of critics attempting to harmonize her genius with her femininity. It is the great pleasure of the Reverend Mr. Duncombe to report of Barbauld in 1776 that

[t]his Lady is not only *poetically enchanting*, but personally attractive. With a countenance in which every thing agreeable in a woman is strongly expressed, she prepossess you extremely in her favour at first sight; and you are doubly pleased with the display of her intellectual powers in conversation with her, as she seems not to be conscious of an understanding superior to the greatest part of her sex.

He goes on to commend her for never attempting “to command admiration” with “oracular

sententiousness” among “her *lettered* friends” and for never making the “illiterate ... feel their inferiority.” Of her poetry, he states that she balances “a masculine force” with “a certain feminine grace of expression” (284-85). Of Barbauld's prose, the Reverend Mr. Duncombe claims that she has “written some pieces ... which, in point of *elegance*, are as much superior to the laboured Essays of our *sturdy Moralists* as the easy motions of a fine Gentleman are, in point of *grace*, to the stiff attitudes of a *Dancing-master*” (285).

Barbauld certainly could not have missed the underlying message in the response of male critics such as Woodfall and Duncombe. Without sharing Woodfall's precise assumptions regarding the existence of “sex in minds,” she accepted a strict separation between the activities of men and women, as already established. Though she must have been gratified by the words of praise, they could only have deepened the anxiety she already felt as a woman writer.

Chapter 6

Children's Literature and Political Writing 1774-1795

In the second phase of Barbauld's literary career, as in the first, her writings betray an obvious struggle between a desire to be ranked next to male writers, and a fear of overstepping the line of prescribed gender activity. With her marriage to Rochemont in 1774, and her involvement at the Palgrave boarding school, Barbauld actively sought to reconcile her writing with her activities as a wife and mother. In *Lessons for Children of Two to Three Years Old* (1778); *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old* (1778); *Lessons for Children from Three to Four Years Old* (1779); and *Hymns in Prose for Children; calculated to impress the young mind with early devotion* (1781), she embraced the role of the mother-teacher. It may be that her marriage affirmed for her the priority of women's activities as wives and mothers, and led her to question the propriety of her early efforts to "legislate mankind." In carrying out her literary projects as a mother-teacher during her years at Palgrave, Barbauld was evidently taking her cue from Locke. The *Lessons* and *Hymns* both reflect a profound debt to Locke's writings -- particularly to his educational writings. Indirectly, the evidence of Locke's influence in the *Lessons* and *Hymns* suggests that he at least partly inspired Barbauld in seeking to rationalize her literary activity as part of her activities as a mother-teacher. Yet it appears that Barbauld was never entirely satisfied with her achievements as a children's writer, still cherishing an ambition as a writer to "legislate mankind" in the same terms as her male contemporaries.

During the late 1780s and early 1790s, Barbauld's literary career became polarized. Her interest in children's literature continued. She made a number of contributions to her brother's *Evenings at Home*, issued in six volumes from 1792-96. Yet she also wrote poems and prose treatises, a significant number of which addressed political subjects. Barbauld's political writings from the 1790s are rhetorically quite similar to her early poems on political

subjects. It seems significant that the period Barbauld's greatest and most apparently confident involvement in politics is also the period in which she most clearly articulates interest in the debate over personal identity, and devotes the most time to working through the terms of the debate. However, as Barbauld involves herself once again in politics, there are reviving signs of her anxiety as a woman writer. Her political writings of the 1790s contain the first signs of her attempt to draw on her authority as a mother-teacher in order to legitimize her involvement in politics. The attempt is only partially successful, and towards the middle of the 1790s, Barbauld renounces politics again, setting the stage for the final phase of her literary career.

I.

At Palgrave, Barbauld's experience both as an instructor in the classroom and as a mother seems to have given her a new appreciation for the value of literature as a pedagogical tool. David Chandler notes that Barbauld “was responsible for the more innovative parts of the curriculum — Drama and English Composition” (“Mrs. Barbauld's” 226).¹ According to the testimony of a former student there, the best lessons were those “of English composition superintended by Mrs. Barbauld.” This was the routine: “On Wednesdays and Saturdays the boys were called in separate classes to her apartments: she read a fable, a short story, or a moral essay, and then sent them back into the school-room, to write it out on slates in their own words” (Elwood 230). The aim was to improve skills of comprehension, writing and analysis, as well as to convey information on specific subjects. The inclusion of fables and

short stories in the curriculum indicates Barbauld's recognition of the effectiveness of combining example with precept in instruction. Barbauld's adoption of her two year old nephew Charles Aikin in 1777, and the arrival of a number of pupils between the ages of two and three at Palgrave, led her to search for books that would specifically facilitate their instruction. Commenting on Barbauld's decision to adopt, Anne Thackeray observes in her *Book of Sibyls* (1883) that “[t]his was a mother yearning for a child, not a schoolmistress asking for a pupil, though perhaps in after times the two were somewhat combined in her” (18).

The literature Barbauld wrote while at Palgrave was a direct product of her experience both as an instructor in the classroom and as a mother.² The last collection of poetry published during her lifetime was the *Devotional Pieces* (1775), which Barbauld intended to serve as an aid to popular devotion. In a letter to her brother from Palgrave, 1774, she playfully invokes a maternal analogy to describe her relationship to the collection, referring to it as “my poor child” and commenting “I cannot help feeling all a parent's anxiety for its fate and establishment in the world” (2: 63-64). In the preface to the first *Lessons*, Barbauld draws directly on her authority as a mother-teacher as justification for publication, writing that

[i]t was found that amidst the multitude of books professedly written for children, there is not one adapted to the comprehension of a child from two to three years old. A grave remark or a connected story however simple is above his capacity, and *nonsense* is always below it, for folly is worse than ignorance. Another defect is the want of *good paper, a clear and large type,*

and large spaces. Those only who have actually taught young children can be sensible how necessary these assistances are. (3-4)

Commenting on the collective achievement of the *Lessons*, Sarah Robbins notes that Barbauld “advocated a meaningful social role for middle-class women -- domestic pedagogue for young children, especially boys” (“Re-making” 158). Barbauld advertises the *Hymns* likewise as an attempt to redress a lack she has perceived in the course of her activities as a mother-teacher. In the preface to the *Hymns*, she remarks on the absence of books intended to encourage devotion in children, noting the exception of Isaac Watts' *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715).

In the *Lessons* Locke serves as Barbauld's consistent guide. As Robbins points out, the *Lessons* all operate upon the view “of the mind as initially blank, plastic, and responsive to shaping sensory impressions, especially when arranged in a hierarchical sequence” (“Lessons” 142), reflecting an obvious debt to the notion of the mind as a *tabula rasa*. Barbauld also evidently shares Locke's assumption that we acquire knowledge by applying reason and reflection to the information we receive from the senses, and that this is fundamental to our acquisition of knowledge. To facilitate his learning, Charles' mother invariably points his attention to the objects around him, gradually increasing his access to new objects as he gets older. Samuel Pickering, who writes in his book *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* that Barbauld “joined the bricks of knowledge with mortar mixed from Locke's writings” (147), comments significantly on the shift between *Lessons for Children from Two to Three* to *Lessons for Children Three Years Old* from the external objects of the senses to internal reflections upon those objects. “Barbauld's pedagogy of

controlled, incremental progress” (142) as Robbins puts it, indirectly provides additional evidence of Barbauld's endorsement of Locke's theory of personal identity, reflecting a Lockean assumption that consciousness connects the individual through all his or her different stages of intellectual progress.

Like the *Lessons*, Barbauld's *Hymns* represent the application of Lockean principles to the management of education. The preface to the *Hymns* contains Barbauld's most direct rejection of the doctrine of innate ideas. The stated aim of the *Hymns* is to ensure that children will not be able to remember a time when they had no conception of the deity. In the *Essay* Locke specifically asserts that we have no innate idea even of the existence of God. While there is no mention of Locke's notion of the mind as a *tabula rasa* in the preface, the poet invokes it later in Hymn X, where she describes the mind of “a babe just born, which knows nothing, remembers nothing, which cannot distinguish good from evil, nor truth from falsehood,” leading her to admonish, “cherish ... this precious mind, feed it with truth, nourish it with knowledge; it comes from God” (170-71). Admittedly, the method of instruction is somewhat different in the *Hymns* than in the *Lessons*, as Barbauld draws on Locke's reflections concerning the association of ideas. In the preface to the *Hymns*, the author acknowledges the value of books that employ “a very rational plan ... unfold the system, and give a summary of the doctrines of religion” (vi). Yet she also recognizes that the faculties of reason and reflection in children are undeveloped, and that they are highly susceptible to the association of ideas, evidently hoping with the *Hymns* to exploit the principle of associationism to benefit children's moral and intellectual development. Section 136 of *Some Thought* offers a virtual blueprint for the *Hymns*, where Locke argues that, to ensure that

children acquire virtue, the foundation of happiness in this world and the next, teachers must “very early” imprint on their minds “a true notion of *God*, as of the independent Supreme Being, Author and Maker of all Things, from whom we receive all our Good, who loves us, and gives us all Things.” He advises parents not to bewilder children with complicated religious concepts, emphasizing that the nature of God is incomprehensible. Instead, he says, children should merely be told “that *God* made and governs all Things, hears and sees every Thing, and does all manner of Good to those that love and obey him.” He claims that

keeping Children constantly Morning and Evening to acts of Devotion to God, as to their Maker, Preserver and Benefactor, in some plain and short Form of Prayer, suitable to their Age and Capacity, will be of much more use to them in Religion, Knowledge and Vertue, than to distract their Thoughts with curious Enquiries into his inscrutable Essence and Being. (136: 195)

Only once an idea of God is well-formed, and a child has been taught to pray to him, and praise him, should a parent consider teaching him “Discourse of other *Spirits*,” and then only when the child raises issues directly. In the preface to the *Hymn*, Barbauld outlines her intention of bringing Locke's theories concerning the association of ideas into the service of religion. As she states, her peculiar object with this publication is

to impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind; fully convinced as the author is, that they cannot be impressed too soon, and that a child, to feel the full force of the idea of God, ought never to remember the time when he had no such idea -- to impress them by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects, with all that he sees, all he hears, all that affects

his young mind with wonder and delight; and thus by deep, strong, and permanent associations to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life. (vi)

Barbauld evidently assumes that there are some ideas with a natural connection to each other that the faculties of reason and reflection are not initially capable of perceiving, which need to be inculcated first through habit. It is partly for this reason that she composes the hymns so that they might easily be “committed to memory and recited.” It is through memorization and recitation that ideas acquire the weight of authority through repetition. To at least some extent, Barbauld believes in the possibility of arriving at truth through the association of ideas. More than Locke, she stresses the importance of the affective component in religion, displaying some of her dissatisfaction with the tradition of rational piety, as it had developed within mainstream Unitarianism. She insists on the need for the child to “feel” the “continual presence” of the God, “and lean upon his daily protection -- though his religious ideas may be mixed with many improprieties, which his correcter reason will refine away” (vii). The sixth hymn features a dialogue between the author and a child, in which the poet exposes the inadequacy of reason as an exclusive foundation for religion, and encourages her young readers to exercise their faculties of imagination and feeling in order to see evidence of God in everything around them -- faculties to which Locke displays a profound suspicion in the *Essays* on the grounds that they foster ideas with no natural connection.³

Both the *Lessons* and the *Hymns* were overwhelmingly popular. Editions of both works continued to be published at regular intervals throughout the nineteenth century, both in Great Britain and in North America. The latest recorded edition of the *Hymns* appeared in

1905. Charlotte Yonge estimates that from the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries three quarters of the gentry learned to read from the *Lessons*.⁴ Mrs. Elwood observes that “[i]n many a bosom ... [have the *Hymns*], 'by deep, strong, and permanent association, laid a foundation for practical devotion' in after life' (232).” Thirty one years later, Anna Laetitia Le Breton refers to the *Hymns* as “perhaps the best known of all ... [Barbauld's] writings” (51). In the same year, Barbauld's first American biographer, Grace A. Ellis observes that the “Prose Hymns' for children and 'Early Lessons' are still used” (1: ix). Samuel Butler records his own childhood memories of the *Hymns in Prose* in his posthumously published novel *The Way of all Flesh* (1903).⁵

Barbauld's abandonment of poetry and essay-writing in favour of children's literature drew complaints from some admirers who felt that she was limiting herself. The most vocal complainer was Samuel Johnson. After citing Barbauld as an admirable instance of “early cultivation,” Johnson mourns that it ended

[i]n marrying a little Presbyterian parson, who keeps an infant boarding-school, so that all her employment now is, “To suckle fools, and chronicle small-beer.” She tells the children, “This is a cat, and that is a dog, with four legs and a tail; see there! You are much better than a cat or a dog, for you can speak.” If I had bestowed such an education on a daughter, and had discovered that she thought of marrying such a fellow, I would have sent her to the *Congress*. (Boswell 662-63)

Ellis takes offence to his remarks, speculating that “some friend, perhaps Boswell ... goaded Dr. Johnson to this ridiculous and foolish expression of ... ignorance.” Evidently, she resents

Johnson's dismissive attitude towards the importance of early education. In her view, the *Lessons* and the *Hymns* were “justly admired for the true devotion and elegance of style which they display” (73-74).

It is true that we might accuse Johnson of underrating the importance of children's literature, but he was not alone. Barbauld's female relatives, Lucy Aikin and Anna Letitia Le Breton, both introduce the subject of her marriage with almost exactly the same ominous phrase. Aikin remarks that, “[h]aving thus laid the foundation of a lasting reputation in literature, Miss Aikin might have been expected to proceed with vigour in rearing the superstructure ... but an event, the most important of her life, was about to subject her to new influence, new duties” (xiv), while Le Breton notes that, “[h]aving thus successfully laid the foundation of a literary reputation ... [Barbauld] might have gone on to longer and more important works ... had not an event ... now taken place which subjected her to new influences, new duties (41). Ellis herself defends the importance of her edition of Barbauld's writings on the grounds that since only her children's literature remained in print “one has no just idea of the varied and extensive powers of Mrs. Barbauld, and no thorough study can be made of her works and genius” (ix-x). A number of modern critics have also expressed chagrin regarding the transition in Barbauld's literary career to children's writer. After praising Barbauld's talents and originality as poet, Roger Lonsdale regrets that she appears to have renounced her vocation as a poet with her marriage and career as a children's writer. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft contest such an interpretation, noting that Barbauld's marriage and her work with children also inspired some of her best poetry. Nevertheless, they are also the ones who have calculated that “more than a third of her surviving poems

were written before her marriage in 1774" (xxix). John Aikin's *Essays on Song-Writing*, which included her Songs I-VI; William Enfield's *Hymns for Public Worship*, which included her Hymns I-V; and the *Poems*, representing the bulk of the verse she published during her lifetime, all appeared in 1772. Undeniably, Barbauld's decision to devote herself to children's literature meant that she sacrificed, at least to some extent, her poetry and essay-writing, which had established her on the same footing as her male contemporaries, and to which Lucy Aikin claims the success of Palgrave was largely owed.

Barbauld seems never to have entirely convinced herself of the equal worth of her children's writing and her poetry. The preface to the *Lessons* offers the following, slightly ambivalent, defence of the value of children's literature: "The task is humble, but not mean; for to lay the first stone of a noble building, and to plant the first idea in the human mind can be no dishonour to any hand" (20). The comment in the preface to the *Hymns* that Watts "is deservedly honoured for the condescension of his Muse, which was very able to take a loftier flight" (v) is likewise telling. Barbauld's praise of poetry in the same preface suggests that she sees a sharp division between her careers as poet and children's writer, which could not be easily reconciled. "But it may well be doubted," she says,

whether poetry ought to be lowered to the capacities of children, or whether they should not rather be kept from reading verse, till they are able to relish good verse: for the very essence of poetry is an elevation in thought and style above the common standard; and if it wants this character, it wants all that renders it valuable. (v)⁶

We must regard the public response to the *Lessons* and the *Hymns* with a certain

degree of suspicion. It is true that it attests to a recognition of Barbauld's genuine achievement, for a long time dismissed and forgotten. In 1843, Mrs. Elwood writes that "though sixty years have elapsed since ... [*Lessons for Children*] was first penned, [it] has not been excelled in its peculiar adaptation to an infant's mind" (231). Jerome Murch too considers Barbauld's children's literature the best of its kind. In the twentieth century, Betsy Rodgers identifies Barbauld as "the first serious writer for children" (71). Most recently, Samuel Pickering has called Barbauld "one of the glories of eighteenth-century children's books" (168). Barbauld certainly correctly identified a need, and applied a consideration and skill to children's literature that was unprecedented. Of his sister's career as a children's writer, John Aikin rightly remarks that "it requires true genius to enter so completely into a child's mind" (Thackeray 23).⁷ It was Barbauld who inspired Sarah Trimmer, who writes in the preface to *An Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature* (1780), "I cannot pass over this opportunity of mentioning a very useful Publication, entitled *Lessons for Children two to three or four Years old*, written by Mrs. Barbauld" (xi-xii), claiming that they are the best children's books that she has ever encountered. Yet the popularity of Barbauld's children's literature suggested the public preference for women's writing that did not risk the violation of prescribed categories of gender activity. Mrs. Elwood, who credits Barbauld with "sound judgment and good sense," "brilliancy of imagination and a considerable degree of wit" in her poetry, praises her above all for her contribution to children's literature, arguing that it was this that made her "an ornament ... to her sex" (240).

II.

During the late 1780s and 1790s, however, Barbauld was inspired by a new interest in politics that would have a profound effect on the development of her literary career. The events of the French Revolution animated her, as they did many British liberals, with the hope for a gradual end to tyranny in Europe. Barbauld had a special interest in the situation in France because she and her husband had lived on the continent between the fall of 1785 and spring of 1786, visiting some of Rochemont's relatives. While she was living in France, she had personally witnessed the injustices of the *ancien régime*. The affair of the diamond necklace took place while she was there. She reported on it indignantly to her friends at home. Meanwhile, there were events taking place in Great Britain that galvanized her interest. There was the campaign to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts. There was also the debate over the abolition of the slave trade. A letter from Hampstead, May, 1789 identifies "the noble effort making for the abolition of the slave trade" as the greatest object of interest taking place in London that season. "Nothing," she says,

for centuries past, has done the nation so much honour, because it must have proceeded from the most liberal motives; -- the purest love of humanity and justice. The voice of the Negroes could not have made itself heard but by the ear of pity -- they might have been oppressed for ages with impunity, if we had so pleased. (2: 81)

Barbauld apparently remained anxious, however, not to transgress prescribed boundaries of female activity. Anna Laetitia Le Breton asserts that,

[l]iving as she did, through times in which the profession of liberal opinions was in the highest degree unpopular, not to say dangerous, she never hesitated to employ all her gifts of eloquence and reasoning, to endeavour to bring about a better state of things, and as a dissenter especially, to free those who shared her opinions, from the social disabilities, which after the lapse of many years were happily removed. (191-92)

This assertion, unfortunately, does not appear entirely true. During the years after her marriage, Barbauld and her brother continued to correspond regularly on literary matters, and he urged her on several occasions to employ her poetic gifts to promote political causes, in one particular instance, by resorting to poetry himself. "Thus speaks the Muse," admonishes John Aikin, early in 1790,

... and bends her brows severe:

Did I, Laetitia, lend my choicest lays,
 And crown thy youthful head with freshest bays,
 That all the expectance of thy full-grown year,
 Should lie inert and fruitless? O reverse
 Those sacred gifts whose meed is deathless praise,
 Whose potent charm the enraptured soul can raise
 Far from the vapours of this earthly sphere,
 Seize, seize the lyre, resume the lofty strain!
 'Tis time, 'tis time! Hark how the nations round
 With jocund notes of liberty resound, ---

And thy own Corsica has burst her chain!

O let the song to Britain's shores rebound,

Where Freedom's once-loved voice is heard, alas! in vain. (1: xxxv)

The phrase “potent charm” is a close variant of Barbauld's own phrase “potent sound,” which she uses to describe poetry in “To Mrs. P {riestley}.” Aikin's focus is on the capacity of poetry to raise “the enraptured soul,” while Barbauld's is on the capacity of poetry to rouse emotion by capturing the effect of life, and giving the impression of capturing the soul, but Aikin's lines would nonetheless be a compelling reminder to Barbauld of the reasons she had committed herself to a poetic vocation. The specific reference to “Corsica,” the most ambitious of Barbauld's early poems, and the affirmation that it did make a tangible difference in the realm of politics would no doubt also have been inspiring to Barbauld. Lucy Aikin claims that it was this sonnet that roused her aunt once more to action in the cause of liberty.

Urged by her brother, Barbauld's writing of the late 1780s and 1790s again challenged standard assumptions concerning the role of women in society by directly addressing politics. “Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade”(1791; 1791) came out after the first failure of the campaign in Great Britain to abolish the slave trade. Other poems on political subjects include “The Apology of the Bishops, in Answer to 'Bonner's Ghost'”(1791; 1843); “{Lines to Samuel Rogers in Wales on the Eve of Bastille Day, 1791}” (1791; 1994); “To a Great Nation” (1792; 1793); “To the Poor”(1795; 1825); and “To Dr. Priestley, Dec 29, 1792” (1792; 1793). She also wrote political pamphlets, including *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790), *Remarks on Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry into ... Public or Social Worship*

(1792), *Civic Sermons to the People* (1792), and *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation* (1793). She also wrote some short imaginative pieces in prose on political subjects such as “Curé on the Banks of the Rhone” (1791); “Dialogue between Madame Cosmogonia and a Philosophical Inquirer of the Eighteenth Century January 1, 1793;” and “Letter of John Bull.”

“Epistle to William Wilberforce” is rhetorically very similar to “Corsica.” The reference in the title is to Wilberforce's efforts as a member of parliament for Yorkshire to pass a bill to abolish the slave trade. Wilberforce had succeeded in galvanizing support among the general population, and uniting statesmen from otherwise opposite ends of the political spectrum, including Whig leader Charles Fox, and the conservative prime minister William Pitt. The failure of his motion in parliament caused widespread consternation. Barbauld's poem records her response to the situation. It was printed twice that year.

The poem opens with the declaration, “Cease, Wilberforce, to urge thy generous aim!/ Thy Country knows the sin, and stands the shame” (1)! The capitalization of “Country” emphasizes the analogy between the collective and the individual, which Barbauld highlights in *Sins of Government*, already suggesting to the reader that the collective is accountable to the same principles as the individual, and that it might be instructed to abide by the same principles as the individual.⁸ Barbauld is writing after the failure of the abolitionists to arouse the emotions of the majority in parliament in favour of their cause. Despite the combined efforts of abolitionists, Great Britain continues to rationalize the practice of slavery in its colonies:

The Preacher, Poet, Senator in vain
Has rattled in her sight the Negro's chain;

With his deep groans assail'd her startled ear,
 And rent the veil that hid his constant tear;
 Forc'd her averted eyes his stripes to scan,
 Beneath the bloody scourge laid bare the man,
 Claim'd Pity's tear, urg'd Conscience' strong controul,
 And flash'd conviction on her shrinking soul.
 The Muse, soon awak'd, with ready tongue
 At Mercy's shrine applausive peans [sic] rung;
 And Freedom's eager sons, in vain foretold
 A new Astrean reign, and age of gold:
 She knows and she persists -- Still Afric bleeds,
 Uncheck'd, the human traffic still proceeds;
 She stamps her infamy to future time,
 And on her harden'd forehead seals the crime. (3-18)

Barbault's vivid description of the efforts of the abolitionists to expose the evils of slavery attests to their effective exploitation of language in order to arouse the emotions of their audience in favour of their cause.

