

**Forms of Formation:
Tolerating the Romantic-Era Teen**

Doctoral Thesis

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Timothy Moore, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own.
Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Timothy Moore

Date: 15/03/22

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Abstract

Following on from recent research confirming the conceptual presence of adolescence within the eighteenth century, this thesis examines tolerant adult attitudes towards adolescent independence and (mis)behaviour as represented by British literature from 1780-1825. It is a cross-generic study that analyses various formal representations of adult characters, narrators and writers who respond to adolescent folly as less a serious moral shortcoming than a phenomenon that was typically harmless, transitory, and even at times vicariously instructive. Far from being rare or unusual, this tolerant attitude towards adolescence is argued to form a continual presence within the Romantic-era literary marketplace, that reappeared within many of the period's most popular genres. Literary forms such as children's literature, romance novels, conduct literature, autobiographies, pedagogical novels and more are shown to feature not just permissive adult characters and narrators but also various other formal devices and interventions that belied their authors' participation in a wider cultural tolerance of adolescent (mis)behaviour. By analysing the unique methodologies adopted for this purpose within such a wide range of generic forms, this thesis constitutes both a formal study of genre and a literary-historical study of the representation of youth. Its primary contention is that the interval of time between 1780 and 1825 formed a unique literary period in which British writings across a whole series of genres manifested a tolerance of adolescent independence and misbehaviour unseen in the periods immediately before and after. Thus, by addressing a post-revolutionary era itself associated with transition, this thesis provides a fresh, more complex perspective on both the range and change in attitudes towards youth as represented by British Romantic-era literature.

Forms of Formation: Tolerating the Romantic-Era Teen

‘In this age of high-minded independence, when our youth are apt to set up for themselves, ...it is become too frequent a practice of our tolerating young ladies, [and] in speaking of their misled and erring acquaintance, to offer for them this flimsy vindication, “that what they do is right, if it appear so to them;” – “if they see the thing in that light, and act to up it with sincerity, they cannot be materially wrong.”’ *Hannah More, Strictures on Modern Education.*¹

‘What is toleration? It is a privilege to which human nature is entitled. We are all made up of weakness and errors; it therefore behoves us mutually to forgive another’s follies. This is the very first law of nature.’

*Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary.*²

Introduction

Published to instantaneous success in 1813, Eaton Stannard Barrett’s novel *The Heroine* features the kind of protagonist that modern readers might regard as a familiar stock character: a disaffected teenager who believes that they are destined for greater things. Born into ‘nothing better than a decent and respectable family’ with ‘the dullness of an unimpeached reputation,’ the fifteen-year-old Cherry Wilkinson avows herself ‘condemned to waste my health, bloom, and youth, in a series of uninterrupted prosperity.’ In an attempt to seek a fate more exciting than that of being ‘doomed to [marry...] some honest gentleman [and...] degenerate into a dangler of keys and whipper of children; [who] trots up and down stairs, educates the poultry, and superintends the architecture of pies,’ she consequently runs away from home, having been ‘prepared’ for such a step ““by a five years’ course of novels.””³ The three volumes that follow depict a series of conflicts, intrigues and

¹ Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* [1799], 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Cadell & Davies, 1799), II, p. 89. More inserted this passage in the slightly expanded, second edition of *Strictures* just months after the publication of the original edition.

² ‘Qu’est-ce que la tolerance? C’est l’apanage de l’humanité. Nous sommes tous pètris de faiblesse, et d’erreurs; pardonnons-nous réciproquement nos sottises, c’est la première loi de la nature.’ François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, ‘Dictionnaire Philosophique’, *Les Oeuvres Completes de Voltaire*, 146 vols., ed. Christine Mervaud (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1994), XXXVI, p. 552, and *The Philosophical Dictionary for the Pocket*, trans. anon. (London: Thomas Brown, 1765), p. 312.