In this passage, the poet seems to locate the power of language in a slightly different source than in the poems from her years at Warrington. This passage is interesting to compare with the aesthetic theory set out in Henry Home, Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism* (1762). In the chapter "Emotions caused by Fiction" in the *Elements*, Kames identifies the power of language in its capacity to evoke sympathetic identification through the generation

of what he calls “ideal presence.” He states that “[t]he power of language to raise emotions depends entirely on the raising of such lively and distinct images as to convince the readers that they are witnessing them first hand.” (Elledge 2: 841). Kames' theory of “ideal presence” leads him to develop a hierarchy of different artistic forms. He ranks theatrical presentations first, painting second, and literature third, based on what he regards as the relative capacity of each of these artistic forms to generate “ideal presence.” As Barbauld suggests, the abolitionists have forced opponents to acknowledge the truth of the cruelty of slavery by presenting them with images lively and distinct enough to give the impression of witnessing slavery first hand. The poet underscores the notion of the “truth” of slavery in the Biblical image of the rent veil, historically associated with the revelation of divine truth.⁹ Barbauld's tribute to the efforts of the abolitionists emphasizes the theatrical effects produced by their accounts of slavery. Barbauld's account of the power of language only differs from that of Kames in that she evidently rates poetry more highly in its capacity to achieve theatrical effects.

There is still an affirmation of Barbauld's earlier conception of the power of language in the assertion that the abolitionists have “[b]eneath the bloody scourge laid bare the man” -- a particularly important achievement given that it was the humanity of the Africans many supporters of the slave trade had attempted to deny. As the poet implies, the abolitionists not only have made eloquently evident the sufferings of the slaves but also have affirmed their humanity by exposing something of their inner life to the public. It appears to be specifically in laying bare the man that the abolitionists have “[c]laim'd Pity's tear, urg'd Conscience's strong controul/ And flash'd conviction on ... [the] shrinking soul.”

Barbauld marvels that, despite the efforts of “[t]he Preacher, Poet, [and] Senator,” there has been no change in the situation. The nation has admitted its guilt, but has refused to do anything about it. Barbauld reserves special praise among the abolitionists for Hannah More, the “Muse” of line 11. The allusion to “Mercy’s shrine” and the predictions of “a new Astrean reign, an age of gold,” explicitly echo More’s “Slavery. A Poem” (1788), composed when the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade was first gaining momentum. Barbauld’s tribute to the efforts of the abolitionists effectively conveys her disbelief over the result of the vote in parliament. It also prompts the reader initially to wonder at Barbauld’s attempt to follow up More’s poem. Her strategy will evidently be a bit different. The strategy of the opening section seems to be an effort to shame the members of parliament who voted against the abolition of slavery, not by exposing to them again the cruelty of slavery or inner life of its victims, which has obviously been ineffectual with them, but by forcing them to confront themselves, sealing the crime upon their “harden’d foreheads,” in order to awaken their feelings to what they have done.

Verse paragraph two develops this strategy further, as the poet attempts to determine the underlying motive for the lack of sympathy displayed by the majority in parliament towards the Africans. The poet wonders what could account for the failure of the combined efforts of “Preacher, Poet, Senator” “[t]o rouse, to melt, or to inform the breast” (24). The reason, it becomes quickly apparent to the poet, is “Avarice.” She sees that “[w]here seasoned tools of Avarice prevail/ A Nation’s eloquence, combined, must fail” (25-26). It is Avarice that explains the success of “flimsy sophistry,” “[t]he plausible argument, the daring lye,/ The artful gloss, that moral sense confounds” (27-30). “[T]hirst of gain” obstructs

sympathy. In the late eighteenth century, there were others who had theorized the impact of “thirst of gain” on the process of sympathetic identification. In the chapter “Of Sympathy” in *Essays on Poetry and Music* (1774), James Beattie writes that selfish passions, and particularly the love of money, destroy sympathy. The reference to “Avarice” prompts a lengthy description of the scene of the debate, and the behaviour of opponents to the abolition of the slave trade, as they draw on historical and Biblical precedent to defend the practice of slavery, to support what are essentially mercenary considerations, and as they mock accounts of the suffering of the Africans. The emphasis in this section is on generating theatrical effects. The focus shifts where the poet claims that Great Britain will suffer as a result of the continuation of slavery. “For not unmark'd in heaven's impartial plan,” she declares, asking “Shall man, proud worm, contemn his fellow-man?”(44). She argues that Africa will inevitably seek to redress herself. Indeed, she warns, Africa has already been revenged in the depravity that the practice of slavery has inspired in slave owners. In her view, slavery inhibits the development of the intellect and the establishment of virtue in both slaves and their owners. The poet provides a compelling psychological portrait of a slave owner who succumbs to the “contagion” of slavery, as “[t]he fiery venom gains/ The milky innocence of infant veins” (52), agitating “uncontroled desire” (54).

Verse paragraph three upholds the same strategy as the previous two, combining theatrical effects with a continuing effort to probe the psychological impact of slavery. Accepting the failure of efforts to move supporters of the slave trade with representations of its suffering victims, the poet attempts to move them with a representation of the “infirm ... mind” of a “pale Beauty,” “[d]iffus'd on sofas of voluptuous ease” (58), “[c]ontriving torture,

and inflicting wounds” upon her “menial train,” who regard her with “anxious awe” (59).

There is another reproof directed at the members of parliament who voted against Wilberforce. The poet suggests that if they do not care about the effects of slavery upon its victims, or upon themselves, they must consider effects of slavery upon their wives and daughters. She thus effectively exploits the contemporary preoccupation with female virtue to underscore the terrifying effects of slavery.

In verse paragraph four, the poet contrasts the scene of forced labour and “sensual riot” at an East Indian plantation, like some latter-day Babylon, with the “cheerful labour,” and healthful simplicity of English rural life, which “Sooths the lone Poet in his evening walk”(74). Great Britain has no need, she suggests, for the economic benefits of slavery. By calling into question the economic benefits of slavery, the poet indirectly challenges the validity of the arguments of the anti-abolitionists, attacking the problem at its root. If “Avarice” has destroyed the capacity of the anti-abolitionists for sympathy, she seeks to destroy “Avarice.”

As she asserts in verse paragraph five, slavery will actually prove the undoing of the nation economically. The poet offers another contrast, this time between “Augusta,” and “Art,” who bring from the East luxury and corruption, and “Simplicity,” “most dear of rural maids” (100), who brings with her “Independence” and “Freedom.” While Barbauld might justly be taken to task for her negative characterization of the East, she again effectively exploits the image of “Contagion” and “leprosy” to emphasize the ultimate effects of slavery upon Great Britain. Already, the poet claims, slavery has contributed to a decline in English morals.

The poem concludes with an address once more to the abolitionists. “In Virtue’s *fasti* be inscrib’d your name,” the poet declares, assuring them that their efforts have won them recognition even if they have not been successful. Significantly, she urges them to “seek no more to break a Nation’s fall” (116), claiming that they have saved themselves, but cannot hope for anything more, at least not at this point in history. She attempts to comfort them with the assurance that their words and example will inspire the praise of future generations. She writes, “[s]ucceeding times your struggles and their fate,/ With mingled shame and triumph shall relate” (118-19). Barbauld evidently accepts, at this point, the possibility that her own words, as the words of so many others, will fail to move supporters of the slave trade, and that her poem, far from converting anyone, will serve only as comfort for the converted. She accepts the possibility that her words might not alter events, but only commemorate the efforts of a few.¹⁰

Barbauld’s political pamphlets of the 1790s reflect the same principles of operation as her poetry. Indeed, “To a Great Nation” builds directly on the *Address*. It is in the *Address* that Barbauld first presents France as a model of productive amendment for England, so long as “it maintains the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of moderation, [and] the spirit of firmness” (2: 374) it has displayed up until this point. As already discussed, the *Address* identifies a specific connection between Locke’s theory of personal identity and political reform, invoking the language of Locke’s chapter “Of Identity and Diversity” in the author’s declaration, towards the conclusion of her address, that “[w]e appeal from Philip intoxicated to Philip sober. We know that you will refuse us while you are narrow-minded, but you will not always be narrow-minded” (2: 370). This is essentially a rephrasing of Locke’s scenario

involving the Drunk Man and the Sober Man, by which Locke illustrates how a man can become a different person through the effects of alcohol, if he forgets the actions he commits while under its influence. Barbauld significantly suggests that it is through the example of France that Great Britain will be converted “from Philip intoxicated to Philip sober.”

Other prose writings from the 1790s attempt to instruct Great Britain by forcing it to scrutinize its own example. The “Dialogue between Madame Cosmogonia and a Philosophical Inquirer of the Eighteenth Century January 1, 1793” personifies Great Britain in the figure of Madame Cosmogonia. In the course of the dialogue, Madame Cosmogonia admits to the irrational action of pulling down the house of a philosopher who attempts to advise her on the better regulation of her family. In the “Letter of John Bull,” John Bull describes his difficulties with his wife Britannia and mother the Church of England, whose refusal to change he sees will ultimately bring ruin upon everyone. Barbauld's habit of personifying the nation serves to underscore the analogy between the collective and the individual, which Barbauld articulates most explicitly in *Sins of Government*.

Barbauld's poetry and prose of the late 1780s and early 1790s served to consolidate her literary reputation, securing her respect and recognition on equal footing with men. The *Monthly Review* 6 (1791) claimed of the poetic epistle addressed to Wilberforce that “Juvenal himself ... would not blush to hear such lines compared with his vigorous and manly strains” (227). The *Address* earned praise from contemporary male writers such as Samuel Rogers and Thomas Moore. In a letter to Barbauld from Newington Green, 29 March, 1790, Rogers comments that “its spirit and elegance are now indeed the subject of universal admiration and curiosity,” and that “[i]ts fine irony, its elevation and sublimity of sentiment” attest to the

possession of “superior genius” (Le Breton 192-93). Moore writes to Rochemont from Clifford Street, 29 November, 1790, that “I hardly know anything in the English language superior in delicacy of irony, and strength of reason, to that truly eloquent performance” (Le Breton 194), expressing his hope that Barbauld will, after all, publish some of her sentiments on Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).¹¹ He tells Rochemont that though he was apprehensive when he first heard of Barbauld's intention to answer Burke he no longer regards Burke as too “formidable an antagonist” for her. Those who did not share her political views were moved to admit grudging admiration for her talents as a writer. In an attack against one of her political pamphlets, the *Edinburgh Review* allows that Barbauld demonstrates “very considerable talent” (Rodgers 136).

As in the early phase of her literary career, Barbauld's achievement was partly enabled by her strategy of publication. She first published the *Address*, the *Remarks*, and *Sins of Government* anonymously. These were routinely mistaken for a man's. One reviewer of the *Address*, Reverend Keate, acknowledges that the author's “conceptions are strong, and his language in general elegant and nervous.” In an addendum to the review, he expresses his shock upon discovering that the author is in fact a woman. Echoing line 12 of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, “And in such Bosoms dwells such mighty Rage?” he asks, “[c]an such mighty rage in soft bosoms dwell?” (Rodgers 110). His comment indirectly illustrates the general reception Barbauld might have expected to receive for her political pamphlets if she had decided to acknowledge her authorship from the very beginning. The parallel between Barbauld and Belinda serves to trivialize Barbauld's concerns. Keate, it seems, can no longer take the *Address* seriously once he discovers that it has been written by a woman.

For all their apparent confidence, however Barbauld's political writings of the 1790s contain signs of anxiety. Her decision to publish her pamphlets anonymously attests to a certain apprehension on her part, although it again ensured that she would be evaluated without regard for her sex. "Epistle to William Wilberforce" is notably the only instance of Barbauld's political writing of 1790s that was not first published anonymously, perhaps because she could look to a female precedent in Hannah More's poem "Slavery."

Barbauld's continued contribution to children's literature throughout the 1790s implies a strategic attempt to head off criticism from those who felt she was overstepping prescribed boundaries of female activity, as she drew implicitly upon her authority as a mother-teacher as justification for her interference in politics. It is possible that she only felt comfortable venturing into politics again after having established her reputation as a mother-teacher. John Aikin, interestingly enough, continued to solicit contributions from his sister for *Evenings at Home* at the same time as he urged her to employ her pen in the cause of liberty, suggesting an attempt to exploit her new reliance upon her authority as a mother-teacher.

The contributions to *Evenings at Home* reflect the same principles of instruction that Barbauld herself employed in the classroom at the Palgrave boarding school. They include fables, short stories, and dialogues, each conveying some sort of moral or intellectual lesson. Among the fables, "The Wasp and the Bee" teaches the rewards of usefulness; "The Goose and the Horse" establishes the advantages of mastering one particular skill rather than performing many skills indifferently; "The Flying Fish" demonstrates the disaster that comes with yearning for abilities that one has not been granted; and "The Phoenix and Dove" illustrates the compensations of domestic over fashionable life. "Canute's Reproof"

constitutes a rebuke against flattery. “Alfred, a drama” and “Live Dolls” encourage charity, while “The Masque of Nature;” “Things by their right Names;” “On Manufactures;” “A Lesson in the Art of Distinguishing;” “The Manufacture of Paper;” and “The Four Sisters” provide information about different aspects of the natural world.

Indeed, it appears that *Evenings at Home* essentially extends the project of the *Lessons*. As stated in the introduction to *Evenings at Home*, the material is adapted to “the age and understanding”(2) of a range of children of both sexes, and as the reader discovers, it is, like the *Lessons*, arranged in increasing level of sophistication. The *Monthly Review* of November, 1793 aptly describes the *Evenings at Home* as “calculated to engage the attention of the young, to awaken the growing mind to inquiry & use of its reasoning powers, and to inspire it with sentiments of humanity, virtue and piety” (Rodgers 125-26).

There are examples among Barbauld's political writings of the 1790s of her direct appeal to her authority as a mother-teacher. In “{Lines to Samuel Rogers in Wales on the Eve of Bastille Day, 1791}” (1791; 1994), the poet exploits her maternal relationship with the poem's subject in order to urge the cause of liberty. Barbauld first met Samuel Rogers in the summer of 1786. She was some twenty years older than he was, and almost immediately conceived a maternal affection for him. While still identifying herself with the Muse in the poem she addresses to him, she hails her subject significantly as “the youth who holds his stay,/ Far from Freedom's band away” in lines 3-4, and as “Freedom's child” in line 22, expressing the hope that the “thrilling numbers” of the “Muse” will “dart/ Thro his ear, and thro his heart” (1-2). Her air is decidedly maternal, as she chides,

Hanging woods and fairy streams,

Inspirers of poetic dreams,
 Must not now the soul enthrall,
 While dungeons burst, and despots fall. (5-8)

There are significant echoes of “{Lines to Samuel Rogers}” in “To Mr. S. T. Coleridge” (1797; 1799). Addressing Coleridge as “Youth belov’d” (32), Barbauld warns her subject not to be caught up in “the maze of metaphysic lore” (34), which she envisions as a forest where “dreams hang on every leaf” (6), luring the mind into “fairy bowers entranced” (28). “To Mr. S. T. Coleridge” affords additional proof of Barbauld’s increasing reliance on her authority as a mother-teacher outside of her children’s literature, in its striking contrast to her earlier poetic epistles to male contemporaries, “Epistle to Wilberforce” and “To Dr. Priestley, Dec 29, 1792” (1792; 1793). “Epistle to Wilberforce” and “To Dr. Priestley” both offer themselves as statements of support from one compatriot to another, affirmations of their participation in a common struggle. In “To Mr. S. T. Coleridge,” the poet addresses Coleridge not as a compatriot, but as a surrogate mother. After advising the young writer against the dangers of losing himself in “metaphysic lore” rather than devoting himself to “fair exertion, for bright fame sustained,/ For friends, for country” (40-41), the poem concludes, “Now Heaven conduct thee with a Parent’s love” (43). The shift was natural enough, given the age difference between Barbauld and her male addressees. Priestley was ten years older than Barbauld. Wilberforce and Coleridge were both younger than Barbauld, but the age difference was far more considerable between Barbauld and Coleridge than it was between her and Wilberforce. Barbauld was sixteen years older than Wilberforce, and twenty-nine years older than Coleridge. Barbauld’s adopted son and nephew Charles Aikin was two years younger

than Coleridge. She had taken a close interest in Coleridge's professional career when he was offered the opportunity to take over her nephew Arthur Aikin's position as a Unitarian minister, and was apparently very disappointed when he ultimately declined the offer. Natural or not, however, the transition from "Epistle to Wilberforce" and "To Dr. Priestley" to the poem addressed to Coleridge is striking.¹²

In "To a Great Nation" (mid-September 1792?; 1793), there is also subtle evidence of Barbauld's efforts to draw on her authority as a mother-teacher in order to sanction her involvement in politics. Like "Epistle to Wilberforce," "To a Great Nation" displays general parallels to "Corsica." "To a Great Nation" is written, like "Corsica," at a moment of crisis. The revolution seemed temporarily in danger of failing as a result of threat of invasion, civil unrest, and the suspected machinations of exiled aristocrats. Joseph Priestley was once more raising a subscription on behalf of the beleaguered champions of liberty.

The poem opens with a command: "Rise mighty nation! In thy great strength,/ And deal thy dreadful vengeance round" (1-2), warning France that her friends betray her and her enemies oppress her. For a woman writer, the boldness of this command is striking. The poet shifts her attention in stanza three from France specifically to "the ardent youth" (12). "The tocsin sounds!" she observes, bidding him "Arise, arise/ Stern o'er each breast let country reign" (10-11). This specific address to "the ardent youth" hints at a subtle invocation of Barbauld's authority as a mother-teacher. The image of the youth hearkening to the sound of the tocsin significantly appears in line 10 of "{Lines to Samuel Rogers}." In "To a Great Nation," as in "Corsica," the poet goes on to envision the realization of "Freedom." She concludes on a cautionary note, urging France to live up to the principles of the

Revolution, and once it has achieved satisfaction against its oppressors to “wash with sad repentant tear/ Each deed that clouds thy glory's page” (21-22). It is her hope that France will allow its exiles to return without fear of retribution, as she encourages France to “fold in thy relenting arms,/ Thy wretched outcasts where they roam” (25-26). This image of motherly tenderness provides further evidence of Barbauld's invocation of her authority as a mother-teacher, indirectly underscoring the author's own maternal aspect. The author expresses a dislike of violence, which she evidently only sanctions under exceptional circumstances. As soon as the revolution is over, she wants France to put the past behind -- bury its dead -- build tombs to the martyrs of freedom, and “rise the model of the world” (35-36). The final line suggests that the poet aims her injunctions not only at France, but also at other European nations as well.

Barbauld's choice of title for the poem serves indirectly to underscore this point. She might have called her poem “France: an Ode,” the title of Coleridge's poem written after the French invasion of Switzerland during the spring of 1798. Her title seems almost deliberately to deceive the expectations of her own fellow citizens, who might at first assume that her subject is Great Britain. For her, France, like Corsica, is most clearly a model for Great Britain, which she regarded as have increasingly betrayed its liberal principles.

Barbauld's appeals to her authority as a mother-teacher in her political writings were evidently still subtle, and still few. Part of the problem for Barbauld perhaps was that she had not yet resolved the conflict between her desire as a writer to be ranked next to male contemporaries, and her commitment to her activities as a wife and mother. She may have felt that by drawing attention to her status as a mother-teacher she was compromising her

claims to the same recognition and respect as male writers.

The responses by male contemporaries to Barbauld's political writings of the 1790s suggest that her tentative efforts to draw upon her authority as a mother-teacher to address politics were not successful. It was significantly during this period that Barbauld first came under serious attack for her perceived violation of the boundaries of feminine propriety. Horace Walpole refers sneeringly to her as "the virago Barbauld" (Rodgers 108), and compares her unflatteringly to the Old Testament Deborah, though part of his dislike seems to have been upon party grounds, since he had no trouble with Hannah More's forays into politics. In a letter to More he actually accuses Barbauld of supporting the abolition of slavery only as a means of promoting her own faction, commending More for acting upon principles of genuine humanity. In "The Unsexed Females; A Poem: Addressed to the Author of 'The Pursuits of Literature'" (1798), Richard Polwhele includes Barbauld in the group of radical feminists associated with Mary Wollstonecraft, lamenting that "veteran Barbauld caught the strain,/ And deem'd her songs of Love, her Lyrics vain" (91-92). Polwhele raises specific objections to Barbauld's political pamphlets. In a footnote to the poem, he softens his objections a little, making it clear that he does not place Barbauld in entirely the same category as Wollstonecraft in his expressed confidence that Barbauld shares his alarm at Wollstonecraft's "eccentricities." Moreover, he acknowledges that in spite of their damage to her reputation Barbauld's political pamphlets attest to "talents and virtues." He also makes it clear that his disapproval of Barbauld's political writing has not diminished his admiration of her as one of his early favourites, when he "first '... lisp'd in numbers.'" It seems that Polwhele continues to appreciate Barbauld's efforts as a mother-teacher in the realm of

children's literature, although he does not consider the authority she has acquired in this context to be transferable to politics. Polwhele's evaluation of Barbauld, like Walpole's, is evidently tinged by party politics. He too has only praise for women who share his own political perspective, portraying the women of bluestocking society as paragons of femininity. However, it is also true that the involvement of the women of bluestocking society in politics was never as extensive as Barbauld's. Polwhele certainly makes no mention of the political activity of the women of bluestocking society.

One of Barbauld's pieces that came under the fiercest attack during the 1790s was the poem "To a Great Nation." The editors of the *Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (1994) note that though the poem was originally entitled "To a Great Nation. Written by a Lady," the second part of the title was later dropped to mitigate resentment against the poem. The poem was ultimately re-titled "On the Expected General Rising of the French Nation in 1792" for the posthumous *Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*. The negative reaction to this poem is illuminating if we recall Boswell's comment to Priestley concerning "Corsica." During the 1770s, Boswell could see an advantage in "Corsica" having been written by a woman. As a result of the changing political climate, by the 1790s the advantage was evidently gone, although Barbauld undoubtedly hoped otherwise.

As it turned out, none of Barbauld's ventures into politics achieved the end that she sought. Slavery would not be abolished until after Barbauld's death. The Corporation and Test Acts also remained in place throughout her life. The revolution in France failed to live up to its initial promise. Indeed, Kraft and McCarthy suggest that "To a Great Nation" was not even read in France. According to them, though the poem was probably sent to Paris in

September of 1792 with money Priestley had procured for the revolutionary cause, there are no copies of it at the Archives Nationales and Bibliothèque Nationale, and it is not published in the *Patriote François* or the *Moniteur Universel* for September–November 1792, suggesting that if it was sent, it was immediately ignored. According to Mrs. Elwood, of all Barbauld's writing of the 1790s, by far the most popular “was Dr. Aiken's very amusing ‘Evenings at Home,’” claiming that it “still remains a favourite work for young people” (234–35).

As the 1790s went on, Barbauld seems increasingly to have despaired at the possibility for achieving political change. Part of the problem, she realized, was the prevailing reactionary climate in Great Britain. In a letter from Hampstead, Dec 5, 1799, she writes that “I cannot avoid a melancholy sensation reflecting, that such are the times we live in, that a bookseller dares not publish a pamphlet written with perfect decency, and in which, moreover, there is not a word of politics” (2: 128). Unlike many other early supporters of the French Revolution, Barbauld continued to uphold the ideals of the revolutionaries despite their own failure to live up to them. Yet her optimism in the possibility for implementing political reform in Great Britain increasingly faded. The disappointment over the failure of cherished political causes, combined perhaps with personal disappointment in her marriage, caused Barbauld to lose heart. In a letter from January 14, 1802, she reports “My enthusiasm is all gone” (2: 85), desiring some process, “electrical,” “galvanic” or other, to revive her. To Mrs. Beecroft on July 28, 1803, she writes, “I wish I could lose in the quiet walks of literature all thoughts of the present state of the political horizon” (2: 243).

Chapter 7

Literary Criticism and Late Poems 1795-1825

Frustrated perhaps with the apparent futility of her efforts to achieve political change, yet not completely satisfied in her career as a children's writer either, Barbauld turned to a different medium around the middle of the 1790s. Beginning with her prefaces to Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* (1795), and the *Odes of Collins* (1797), Barbauld devoted herself increasingly to literary criticism. In the next decade, she edited *The Correspondence of Richardson* (1804); *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, and Freeholder, with a Preliminary Essay* (1805); *The British Novelists* series (1810); and *The Female Speaker* (1811). In her literary criticism, Barbauld indirectly took stock of her own literary career in her fullest exploration of the subject of female literary activity. Her literary criticism unequivocally affirms that women are capable of the same literary achievement as men. Indeed, Barbauld's late writings routinely celebrate the accomplishments of women writers as testimony to the fact that there are women who possess the same genius as men, and deserve the same respect and recognition in literary society. At the same time, Barbauld's literary criticism clearly articulates a concern that women's literary activities might interfere with the execution of their domestic duties. This threat might be avoided to some extent, in Barbauld's view, if families encouraged only talented women to write, and taught women writers to prioritize their domestic duties. Occasionally, Barbauld's anxiety over the consequences of female literary activity encouraged her to seek comfort in the view that women's writing reflected the existence of some essential differences between the male and female mind, which confirmed rather than challenged the basis for the existing sexual order. For the first time, Barbauld plainly articulated the strategy by which women writers might reconcile literary ambition with prescribed gender categories, in conceiving their writing as an extension of their activities as a mother-teacher. As a literary critic, Barbauld herself

explicitly adopted the persona of the mother-teacher. She also demonstrated an increasing desire to valorize the contribution of women writers as mother-teachers with an insistence upon the cultural value of literature to instruct. More and more, she considered that men as well as women should actively promote virtue and truth in their writing. In her literary criticism, she also took the opportunity to develop her aesthetic theory further, exploring the mechanism by which literature might most effectively serve to benefit the moral and intellectual development of the reader. It appears that Locke's theory of personal identity continued to inform her opinions about the operation of literature on the minds of readers.

After a decade and a half devoted primarily to literary criticism, Barbauld's career as a writer became polarized once more with the publication of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, a Poem* (1811; 1812). *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* constitutes Barbauld's final and most ambitious effort to "legislate mankind," in spite of persisting anxiety as a woman writer. It also constitutes her fullest effort to reconcile the role of "legislator of mankind" with that of mother-teacher. While appealing to her authority as a mother-teacher enabled Barbauld to pursue her ambitions as a writer, however, it failed to exempt her from the attacks of male contemporaries, who continued to regard her as encroaching upon male territory. Reviewers of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* sought to undermine Barbauld's attempt to expand her jurisdiction as a mother-teacher into politics, as they simultaneously attacked her as transgressive, and dismissed her as trivial and didactic.

I.

Throughout her life, Barbauld consistently championed the merits of women writers. According to great-niece Anna Letitia Le Breton, Barbauld “was acquainted with almost all the principal female writers of her time, and there was not one whom she failed to mention in terms of admiration, esteem, or affection” (190). Among the female writers whom she specifically regarded as geniuses were Elizabeth Montagu, Hannah More, Charlotte Smith, Fanny Burney, Joanna Baillie, Ann Radcliffe, and Maria Edgeworth, the last of whom seems to have commanded particular respect. The tribute to Baillie in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* galled male acquaintances such as Henry Crabbe Robinson, as well as reviewers, who raised objections that the poem had dedicated more lines of praise to Baillie than to Shakespeare. Such complaints, however, missed the point. Barbauld was not necessarily making a pronouncement on the relative merits of Baillie and Shakespeare. She *was* asserting that women's literary achievements had finally earned them consideration alongside male authors.

Barbauld saw that women writers had struggled, and continued to struggle, against the constraints of female education and circumstances. As already noted in chapter four, the preface to the *Correspondence of Richardson* (1804) laments the effects of “[t]he prejudice against any appearance of extraordinary cultivation in women” (clxiii). Such prejudice had, in Barbauld's view, frequently inhibited female literary achievement. In the introduction to Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793) in *The British Novelists* series, Barbauld enumerates the difficulties Smith faced on this account. According to Barbauld, after Smith's

mother died, she was raised by an aunt unfavourable “to mental accomplishment” in women, so that she “received ... rather a fashionable than literary education, and was left to gratify her taste for books by desultory reading, and almost stealth.” When her father remarried, Smith was “plunged into the cares of a married life before her fine genius had received all the advantage it might have gained by a culture more regular and persevering” (36: i).

In “Of Female Studies” (1825), Barbauld proposes that all women might benefit from a literary education. Literature granted women relief from the narrowness and monotony of their ordinary lives, as well as providing them with valuable sources of knowledge, to which they would not otherwise have access. The author specifically recommends languages that would allow women to appreciate the masterpieces of world literature. Women were, in her view, increasingly well-situated to receive a literary education. “To you,” she tells the young woman to whom she addresses “Of Female Studies,” “the beauties of poetry, of moral painting, and all, in general, that is comprised under the term of polite literature, lie particularly open, and you cannot neglect them without neglecting a very copious source of enjoyment” (30).

In “On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing,” the prefatory essay to *The British Novelists* series, Barbauld argues that persisting differences between male and female writers were largely the product of experience (simply another component of education, according to her own definition of education in the essay “On Education”). Here she attributes the “melancholy tinge” and sentiment of women's novels, and the comic dimension and “brisk[] flow of ideas” of men's novels, to the fact that women must “nurse those feelings in secrecy and silence” which men usually experience only “transiently” (1: 44–45). A variation of the

same idea appears in “Of Female Studies,” where Barbauld writes that woman’s “very seclusion from the jarring interests and coarser amusements of society, fit her in a peculiar manner for the worlds of fancy and sentiment, and dispose her to the quickest relish of what is pathetic, sublime, or tender” (2: 279-80). From Barbauld’s point of view, the differences between individual writers outweighed those between men and women. Addressing Maria Edgeworth’s proposal to start a periodical with exclusively female contributors in a letter from August 30, 1804, Barbauld insists,

There is no bond of union among literary women, any more than among literary men; different sentiments and different connections separate them much more than the joint interest of their sex would unite them. Mrs. Hannah More would not write along with you or me, and we should probably hesitate at joining Miss Hays, or if she were living, Mrs. Godwin.

She expresses additional concerns about the periodical’s tentative title: “The Lady’s Paper,” claiming that “[m]any would sneer ... they would pretend to expect, however unreasonably, frivolity or romance.” “There is a great difference,” she argues, “between a paper written *by* a lady, and *as* a lady.” “To write professedly as a female junto,” she notes, “seems in some measure to suggest a certain cast of sentiment, and you would write in trammels” (Le Breton 87). Barbauld wants women, in the act of writing, to be able to transcend consideration of their sex. This desire indirectly explains the preference expressed in her literary criticism for unobtrusive third person narration, which most effectively allows the author to “drop himself” (37), to use Catherine E. Moore’s phrase.¹

Barbauld’s literary criticism makes an obvious effort to resist categorizing writers by

their sex. This is most striking in connection to *The British Novelists* series, whose fifty volumes of material Barbauld assembled and edited not long after her husband's death. According to her, the principle of selection was objective. The criteria for inclusion were "excellence," "singularity," and popularity. If the male writers in *The British Novelists* still outnumber the female, they by no means overwhelm them. Male writers are certainly not rated more highly than the female. In the prefatory essay on Burney, Barbauld writes that "[s]carcely any name, if any, stands higher in the list of novel-writers than that of Miss Burney" (38: i). The editorial comments throughout the series reflect an attempt to evaluate authors objectively and individually. Thus, Barbauld distinguishes Defoe for his accuracy of observation; Fielding for his humour; Lennox for her effective satire, Johnson for his moral truth; Brooke for the polish and perfection of her style; Graves for his ingenuity; Moore for his evident "knowledge of the world;" Burney for her variety of character, as well as "pathos" and "humour;" Radcliffe for her capacity to arouse "suspense" and "terror;" and Bage for his persuasive challenge to custom and prejudice. In addition, she points out a number of instances in which writers resist straightforward categorization in terms of sex. Johnson receives special praise for his demonstration of feeling and fancy. Though Barbauld generally has little time for Henry Mackenzie, she finds one of his stories "exquisitely beautiful" (29: iii). She commends "several pretty and elegant pieces" of Smollett's poetry, noting his capacity as a versifier of both "a manly vigour of thought" and a "tenderness and delicacy" (30: iv). There is no attempt, in arranging the series, to separate male and female writers from each other.

It was, of course, easier for her to establish a mixed canon of novel-writers than of

poets, since the novel remained, at that time, a more popular if less respected form than poetry. The large numbers of women novelists, and the novel's largely female readership, had helped to give it a reputation as a "feminine" form. In her preface to *Rasselas*, Barbauld acknowledges both the novel's perception as a "feminine" and a "low" form in her observation that "Hercules ... once wielded the distaff; and the Hercules of literature, Dr. Johnson, has not disdained to be the author of a novel" (26: i), the allusion to the distaff evoking women's traditional occupation of spinning. In her article "Anna Barbauld's Criticism of Fiction -- Johnsonian Mode, Female vision," Katherine M. Rogers identifies Barbauld's focus on the novel as signalling a specifically female vision underlying her literary criticism, which in all other respects closely resembles Johnson's. Significantly, it is one of Barbauld's consistent aims to defend the status of the novel as a literary form. Her early critical piece "On Romances" counts novels among "the multifarious productions which the efforts of superior genius, or the labours of scholastic industry, have crowded upon the world" (39-40). In the preface to the *Correspondence of Richardson*, Barbauld proposes raising the status of the romance-writer on the combined grounds of aesthetics and popularity. "[T]he range of this kind of writing," she argues,

is so extensive, and its effect so great, it is evident that it ought to hold no mean rank among the productions of genius; and, in truth, there is hardly any department of literature in which we shall meet with more fine writing than in the best production of this kind. (ix)

In her view, the novel requires the same skill and knowledge to manage as other literary forms. Like poetry, the novel is capable of achieving epic, dramatic, didactic, and satiric

effects, and its technical demands, though different, are equally challenging. At the same time, it commands greater interest than poetry. In the "Origin," she insists that novel-writing requires "talents of the highest order" (1: 3). From her perspective, therefore, it might have seemed more urgent to establish women's place among the ranks of novelists than among those of poets. Other eighteenth-century women writers, such as Jane Brereton, who had attempted to raise the profile of women in poetry by proposing a canon of female poets, failed to overcome the problem of ghettoization, by studiously avoiding any comparison between male and female poets. Without any defence of women's claims to equal aesthetic excellence in poetry, Brereton accepted the continued marginalization of female poets.

While a consistent champion of female literary achievement, Barbauld expresses a certain amount of anxiety concerning the increasing numbers of women "taking the pen in hand," which she saw as potentially threatening to the fulfilment of their responsibilities as wives and mothers. To Elizabeth Montagu, she writes that "perhaps you may think that having myself stepped out of the bounds of female reserve in becoming an author, it is with an ill grace I offer these sentiments -- but my situation is peculiar, and would be no rule for others" (Le Breton 47).² She fears that an academy for young women such as Montagu envisions would encourage women to sacrifice their duties as "good wives or agreeable companions" for literary aspirations. In *Correspondence of Richardson*, she addresses prevailing attitudes to women during the early eighteenth century. While lamenting the restrictions upon women of the previous generation, she makes the following observation:

The restraint of former times was painful and humiliating; what can be more humiliating than the necessity of affecting ignorance; and yet, perhaps, it is not

undesirable that female genius should have something to overcome; so much, as to render it probable, before a woman steps out of the common walks of life, that her acquirements are solid, and her love for literature decided and irresistible. These obstacles did not prevent the Epictetus of Mrs. Carter, nor the volumes of Mrs. Chapone, from being written and given to the world.

(clxiv)

Barbauld thus supports efforts to dissuade women from embarking on literary careers.

Although recognizing that some exceptional women had suffered in having to repress their talents, she considers it most important to prevent too many women from becoming writers. Such discouragement ensured that women who did write possessed genuine talents. In this, Barbauld was perhaps responding, in part, to contemporary attacks against women writers, which cited the example of female “scribblers” as evidence that writing constituted a violation of prescribed boundaries of gender activity. It may be that she saw the discouragement of female “scribblers” as necessary to preserve the opportunity for women of genuine talents to write. Barbauld's treatise “Of Female Studies” affirms the assumption that writing stood outside “the common walks” of female life. “Literary knowledge ... in men,” she claims, “is often an indispensable duty; in women, it can be only a desirable accomplishment,” and furthermore, “[i]n women it is more immediately applied to the purposes of adorning and improving the mind, of refining the sentiments, and supplying proper stores for conversation” (2: 279). Barbauld indirectly suggests that it is up to parents and educators to minimize the threat of female literary activity by emphasizing its singularity.

In the criticism of the last phase of her literary career, Barbauld expresses specific

disapproval for women writers, or for passages in women's writing she regards as threatening their femininity. She objects particularly to the indulgence of women writers in humour or comedy. While praising Smollett and Fielding as comic writers, she criticizes Burney's fondness for "humour, and low humour," which she regards as tainting her otherwise "elegant and dignified" (38: iii) style. She never admits or explains the reasons for this double standard. Evidently, it has something to do with the worldly nature of much comic material, as well as the notorious reputation of figures such as Aphra Behn, who had excelled as a comic playwright. Indirectly, Barbauld's evaluation of Burney invites a re-evaluation of her statements in the introductory essay to *The British Novelists* concerning the "melancholy tinge" and sentiment of women's novels, and the comic dimension and "brisk flow of ideas" of men's novels. If we look closely, Barbauld's anxiety concerning the possible threat of women's writing to prescribed boundaries of gender activity results in a certain contradiction in her analysis. "Is it," Barbauld asks,

that men, mixing at large in society, have a brisker flow of ideas, and, seeing a greater variety of characters, introduce more of the business and pleasures of life into their productions? Is it that humour is a scarcer product of the mind than sentiment, and more congenial to the stronger powers of man? Is it that women nurse those feelings in secrecy and silence, and diversify the expressions of them with endless shades of sentiment, which are more transiently felt, and with fewer modifications of delicacy, by the other sex? (1: 42)

While placing the greatest emphasis on experience as the source of difference between male

and female writers, Barbauld refuses to discount the possibility that the writing of men and women might reflect at least some essential differences between the male and female mind. The suggestion "that humour is a scarcer product of mind than sentiment, and more congenial to the stronger powers of man" leaves open the possibility that the writing of men and women might serve to affirm rather than to disrupt prescribed gender activity. In attesting to the existence of essential differences between the male and female mind, the writing of men and women might justify relegating women to the domestic, and men to the professional realms. Barbauld identifies differences between male and female writings as primarily the effect of experience, but she evidently desires to maintain some distinction between the writing of men and women. This points, in turn, to an unresolved tension in Barbauld's attitudes towards female literary activity. If she wants women to free themselves from the constraints of sex in their writing, and to compete in the literary world alongside men, she also fears the possible consequences.

Barbauld's literary criticism increasingly foregrounds the moral and didactic aspect of women's writing. The tendency had always been there in her writing, evident as early as "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" (n.d.; 1772), but was now unmistakable. In "On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing," Barbauld declares that

we have more good writers in this walk living at the present time, than any period since the days of Richardson and Fielding. A very great proportion of these are ladies: and surely it will not be said that either taste or morals have been losers by their taking the pen in hand. The names of D'Arblay, Edgeworth, Inchbald, Radcliffe, and a number more will vindicate this

assertion ... (1: 58-59)

Her editorial comments on women writers throughout the series invariably address the moral tendency of their writing. It is for moral reasons that she disapproves of Aphra Behn and Delarivière Manley, and approves of Eliza Haywood, Frances Sheridan, Jane West, Sarah Fielding, Amelia Opie, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Ann Radcliffe. She is also quick to identify specific lessons directed at the reader by women writers, evaluating both the merits of each lesson, and the success with which they are conveyed.

The literary criticism of the final phase of Barbauld's career as a writer reflects her own efforts to reconcile her literary activities with her activities as a mother-teacher. Her critical editions of Joseph Addison's essays and of Samuel Richardson's letters were both intended to preserve an interest in writers whom she valued particularly for their role in the education of young readers. The editorial commentary throughout *The British Novelists* series serves explicitly as a guidebook for parents, providing an evaluation of the moral tendency of each writer featured. In this respect, it was fairly typical of female Romantic literary criticism, as Anne K. Mellor has discussed. "Insisting that the cultural role of literature is to instruct," Mellor writes, "these women critics assumed the stance of the mother-teacher, selecting the appropriate books for young people to read at different stages of their growth" ("A Criticism" 34). Of all Barbauld's editorial efforts, *The Female Speaker* is the most obviously pedagogical in intention. In the introduction, Barbauld states that she intends the collection "for the use of young females," observing that "a taste for fine writing cannot be cultivated too early; and the surest mode of cultivating it is by reading much at that

period of life, when what is read is indelibly impressed upon the memory, and by reading nothing, which does not deserve to be so impressed” (iii). Again, in carrying out her literary project as a mother-teacher Barbauld is taking her cue from Locke, signalled in the reference to the concept of the mind as a *tabula rasa*.

Significantly, however, Barbauld's literary criticism rejects the application of a double standard to male and female writing, underscoring the universal importance of the instructive function of literature. “Books are,” she writes in “On the Classics” (1825), “a kind of perpetual censors on men and manners; they judge without partiality, and reprove without fear or affection.” Indeed, “On the Classics” insists on a special role for literature in education. “Oral instruction,” she notes,

can benefit but one age and one set of hearers; but these silent teachers address all ages and all nations. They may sleep for a while and be neglected; but whenever the desire of information springs up in the human breast there they are with their mild wisdom ready to instruct and please us. (Ellis 2: 291)

Unlike oral instruction, literature has the capacity to preserve knowledge and to transmit it to a large audience. Without books, in Barbauld's view, civilization would quickly crumble. In “On the Classics,” Barbauld reiterates her view that literature exerts a particular power over the reader in its capacity to represent identity. “Sometimes,” she observes, “we have the pleasure of being brought into the cabinet of a great man, and leaning as it were over his shoulder while he is pouring himself out in the freedom of a confidential intercourse which was never meant to meet the eye even of his contemporaries” (292). In a minor composition: “True Magicians,” included in the *Legacy* along with “On the Classics,” Barbauld illustrates

her point as Clio, the muse of History, conjures up various figures from classical and European history to appear before the narrator. Significantly, the narrator finds that the figures who appear most vividly before her are those who have left writings providing some account of their thoughts and actions over time. The narrator's clearest impressions of all are those of Cicero, from his orations against Catiline, and of Julius Caesar, from the commentaries on his military expeditions into Gaul. "On the Classics" specifically acknowledges the potential role of literature as a political force in the comment that "[t]he Despot trembles on his throne, and the bold and bad man turns pale in his closet at the sentence pronounced against him ages before he was born." Barbauld's critical essay on the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian and Freeholder papers concludes that

[b]ooks make a silent and gradual, but a sure change in our ideas and opinions; and as new authors are continually taking possession of the public mind, and old ones falling into disuse, new associations insensibly take place, and shed their influence unperceived over our taste, our manners, and our morals, adding though that as "[b]ooks influence manners ... manners, in return, influence the taste for books" (183).

In the context of "The Life of Richardson," Barbauld emphasizes the importance of books for readers without access to formal education. "Reading," she contends, "provided a man seeks rather after good books than new books, still continues to be the cheapest of amusements ... Nor is time generally wanting; the severest labour has its intervals, in which the youth, who is stung with the thirst of knowledge, will still to the page that gratifies his curiosity, and afterwards brood over the thoughts which have been there kindled as he

works” (xxxiv).

Barbauld's criticism of the novel specifically highlights its role in the moral development of the reader. In the prefatory essay to her edition of the *Correspondence of Richardson*, Barbauld discusses the power of novels to influence the moral development of the reader, both through precept and example, underscoring the particular importance of example.³ In all countries, Barbauld remarks, novels

have been grafted upon the actions of their heroes ... interwoven with their mythology ... moulded upon the manners of the age, and, in return, have influenced not a little the manners of the next generation, by the principles they have insinuated, and the sensibilities they have exercised. A spirit of adventure, a high sense of honour, of martial glory, refined and romantic passion, sentimental delicacy, or all the melting sensibilities of humanity, have been, in their turns, inspired by this powerful engine, which takes so strong a hold on the fancy and the passions of young readers. (vii-viii)

As the author suggests, the primary force of the novel involves the creation of fictional heroes whose existence seems as “real” to the reader as the heroes of history upon whom they are modelled. Although not stated explicitly, Barbauld's underlying assumption is again that through narrative, the record of thought and action over time, writers are able to capture the effect of personal identity, and to give characters they write about the appearance of “real” life.⁴ This capacity to capture the effect of personal identity enables the writer to transmit the example of heroes down to posterity with the same sense of immediacy as they held for their contemporaries. It also permits a blurring between history and fiction, as both historian and

novelist (or presumably poet or playwright) are capable of producing equally convincing representations of the same historical figures. The only difference is that the novelist is less bound to observe the surviving facts of history than the historian. In providing examples of “the manners of the age,” fictional characters provide the readers with knowledge of that age, as well as with models of conduct, which help to mould the manners of the following age.

The preliminary essay to the *Selections* contains the same insistence on the mutual influence of books and manners. Barbauld's suggestion that the novel has appealed to “the fancy and passions” as a means of reinforcing lessons in conduct again reflect her debt to Locke's theory concerning the association of ideas. This appeal to the fancy as well as to the passions obviously gives the novelist an advantage over the historian, as he or she governs the reader not only by commanding the emotions: “love, pity, joy, anguish, transport, or indignation,” but also by captivating the fancy with images of “ideal excellence,” as she puts it in “On Romances.” Richardson, for instance, presents in *Clarissa* “the sublime of virtue,” and in *Clementina*, “the sublime of passion.”

In “The Life of Richardson,” Barbauld displays some anxiety about the novel's appeal to “fancy,” and the possibility that the novel might provide false knowledge of the world. She mentions Nicholas-Despreaux Boileau and Miguel de Cervantes, as effectively exposing the errors of the early romances. Significantly, one of the novels Barbauld includes in *The British Novelists* series is Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, whose heroine, Arabella, is testimony to the effects of the early “languishing love romances,” which give her “a profound ignorance of events and circumstances of real life and manners” (24: i). This ignorance leads Arabella into a humorous series of misadventures, as well as a number of difficulties with her

lover, which are only resolved when she is persuaded to renounce her reading.⁵ Significantly, however, Arabella also attests to the positive effects of romances in appealing to the fancy. Her disinterestedness, generosity, virtue and courage are all inspired by her reading of romances. Lennox, it appears, shared Barbauld's ambivalence about the effects of fiction.