³ Eaton Stannard Barrett, *The Heroine; Or, Adventures of a Fair Romance Reader*, 3 vols. (London: Colburn, 1813), II, pp. 2, 6-7, 211-2.

deceptions that inevitably challenge not just the chastity of the aptly-named Cherry but also her naivety.⁴ What is startling about the account of these anti-authoritarian adventures is that despite (or perhaps because of) their publication in a post-Revolution era of heightened state surveillance, *The Heroine* achieved such popularity with the British public that contemporary critics described it as the only British work to have ever made ‘the nearest approach to the success of the Waverley novels.’⁵ Perhaps the most striking factor about this extraordinarily tolerant response to an account of teen rebellion is that Barrett appeared to both anticipate and model such a reaction through the openness and tolerance with which the adult characters in the novel themselves respond to Cherry’s insurrection. Correctly judging that her actions constitute a temporary phase which she will soon grow out of, the adult characters of *The Heroine* do not judge or condemn its protagonist for her contumacy but instead forgive and indulge it, and indeed even derive great entertainment in ‘humour[ing her] pretty caprices’ (III, p. 265). In fact, by the novel’s conclusion, it is precisely the many ‘foibles’ of Cherry that ultimately prove the value of her ‘heart’ and win her a husband (II, p. 120):

“It was by my knowledge of your failings... that I discovered your perfections. Those embarrassments of your life... have shewn me, that if you had weakness enough to court danger, you had firmness enough to withstand temptation; and that while the faulty part of your character was factitious and superinduced, all the pure and generous impulses came from your heart.” (III, p. 299)

Just two years earlier, Jane Austen, herself an ardent admirer of Barrett’s fiction,⁶ had also portrayed a similar reaction to adolescent folly in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). Marianne Dashwood’s sentimental immaturity is excused by Colonel Brandon (as well as by numerous nineteenth-century reviewers)⁷ precisely because her failings evidence a uniquely youthful vivacity and innocence:

⁴ The erotic significance behind Cherry’s name reflects the nineteenth-century re-popularisation of the cherry as a sexual symbol after it had first become common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. See Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols. (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), II, pp. 231-3.

⁵ Barrett, though little known today, was a literary sensation of his time and produced novels, plays and poems of which some examples were, according to Reiman, ‘more popular during his lifetime than any single work by a major or secondary poet then living, including Scott or Byron.’ The potential for a more lasting fame for his literary career was cut short by an early death in 1820, and although the subsequent centuries saw continuing reprints of his work, it has only been since the 1990s that any real signs of scholarly interest in his work are being revived. See *The Annual Register: Or a View of the History, Politics and Literature of the year 1820*, I (1820), p. 572; Donald H. Reiman’s ‘Introduction’ to Eaton Stannard Barrett, *Woman: a Poem* [1801] (Garland Publishing Inc.: New York & London, 1979), and ‘Introduction’ to Eaton Stannard Barrett, *The Heroine; Or, Adventures of a Fair Romance Reader*, ed. Avril Horner & Sue Zlosnik (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2011).

⁶ Jane Austen to Cassandra, March 2nd 1814, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 256.

⁷ Nineteenth-century reviewers reacted particularly favourably towards Marianne, often more than any other character in the novel. Princess Charlotte, for instance, wrote in 1812 that ‘Maryanne [sic] and me are very alike in disposition. Certainly I am not so good, [but I do have] the same imprudence &c. However, [we] remain very

“[T]here is something so amiable in the prejudices of a young mind, that one is sorry to see them give way to the reception of more general opinions... for when the romantic refinements of a young mind are obliged to give way, how frequently are they succeeded by such opinions as are but too common, and too dangerous!”⁸

Similarly, even the more serious youthful indiscretions of Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* are ultimately excused by consequence of the ‘irreparable injury’ dealt him by his upbringing, and by the conclusion of the novel the Dashwoods ‘forgave, pitied, wished him well—w[ere] even interested in his happiness’ (pp. 375-6). Their attitude is perhaps most succinctly articulated by a different Austen heroine again: ‘Wickedness is always wickedness, but folly is not always folly,’ is the sage and forgiving conclusion of Emma Woodhouse.⁹

This thesis is precisely about those attitudes described in *The Heroine, Emma, Sense and Sensibility*, and numerous other literary works around the turn of the nineteenth century. As Hannah More complains, adults of this period often allowed adolescents to exhibit an extraordinary amount of ‘high-minded independence,’ and ‘tolerated’ youths acting in any manner that ‘appeared right’ to them. The thesis is a cross-generic study that analyses various formal and literary representations of exactly these kinds of adults, who perceived adolescent folly as less a serious moral shortcoming than a phenomenon that was harmless, transitory, and could often constitute a source of great instruction or entertainment. Far from being rare or unusual, these tolerant attitudes towards adolescence will be demonstrated to form a continual presence within the Romantic-era literary marketplace, which current scholars are increasingly recognising as ‘informed by a body of educational theory that sought to liberate [young people] from unnatural constraints, and to ensure that their voices were heard and their ways of seeing respected.’¹⁰ With the popularity of the novel form established and growing in Britain by the end of eighteenth century, Romantic-era writers increasingly began to experiment with

alike. I must say she interested me much.’ Similarly, another (anonymous) review finds Marianne to be such an appealing character that she is said to render *Sense and Sensibility* a ‘fail[ure of] its intention, by making sensibility more attractive than sense. Ellinor [sic] is too good; one feels inclined to pat her on the back and say, “Good girl,” but all sympathy is with the unfortunate Marianne.’ W. F. Pollock likewise stated that of all Austen’s novels, ‘in no other is there a character of such passionate tenderness as belongs to Marianne.’ The most notable exception to this trend was given by Margaret Oliphant, who asserted that ‘Marianne’s sensibility is not amusing, and we find it utterly impossible to take any interest in her selfish and high-flown wretchedness,’ but such comments are rare. For Princess Charlotte, see Park Honan, *Jane Austen: Her Life* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 289-90. See too ‘Miss Austen,’ *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, 3.2 (August 1866), 237-40 (p. 238); W. F. Pollock, ‘British Novelists,’ *Fraser’s Magazine*, 61 (January 1860), 30-5, and Margaret Oliphant, ‘Miss Austen and Miss Mitford,’ *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 107 (March 1870), 294–305.

⁸ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* [1811], ed. Edward Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66-7. For the sake of consistency, all references to Austen novels in the thesis are taken from the same series of Janet Todd’s Cambridge editions.

⁹ Jane Austen, *Emma* [1816], ed. Richard Cronin & Dorothy McMillan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 229.

¹⁰ Susan Manly, ‘Literature for Children,’ *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. David Duff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 217-30 (p. 218).

and challenge those formal conventions inherited from the prose writers of the early eighteenth century. Innovations in form and content created new kinds of literature in seeming opposition to their predecessors: female *Bildungsromane* to match their hitherto masculine counterparts; updated conduct literature that venerated rationality and self-improvement instead of sensibility, and new burlesque forms that satirized the affectation of earlier models of sentimentalism.¹¹ This thesis examines examples of generic categories that reserve particular space for the tolerant representation of teenhood. In doing so, it also partially uncovers what it was about the Romantic-era teen that arrested the attention of contemporary writers so forcibly, and seeks to understand how representations of such a transient life stage paradoxically became such a permanent and immortalised feature of the British literary canon.

My treatment of adolescent tolerance as a socio-cultural phenomenon necessarily means that this thesis addresses literary-historical topics (namely, the post-revolutionary representations of British attitudes towards authority, and towards adolescence). However, the questions it poses are primarily formal in nature, about how this tolerance is variously depicted across a series of very different generic forms – pedagogical novels, conduct books, burlesque satires, educational treatises, courtship novels, children’s literature, biographies and more.¹² Despite their huge range of formal and stylistic disparity, I thus treat the different genres in this study as fundamentally interconnected, and as jointly participating in the same cultural process of the representation and dissemination of a shared ideology of youth. Through their collective toleration of adolescent independence, my selected texts function as not just a documentation of a naturalistic process of maturation but also to stage and work through the formal problems attending the emergence of adolescents as a new socio-cultural people group. By analysing the methodologies adopted for this purpose within such a wide-