Barbauld's anxiety concerning the novel's promotion of false ideas leads her to an ambivalent assessment of the relative merits of history and fiction. In "On the Uses of History," Barbauld writes:

Is it true? — a child asks, when you tell him a wonderful story that strikes his imagination. The writer of fiction has the unlimited command of events and of characters; yet that single circumstance of truth, that the events related really came to pass, that the heroes brought upon the stage really existed, counterbalances, with respect to interest, all the privileges of the former, and in a mind a little accustomed to exertion will throw the advantage on the side of the historian. (Ellis 2: 403-04)

In this passage, she gives the advantage to fiction, but a little later, she declares, "man must be shown as the being he really is, or no real knowledge is gained," warning against such fictional writing as "Sir Charles Grandison" and "the Princess of Cleves" (404-05).

Barbauld takes comfort in the observation that the novel was gradually increasing in its adherence to the truth. Barbauld is careful to insist that the novel has never been "the mere play of the imagination." From the beginning, novelists have realized that "*le vrai seul est aimable*." In this, she picks up her opening statement that novels were first "moulded upon the manners of the age." Barbauld's suggestion is that novels are all, to some extent,

repositories of the knowledge and moral values of their age, which they transmit to the next. During the early days in the history of the novel, according to her, most of the population still lived in superstition and ignorance. As knowledge increased, and superstition lessened, there was a progressive insistence on the imitation of nature and the “introduction of characters from ordinary life” (xiv). The earliest form of novels were chivalric romances, which focussed on the frequently marvellous adventures of knights and ladies. Next came the historical romances, loosely based on figures from classical history such as Alexander the Great and the Roman Brutus, and also full of supernatural events and characters. There were also “monkish legends, a species of romance abounding with the marvellous, and particularly suited to the taste of a superstitious age” (xvii). By the time of Richardson, “[t]he moated castle is changed to a modern parlour; the princess and her pages to a lady and her domestics, or even a simple maiden, without birth or fortune; we are not called on to wonder at improbable events, but to be moved by natural passions” (xxi). Barbauld clearly believes that the best fiction is the realistic novel of sentiment. It remains close to the truth, while effectively promoting virtue through an appeal to passion rather than primarily to fancy.

Barbauld takes comfort in the increasing adherence of the novel to virtue. While commending the majority of early romances for their expression of “virtuous and noble sentiments” (x), Barbauld also notes many instances where they were founded on license and intrigue and “the nobler passions ... seldom touched,” including “[t]he *Decamerone* of Boccaccio, the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre, *contes* and *fabliaux* without number” (xv). She criticizes the late-seventeenth-century romances for following Restoration drama in imitating the dissipated manners of the court.

For Barbauld, Richardson hailed a new era. The rest of “The Life of Richardson” provides a tribute to Richardson's contribution to the moral and intellectual development of the public. As she asserts, “[i]t was the high and just praise given by our great critic, Dr. Johnson, to the author of *Clarissa*, that he ‘had enlarged the knowledge of human nature’” (xxii). She adds that “[t]he novelist has all the advantage of the preacher in introducing useful maxims and sentiments of virtue; an advantage which Richardson made large use of.” Richardson, she claims, “prided himself on being a moral and religious writer.” He conceived his protagonists: Pamela, *Clarissa*, and Sir Charles Grandison explicitly as inspiring role models for his readers. His protagonists are all exceptional for their learning and virtue. According to Barbauld, Richardson's novels “were received by his admirers as manuals of instruction” (ccvi), citing a number of public and private eulogiums after their publication.

In her analysis of Richardson's novels, Barbauld attributes his success as a “moral” and “religious” writer directly to his creation of convincingly lifelike characters. She identifies Richardson's immediate pattern as Daniel Defoe, who first excelled in “natural painting.” Defoe, in her view, achieved “the most serious air of truth” “by an accumulation of circumstance” and “natural way of telling the story” (xx). The main difference between Richardson and Defoe is that “De Foe was more employed about things, and ... Richardson about persons and sentiments” (xx), which gave him greater influence as a moral reformer than Defoe. While granting all novelists the capacity to capture the effect of personal identity through narrative, she evidently regards some writers as better at this than others. Like Defoe, Richardson had the ability to deceive his readers into accepting fiction for truth. Barbauld reports the widespread speculation concerning the identity of Pamela, long after

Richardson had admitted his authorship. She notes the visits from foreigners to the sites associated with *Clarissa*, which they believed actually existed. She cites the letter of a male reader who declares of Clarissa: "I should read the account of her death with as much anguish of mind as I should feel at the loss of my dearest friend" (cx), as well as the reaction of Lady Bradshaigh, one of Richardson's long-term correspondents:

The eager and passionate interest she took in the story of Clarissa, though carried to almost whimsical excess, does honour to the powers of the author, and the feelings of the lady. She seems to have considered Clarissa and Lovelace as real beings, whose fate the writer held in his hands. (ccvi)

When imploring Richardson to reform Lovelace, for instance, Lady Bradshaigh declares that the author's reward will be the salvation of a soul. In her own analysis of the novel's epistolary form, Barbauld claims that "we regard his characters as real personages, who we know and converse with, and whose fate remains to be decided in the course of events" (lxxii).

Barbauld also identifies some limitations with Richardson's novels. In her analysis of *Sir Charles Grandison*, she admits that "[n]ovels will always be different from real life, and therefore always, perhaps, in some degree, dangerous to the young mind" (cxxxiii). While Richardson "took the incidents, manners, and general character, of the times in which he lived" (xxi), he "drew equally from nature and from his own ideas" (xxi). The result is a number of improbabilities in his narratives, and in his characters. Barbauld finds fault, on different grounds, with Pamela, Clarissa, Lovelace, Belford, and Sir Charles Grandison. She also discovers limitations with the morality of Richardson's novels. Acknowledging

Richardson's sincere intentions as a moralist, she claims that he overrated his success as a reformer of the age, calling attention to specific limitations in the morals of all of his novels.

In her consistent emphasis on the moral and pedagogical value of literature Barbauld indirectly affirms a common ground for evaluating male and female writers.⁶ Morality is a recurring focus of interest in her literary criticism, regardless of the sex of the writer. In her account of the history of the novel in the preface to the *Correspondence of Richardson*, she not only takes to task women writers such as Delarivière Manley and Aphra Behn who “fill [their novels] with fashionable scandal,” but also criticizes Alan-René Le Sage's *Gil Blas* (1715-35), which she calls “a work of infinite entertainment, though of dubious morality.” Other male writers who earn Barbauld's censure for the morality of their fiction include Tobias Smollet and Henry Fielding. Of Fielding, she writes that he could not seem to create “a consistently virtuous character” (lxxx). She considers him most at fault in his character of Tom Jones, remarking that “[t]he fault of Jones are less than those of almost every other person who is brought up on the stage; yet they are of a more dangerous example, because they are mixed with so many qualities which excite our affections” (xxiv). The same was true of Smollett, though Barbauld was less willing to admit the possible attractiveness of his characters. As she observes,

[i]t has been said of Fielding, that he could not draw a thoroughly virtuous character; but Smollet could not draw an amiable one. It must be remembered, however, that vice may pollute the mind, and coarseness vitiate the taste, even when presented in the least attractive form; it is therefore to the praise of the present generation that this author's novels are much less read

now than they were formerly. (xvi)

Barbauld also criticizes writers she considers guilty of promoting false ideas. For example, she takes Defoe to task for including instances of dreams, portents, apparitions in his works, helping to perpetuate the superstitions of his readership. Indirectly, Barbauld's insistence on the importance of the pedagogical value of novels valorizes a specifically "feminine" mode of writing.

II.

With the protraction of hostilities between Great Britain and France, Barbauld was drawn once more to assume the same prerogative as male writers in seeking to "legislate mankind."⁷ She had continued to compose a certain amount of poetry throughout the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century, including two poems on political subjects: "Peace and the Shepherd" (1798?; 1800), and "Song for the London Volunteers" (1803; 1994). Yet neither one of these poems is particularly ambitious. "Peace and the Shepherd" is a short allegory, describing a personified Peace unsuccessfully seeking shelter from soldiers in a secluded shepherd's lodge. It was written to lament the French invasion of Switzerland. The "Song for the London Volunteers" was written to support the initial preparations for war against France, praising the London volunteers, who though "sons of Peace" (16) are resolutely furnishing themselves for battle. At least some of the verse Barbauld wrote during this period seems to have been commissioned by her male relatives. Her brother John Aikin edited the *Monthly Magazine* from 1796 until 1806, and the *Athenaeum* from 1806 until

1809, while her nephew Arthur Aikin edited the *Annual Review* from 1803 until 1809. Barbauld's ambition was fully reawakened in the following decade. This was an extremely bleak period in the history of Great Britain. By 1811, Great Britain had been at war with France for most of the previous two decades, which had resulted in the frequent interruption of trade, scarcity and high prices for the civilian population of both nations. At this point, there was no end in view to the conflict, and certainly no indication of victory for Great Britain. The country was nearing financial collapse. Meanwhile, it had lost its allies in the fight against France, and succeeded in provoking the United States. In 1811, George III lapsed into his final madness, yet still there was no attempt to negotiate for peace. Barbauld had opposed the decision to go to war. She gave it her support once the soldiers were engaged, but became increasingly ambivalent as the conflict lengthened. In 1811, Barbauld composed "On the King's Illness," in which she mourns not only the condition of George III, but also his failure to close "the wounds of war" (27). Shortly afterwards, she ventured seriously into politics once more, with *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*.

Eighteen Hundred and Eleven opens with a protest against the continuation of war, offering an ominous assessment of Great Britain's chances in the contest with France, now that the government seems to have committed itself to see it to its final conclusion. The poet suggests that Great Britain "[b]ravelly, though vainly, dares to strive with Fate,/ And seeks by turns to prop each sinking state" (5-6), an allusion to Napoleon's successive conquest of Great Britain's allies. From her perspective, Napoleon's victory over Great Britain appears a foregone conclusion. As in her earlier poems on political subjects, Barbauld uses the strategy of personifying the nation to communicate her point.

The second verse paragraph picks up the strategy of personification to mourn the wastefulness of war. The poet paints a vivid picture of the abundance of Nature, which provides the basis for all “the joys of life.” This picture contrasts starkly with the “Famine,” “Disease,” and “Rapine” that have followed the war with France. The analogy between husbandry and war, in the line “The sword, not sickle, reaps the harvest now” (19), underscores the contrast between the once idyllic scene of harvest, celebrated in poetry as far back as Virgil's *Eclogues*, with the horrific scene of soldiers cut down by swords. There is no sense of heroism -- only of slaughter and suffering. Civilians suffer as well, as soldiers scavenge the remains of “the scant supply,” leaving the peasant to die.

After setting the scene in Europe, the poet shifts in the next verse paragraph to the scene at home, drawing attention to the suffering of women as a result of the protraction of war. The poet describes the widowed matron, “[f]ruitful in vain,” whose husband and sons have all been killed, and whose daughters have been left unmarried or widowed themselves, as a result of the destruction of an entire generation of men. The description of the widowed matron serves as a subtle reminder of Barbauld's own maternal aspect. While unlike the widowed matron, Barbauld had no male relatives fighting in the war, she was undeniably a widow who had experienced the distressing loss of a husband, as well as the pain of childlessness. The poet's focus on the domestic aspect of destruction implies an attempt perhaps to mitigate her interference in politics -- both in providing a legitimate excuse for her interest in the conflict, and in suggesting that she is not attempting to compete directly with male writers, since she is evidently approaching her subject from a female perspective.⁸ The sensitive description of the matron intimates that in the composition of *Eighteenth Hundred*

and Eleven the poet was fundamentally inspired by her own feelings as a mother, and as a wife. She follows up the picture of the matron with the picture of a young wife, reading the newspaper “[t]o learn the fate of husband, brothers, friends” (34), or alternately, studying maps of Europe in order to understand the course of the conflict, or to discover where a loved one has died. As a whole, the section underscores the sense of the wastefulness of war, the phrase “fruitful in vain” echoing the phrase “[b]ounteous in vain,” at the beginning of verse paragraph two. This echo also indirectly underscores the notion of Nature as a mother with whom the poet empathizes.

Verse paragraph four addresses Great Britain directly, reproaching the government for its complacency in the face of obvious warning signs. The poet exploits the same technique of personification she has used before in order to heighten the impact of her warning, envisioning Great Britain as a an “island Queen amidst ... [her] subject seas” (40), who now slumbers, lulled into a false sense of security by her flatterers, used only to homage, and unprepared for the treatment she will soon receive from her enemies. The image of a sleeping queen serves to emphasize the obliviousness of government leaders to the sufferings of the people, since they are not directly participating in the fighting. It also serves to heighten the sense of Great Britain's vulnerability. It is possible that Barbauld is intending to evoke the famous image of Marie Antoinette in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). If this is the case, Barbauld might be issuing a tacit answer to Burke in suggesting that Marie Antoinette, as Great Britain, must be held partly accountable for her own downfall, because she listened to flatterers, and succumbed to luxury. “So sing thy flatterers,” writes the poet, “but, Britain, know,/ Thou who has shared the guilt must

share the woe” (45-46). Barbauld thus picks up her criticism of the effects of colonialism, which she addresses most fully in “Epistle to Wilberforce.” Great Britain has compromised itself for the sake of its commercial interests. Although the poet never says it in so many words, she implies that Great Britain's greed has partly caused the dire situation in Europe, in contributing to the competition for territory. As result of its greed, and the protraction of war, Great Britain is on the verge of economic ruin. As in “The Times” and “Epistle to Wilberforce,” the poet exploits the analogy of disease to describe the situation in Great Britain: “There, the heart-witherings of unuttered fear,/ And that sad death, whence most affection bleeds,/ Which sickness, only of the soul precedes” (50-52). There follows a digression concerning the dangers of capitalism, as the poet comments, “Thy baseless wealth dissolves in air away,/ Like mists that melt before the morning ray” (53-54). Now that the economy of Great Britain is substantially driven by trade, its wealth has ceased to have a tangible foundation. The section concludes with a description of the merchants in London, who already have prognostications of the disaster to come.

A short section follows, beginning “Yes, thou must droop; thy Midas dream is o'er” (61). The allusion to Midas is particularly effective, since the story of Midas offers a striking illustration of both the destructiveness and the transience of wealth. Midas, so the legend goes, is a king, who for his kind treatment of Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, has his wish granted that everything he touch be turned to gold. Although initially delighted with his gift, Midas is horrified when he inadvertently kills his daughter and nearly kills himself when his gift prevents him from eating. The poet emphasizes the analogy between the story of Midas and the situation in Great Britain in the subsequent vision of “the golden tide of

Commerce” leaving the shores of Great Britain for other lands. In classical mythology, Midas significantly gets rid of his gift by washing in the river Pactolus, which was supposed ever after to have had sands containing gold. The verse paragraph ends with another echo of “Epistle to Wilberforce” in the allusion to “[e]nfeebling Luxury and ghastly Want” (64).

Verse paragraph six abandons the offensive with an impassioned address:

... O my Country, name beloved, revered,
 By every tie that binds the soul endeared,
 Whose image to my infant sense came
 Mixt with Religion's light and Freedom's holy flame! (67-70)

At the same time as she abandons the offensive, the poet conspicuously emphasizes her filial relationship to Great Britain, claiming that she is protesting the conflict only out of love and reverence for her country. She is evidently still nervous about assuming any position of command, despite her subtle attempts to bolster her authority by invoking the role of the mother-teacher. Next, the poet contends that if it is the fate of Great Britain to fall, that in no way diminishes the glory of its achievements. Great Britain has left a rich legacy, in science, literature, law, and the arts. The British have settled everywhere, from the “Ganges to the pole,” and their language is spoken all over the world. The poet specifically highlights the legacy of Great Britain in North America. “Thy hand has planted,” she writes,

... and thy spirit fills:
 Soon as their gradual progress shall impart
 The finer sense of morals and of art,
 Thy stores of knowledge the new states shall know,

And think thy thoughts, and with thy fancy glow ... (84-88)

There is an indirect parallel to “Corsica,” as the poet offers Great Britain the comfort of preserving its identity as a nation in the face of conquest and physical decay, if not in the minds of her own citizens, in those of the citizens of North America, who will take up and preserve its legacy. The rest of the section offers a list of those whom Barbauld regards as Great Britain's greatest geniuses, beginning with the lines “Thy Lockes, thy Paleys shall instruct their youth,/ Thy leading star direct their search for truth” (89-90). It is this section that also includes praise of Joanna Baillie, the poet hoping that “[s]ome youthful Basil from thy moral lay/ With stricter hand his fond desires shall sway” (105-06). Barbauld's celebration of the instructive value of Baillie's writing serves strategically to reaffirm the validity of her own literary mission as a mother-teacher. At the same time, her stress on the instructive value of Locke and Paley, as well as Baillie, asserts a common criteria for evaluating male and female writing.

Verse paragraph seven allows “Fancy,” that “fond moody Power” (114), to imagine Great Britain in the future, after its fall. There is yet another echo of “Epistle to Wilberforce” in the line “as hopes – as fears prevail,/ She longs, or dreads, to lift the awful veil” (115-16). As in “Epistle to Wilberforce,” the image of the veil connotes the revelation of truth. In *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, the veil is lifted, not torn, but the implication is the same. Contemporary readers of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* apparently feared the prophetic power of Barbauld's words. The *Monthly Review*, for instance, compares Barbauld to Cassandra. Barbauld invites the analogy in the portrait of herself as the victim of her own Fancy, implied in the lines “On visions of delight now loves to dwell,/ Now hears the shriek of

woe or Freedom's knell" (117-18). The poet sees Great Britain, as the rest of Europe, falling into another Dark Ages.

Barbauld devotes the next five verse paragraphs to expanding the vision of Great Britain's ruin. The poet adopts the perspective of future visitors from North America, coming to survey the sites of Great Britain's former glory.⁹ She describes the scenes that the visitors encounter on their voyage, as they pause to make inquiries regarding the "statesmen, sages, poets, heroes" from Great Britain's past, and to reflect mournfully upon the awful contrast between what Great Britain once was and what it is now. Throughout this section of the poem, she invites the reader to identify with these future visitors. There is a special poignancy in the realization that Barbauld's readers have more in common with future, foreign visitors, than with most of their own descendants. The survivors of Great Britain's fall will, the poet suggests, have little idea of their nation's past. The poet envisions an encounter between "the ingenuous youth" of North America and the British peasant "[w]ho toils, unconscious of the mighty dead" (140). Throughout this part of the poem, the careful delineation of the thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of visitors from North America, as well as the few surviving citizens of Great Britain who remember their nation's past, serves to make the imagined decline of Great Britain vividly real to the reader.

It is also at this point in the poem that North America first emerges as a role model for Great Britain. As she lost faith in the rate of political progress in Europe, Barbauld shifted her some of her hopes from France and Britain to America. David Ramsay's *The History of the American Revolution* (1789) made a great impression upon her. She had been among those who originally criticized British policy towards the Americans, and retained an idealized

image of America and the leaders of its revolution. George Washington she calls “the purest character perhaps that history has to boast of” (2: 145). To some extent, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* might be seen as a paean for America, which she hopes will realize its destiny as a champion of liberty, where Great Britain has failed.

Verse paragraph fourteen marks another shift, as the poet asserts

There walks a Spirit o'er the peopled earth,
 Secret his progress is, unknown his birth;
 Moody and viewless as the changing wind,
 No force arrests his foot, no chains can bind;
 Where'er he turns, the human brute awakes,
 And roused to better life, his sordid hut forsakes:
 He thinks, he reasons, glows with purer fires,
 Feels finer wants, and burns with new desires ... (215-222)

Again employing the technique of personification, the poet imagines some sort of force, which has been variously interpreted by critics as liberty, truth, virtue, knowledge, civilization, or some combination of all of these, that separates man from the rest of the animals. It is this force that accounts for all the accomplishments of humanity, and gives rise to “History.” This account of the origins of history contains some suggestive echoes of the discussion between father and son in John Aikin's piece “On Man” in *Evenings at Home*. If we recall from chapter two, Charles' father in “On Man” distinguishes men from animals based on the faculty of reason, and also on a capacity to “*discourse*, or communicate ideas stored up in memory.” Man is unique, he claims, as “an *improvable* being, the wisdom and

experience acquired by one individual being thus transmitted to others, and so on in an endless series of progression.” This reflect prompts Charles' father to quote the Shakespearean definition of man as “a creature 'made with large discourse, looking before and after” (185). As already noted, this description of man reflects in a number of points Locke's discussion of identity in his chapter “Of Identity and Diversity.” The conception of man as a rational being with a capacity to stretch the mind backwards into the past and forwards into the future, enabling him the possibility of progress, both as an individual, and as a species, strikingly resembles Locke's definition of a person as “a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.” It is possible that in Barbauld's description of the origin of history in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* she is directly influenced by Locke's theory of personal identity. The “Spirit” she speaks of may indeed be intended to evoke Locke's concept of consciousness.

The following verse paragraph holds up to Great Britain examples from the past in order to highlight its expected fate. The poet envisions what happens when this “Genius ... forsakes the favoured shore” (241). Anticipating the post-apocalyptic scene of Percy Shelley's “Ozymandias”(1818), and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), the poet powerfully describes a series of ruined and deserted landscapes from past empires. With the departure of this “Genius” it appears that Nature ceases to grant his favours. It is interesting that the poet identifies Nature here as male, after having associated Nature with the matron in verse paragraph three. The effect is to connect women with peace, prosperity and fertility, and men with war, ruin, and sterility. Indirectly, the poet aligns herself with the rest of her sex in attempting to end a conflict that was being fought between men.

The poet recounts the progress of “Genius” from Rome to Great Britain. After forsaking the favoured shore “the vagrant Power” (259) “Northward ... throws the animating ray” (261), and “Commerce spreads her sail” (274) in the same direction. Soon literature and the other arts flourish once more. The poet pictures the transformation of Great Britain as “[t]he wattled hut” gives way to “Corinthian columns” and “light varandas,” and the British recapture the sophisticated rhetoric of the classical Roman orators. She draws particular attention to the change in the women:

Where once Bonduca whirled the scythed car,
 And the fierce matrons raised the shriek of war,
 Light forms beneath transparent muslins float,
 And tutored voices swell the artful note. (289-92)

There is a hint of dissatisfaction in these lines. The poet suggests that women have traded away a certain amount of power in exchange for sophistication and elegance. She indirectly encourages women to take the same interest as their female ancestors -- perhaps not in raising “the shriek of war,” but in exercising their influence for the good of the nation. In her view, women now are for the most part primarily occupied with the cultivation of ornamental arts. The subsequent description of the greenhouse, and the suggestion that Great Britain has “[s]ubdued the rigour of the northern Bear” (302), and “[o]’er polar climes shed aromatic air” (303) likewise conveys a certain ambivalence, the “aromatic air” in “Epistle to Wilberforce” being synonymous with luxury.

The final verse paragraph opens with the Blakean image of the sick rose, as the poet observes “But fairest flowers expand but to decay;/ The worm is in thy core, thy glories pass

away" (113-14), picking up on the allusion to London's "summer ices and her winter rose" in the stanza before. The poet intimates that there is a certain inevitable historical cycle. Like flowers, empires are transient, and inevitably wither. "Arts, arms and wealth," the poet claims, "destroy the fruits they bring" (315). The only difference is that "[c]ommerce, like beauty, knows no second spring" (316). Commerce brings great riches to a few, but also ever-increasing misery to the majority. Eventually, "Genius" makes for other shores. The poet imagines ultimately that "Genius" will pass away from Europe altogether, and reestablish itself in the Americas. *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* concludes with a celebration of the sublime landscape of South America, with the final promise that "Thy world, Columbus, shall be free" (334).

Barbauld's strategic attempt to reconcile the role of "legislator of mankind" with that of the mother-teacher, while granting her continued confidence to intervene directly in public affairs, failed to win over the male reviewers of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. John Aikin regarded *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* as his sister's "finest production," but also anticipated criticism from "those patriots who think their country just in all her projects, & inexhaustible in her resources" (McCarthy and Kraft 309), as he puts it to James Montgomery in a letter from February 29, 1812. His prediction proved correct.

By far the most hostile reaction to *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* came from the *Quarterly Review*. The anonymous reviewer, now identified as John Wilson Croker (but assumed by Barbauld to be Robert Southey), attacked the poem precisely because it constituted a perceived abandonment of the activities that were considered appropriately female. "We had hoped, indeed," the reviewer remarks rather patronizingly,

that the empire might have been saved without the intervention of a lady-author: we even flattered ourselves that the interests of Europe and of humanity would in some degrees have swayed our public councils, without the descent of (*deus ex machina*) Mrs. Anna Letitia Barbauld ... Not such, however, is her opinion; an irresistible impulse of public duty -- a confident sense of commanding talents -- have induced her to dash down her shagreen spectacles and her knitting needles, and to sally forth. (309)

In the context of his analysis of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, James Chandler states that [t]he reception accorded this poem illustrates how the literary representation of the state of the nation became a way of making history in two senses: as the *construction* of a narrative of events in literary form and as the *intervention* in the course of events by the very act of publishing such a construction. Precisely because this kind of activity was regarded as so potent, it was jealously guarded as a male prerogative. (114)

Alternating between faint praise and insult, Croker identifies the *Lessons for Children* and *Hymns in Prose* as “something better than harmless.” They “have been of some utility,” he admits, “though they display not much of either taste or talents.” This leads him to deplore the difference between Barbauld's children's literature and her “satire” (310).

The reviewer of the *Universal Magazine* (1812) was hardly less offensive than Croker. Like Croker, he precedes his attack against *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* with a dismissal of her children's literature, declaring that “She has produced books for children, criticisms for young gentlemen and ladies, and poetry for both ... [but] in all of these ... there

prevails the same cold regularity, the same frigid observance of what is right without any thing that is very good” (217).

The nature of the attack in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* and the *Universal Magazine* suggests that they recognized and feared Barbauld's attempted expansion of the jurisdiction of the mother-teacher. In both instances, the attack is two-pronged. On the one hand, Barbauld is accused of transgression and over-ambition; on the other hand, her achievement as a children's writer is denigrated and trivialized. By attacking her achievement in children's literature these reviewers effectively undermined her efforts to reconcile the role of “legislator of mankind” with that of mother-teacher. Indeed, Croker distances Barbauld from the role of mother-teacher completely in his rather odd designation of her as a “fatidical spinster,” when at that point she was, of course, a widow. According to William Keach, “as a ‘fatidical spinster,’ she is placed by Croker outside both the ‘conjugal family’ and the ‘public sphere’ into which she has intruded with a new set of claims for attention and legitimacy” (Regency 571).

Members of the liberal press, including those at *The Monthly Review* and the *Eclectic Review* were also discomfited by *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, though their attacks were not scathing. Many contemporaries who otherwise admired her writing, notably Henry Crabb Robinson, criticized this particular poem. Robinson disclaimed the article in the *Quarterly Review* as “coarse and ... blackguard,” recounting John Murray's confession that “he was more ashamed of this than of any other article.” Yet he also asserted, “I certainly wished she had not written it, though it is written in a pleasing style ... the tone and spirit of it are certainly very bad” (64). He considered that Barbauld had made herself vulnerable to charges of presumption in her assumption of the character of “a philosophic poet” or “prophetic

'Elegyist.' He unhappily recounts William Godwin's denunciation of the poem as "cowardly, time-serving, [and] Presbyterian" (63). While Maria Edgeworth voiced similar indignation in a letter to Barbauld, calling the review "so ungentlemanlike, so unjust, so insolent" (Rodgers 142), both she and her father avoided undertaking any public defence of Barbauld..

Later on in the nineteenth century, admirers continued to have trouble with *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. Eric S. Robinson, who considered that Barbauld might have been a "female Johnson," writes of this poem that "[i]ts dismal prognostications were happily all false, and its poetry is not of a high order" (80). Others pleaded mitigating circumstances. Mrs. Elwood complained that "notwithstanding her sex and age, her blameless character and literary reputation ... [Barbauld] was attacked by some, who were so illiberal as not to be able to make allowances for the circumstances under which the work was composed" (238). At the turn of the twentieth century, Alfred Ainger writes of Barbauld's anti-war stance, "It was rather a feminine timidity, and that natural horror of bloodshed which affects many persons when war has been long in progress, and overcomes the healthier conviction that a struggle for the world's good is best for a nation whether the end be success or failure" (375).

There were a few notable exceptions. The *New British Lady's Magazine* reprinted *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* in 1815 with words of praise. Nineteenth-century biographer Grace A. Ellis argues that many of the comments that were made against *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* attest to the fact that "she was yet dreaded as a powerful and influential champion of freedom of thought, of progress, and of humanity" (194).

By all accounts, the response to *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* absolutely devastated Barbauld. Having incensed rather than convinced her opponents, and alienated some of her

former supporters, she resolved never to publish again, abandoning plans for a new edition of her *Poems*. Considering the wave of revolutions that had swept over Europe during her lifetime, Barbauld reflects in 1814 that all we might gather is “that the concerns and destinies of all the world are too high forces,” and that we must “be satisfied in promoting and enjoying the happiness of our own little circle” (2: 140). In later years, she took some mournful comfort in the belief that humanity ignored the lessons presented to it. In a letter from Stoke Newington, November 14, 1818, Barbauld concludes that “[e]ach country, as each man, must buy his own experience” (2: 100).

During the final phase of her literary career, Barbauld continued to receive a certain amount of recognition of her talents as a writer. Henry Crabb Robinson's *Books and their Writers*, contains the following commentary on her: “Mrs. Barbauld is so well known by her prose writings that it is needless for me to attempt to characterize her. Her excellence lay in the soundness and acuteness of her understanding, and in the perfection of her taste” (8). While Wordsworth's praise is not gender neutral -- he identifies Barbauld in a letter to his friend Dyce as one of the “greatest *poetesses*” (293) [my emphasis], and describes her to Henry Crabb Robinson as “the first of our literary women” (Henry Crabb Robinson 8), he is capable sometimes of overlooking her sex. Robinson recalls Wordsworth saying, in connection to her poem “Life,” that “though he was he was not in the habit of begrudging others their good things” he wished he could claim for his own the last eight lines of that poem. When he first knew Barbauld, Coleridge also demonstrated considerable respect for her as a writer. He went to notable lengths to cultivate her acquaintance, in one recorded instance walking forty miles from Nether Stowey to Bristol solely in order to meet her. In his

correspondence he refers to her as that “great and excellent woman Mrs. Barbauld” (*Collected* 1: 393), expressing particular admiration for her prose, which he regarded as virtually unrivalled in English. To the Unitarian minister John Prior Estlin in 1800, Coleridge writes, “The more I see of Mrs Barbauld the more I admire her -- that wonderful *Propriety* of Mind! -- She has great *acuteness*, very great -- yet how steadily she keeps it within the bounds of practical reason” (*Collected* 1: 578). Sir James Mackintosh had high praise for Barbauld's criticism, singling out her comments on *Clarissa* “as fine a piece of mitigated and rational stoicism as our language can boast of” (Thackeray 35).

From the turn of the century onwards, however, Barbauld and her writing also came under general attack for perceived transgression against prescribed boundaries of feminine activity. The most vociferous in his denunciation was Charles Lamb. While granting that she was not as offensive as the generation of women writers who came after her, Lamb condemned her as “impudent, forward, and unfeminine,” declaring that Elizabeth Inchbald was the only clever woman he could ever tolerate (Coleridge, *Letters* 1: 218).

Admittedly, Lamb's opinion of Barbauld seems to have been at least partly the product of personal animus. Lamb received a negative review for *John Woodvil* (1802) in *The Annual Review*, edited by Arthur Aikin. He afterwards conceived a dislike for the whole family, and particularly Barbauld, to whom he mistakenly attributed the review. The same review marked the final turning point in Barbauld's relationship with Coleridge as well. There were already signs, before then, of a gradual cooling of relations between Barbauld and Coleridge. As Deirdre Coleman has ascertained, Barbauld composed “To Mr. S. T. Coleridge” (1797; 1799) as part of a bid to encourage the young poet to accept the Dissenting ministry at Shrewsbury,

which had previously been held by her nephew Arthur Aikin. She would not have been pleased when he resigned the position within a few days of accepting it, or to hear that while in Shrewsbury he referred to his predecessor as a “booby.” Coleridge himself may have resented “To Mr. S. T. Coleridge.” If he expressed no animosity against Barbauld following its publication, he expressed no agreement either. He allowed his admiration and “almost envy” of her “*Propriety of Mind*” and “great *acuteness*,” but clearly celebrated his own “Out-of-the-wayness” (*Collected 1*: 578). Once the review of *John Woodvil* came out, Coleridge informed Robert Southey in a letter from January 25, 1804, “if I do not cut her to the Heart, and openly & with my name, never believe me again” (*Collected 2*: 1039). In a notebook entry for July, 1810, he alludes to “Wordsworth's enemies -- especially that Mistress Bare and Bald” (*Notebooks 3965*) -- a nickname first employed by Robert Southey, but quickly adopted by both Lamb and Coleridge. Significantly, the image evoked by this nickname suggests that underlying the personal animus was still a conviction that Barbauld had unsexed herself somehow in her literary endeavours.

It is striking that Barbauld's early nineteenth-century admirers seem distinctly more concerned to harmonize her genius with her femininity than those of the late eighteenth century. This tendency emerges at several points in Henry Crabb Robinson's commentary. Robinson emphasizes “the beauty of her fine taste, correct understanding, and pure integrity” (17). Recording his impressions of some “pleasing lines in blank verse on the continued affliction of the king,” which she read to him during a visit with her August 26, 1811, he notes “the sentiments and the usual correctness and purity of style and taste which make Mrs. Barbauld's writings” (45). Henry Holland, later a physician to Queen Victoria, simultaneously

praises “Mrs Barbauld's masculine understanding and gentle feminine character” (Rodgers 135). John Frost, who included Barbauld in an updated edition of a poetic anthology originally put together by John Aikin, writes of her, “she is an amiable example to her sex that it is possible to combine, without danger to its morals or religious principles, a manly understanding with a feminine and susceptible heart” (35). Maria Edgeworth distinguishes her friend as “the most respectable and elegant female writer that England can boast” (Rodgers 143).

While serving to offset attacks against Barbauld for transgressing against feminine propriety, however, the attempts to harmonize her genius with her femininity failed to prevent -- indeed, perhaps invited -- the first efforts to trivialize her literary accomplishments. Identifying Barbauld fondly as the “first poetess” he can remember, and the writer, “male or female,” with whom he was most familiar as a child, William Hazlitt remarks that she is “a very pretty poetess” who “strews the flowers of poetry most agreeably round the borders of religious controversy.” His tribute to her prose is likewise dismissive. Barbauld's prose is, in his view, “neat and pointed.” He claims that “Thoughts on the Inconsistency of Human Expectations” is “one of the most ingenious and sensible essays in the language” (148-49), but as William Keach points out, “concludes ... [by] minimizing ... [its] conceptual originality” (*Romanticism* 44). According to Keach, “Hazlitt was very well positioned ... to appreciate Barbauld's achievements as a political poet and controversialist. But he recognizes her only as a versifying school-mistress, an influential but conventional domestic moralist” (*Romanticism* 46). Coleridge's last lecture on Milton, delivered January 14, 1812, provides an instance where he singled Barbauld out for belittlement. Henry Crabb Robinson recounts

that Coleridge “ridiculed some expressions in her *Ode to Content*, 'The hamlets brown, primrose and violet,' etc. -- criticisms apparently first privately voiced by Wordsworth. He himself found no justification for the criticisms, and expressed a certain resentment against Coleridge's public declaration of them, on account of Barbauld's sex. He called Coleridge's attack in the Milton lecture “unhandsome and unmanly.” “That he should select among the living authors, a woman,” he complains, “and that woman a lady who has been among his admirers formerly, and I believe always showed him civilities, is ungenerous and unworthy of his better feelings” (62). Unfortunately, defences of this type were not likely to avert the tendency to trivialize Barbauld.

The editors of *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* effectively summarize the reasons for the decline in Barbauld's reputation during the early nineteenth century: “In part she was the victim, along with her friend Joseph Priestley, of a nineteenth-century reaction against the Enlightenment radicalism she and her political milieu embodies” (xxxiv). This appears, for instance, in Wordsworth's comment that Barbauld “was spoiled somewhat as a Poetess by being a Dissenter, and concerned with a Dissenting Academy” (Oliver lxxv). According to McCarthy and Kraft,

[s]he was also the victim, along with most of her female contemporaries and predecessors, of the reaction against 'Wollstonecraftianism,' which set in as early as 1798 in response to William Godwin's incautiously sincere memoir of his wife. A more specific anti-feminism can be perceived to have motivated the male writers who came to be known as the 'Major Romantics': a tendency of their manifestos about poetry and criticism was to exclude women from both

and to belittle those women who, like Barbauld, were prominent poets and critics. (xxxiv)

Interestingly, Coleridge and Lamb's resentment against Barbauld seems to have been heightened rather than diminished by her appeal to authority as a mother-teacher. Lamb and Coleridge both specifically attack Barbauld for didacticism. Taking aim at *Evenings at Home* in a letter to his friend, Lamb admonishes "Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wives fables in childhood, you had been crammed with Geography & Natural History" (Lamb, *Letters* 2: 82). Such thoughts inspire his passionate denunciation of Barbauld and her "crew" for banishing the "old classics out of the nursery." In an entry for 31 March 1832 in *Table Talk* (1836), Coleridge records Barbauld's alleged comment that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was "improbable, and had no moral," to which he famously claims to have replied that in his "judgement the poem had too much" (1: 272).¹⁰ The juvenile nature of Coleridge and Lamb's insults against Barbauld affirms their resentment of a woman who had assumed maternal authority over them. It is possible that on some level Coleridge and Lamb recognized and resented Barbauld's strategic attempts to claim authority for women writers on the basis of their authority as mother-teachers. Indeed, we might argue that the rise of anti-didacticism during the Romantic period was partly a backlash against women writers such as Barbauld who had established powerful roles for themselves in society on the basis of their authority as mother-teachers. The rejection of didacticism provided an ostensibly aesthetic reason for dismissing the literary achievements of women writers like Barbauld.

Lucy Aikin made an attempt to recuperate her aunt's reputation with the publication

of the posthumous *Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, with a Memoir* (1825). Her account of Barbauld in the *Memoir* rekindles the same tension evident throughout Barbauld's own literary career between an ambition for recognition next to male contemporaries, and the desire to avoid accusations of transgression. The *Memoir* opens with the observation that Barbauld's name has "long [been] dear to ... admirers of genius." The account of her life begins with evidence of the early manifestation of "[that] the quickness of apprehension by which she was eminently distinguished" (v). Aikin takes particular notice of Barbauld's early instruction in Latin and Greek. The discussion of Barbauld's literary achievement include repeated comparisons between her and male, rather than female writers. Aikin cites Johnson's praise of Barbauld for her effectively Johnsonian prose style, and she herself compares Barbauld's achievement as an essayist to Addison's. There is an admission that she has included "the elegant Lines on The Deserted Village [in the *Works*] ... partly for the sake of connecting the name of their author as a contemporary with that of a poet who has been so long enrolled among the classics of his country" (lxi). Aikin observes "that Goldsmith, whose envy is well known, bore involuntary testimony to the merit of these lines, by exhibiting no sentiment but mortification on hearing them read with applause in a London circle" (lxi). Yet she betrays the same quickness as Barbauld's early nineteenth-century male admirers to underscore her aunt's femininity. She notes the attempts by Barbauld's mother to guard against the acquisition of any masculine traits. She is careful to downplay her aunt's own ambition, recording instance after instance of her diffidence to publication, and her deprecation of her own literary achievement. She reproduces Barbauld's letter to Elizabeth Montagu in full, citing it as "a monument of her acuteness and good sense," and "an instance

of the humility with which she estimated her own accomplishments” (xvii). More overtly than Barbauld herself, Aikin attempts to present her aunt's writing as an extension of her activities as a mother-teacher. Robbins has already noted the *Memoir's* effort to uphold “a picture of ... [Barbauld] as motherly teacher in person and texts” (“Re-making” 159). Aikin singles out for praise the writings that most clearly identify her aunt as a mother-teacher, beginning with her early poetry. She cites “The Invitation” as evidence of Barbauld's early interest in the business of education. Among Barbauld's essays, she recommends “Of Education,” and “Of Prejudice,” which she suggests might “be regarded in some measure as a sequel to it.” As touched on in chapter six, she underscores Barbauld's achievement in children's literature, claiming that the *Lessons for Children* “initiated an aera in the art of early instruction,” which had yet to be surpassed. In her view, “[n]one of her [aunt's] works is a fairer monument ... of the elevation of her soul and the brightness of her genius” (xxx) than the *Hymns in Prose*.

Aikin also strategically emphasizes her aunt's status as a mother-teacher with the publication of the *Legacy* during the same year as the *Works*. The preface to the *Legacy* identifies Barbauld as “one of the best friends of youth,” citing a number of Barbauld's pedagogical literary projects, and reminding readers of her lifelong engagement as a teacher in the observation that “[m]any young persons of both sexes partook, during the course of her long life, of the benefit of her personal instructions.” She emphasizes the pedagogical aspect of writings that some readers might not have conceived in that light, noting that Barbauld's “Poems' contain many pieces worthy to be early repositd among the choicest stores of an elegant and ingenuous mind” (iii). It is clear that Aikin intends the *Legacy* as the legacy of her aunt's career as a teacher. As Sarah Robbins points out, she locates the value of the

collection in its “beneficial effects on young readers, who might learn to accept its 'moral truths’” (Robbins 159). Yet there remains a certain ambivalence towards Barbauld's status as a mother-teacher, evident in such statements as “she has condescended to apply her admirable genius to the instruction of even infant minds” (iii).

After Barbauld's death, there remained some who continued to see her in relation to a general literary tradition. According to Jerom Murch's *Mrs. Barbauld and her Contemporaries* (1877), Walter Savage Landor interrupted the conversation at a dinner party in 1852 with a recitation of some lines from “A Summer Evening's Meditation,” afterwards demanding, “Can you show me anything finer in the English language?” (94). In 1855, Harriet Martineau refers to Barbauld as “still ... one of the first writers in our language” (302). In *The Life of Josiah Wedgewood* (1865-66), Eliza Meteyard describes Barbauld as “[a] poet by nature, and with her understanding highly cultivated, the larger portion of her verse has a gracefulness and finish which robs it neither of strength nor fulness of expression,” though she dares to rank her only as foremost among “the *literary women* of the latter half of the eighteenth century” (1: 321) [my emphasis].

However, as the nineteenth century wore on, Barbauld was remembered, if at all, only in the context of an increasingly marginalised tradition of female writing. Frederic Rowton includes selections of Barbauld's poetry in his anthology *The Female Poets of Great Britain* (1853). In his introductory remarks, he writes:

Mrs. Barbauld's poetry exhibits, in high degree, the characteristic qualities of female genius. The quick intuitive perception, the chaste tenderness, the delicate, *musical* flow of thought, that distinguish the female mind, are very

forcibly and fully developed by Mrs. Barbauld. In these respects she is second only to Mrs. Hemans; whilst in many other points of view she is decidedly a greater and more instructive writer. (243)

Though he obviously counts himself as a fan, Rowton sees Barbauld's writing as evidence of a specifically female form of genius. The result of such thinking was the inevitable trivialisation of Barbauld's literary achievement. The ostensibly sympathetic Anne Thackeray writes in *A Book of Sibyls* (1883): "it is certain the modest performances of the ladies of Mrs. Barbauld's time would scarcely meet with the attention now, which they then received. But all the same, the stock of true feeling, of real poetry, is not increased by the increased volubility of our pens" (50). Thanks to Wordsworth's endorsement, the poem "Life" continued to be included in general anthologies such as Francis Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language* (1861), and Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of English Verse* (1900), but one poem was not enough to preserve her literary reputation.

The decline of Barbauld's literary reputation was accelerated by the lack of posthumous editions of her writing. After putting together the *Works* and the *Legacy*, Lucy Aikin did nothing else. Twenty years later, Arthur Aikin had an opportunity to revive interest in Barbauld; he let it slip away. Consequently, only her children's literature remained in circulation. Barbauld's reputation as a mother-teacher thus survived, but without a full appreciation of what she had sought to achieve in that role. The situation was exacerbated by the increasingly negative perception of didactic women writers as time went on. By invoking the authority of the mother-teacher to sanction her writing, Barbauld did finally succeed in silencing those who had accused her of violating feminine propriety, but inevitably consigned

herself to the status of a minor writer.

While interest in Barbauld never entirely faded, it was for a long time mainly a matter of historical curiosity, or of minor literary interest. Barbauld came up routinely in critical discussions of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) as a figure to be despised and dismissed. John Livingston Lewes, Robert Penn Warren, James Boulder, Harold Bloom, and Lionel Trilling all mention Coleridge's account of his exchange with Barbauld over the improbability and the lack of moral in the *Rime*. Paul M. Zall considers Barbauld's failure to observe a moral in the *Rime* as worthy of elevating her to "the pantheon of dunces" ("Wordsworth's 'Ode'" 177). Other twentieth scholars to attack Barbauld include Vivian de Sola Pinto, who refers to her *The Divine Vision: Studies in the Poetry and Art of William Blake* (1957) as "a talented, pious prig" (84). In 1953, Walter Sidney Scott undertook to publish a collection of Barbauld and Edgeworth's letters that had been discovered in a private collection. Yet in his prefatory comments he expresses surprise at the popularity of Barbauld's first volume of verses, and her eminence in late eighteenth-century literary society. In 1968, Mary G. Jones could still allude patronizingly to "Laetitia Barbauld, whose charming verses are not yet forgotten" (61). Betsy Rodgers was virtually alone in seriously defending Barbauld's writing. It is striking that of all Barbauld's writings she reserved specific praise for her political pamphlets, insisting that she was "one of the most effective pamphleteers of the eighteenth century" (108). The only other serious notice of Barbauld from around the same period I have been able to discover is an uncredited article published in the *Hibbert Journal* in 1964, in which Barbauld receives tribute as "one of the most remarkable English women of the 18th century" (32).

With the revival of interest in eighteenth-century and Romantic women writers, Barbauld's literary reputation has greatly recovered. While a few critics, such as Marilyn Gaull, have repeated the standard line of criticism against her, a significant number have begun to appreciate her. In his breakthrough anthology, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (1989), Roger Lonsdale identifies Barbauld as “[p]otentially the most versatile of women poets in the period” (xxxiii). Terry Castle, in her review of Lonsdale's anthology declares Barbauld “one of the most underrated writers of either sex from the period” (“Unruly and Unresigned” 1228). The editors of *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* consider “the critical neglect of Barbauld's poetry ... baffling,” praising her poetry as “the product of an active intelligence and a fertile imagination” (xxi). Critics have now gone a considerable way to retrieving a sense of Barbauld's importance in literary history. There have been a number of articles exploring Barbauld's influence on the first generation of male Romantic writers: Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.¹² It has been a major purpose of this study to establish as a figure worthy of in-depth analysis in her own right.

Notes

Chapter 1

¹Unless otherwise indicated, selections from Barbauld's correspondence and prose pieces are taken from Lucy Aikin's *The Works of Anna Lætitia Barbauld*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), while selections from her poetry are taken from William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft's *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994). I have provided dates for the poems according to McCarthy and Kraft -- both the date or estimated date of composition, and the earliest known date of publication. For the prose I have been able to provide only the date of publication.

²In Barbauld's view, her husband managed to achieve a "rare union of a fervent spirit of devotion, with a pure, sublime philosophy, supported by arguments of metaphysical acuteness" (Aikin 1: xlvii-xlviii)

³The only other instance I have discovered in Barbauld's correspondence of her canvassing others for their philosophical opinions occurs in a letter to Lucy Aikin from Stoke Newington, 1805, in which she asks her niece where she stands on the matter of "*causation*." "Do you agree with Dugald Stewart, Hume, and Mr. Leslie," wonders Barbauld, "because if you do, I think you may as well throw Paley's last work into the fire" (Le Breton 111).

⁴It is important to note that when Aristotle uses the term body and soul (in the Greek: *psuchê*) he means something quite different from the Christian understanding of the words. The body is the body independent of any shape, the stuff of the body if you will, while the soul is the organizing principle of the body, co-extensive with it. The soul is not the immortal part of body, releasing the body in death to assume a different form, though Aristotle

considers that there may be some immortal part of the soul. Aristotle's writings posit a different concept, the *nous* (translated variously as the mind or intellect or intuition), which human beings alone possess. The *nous* is immortal, representing the principle of the divine mind, shared by all human beings.

⁵The notion of the substantial self was not received through Aristotle directly. Aristotle's texts were not widely disseminated until the thirteenth century when St. Thomas Aquinas made an effort to reconcile Aristotle's thought with what was an essentially neo-Platonic (Plotinian) Christianity.

⁶This is not to gloss over the considerable number of medieval philosophical treatises devoted to determining a clear principle of individuation. For many of his medieval successors, Aristotle's explanation of individuation was not considered sufficient, although for the most part, individuation continued to be explained by substance, either material or immaterial, or both. Martha Brandt Bolton lists some exceptions: "Aquinas' *materia signata*, accidents, and existence" (125). There were other debates focussed on determining exactly what happened to the soul between death and resurrection. Theologians argued over whether the soul was active or inactive, conscious or unconscious, and whether it remained in some imperishable part of the body, or roamed, perhaps from one body to another. Still other debates focussed on the logistics involved in the resurrection of the body. There were concerns about what would happen if the flesh dissolved completely, or if flesh from one body were incorporated into another body, for instance, when a person is eaten by a cannibal.

⁷According to Kenneth F. Barber, Descartes reflects a generally increasing demand, during the seventeenth-century, that ontological systems satisfy epistemological concerns,

which he attributes to a number of historical causes, including “[t]he theological chaos engendered by the Reformation” and “the advancement of scientific theories wherein the real constituents of the physical realm are atoms, invisible to perception and hence unknowable by ordinary or commonplace standards” (5).

⁸In Cartesian thought, the belief that matter is unknowable has no general consequence at all, since we presumably know enough about substance through its attributes that it in no way affects our relationship to it. His dismissal of the body as a criterion for identity in part explains his dualistic belief that if God wanted, He could separate material substance (the body) from immaterial substance (the mind or the soul).

⁹Given Locke's opinion of our limited knowledge of the soul, it is not surprising that he avoids setting out a precise account of the identity of immaterial substance. At the conclusion of the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity,” he surmises a general principle for the continuity of substance, asserting that “whatever Substance begins to exist, it must during its Existence, necessarily be the same: Whatever Composition of Substances begins to exist, during the union of those continued substances, the concrete must be the same” (2.27.28: 348). In other words, the continuity of a substance depends quite simply on its continued existence as a substance of the same kind. In these terms, the identity of the soul rests upon whatever power grants it existence.

¹⁰A little later in the chapter, Locke incorporates the parallel between compound bodies and compound finite intelligences directly into his definition of man: “the *idea* in our Minds, of which the Sound *Man* in our Mouths is the Sign, is nothing else but an Animal of a certain Form.” He allows the possibility that other animals may possess reason, such as the

talking parrot from Brazil mentioned in Sir William Temple's *Memoirs of what passed in Christendom from 1672 to 1678*, which means that it is not the idea of a "rational Being alone, that makes the *Idea of Man* in most Peoples sense; but of a Body so and so shaped jointed to it" (2.27.8: 333).

¹¹Elsewhere in the *Essay*, he defines consciousness as "the perception of what passes in a Man's own mind" (2.1.19: 342) and as a necessary act that attends all thinking (2.1.10,11, 19). How he defines consciousness in relation to identity has been the subject of lengthy and ongoing debate. Many have interpreted consciousness as memory, which has opened Locke's theory of personal identity up to charges of circularity. In the twentieth century, philosophers have refuted the charge that Locke's theory of personal identity suffered from circular logic with the claim that he saw consciousness not merely as a collection of memories from a individual history of experience but as an individuating centre: the possession of memories, and not the memories themselves.

¹²The first references to Locke's theory of personal identity occur in William Sherlock's *A Defence of Dr. Sherlock's Notion of a Trinity in Unity* (1694) and Matthew Tindal's *Reflexions ... touching the Doctrine of the Trinity* (1695). Though Locke has little himself to say on the subject of the trinity, medieval theologians had indirectly set a precedent for connecting personal identity and the divine in treating all forms of earthly identity as an analogy for the divine.

¹³In his book on Locke and the Scriblerians, Fox provides a detailed chronicle of the reception of Locke's account of personal identity during the early eighteenth century, which I have thought sufficient to highlight here. The following list of some notable eighteenth-

century participants conveys some sense of the breadth of the debate:

Stillingfleet, Shaftesbury, Berkeley, Butler, Mandeville, Prior, Watts, Clarke and Collins, lesser-known figures such as Henry Lee, Richard Burthogge, Thomas Burnet, Catherine Trotter, Winch Holdsworth, Henry Felton, John Sergeant and Peter Browne, John Harris [ca. 1666-1719] in the *Lexicon Technicum* and Ephraim Chambers in the *Cyclopaedia*, anonymous pamphleteers and writers in *The British Apollo* and *The Spectator* – all were involved, at one point or another in the early discussion of identity and consciousness. David Hume would join that discussion in 1739, and Henry Home (Lord Kames), Abraham Tucker (under the pseudonym of Cuthbert Comment), Edmund Law, Joseph Priestley and Thomas Reid would later continue it, almost exclusively along the lines laid down by Locke and early eighteenth-century commentators. (39)

¹⁴The turning point came with the publication of the first two British encyclopaedias, John Harris' *Lexicon Technicum* (1704-1710) and Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia: Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1728), both of which include Locke's definition of personal identity in their entries for "Identity." Though it seems their intention was to present Locke's definition as some of the latest findings on the subject, rather than as a definitive account of it, the effect was to lend Locke's theory of personal identity a new appearance of authority. Together with Addison, Harris and Chambers succeeded in widely disseminating and popularizing Locke's views. So great was their success, in fact, that Hume could remark, in the *Treatise On Human Nature* (1740), that "[m]ost philosophers seem

inclin'd to think, that personal identity *arises* from consciousness” (Appendix 635).

¹⁵In many respects, Hume is building upon the work of Anthony Collins, a close friend of Locke's and one of his earliest defenders. Collins argues, in fact, that there is not one consciousness, but a series of discrete and individual consciousnesses. According to Collins, “no Man has the same ... Consciousness to Day that he had yesterday” (876), and therefore, we “are not conscious that we continue a Moment the same individual numerical Being” (870). The individual is, as he sees it, not one self but a series of different selves, leading him to question the meaningfulness of traditional categories of identity.

¹⁶Adam Smith builds directly upon this view of the self in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). In this context, he suggests that since we are nothing beyond our perceptions, we look for ourselves in the external objects which are the source of these perceptions. We develop an image of ourselves, an identity for ourselves, in imaginative identification or “sympathy” with others. While the limitations in human knowledge of substance isolate the individual from others, and give him or her only weak ideas of the feelings of others, through the principle of sympathy he or she can acquire a strong impression similar to the feeling itself. It is this principle of sympathy that constitutes the basis for all our moral sentiments.

¹⁷In these terms, one might refute claims that Locke reproduces a dualistic division between the mind and the body. Indeed, one might connect Locke with late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century medical theory that posited an increasingly close relationship between the mind and the body, as the theory of “animal spirits” eclipsed and replaced the dominant theory of humours. Late seventeenth-century physician Thomas Willis was the first

to envision a regulating nervous system which transported “animal spirits” that were extracted from the blood and distilled in the cerebral cortex (Fox, *Psychology* 231). There were some medico-theologians, such as George Cheyne, who sought to apply the theory of “animal spirits” directly to spiritual questions and speculation into the nature of the soul. Cheyne proposed that the soul, or

the Intelligent Principle ... resides somewhere in the Brain, where all the Nerves, or Instruments of Sensation terminate, like a *Musician*, in a finely fram'd and well tun'd Organ-Case; that these Nerves are like Keys, which, being struck or touch'd, convey the Sound and Harmony to this sentient Principle, or *Musician*. (Fox, *Psychology* 262)

This has important implications from a feminist perspective, since it answers charges from some feminist philosophers that Locke, in insisting on a separation between consciousness and material substance, perpetuated a dualistic way of thinking, implicitly valorizing the mind over the body, and “masculine” over “feminine.”

¹⁸In this context, Patricia U. Bonomi claims that Locke centrally contributed towards shifting “the emphasis from an interventionist God to one whose greatest gift to human kind was natural reason” (98).

¹⁹The opportunity to define identity apart from the body and the soul continued to be important long afterwards for women seeking social, economic, and political advancement. Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus indicate the prevailing assumption shared by most eighteenth and nineteenth century male philosophers “that women’s biological nature dictates and justifies her lack of political status” (3-4). Marilyn Chapin Massey notes that “[i]n the

newly industrialized West of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, philosophers and theologians, along with physicians, pedagogues, psychologists, and poets had determined the matter of a woman's soul.” The assumption, it seems, was no longer that women's souls were inferior to men's. Instead, it was held “[t]hat woman had a soul ... *different* from man's, by virtue of its superior religious nature” (2). Yet the outcome was the same. Where women had been excluded from political life on the grounds of moral inferiority, they were now excluded on the grounds of moral delicacy.

²⁰As a result of Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness, Fox suggests, the term soul suffered a general displacement in the course of the eighteenth century (*Psychology* 1-19).

²¹Carolyn Williams provides a good discussion of the influence that Aristotle's views on the sexes continued to have in eighteenth-century Great Britain, and of the effect that this legacy had on classically educated eighteenth-century bluestockings.

²²In the twentieth century, Locke's emphasis on the rational character of consciousness has been criticized by some feminist philosophers as a reflection of “masculine” gender-bias, elevating “reason and objectivity ... gendered concepts associated with maleness or with men” (Antony and Witt xv) above emotion and intuition, and as an attempt to exclude women from the definition of personhood. It must be noted that despite his reputation as a proponent of philosophical rationalism, a little later in the chapter “Of Identity and Diversity” Locke shifts his focus away from reason in his definition of the self as “a conscious thinking thing ... sensible, or conscious of Pleasure and Pain, capable of Happiness or Misery, and ... concern'd for it *self*, as far as that consciousness extends” (2.27.17). In his view, consciousness unites not only thoughts and actions, but also sensations and emotions. From

this it appears that men and women are both equally rational and emotional, though perhaps the degree that they manifest either reason and emotion depends on their upbringing and experience.

²³Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace claims that for Locke “the mother’s role is purely ancillary” (19). In her view, the Lockean paradigm consequently inhibits the female child’s psychological development, since it encourages her to identify with the father, and to internalize paternal authority as part of the superego. In my view, it is somewhat difficult to evaluate Locke’s views concerning the relative contributions of each parent to the education of their children. In *Some Thoughts*, there are more references to the father’s role in education than to the mother’s, but the book is written as a manual of advice to a father. Some of the subjects Locke assumes that the mother might teach her children suggest that he sees women just as heavily involved in the process of education as men. Locke specifically mentions the methods by which a mother might teach her son Latin, declaring “if she will but spend two or three hours in a day with him, and make him read the Evangelists in *Latin* to her” (177: 234), he will learn Latin with amazing efficiency. It is true that Locke sometimes seems to assume that mothers will instruct children during the earliest years, and fathers during adolescence. Yet it is important to remember that Locke also sees the earliest years as the most important in formative development, and requiring the most careful management.

²⁴As such, I would qualify Alice Browne’s argument in *The Eighteenth-Century Feminist Mind*. Based on her researches, Browne identifies two major schools of eighteenth-century feminist thought, the first of which she traces to Locke, and the second to Rousseau. According to Browne, the first school saw no fundamental difference between men and

women, and advocated the same education for women as for men, similar legal and property rights, and the same standard of sexual morality. The other “emphasize[ed] women's difference from men, and their specifically feminine needs and experiences” (7), proposing that “women should have a more important role in society because of their difference from men and the unique importance of their role as mothers” (5). The one posited an androgynous ideal for women to aspire towards -- it encouraged women to become more like the way in which men had been traditionally perceived. The other posited a feminine ideal for women to develop -- it recognized the validity of female roles and experience and considered the feminine ideal as a cornerstone of society. In Browne's view, each school suffered from specific limitations. The first school could “present[] women as slightly weaker, inferior men, with no distinguishing characteristics of their own” (111). It could associate feminine with weakness, and devalue the whole history of women's experience. The second school could grant women value “only for their difference from men and their usefulness to men and children” (5). I would argue that Locke's theory of self-in-consciousness offered a means of mediating the problems facing eighteenth-century feminists in aspiring to be more like men without renouncing their femininity.

²⁵At one time Masham and Locke had carried out a flirtatious correspondence together. Masham remained Locke's friend and supporter throughout his life. Locke spent the last days of his life in the care of her and her husband.

²⁶The line of Cockburn's thought in *A Defence of Mr. Locke's "Essay of Human Understanding"* closely follows Locke's, and was actually mistaken as his. After asserting that the nature of immaterial substance is beyond the scope of human knowledge, she

announces that it is her aim to show that the immortality of the soul is not certain, but only “highly probable.” In her view, we accept it as a matter of revelation. Like Locke, she denies that the soul always thinks, and questions the capacity of the soul to serve as a foundation for a theory of personal identity. This leads her to affirm Locke's theory of personal identity, which she summarizes as follows:

Personal identity, according to him, consisting in the *same consciousness*, and not in the same *substance*: for whatever substance there is, without *consciousness* there is no *person*. *Consciousness* therefore, and not *substance*, making a *person*, the same consciousness must make the same person, whether in the same, or in different substances; and no farther than the same consciousness extends, can there be the same person: but wherever there are *two distinct incommunicable consciousnesses*, there are two distinct *persons*, though in the same substance. (Atherton 132)

²⁷I use the term early modern feminism loosely to designate a line of thought emerging in the seventeenth century and developing in the eighteenth that expressed dissatisfaction with male misogyny and sought to improve women's position in society, however it was imagined that might be accomplished. In the construction of the following argument, I am aware of Claire Grogan's charge “that the desire (and apparent ability) to create a common ground between politically opposing positions over-simplifies and misrepresents the sophistication of the views actually presented” (99). I do not agree with the argument that the acknowledgement of some “common ground” necessarily ignores the existence of difference. Nor do I agree with her assessment that Hannah More is not a feminist, which, to my mind,

oversimplifies definitions of feminism.

²⁸In his contribution to the growth of early modern feminism, Locke was partly following the lead of Descartes. According to Dale Spender, the “Cartesian philosophy fostered an introspective psychology, a radical consciousness of self -- important to the growth of feminism -- by its insistence on the thinking *I* as the touchstone to *experience* all knowledge and even of existence” (33). By shifting the basis of knowledge away from established sources of authority towards individual consciousness, Descartes invited early feminists to disclaim traditional arguments concerning women's intellectual inferiority. The Cartesian *cogito*, as Lockean consciousness, assumes a universally accessible method of reasoning. This faith in a universally accessible method of reasoning, as Genevieve Lloyd has argued, “was in many ways egalitarian in intent” (53), though she has also claimed, with Susan Bordo, that the categories of thought laid down under his influence were later directed to the subordination of women. Descartes' egalitarian aims were signaled indirectly in his practice of writing in the vernacular, and in his correspondence with women, including Anna van Schurman. Louise M. Antony and Charlotte Witt emphasize the debt of eighteenth-century feminists Mary Astell and Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham to Cartesianism, which they saw as an assertion of the equal intellectual capacity of the sexes, and thus, of their equal rights to education. Descartes' *cogito* encouraged female (as well as male) autonomy by shifting the basis of knowledge towards the individual and away from established sources of authority.

Another important influence on the early modern feminists were the Cambridge Platonists, and their emphasis on the importance of reason in achieving a right understanding

of God. Though Astell accepts what Locke says concerning the limitations of human knowledge, and his account of the acquisition of simple ideas and judgement, she has trouble rejecting the doctrine of innate ideas. Nevertheless, her feminist writings are thoroughly permeated by Locke. If he was building on the legacy of Descartes, Locke argued the case for women's rationality more plainly than his predecessor did, and more actively encouraged women to exert the faculties of reason and reflection. In his strong emphasis on the importance of experience, Locke also marks a significant advance on Descartes from the perspective of the early modern feminists. Unlike Descartes, too, he pursued some of the political, and more specifically, the feminist implications, of his philosophy in his political writings. While not all of the early modern feminists were Whigs (Astell certainly was not) Locke's political writings provided useful hints of the practical applications of his philosophy. In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne K. Mellor has already traced an eighteenth-century feminist movement through Astell, Macaulay, Wollstonecraft, and the eighteenth-century bluestockings, which she associates with the Enlightenment ideals of Voltaire and Diderot, who defended the rational capacity of women, and condemned society for failing to educate them and encouraging them in mental weakness, though of course both of these writers were heavily indebted to Locke. Indeed, as noted already, Voltaire was largely responsible for popularizing Locke's theory of personal identity on the continent.

²⁹ The most important early modern feminist writings include Lady Masham's *Occasional Thoughts in Reference to a Virtuous Christian Life* (1705), Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1696) and *Some Reflections upon Marriage* (1700); the anonymous *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*

.... *In a Letter to a Lady by a Lady* (1696); Marissa, Lady Chudleigh's poem *The Ladies' Defence* (1701) and *Essay on Knowledge* (1710); the "Sophia Pamphlets" (1739-40): *Woman not inferior to Man: or a short and modest vindication of the natural right of the fair sex to a perfect equality of power, dignity and esteem with men. By Sophia a person of Quality, and Woman's superior excellence over Man or a reply to the author of a late treatise entitled Man superior to Woman. In which the excessive weakness of that Gentleman's answer to Woman not inferior to Man is exposed*, which were collected and published as *Beauty's Triumph* (1757); Catherine Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792); Mary Hays' *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (1793); the anonymous *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798); Priscilla Wakefield's *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (1798); Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799); as well as Mary Robinson's *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799).

³⁰We have illustration of Locke's own appreciation for the capacities of the female intellect in his opinion of Lady Masham and Cockburn. Of Lady Masham, he writes,

The Lady herself is so well versed in theological and philosophical studies and of such an original mind that you will not find many men to whom she is not superior in wealth of knowledge and ability to profit by it. Her judgement is excellent, I know few who can bring such clearness of thought to bear upon the most abstruse subjects, or such capacity for searching through and solving the difficulties. I do not say of most women, but even of most learned men.

(Atherton 101-02)

In a letter to Cockburn, thanking her for the *Defence*, he declares “that as the rest of the world takes notice of the strength and clearness of your reasoning, so I cannot but be extremely sensible it was employed in my defence” (Hays 409).

³¹There had already been some discussion of female education in seventeenth-century Great Britain, including, notably, Bathsua Makin's *An essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Arts, and Tongues, with an Answer to the objections against this way of Education* (1673), and George Hickeys' *A Sermon Preached at the Church of St. Bridget, on East, Tuesday, being the first of April, 1684. Before the Right Honourable Sir Henry Tule, Lord Mayor of London and Honourable of Alderman, Together with the Governors of the Hospital, upon the Subject of Alms-giving*, and Clement Bairnsdale's *A Letter touching a College of Maids or a Virgin Society* (1675). Also known in Great Britain were Anna Maria van Schulman's *De in genii mulierbris ad doctrinam et meliores litteras aptitudine* (1641), translated in English, probably by Bairnsdale as *The Learned Maid, or Whether a maid may be a Scholar* (1659), Poulain de Barre's *De l'Égalité des deux Sexes* (1673), which though possibly intended simply as a rhetorical exercise was taken seriously in the translation into English by A. L.: *The Woman as Good as the Man, or the Equality of Both Sexes* (1677), François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon's *Traité de l'éducation des filles* (1687), translated into English and adapted to the situation in Great Britain by Hickeys in 1707. As such, it appears that Locke was part of a large-scale shift in attitudes towards women. There is a significant change, however, in the kinds of proposals offered for female education before and after the publication of Locke's writings. For all her fame as linguist and

tutor for Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, Bathsua Makin placed primary emphasis on the acquisition of ornamental accomplishments such as dancing, singing, and music, intended to show women off to advantage in company, and housewifely skills such as needlework, suggesting that a small number of women might also want to pursue academic subjects. Astell's proposal for a religious college, formulated only a few decades later, offered a far more rigorous and ambitious program. In her view, women should follow a curriculum similar to that of men. Among the earlier writers there were also some like Fénelon who regarded the female mind as improvable, but still inferior to the male. Fénelon's proposed curriculum was serious, but rather narrow.

³²As a result of the influence of Puritanism a number of religious thinkers put forth arguments of spiritual androgyny, though on Biblical rather than philosophical grounds. Margaret Fell, for example, contended that since Christ is our model, and he was born of woman and unites male and female principles, our souls too unite both of these principles. According to Davidoff and Hall, Puritanism had a significant long-term effect "on the relative place of men and women in the church." While it rejected radical change in social arrangements between the sexes, "there remained a belief in individual freedom of conscience and a commitment to spiritual equality, that men and women were 'all one in Christ Jesus.'" The most radical were sects such as the Quakers, the Ranters, and the Diggers, who actually had women preachers. But Puritanism generally "endowed women with a strong sense of self, a belief in their individual responsibility for their own souls, which could inspire action among the weakest" (117).

³³While learned women continued to be singled out for attack in eighteenth-century

anti-feminist literature -- a source of ongoing complaint in early modern feminist literature -- they also had increasing numbers of male supporters. *A Dialogue concerning Women, Being a Defence of the Sex, Written to Eugenia by W. Walsh* (1691); Charles L. Gildon's two letters, "Chloe to Urania, against Womens being Learn'd" and "An Answer to the foregoing Letter in Defence of Womens being Learn'd" (1694); John Dunton's *The Ladies Dictionary; Being a General Entertainment for the Fair-Sex* (1694); *The Guardian* no. 155 (1713), Addison and Steele's *The Ladies Library* (1714), which included excerpts from Astell's *Serious Proposal* and Locke's *Some Thoughts*. Myra Reynolds comments that "There was nothing in the quotations to antagonize or terrify the most conservative religious readers, yet the total effect of the book would be a recognition of woman's ability to think on important and difficult questions, and the outcome would be to give her insensibly a more honorable place in home, social, and church life" (333).

³⁴As one who supports absolute sovereignty in the state and the family, Astell insists that a wife "Elects a Monarch for Life" and "gives him an Authority she cannot recall however he misapply it" (103). She states unequivocally that a woman "who Marrys ought to lay it down for an indisputable Maxim that her Husband must govern absolutely and intirely, and that she has nothing else to do but to Please and Obey" (116). It is this conservative premise that leads her to offer the radical advice that women not get married at all.

³⁵Without ignoring the real dangers or difficulties posed by motherhood, due to the relatively backward state of obstetrics, and the consequently high rate of death from complications during pregnancy and during and after childbirth, Vickery points out that "[a]s the mother who determined to *be* a mother gained in romantic profile, so fashionable

maternalism presented fresh rhetorical opportunities. Feminists exploited the discourse of maternity for political ends” (94). She notes that the eighteenth century saw the introduction of legislation that recognized women's claims as mothers.

³⁶Throughout the eighteenth century there continued to be a certain amount of debate over the value of imaginative literature. It has been accepted that the eighteenth century saw a tendency to denigrate imaginative literature, as it was increasingly relegated to the province of feeling as opposed to that of rational truth. Yet there were many eighteenth-century literary theorists who made sweeping claims on behalf of imaginative literature. In *The Grounds of Criticism* (1704), John Dennis argues that poetry is “the noblest of all arts” and “one by consequence the most instructive and most beneficial to mankind,” appealing to the “testimony of the greatest men who have lived in every age” for having “unanimously cherished, esteemed, and admired it.” In his view, poetry “comprehends the force of all the arts of logic, of ethics, of eloquence, of painting, of music” (Elledge 1: 100). In the preface to *Winter* (1726), James Thomson praises poetry as “a divine art.” He expresses the hope that poetry will be “once more restored to her ancient truth and purity,” asserting that “then of necessity the most inveterate ignorance and prejudice shall be struck dumb, and poets yet become the delight of mankind,” as poetry is made “fair, useful, and magnificent” (Elledge 1: 407). Samuel Johnson provides some of the most rousing eighteenth-century statements concerning the importance of poetry. Perhaps the most famous is assigned to Imlac, the royal poet and advisor in *Rasselas* (1759) who regards the poet “as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind ... presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations” (62).

³⁷Other attempts by women writers to reconcile their literary and domestic activities appear in the number of cookbooks, books on housekeeping, and manuals on midwifery they produced. While from 1650 to 1760 the majority of such books were still written by men, women contributed an increasingly significant proportion. Popular female contributors to this field include Hannah Woolley, Hannah Glasse, and Jane Sharp. The attempts by male writers to encroach into the sphere of domestic activity, offering women advice upon the management of household affairs and the raising of children might be seen as an indirect sign of the new opportunities for women as wives and mothers.

³⁸Other arguments I have considered include that of Gordon Schochet, who argues that Locke “left women pretty much as he had found them in Stuart society, but through a shift in the focus of politics from the patriarchal *father* to the rational, rights-bearing *individual* -- who remained an adult male -- Locke created the theoretical possibility of full political membership for women” (221).

Chapter 2

¹It is possible that there were other references to the debate over personal identity in Barbauld's correspondence. A good deal of it was lost in the bombing of London during World War Two.

²Hymns I-V were first published in William Enfield's *Hymns for Public Worship* (1772).

³The limits of human knowledge is a general theme of Barbauld's early religious

poetry, iterated most forcefully in "The Epiphany" (c.1772; 1825), a retelling of the story of the three wise men. "The Epiphany" offers Barbauld's earliest exploration of the distinction between faith and knowledge. At the beginning of the poem, the three wise men have achieved the height of human knowledge, but still "mourn[] the narrow bounds assigned/ To the keen glances of the searching mind" (24-25). They only find satisfaction with the coming of Christ, and the addition of faith to knowledge. The same theme also comes up in Barbauld's correspondence. In a letter to Hannah More from Hampstead, 1799, Barbauld laments "the weakness and imperfection of human reason" (2.45), which is the cause of so much human misunderstanding and conflict.

⁴The poet of "A Summer Evening's Meditation" significantly seems to see signs of revelation in nature. The comparison of the stars to lamps indirectly evokes the parable of the ten virgins: "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to the ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps" (Matthew 25: 1).

⁵There are indirect signs of a continuity in the line of Barbauld's thought from "Address to the Deity" through "A Summer Evening's Meditation" to "Thoughts on the Devotional Taste." That "A Summer Evening's Meditation" is on her mind when she writes "Thoughts on the Devotional Taste" is evident from the passage where she describes growing giddy at the prospect of "the numerous productions of this earth," and at "the magnificent profusion of suns and systems which astronomy pours upon the mind ... when we trace the footsteps of creative energy through regions of unmeasured space [so that] we think it almost

impiety for a worm to lift its head from the dust, and address the Lord of so stupendous a universe.” (2: 237-38). The specific allusion to the worm echoes lines 7-8 in “Address to the Deity:” “Worms, angels, men, in every different sphere/ Are equal all, for all are nothing here.”

⁶There is an element of paradox in Barbauld's warnings, of course, since it is her own “sceptical turn of mind:” her doubt concerning the attainability of the truth that makes her especially alert to the dangers of falling into scepticism. What separates Barbauld from the sceptics is that she regards the limits of human knowledge not as grounds for questioning “established truths,” but for reaffirming faith through devotion. Her scepticism constitutes a form of Christian humility.

⁷According to R. K. Webb,

James Martineau [1805-1900] made much of this exchange [between Barbauld and Priestley] and characterised it admirably: in it a passion for the sublime and the beautiful confronted a passion for the truth; an attitude that saw some elements of adoration in all creeds came up against one that saw creeds as mostly error; the language of art was incompatible with a worship that would transcend the physical to attain 'the simplicity of a spirit in space'. (Webb 301)

In some respects, however, Martineau's characterization is misleading, since it suggests that Barbauld lacked a “passion for the truth.” This is not *exactly* right. The source of Barbauld and Priestley's disagreement is not fundamentally a conflict between the sublime and the beautiful on the one hand, and the truth on the other. Rather, it stems from an essentially different assessment of the limits of human knowledge.

⁸In *Misogynous Economies: The Business of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1999), Laura Mandell argues “that, because of her particular religious beliefs, Barbauld is able to reject the melancholy affect, the aggressive individualism, and the disgust with women's bodies that produce a Romantic reverence for male-authored texts” (130). According to her, it is Barbauld's “vision of God as overturning all hierarchies, and her fantasy that spirit is not distinct from matter but rather matter refined, that enables Barbauld to establish herself as simultaneously female and transcendent and thereby to assume an authoritative poetic voice” (132). Though I find Mandell's thesis concerning Barbauld compelling and in many respects persuasive, I would question her label of Barbauld as a materialist.

⁹While Barbauld's position on faith and knowledge separates her from her co-religionists, it was more the norm than the exception for the period -- a testimony to Locke's widespread influence. From the period between 1740 and 1780, as Hoxie Fairchild notes, “[t]he decline in theological speculation is marked” (10), and “orthodox apologists ... grow increasingly willing to admit that Christianity is indeed 'not founded on argument' and that its claims are derived from higher sources than either rationalism or empiricism can provide” (11). There is a gradually increasing conviction that in spiritual matters it is not reason upon which we must rely. Joseph Butler was the last great Christian apologist to emphasize the importance of abstract reason as a foundation for religion. When Soame Jenyns sought to defend Christianity in *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1757), he concluded that revelation must be accepted on faith, rather than as evidence for faith. Alternatively, William Paley, in *Evidences of Christianity* (1794) and *Natural Theology*

(1802), discovered the strongest basis for religion in the accumulation of teleological evidence.

¹⁰The name of the boy in the two dialogues is suggestive. Charles was the name of Barbauld's nephew, whom she and her husband adopted a few years after they were married. It is tempting to speculate that the dialogues record part of the family debate on the subject of personal identity, although it is unclear whether the father in the dialogue is meant to represent Charles's biological father, John Aikin, or his adopted father, Rochemont Barbauld.

¹¹Lucy Aikin's memoir of her aunt at the beginning of *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld* attributes the following pieces in *Evenings at Home* to Barbauld: "The Young Mouse;" "The Wasp and Bee;" "Alfred, a drama;" "Animals and Countries;" "Canute's Reproof;" "The Masque of Nature;" "Things by their right Names;" "The Goose and Horse;" "On Manufactures;" "The Flying-fish;" "A Lesson in the Art of Distinguishing;" "The Phoenix and Dove;" "The Manufacture of Paper;" "The Four Sisters;" and "Live Dolls" (1: xxix).

¹²Until the end of her life, Barbauld remains capable of conceiving the mind as not merely connected to but actually interchangeable with the soul, according to the orthodox Christian view. Writing from Stoke Newington, December 8, 1818 to her friend Susannah Taylor, Barbauld offers some playful advice, urging her to remember that the self is not mind only, but a compound of mind and body:

Among other things, we say that you must not let *mind* wear out *body*, which I suspect you are little inclined to do. Mind is often very hard upon his humble yoke fellow, sometimes speaking contemptuously of her, as being of a low, mean family, in comparison with himself; often abridging her food or natural

rest for his whims. Many a headache has he given her, when, but for him, she would be quietly resting in her bed. Sometimes he fancies that she hangs a dead weight upon him, and impedes all his motions; yet it is well known that, though he gives himself such airs or superiority, he can in fact do nothing without her; and since, however they came together, they are united for better for worse, it is for his interest as well as hers she should be nursed and cherished and taken care of. (2: 304)

One of Barbauld's very last surviving poems, "To ***** Occasioned by his Poem on the Sun" (n.d. 1825), again conceives of the mind as interchangeable with the soul:

When gems grow pale, and roses droop,
 And sickening suns expire, --
 The mind, a ray from heaven, shall live,
 And mix with heavenly fire. (17-20)

¹³Priestley insists that the theory of a single substance only appears counter-intuitive if we think of material substance as solid and impermeable. In his view, material substance, far from being solid and impermeable, is perfectly capable of interfusing with spirit.

¹⁴Barbauld thus glosses over what had historically been a subject of significant metaphysical debate. During the Middle Ages, there emerged two distinct views concerning the fate of the body after death: some believed that the same body we possessed on earth was resurrected in heaven, while others believed that the body was reconstituted at the resurrection. As far as Barbauld is concerned, there is no real debate. Her interest is in what happens to life, not to the body, in the process of death. Barbauld's late poem, "The Wake of

the King of Spain,” indirectly picks of this point with its striking description of the Spanish court's macabre and misguided focus on material substance, as they continue to dress the king's body and reenact the same rituals they performed during as life for a nine days after his death.

Chapter 3

¹It appears, from this, that an endorsement of Locke's theory of personal identity need not imply a view of the individual as utterly passive. This is perhaps a misconception that has arisen out of subsequent interpretations, including those of some of the male Romantics. While Locke's theory of personal identity acknowledges a certain degree of passivity, it fully allows for the possibility of individual responsibility and initiative.

²Barbauld exploits the image of the mind as a *tabula rasa* for poetic inspiration throughout her literary career. A late poem, “Lines written in a young Lady's Album of different-coloured Paper” (n.d.; 1825), invokes the notion of the *tabula rasa* in the metaphorical contrast between “the white page of innocence and youth” (10) and the album of “varied leaves” that provides a more appropriate analogy for the “chequered scenes” (1) encountered by the time we reach maturity.

³The text for the *Hymns in Prose* is taken from *A Legacy for Young Ladies*, ed. Lucy Aikin (Boston: David Reed, 1826).

⁴With their history of non-conformity, the Aikin family had suffered directly as a result of the Act of Uniformity, which dispossessed all non-conforming members of the clergy and

refused them the right to preach or to teach publicly or privately, except with a grant of permission from the local bishop, as well as the Corporation and Test Acts, which decreed that all government officials, including local officials, must accept the Sacrament in accordance with the rules set out by the Church of England. Nevertheless, Barbauld's concern to promote religious toleration extended well beyond the interests of her own particular denomination. While she lived at Stoke Newington, for example, Barbauld established a local book club for ladies, which she convinced to admit some Jewish members.

⁵Locke goes so far as to assert his belief that individuals would not be held accountable in heaven for actions they could not remember committing on earth. Such a view conflicts directly with the opinion of those such as Isaac Watts (1674-1748), who upheld the notion of the substantial self, insisting that a person is “one intelligent substance, which is always the same, whether it be or be not conscious ... of its own actions in different times and places” (626). In blatant contradiction to Locke, Watts argues the fitness of hanging a man for murder whether he remembers having committed the act or not. Others who witness the crime, he claims, “know his body to be the same; and they justly infer his soul must be the same also, whatsoever ... [the perpetrator's] distraction might dictate concerning himself” (627-28).

I have wondered whether Barbauld's experience with her husband's recurring episodes of madness might have given her a special interest in the debate over personal identity. Rochemont's condition deteriorated completely in later life. He made two attempts on her life, forcing her to consent to a separation. He was apparently so unhappy without her that he committed suicide soon afterwards.

⁶There is, incidentally, a good possibility that Blake and Barbauld knew each other through Joseph Johnson's circle. Blake was working for Johnson during the time when Barbauld was often met with fellow radical Unitarian Dissenters at Johnson's house, and Blake was likely introduced to the members of the circle and included in their discussions, all of which Peter Ackroyd discusses in his recent biography of Blake.

⁷Barbauld's writings reveal a recurring concern with what she saw as an increasingly prevalent trend towards materialism. In "The Times. *Tempore Georgii IIIi*," the poet identifies materialism as a form of tyranny, which is most difficult to eradicate since it inhabits not one, but every breast. "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade (1791; 1791)," and "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven" (1811; 1812) both mourn the injustices that have resulted from national greed. *Sins of the Government* denounces the "thirst of gain" (2: 385) and "selfish monopolizing spirit" (398) that prevails in Great Britain, while another prose piece, "Dialogue in the Shades" (1798) extends its criticism to Europe as a whole, criticizing the current worship of Mars and Mercury, "god of wealth and frauds." Barbauld's writings also reflect a specific awareness of the social problems produced by capitalism. "On the Deserted Village" (c. 1770; 1825) offers a tribute to Oliver Goldsmith's poem "The Deserted Village" (1770), which addresses the effects of the growth of capitalism and trend towards urbanization in widening the gap between the rich and the poor. While consistently promoting capitalist values such as ingenuity, industry, and self-reliance, both Barbauld and John Aikin advocated a regulated system of relief for the poor. Barbauld also shows a sensitivity to the alienating effects of labour under capitalism, recognizing the rote nature of work in a manufacture. In "On

Manufactures,” she argues that the product of a single genius will always be of a “nobler ... higher species” than the product of manufacture.

⁸In these terms, I would qualify Carol Shiner Wilson's judgement that Barbauld precludes the possibility for a change to the established hierarchy. Wilson's article “Stitchery, Domesticity, and the Artistic Enterprises” underscores Barbauld's statement in “Against Inconsistency in Our Expectations” that we live in a system with “laws as determined, fixed and invariable, as any of Newton's *Principia*” (192). While I would agree that Barbauld advocates a certain degree of stoical resignation in circumstances which are unchangeable, I do not think she rules out the possibility for change altogether, or that she considers the system as rigid as this statement might suggest.

⁹Barbauld speaks of the effacement of differences between members of different classes in much more in positive terms in the preface to *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, and Freeholder, with a Preliminary Essay* (1805) than in “Against Inconsistency,” reflecting perhaps the effects of her engagement in various liberal causes during the 1790s. In the preface to the *Selections*, she writes that: “There was more separation than at present between the different classes of society, and each was more strongly marked with the peculiarities of his profession ... Genius had already attained its perfection, but the reign of taste may be said to have commenced with Addison” (191), going on to praise Addison for his contribution to this phenomenon through the instruction he provided.

¹⁰In her correspondence, Barbauld is not whole-hearted in her endorsement of the current rage for ploughmen turned poets, suspecting it to be a bit of a fad. She records the story of a subscription raised for a pipe-maker discovered to have poetic talent whom she

predicts will in a little while be forgotten.

¹¹Barbauld is capable occasionally of expressing a little disapproval concerning the widespread upward mobility during the eighteenth century, speaking of Richardson's friend Lady Bradshaigh and her husband, whom, we are told, "lived in what was called the true English stile of country gentry, before the villa of the manufacturer had eclipsed, by its ephemeral splendor, the paternal seat of the hereditary landholder" (cciii).

¹²Critics have indirectly pointed to the tension in Barbauld's political ideology. Grace A. Ellis describes Barbauld as "[a] firm believer in the march of intellect, the growth of liberal political and religious views, the progress and improvement of humanity everywhere," insisting that "she never hesitated to speak for the oppressed and unfortunate" (1: 181). More recently, Isaac Kramnick has named Barbauld "perhaps the most important woman radical in the 1790s" (33) with the exception of Mary Wollstonecraft, while Mitzi Myers has credited Barbauld with consistently working towards the "advance [of] social betterment" ("Impeccable" 271). Rod McGillis writes that Barbauld's "world ... is a democratic world" (164). At the same time, others have emphasized the moderation of Barbauld and her brother's liberal ideals. According to Betsy Rodgers, the Dissenters were, in general, "loyal to the House of Hanover, and they were less extreme in their ideas than the little clique of aristocratic Whigs ... who formed the club, The Friends of the People, and they were more moderate and scrupulous than their Parliamentary leader, Charles James Fox" (114).

¹Myra Reynolds, Miriam Leranbaum, Marilyn Williamson, and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace all consider Barbauld regressive in her attitudes towards the sexes. Lynne Agress includes Barbauld among the female critics who “discriminated against [their] own sex” (110). While emphasizing Barbauld's friendships with other women writers, Catherine Moore observes of Barbauld that “her reputation today -- and in her time -- is not that of an ardent feminist.” “Although Mrs. Barbauld was occasionally grouped with feminists, even her political enemies knew better” (387-88). Marlon Ross identifies Barbauld's writing as constrained by the “limits” of her “feminism,” arguing that “a woman who cannot grant women absolute equal rights with men also cannot grant them the right to write freely from the dictates of their own desire” (216-17). Alice Browne accuses Barbauld of advocating education only for exceptional women, which she suggests indirectly justifies the complacency of anti-feminists who deny the need for social change. G. J. Barker-Benfield contrasts Barbauld unfavourably with Wollstonecraft in her attitudes towards women.

Yet Anne Mellor, in *Romanticism and Gender* (1993), identifies Barbauld, along with Wollstonecraft, as part of an eighteenth-century enlightenment feminist movement advocating gradual reform of sexual relations on the basis of a new recognition of women's role as a rational companion and mother, and elevating values traditionally associated with female experience. Stuart Curran associates Barbauld with the bluestocking women, who “set themselves no intellectual limitations,” as “they debated moral questions, translated the classics, engaged in influential literary criticism” (“Women” 100), as well as with Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams. In their recent edition of Barbauld's poems, William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft note that while Barbauld is “not generally recognized

as an important forerunner of women's rights in the way that Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft are, she often voiced her belief in freedom of conscience, which is, after all, the genesis of all social reform; and she certainly demonstrated her own willingness to give full rein to an unshackled imagination" (xxiii). In his article, "We Hoped the *Woman* was Going to Appear": Repression, Desire, and Gender in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's Early Poems," McCarthy takes issue with Ross' assessment of Barbauld's poetry, stating that Barbauld's female contemporaries saw her as "a woman speaking to women," and her "texts as signs of female desire." In reply to commentators who have pronounced Barbauld and her poems as "disappointingly unfeminist," he argues that Barbauld's poetry "align[s] itself with a particular brand of eighteenth century feminism" going back to Astell and her call for women "to be free if not in the world in ... [their] own bosoms" (115). He defends Barbauld from those who accuse of her being unfeminist with the assertion that she "in at least one important respect, a feminist," since "[i]n a culture that imposes upon women a narrow range of permissible desires and limited means of expressing them, to insist on asserting desire may be, ipso facto, a feminist act" (126).

Mitzi Myers and Sylvia Myers take the middle ground. Mitzi Myers distinguishes Barbauld from the radicals on the one hand, and the conservatives on the other with the label of a "moderate" ("Reform" 201), while Sylvia Myers claims that the Barbauld, like the bluestockings, displays a partially developed "feminist consciousness." At the end of the nineteenth century, Eric S. Robinson identifies Barbauld, with the bluestockings, as aiming to increase recognition of the "value of their sex," without losing sight of women's domestic function, asking only that women "should be made worthier helpmeets for mankind, by being

esteemed capable of higher life” (77).

²There are instances in Barbauld's early correspondence where she explicitly challenges suggestions of female moral inferiority. “It is not true,” Barbauld asserts in a letter from London, 1771, “what Dr. Fordyce insinuates, that women's friendships are not sincere; I am sure it is not: I remember when I read it I had a good mind to have burnt the book for that unkind passage” (2: 59).

³Barbauld's inclusion of women among her “Characters” is in itself significant given popular eighteenth-century assumptions about women. The “Characters” might be seen specifically to challenge Pope's “vision of woman as an ephemeral, mercurial, and therefore characterless being” (Setzer 506), expressed most succinctly in the lines “women have no character at all” (2) from the *Characters of Women* (1731). Though the “Characters” never directly address the debate over personal identity they might be taken as a collective expression of Barbauld's anxiety over the malleability of the Lockean self, and her awareness of the necessity of a principle to regulate moral and intellectual development, which she shared with other eighteenth-century women writers.

⁴The only favourable characterization of an unmarried woman in all of Barbauld's writings occurs in “Live Dolls,” a contribution to *Evenings at Home*. It is significant that Mrs. Dorcas achieves fulfilment in acting as a surrogate mother for her niece Eliza, compensating for the lack of guidance Eliza has received from her own mother. After her husband's death, Barbauld demonstrated a new appreciation of single female existence. Recording a visit to Hannah More in a letter from Stoke Newington, October 16, 1812, she observes that “[i]t is somewhat remarkable that she & her four sisters have lived together for

fifty years without separation by either death or marriage; in single blessedness” (Scott 74-75).

⁵Eric S. Robinson suggests that Barbauld's mother was mostly interested in the possible threat to sexual propriety. He attributes to Barbauld's mother the declaration “that a girl brought up in a boy's school had no alternative between becoming a prude or degenerating into a hoyden,” which led her to conclude that “her daughter had better be too shy than too bold” (78). It probably did not help that female intellectual activity remained at that time intimately associated with sexual impropriety.

⁶The description of Rochemont in the *Monthly Repository* incidentally demonstrates the same balance of head and heart as the descriptions in Barbauld's male and female “Characters.” Rochemont emerges as at once highly rational, and highly sympathetic, possessing an “exquisite sensibility” that gives him wonderful taste in literature.

⁷Barbauld's opposition to “masculine” heroism only deepened as she grew older. After reading Jean Froissart's chronicles celebrating the chivalric exploits of the French and English noblemen in the campaigns of Edward III, Barbauld records in a letter from 1806, “I feel ashamed at my heart having ever beat with pleasure at the names of Cressy and Poitiers,” revolted by the instances of barbarity casually passed over. In a letter from May, 1813, she dismisses male deeds of heroism, decrying war as inconsistent “with the spirit of the Gospel” (2: 108). Writing from Stoke Newington, June 1814, after England's great victory against Napoleon, she confesses that she “cannot ... fully rejoice in victory over Buonoparte” (140), since she is unable to erase the image of wasted human life and devastation. One of Barbauld's last poems, “Baby-House” (n.d.; 1825) reiterates the moral of “Written on a

Marble,” comparing the most famous public monuments: the Pyramids, and Versailles, to a girl's doll-house.

⁸Barbauld had already disparaged fashion in her correspondence from Palgrave. Writing to her brother on January 19, 1778, Barbauld expresses disappointment with Elizabeth Montagu's attempts to establish herself as “the queen of fashion and splendour,” commenting “I am afraid she will be full as much the woman of the world as the philosopher”(2: 19). This expression of disappointment effectively conveys her concern that fashion inevitably compromises a woman's intellectual reputation -- even if she is a woman of genius and cultivation. In a letter from November 11, 1777 to a female friend, Barbauld satirizes fashionable society in an allegory of Leisure and her daughter Ennui (2: 72-73).

⁹Certainly some male readers assumed that “Washing-Day” was intended as a celebration of female domestic activity. In his review of Wordsworth's *Poems in Two Volumes*, Lord Francis Jeffrey singles out “Washing Day” as one of his specific objects of attack, stating that “[a]ll the world laughs at Elegiac stanzas to a sucking pig ... A Hymn on Washing-day ... Sonnets to one's grandmother ... or Pindarics on gooseberry-pye” (218).

¹⁰Mona Wilson, in *Jane Austen and some Contemporaries*, makes this report of the reputation Barbauld earned for herself in her teaching of young women: “Mothers felt that a few weeks of Mrs. Barbauld's influence and example was the perfect completion of a daughter's education, and her approval an order to be proudly worn on confronting the world” (71).

¹¹There continue to be hints of Barbauld's efforts to set limits upon female education. To her praise of Richardson as “[a] friend to mental improvement in women” she adds the

qualifying phrase “though under all those restrictions which modesty and decorum have imposed upon the sex” (cxliii). Her comments on Nekayah, the heroine of Johnson's *Rasselas*, in the preface to that novel, are equally telling. Noticing that readers often have difficulty with the characterization of Nekayah as “more philosophical than her brother” (26: vi), she joins her own voice to the chorus, wondering what prompted this particular decision. Barbauld also tolerates Fielding's satirical attacks against women she regards as genuinely overstepping prescribed boundaries of female activity. Discussing a particular encounter between Squire Western and his sister, “a politician in petticoats” (18: xxii), in *Tom Jones*, she allows that “the cordial contempt shown for female pretensions on the one side, and country ignorance on the other, are highly amusing” (18: xxii).

¹²“A Dialogue of the Dead” significantly connects issues of class and gender, indirectly allying the emergence of a “companionate” conception of marriage with the beginning of an increasingly fluid social hierarchy. Helen holds up Madame de Maintenon as testimony to the opportunities suddenly available in society to improve one's condition. We discover that Madame de Maintenon raised herself “from obscurity and dependance to be the wife of a great monarch” (139) through “personal merit and charms” (140).

Chapter 5

¹In their classic feminist study *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar memorably describe the dominant model of creativity prevailing through the nineteenth century as that of the pen-penis on the virgin page. Both they and Fullard make the case that

poetry was a more intimidating form for women to attempt than the novel. Fullard claims that “the novel allows – even encourages – just the self-effacing withdrawal society has traditionally fostered in women,” while “the lyric poem is in some sense the utterance of a strong and assertive I” -- a suggestive, if over-generalized statement. That Barbauld is specifically disparaging of her verse provides some affirmation for the argument that poetry’s assertion of an “I” discouraged women from writing in this form.

²This is, of course, not to deny the significance of Barbauld’s gender in determining the character of her early writing. McCarthy himself, in his article “We Hoped the *Woman* was Going to Appear,” emphasizes the importance of Barbauld’s female perspective in determining the character of the *Poems*.

³According to Barbauld’s account, Burney wrote her first novel in secret, and “[w]ith the modesty of a young woman, and the diffidence of a young author, she contrived to throw it into the press anonymously.” After *Evelina* came out, its author “laid the volumes in the way of her friends, whose impartial plaudits soon encouraged her to confess to who they were obliged for their entertainment.” In this context, Barbauld attributes Burney’s reluctance to publish first of all to her sex, and then to her youth. In the next sentence, she significantly downplays the inhibiting effect of youth, remarking that “[t]here is perhaps no purer or higher pleasure than the young mind enjoys in the first burst of praise and admiration which attends a successful performance,” as the young author enjoys all the satisfaction and confidence, remaining “happily ignorant of all the chills and mortifications, the impossibility not to flag in a long work, the ridicule and censure which fasten on vulnerable parts, and the apathy or diffidence which generally seizes an author before his literary race is done” (38: ii). Barbauld

speaks of writing in the abstract, but reveals a close identification with Burney.

⁴Part of the conflict in Barbauld's writing between a desire to be ranked next to male contemporaries and a fear of violating prescribed gender categories might be traced to her Dissenting background. Marlon Ross argues that Dissent invited women to speak out on the subject of politics, since "women's political discourse ... occupies a position of dissent. Simply to speak about politics is to place oneself *against* the political establishment, where women's role is normatively defined solely by silent obeisance" ("Configurations" 93). However, as William Keach observes, Dissent taught Barbauld "to claim a critical freedom for herself that had to coexist both with intellectual and political solidarity and with the continuing relegation of women to the realm of nurturing domesticity" ("Barbauld" 50).

⁵Samuel Johnson identifies the emergence of loco-descriptive poetry out of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pastoral and Georgic traditions in his remarks on John Denham in the *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-80). He claims that Denham creates "a new scheme of poetry" with "the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation" (77). Some standard twentieth-century critical examinations of loco-descriptive poetry include Elizabeth Nitchie's *Virgil in the English Poets* and D. L. Durling's *Georgic Tradition in English Poetry*.

⁶Jean Hagstrum's *The Sister Arts, the Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* still provides the most comprehensive account of the origin and development of this notion during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

⁷In the preface to her edition of Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1795), Barbauld identifies one species of poetry that operates on slightly different principles.

In her view, “didactic,” or “preceptive” poetry, the aim of which is to provide information, appeals to the faculty of reason as opposed to the emotions. While demonstrating an appreciation for didactic poetry such as Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733-34) and Akenside's *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, she supports the general preference for poems “which are more peculiarly the work of imagination” (ii). In the preface to her edition of *The Odes of Collins* (1797) she makes a similar distinction between “pure Poetry, or Poetry in the abstract” from “didactic and dramatic compositions” (iv), her description of pure poetry reinforcing her preference for this kind of poetry over the didactic or preceptive kind.

⁸Kraft and McCarthy identify the allusion to Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* in their footnotes to the poem. They note Barbauld's conflation of the stories of two characters in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*: the story of Rinaldo, who witnesses a hundred and one trees each give birth to a beautiful woman, and the story of Tancred, who stabs a tree trunk, only to discover that there is a woman, Clorinda, imprisoned within.

⁹In raising the connection between fancy and women's “bounded sphere” “To Dr. Aikin” anticipates “Washing-Day.” As Kraft argues, “Washing-Day” is “about the way the creative imagination can flourish in a mundane setting” (8). Observing the common view among other critics of the poem that “there is no relationship between housework and the imagination; there is instead a choice of one or the other,” she argues that Barbauld shows “that there is a relationship, that the imagination can flourish amidst the ‘endless repetition’ of housework itself can be the scene of inspiration” (9). Significantly, it is also true in “Washing-Day” that fancy offers a potential escape from the sometimes oppressive domestic routine, and that the act of poetic composition appears as a direct alternative to the tasks

involved in running a household. Barbauld, it seems, continues to envision poetry as a means of transcending the “bounded sphere” without actually violating any boundaries.

¹⁰Locke himself fails to see the instructive value of poetry. In *Some Thoughts* he warns that a child should absolutely never be taught to write verse, “for if he has no genius for poetry, 'tis the most unreasonable thing in the world to torment a child and waste his time,” and “if he have a poetic vein, 'tis to me the strangest thing in the world that the father should desire or suffer it to be improved” (174: 230). Poetry is akin to gambling, he claims, in distracting men from useful callings, and taking away from their patrimony. Perhaps part of Locke's difficulty with poetry is precisely his recognition that it appeals to passion rather than to reason, arousing his concern that it might foster the association of ideas not naturally connected, though he seems at some points to recognize the possibility of exploiting the principle of associationism to benefit moral and intellectual development. In *Some Thoughts*, he indirectly advises parents to exploit the principle of associationism in learning where he tells them to reinforce lessons through habitual association and the judicious assignment of praise and blame, and to make the learning experience enjoyable.

While Barbauld evidently acknowledges that poetry appeals to passion rather than to reason, she also considers that in appealing to passion poetry could effectively teach, reinforcing the lessons established through reason. In “The Mouse's Petition,” she emphasizes the compatibility of feeling and reason, developing the ideal of “[t]he well taught philosophic mind” (25), which characteristically “[t]o all compassion gives;/ Casts round the world an equal eye,/ And feels for all that lives” (26-28). The strategy of the poem is a simultaneous appeal to reason, as the mouse sets out a series of rational arguments to urge its

freedom, and to feeling, as it attempts to win Priestley's. The poem successfully arouses Priestley's sympathy, significantly, by representing the mouse to him as a person in the Lockean sense. The poem endows the mouse with consciousness by adopting the first-person perspective of the mouse, who petitions her friend directly. The method of first person narration is particularly effective in endowing the mouse with consciousness (and therein personal identity), since it allows the poet to trace the thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of the mouse in a natural way. It is precisely this I would argue that motivates the poet's decision to speak from the perspective of the mouse, rather than attempting to plead the cause of the mouse directly.

¹¹Nevertheless, as Germaine Greer among others has discussed, the figure of the Muse offered the female poet a problematic model of poetic composition. It merely served to remind the female poet of the unconventionality of her status, and the possible transgression involved for her in the act of writing. The figure of the Muse was a reminder of women's traditional position as the object rather than the subject in poetry. Although the male poet invoked the Muse as a source of inspiration to speak, the Muse herself remained passive and silent. The figure of the Sibyl, which Barbauld invokes in "The Groans of the Tankard," offered no more inviting a model of poetic composition. While the Sibyl speaks, it is not her voice. She is spoken through by the male deity.

¹²In emphasizing the importance of examples in literature, Barbauld and her brother also betray the influence of Locke. In *Some Thoughts*, Locke identifies two main methods of cultivating the faculties of reason and reflection: by precept and by example. Of the two, he regards example as the most effective. "But of all the Ways whereby Children are to be

instructed,” he writes,

and their Manners formed, the plainest, easiest, and most efficaceous, is to set before their Eyes the *Examples* of those Things you would have them do, or avoid. Which, when they are pointed out to them, in the Practice of Persons within their Knowledge, with some Reflections on their Beauty or Unbecomingness, are of more force to draw or deter their Imitation, than any Discourse which can be made to them. (82: 143) .

¹³Significantly, a number of contemporaries attested specifically to Barbauld's success in exploiting the “potent sound” of poetry to arouse the emotions, and influence the thoughts and manners of her audience. A female contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine* 44 (1774), identifying herself as “Mira,” hails Barbauld, telling her, “thy name inspires/ My glowing bosom with congenial fires” (327). In *The Female Advocate; a Poem* (1774) Mary Scott asserts,

How fair, how beauteous to our gazing eyes
Thy vivid intellectual paintings rise!
We feel thy feelings, glow with all thy fires,
Adopt thy thoughts, and pant with thy desires. (35)

¹⁴Daniel E. White has a different theory concerning what he calls Barbauld and Aikin's “collaborative mode.” In his view, this “collaborative mode ... asserts an integral connection between the ‘intimate sphere’ of the family, the austere virtues of religious nonconformity, and the progressive market ethos of middle-class eighteenth-century life, especially in the commercial centers of northern England” (512).

¹⁵This is the account of the event Samuel Rogers provides in the *Memoirs of C. J.*

Fox:

“I am greatly pleased with your ‘Miscellaneous Pieces,’” said Fox. Aikin bowed.

“I particularly admire,” continued Fox, “your essay ‘Against Inconsistency in our Expectations.’”

“That,” replied Aikin, “is my sister’s.”

“I like much,” returned Fox, “your essay ‘On Monastic Institutions.’”

“That,” answered Aikin, “is also my sister’s.”

Fox thought it best to say no more about the book. (Rodgers 61)

Chapter 6

¹Otherwise, Chandler is primarily intent on redressing misconceptions that Barbauld was in charge of the school at Palgrave.

²Anne Pradeilles considers Barbauld in this respect fairly typical of late-eighteenth-century women writers of instructional manuals. She writes,

Il faut constater d'ailleurs que la plupart des auteurs féminins de manuels pédagogiques à la fin du dix-huitième siècle en Angleterre sont des mères de famille ou des pédagogues de profession, maitresses d'école ou gouvernantes, et que leurs oeuvres, avant d'avoir été publiées, ont très souvent été utilisées par leurs enfants ou leurs élèves. (166)

³Renée Balibar connects Barbauld's children's literature directly to her political ideology with his claim that it “impugned the old structure of privileges, aiming to share the means of expression of the state language with the lower classes” (142).

⁴Yonge's statement appears in *Macmillan's Magazine* 20 (1869): 234. In his article “The Cool World of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Mrs. Barbauld's Crew & the Building of a Mass Reading Class,” Paul M. Zall suggests that if the evidence of their popularity is true, “then we owe thanks to Hannah More, Mrs. Trimmer, and Mrs. Barbauld for making possible a mass of readers ready for the *Lyrical Ballads* two years before that revolutionary volume.” He claims that “[t]hanks are due particularly to Mrs. Barbauld for the fact that they would find its so-called 'experimental' language not at all strange. It was she who was responsible for their learning to read by means of 'the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society’” (78).

⁵The only other writing of Barbauld's to achieve the same kind of popularity were her poetic hymns. Like the *Lessons* and the *Hymns in Prose*, Barbauld's poetic hymns continued to be read throughout the nineteenth century. They were eventually translated into in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. Eric S. Robinson identifies the hymns as the main reason for Barbauld's continuing public recognition at the end of the nineteenth century, long after the names of her female contemporaries had been forgotten. According to Barbauld's modern editors, her poetic “hymns became fixtures in the hymnals of several churches; mangled versions of them are still sung today” (xxii). The *Devotional Pieces* did not meet with the same success as her other religious poetry, probably because of the controversy she aroused with her prefatory essay.

⁶Lucy Aikin would reject this assumption in her own *Poetry for Children* (1803), the preface of which contends that poetry is the best form of literature for children, contrasting poetry favourably with novels, which convey a “false picture of the real world,” and fairy tales, at least those of the previous generation, which “only wandered over the region of shadows” (iii-iv).

⁷According to Sarah Robbins, Barbauld's appeal for nineteenth-century women lay precisely in her apparent capacity to bridge “masculine” and “feminine” thinking, by directing her “genius” to create the role of the domestic pedagogue (“Re-making” 160).

⁸It is of course true that capitalization of common nouns is normative in the context of eighteenth-century poetry. Yet this fact does not preclude the possibility that a poet might use capitalization to special effect.

⁹Barbauld's allusion to the rent veil contrasts strikingly with Percy Shelley's use of the same image in *The Revolt of Islam* (1818) and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). Whereas in Shelley's poems, the veil is associated with repression and the rending of the veil with liberty, in “Epistle to Wilberforce” the rending of the veil appears in the context of a failed attempt on behalf of liberty.

¹⁰Julie Ellison posits a different account of the rhetorical strategy at work in “Epistle to Wilberforce.” In her view, Barbauld “insists that sentimental portrayals of the victim have failed and replaces them with the systematic logic of moral economy” (236). “In the face of the defeated campaign of sensibility, Barbauld prophesies Africa's revenge on Britain through the systematic but internalized operations of empire” (237). The poet “seems to abandon moral judgment to the impersonal reflexes of economic logic.” According to Ellison, in

Eighteen Hundred Eleven “the logic of systematic moral correction again prevails in declarations that outraged Barbauld's original readers” (238). I would question the reading of “Epistle to Wilberforce” and *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* as having renounced an appeal to feeling.

¹¹This was a project Barbauld apparently never completed. It was Priestley, and not Barbauld, who published *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791).

¹²There have been conflicting views among critics regarding the implications of Barbauld's adoption of the role of the mother-teacher in “To Mr. S. T. Coleridge.” Philip Cox insists that “[i]n adopting this quasi-maternal role, Barbauld forgoes her claim to equality with or equivalence to the poet whom she addresses” (36). Deirdre Coleman sees a “superiority implied” in Barbauld's assumption of parental authority over Coleridge, though she argues that the “poem is a substantial tribute to Coleridge in so far as it takes its cue from his own writings and conversation” (152).

Chapter 7

¹One of the reasons Barbauld prefers Richardson to Fielding is because of the former's mastery of an unintrusive method of narration. While acknowledging that both the intrusive and unintrusive methods of narration have their “advantages,” she maintains that the latter demands superior talents as a writer. Barbauld praises Inchbald specifically for her dramatic method of characterization. “We see and hear the persons themselves,” she writes of

Inchbald's novels, "we are but little led to think of the author, and it is only when we have done feeling that we begin to admire" (27: iii). Barbauld particularly objects to writers who allow their personal lives to intrude into their narration. Of Charlotte Smith, she complains that "the asperity of invective and the querulousness of the complaint too frequently cloud the happier exertions of the imagination" (36: viii).

²This statement has invited the charge that Barbauld did not apply the same standards of conduct to herself as she did to other women. While it is true she thought that women of exceptional intellect and literary talents should receive special opportunities for cultivating those faculties and talents, she held all women to the same standard of behaviour.

³Novelists would most obviously convey precepts in the form of digressions. Later on in "The Life of Richardson," Barbauld makes some observations on the effect of digressions permitted by third person omniscient narration.

⁴Barbauld regarded some forms of narration as more effective than others in bringing characters to life. In her view, the most effective were those that closely followed the flow of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, such as diaries or letters. Mellor identifies a general emphasis in female Romantic criticism on "probability," noting that "[t]o be probable, literature must show how real characters change and grow *over time* ..." ("A Criticism" 38) Indirectly, she points to a common desire among female Romantic critics for literature that provides readers with patterns of thought and behaviour for them to imitate.

⁵Barbauld shared Johnson's view that writers should sometimes sacrifice realism in order to uphold a clear pattern of moral order, though, like him, she warns that if realism is sacrificed too much literature loses all effect.

⁶I am aware of the number of critics who emphasize Barbauld's comments regarding the purpose of novels as entertainment. It is true, as Moore observes, that Barbauld confesses, "[W]hen I take up a novel, my end and object is entertainment; and as I suspect that to be the case with most readers, I hesitate not to say that entertainment is their legitimate end and object" ("Origin," 1:46). Barbauld also expresses a dislike for novels that preach. Nevertheless, entertainment is never the only object for which she values the novel.

⁷As in the case of her children's writing, Barbauld displays mixed feelings regarding the importance of her literary criticism. Moore observes of *The British Novelists* series that "Lucy Aikin's reference to it as the 'humbler offices of literature' may reflect the attitude of her aunt ... and certainly Aikin's explanation that the task was undertaken to assuage grief over Mr. Barbauld's suicide in 1808 points to something less than Mrs. Barbauld's total commitment to the project on its own merit" (383).

⁸The conflict between Barbauld's desire to be ranked next to male writers, and her fear of transgressing against prescribed boundaries of female activity emerges indirectly in the literary form of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. As McCarthy and Kraft point out, "*Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* is in part a Juvenalian, or 'tragical,' satire," along the same lines as Johnson's *London* (1738). According to Maggie Favretti, "[t]he negative reaction to *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* had to do not with the poem's content but its form." Barbauld's "works before 1790 were nearly all in the form of small poems in a 'properly' feminized voice. Even after 1790, when her work became more politically challenging, she still set her challenges in the form of private communication, sermon, or household allegory." With *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, she was entering a "forbidden discourse" (108).

Yet Ross argues that Barbauld deliberately problematizes the label of satire. He claims that Barbauld chose to write *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* as an occasional poem, because it was “a form that during the period stood at the crossroads between overt political satire (the province of political men) and apolitical sentiment (a province women were making increasingly their own)” (“Configurations” 95). In his view, Barbauld made a deliberate effort to downplay the topicality of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, noting that political or topical satire, tragedy, and epic, remained the genres most jealously guarded by male writers. He points to one of the ironies of the attack against *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* in the *Quarterly Review*. The same reviewer who criticizes Barbauld for violating feminine propriety also derides her satire for failing to be topical enough, which would have constituted a more blatant violation of feminine propriety than Barbauld would have dared.

⁹McCarthy and Kraft discuss possible antecedents of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* in its treatment of the “theme of the passing of empire from east to west,” including George Berkeley's “On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America” (1752), Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, and Constantin François' *Les Ruines; ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires* (1791). To some extent, Barbauld's choice of this particular theme again conveys her desire for a place next to male writers.

¹⁰For this alleged statement Barbauld has continued to be castigated by twentieth-century critics. Some critics have attempted a defence. Mellor argues that Barbauld's comment that the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* “was improbable and had no moral” “articulated her shrewd critical insight into the poem's unresolved romantic-ironic juxtaposition of a chaotic, amoral universe with a Christian theology” (“A Criticism” 29). It

is not my purpose here to sort out the differences of opinion on this subject. Most interesting, from my own perspective, is Deirdre Coleman's claim that Coleridge “drew upon the downturn in Barbauld's reputation amongst conservative thinkers, and the increasingly misogynist assessment of her as an unimaginative, didactic, schoolmarmish pedagogue who wrote lessons and verses for children” (148).

¹¹John Frost's *Select Works of the British Poets, in a Chronological Series from Falconer to Sir Walter Scott ... Designed as a Continuation of Dr. Aikin's British Poets* adds selections from Barbauld and Baillie. Aikin had restricted his choice to dead writers, which precluded Barbauld and Baillie, though it is unclear whether he would have included them under different circumstances, since there are no female writers at all in his anthology.

¹²See, for instance, Porter Williams' “The Influence of Mrs. Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* upon Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, Zall's “Wordsworth's ‘Ode’ & Mrs. Barbauld's *Hymns*,” David Chandler's “Wordsworth's ‘A night-Piece’ and Mrs Barbauld,” Damian Walford Davies' “‘A tongue in every star’: Wordsworth and Mrs Barbauld's ‘A Summer Evening's Meditation,’” and Deirdre Colman's “The Unitarian Rationalist and the ‘Winged Spider’: Anna Letitia Barbauld and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.”

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