¹¹ This is the subject of Tilottama Rajan and Julia Wright’s lauded anthology *Romanticism, History and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming Literature 1789-1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See too Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹² One absence from this list that might seem particularly conspicuous is Romantic poetry. While I accept that a study of the ‘Romantic-era youth’ without even a cursory analysis of Blake or the Lake Poets cannot be complete, I justify my omission of Romantic poetry on the basis that its arbitrary insertion into an otherwise generic study of prose subforms like ‘the pedagogical manual’ or ‘the autobiography’ would do it an injustice. Even if one discounted the work of the so-called ‘Big Six’ Romantic poets, the poetry written to or about youths at this time was enduringly influential and operated with very different effect to those prose genres at the centre of the current study. Indeed, as Richardson has pointed out, ‘It is significant that the most frequently cited authority in nineteenth-century writings on education and in Victorian children’s literature alike... is not Locke’s *Some Thoughts* or Rousseau’s *Émile*, but Wordsworth’s “Intimations” ode.’ Despite this however, existing discussions of the presence of the adolescent in Romantic poetry remain even to this day disappointingly scarce. One suspects that if the critical tradition had historically directed as much attention to the ‘Romantic Teen’ as continues to be enjoyed by the ‘Romantic Child,’ the aims of the present study would long have been redundant. See Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice: 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. xv.

ranging series of different generic forms, this thesis thus constitutes both a generic study of tolerance and a literary-historical study of the representation of youth. Its primary contention is that the decades before and after the turn of the nineteenth century formed a unique literary period in which British writings across a whole series of genres manifested an adult tolerance of adolescent independence and misbehaviour. In addressing a post-revolutionary era itself associated with transition, this thesis thus provides a fresh, more complex perspective on both the range and change in attitudes towards youth as represented by British literature before and after the French Revolution.

The period covered by this thesis is 1780 to 1825. Alan Richardson, whose study of Romantic educational philosophy similarly stretches from 1780 to 1832, characterises this era by its pioneering of

the effective beginning of mass education[,] ... the Sunday Schools movement, the first attempt to legislate schooling for lower-class children, the rise of a children's literature geared for instructional use at home and in the schools, the first experiments in didactic "popular" fiction, the practical working out of Locke's educational methods for use in the middle-class home, the popularization in England of Rousseau's educational theories, the publication of the first major feminist critiques of education, and the adumbration of a Romantic response to a number of these developments in poems by Blake and Wordsworth.¹³

Despite the obvious relevance of these unique socio-historical and cultural conditions, the selection of a start and end point to a thematic study of adolescent tolerance is to a certain extent necessarily arbitrary, and my own date selection is by no means intended to represent the only possible timespan for either early tolerant representations of youth or the first presence of the 'Romantic' adolescent. Despite this, after four years of reading all manner of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century representations of youth, it seemed evident to me that it is between 1780 to 1825 that one finds an unusual concentration of literary texts that both portray and promulgate tolerant attitudes towards adolescence, in a way that does not occur at any other point during either the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. Therefore, although the overall scope of the present study is much larger than a mere forty-five-year window (and indeed offers several close readings of foundational texts published outside those dates), its focus remains primarily in those decades immediately before and after the turn of the nineteenth century, and the micro-patterns of tolerance observable within this timeframe.

Toleration and the Enlightenment

If the focus of the present study lingers on these 'micro-patterns' of tolerance localised to Romantic-era Britain, the position of tolerance within the larger, macro context of the European Enlightenment continues to generate as much scholarly discussion across the modern humanities

¹³ Richardson, *Literature, Education, Romanticism*, p. 3.

today as it did amongst the 'philosophes' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These discussions have tended to differentiate the notion of toleration (i.e. a socio-political practice) from that of tolerance (i.e. an ideology or attitude); Dr Johnson defined the former as the 'allowance' of something not approved but the latter as one's 'capacity to endure' it.¹⁴ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these debates centred on the notion of religious toleration in particular, questioning the extent to which (or indeed if at all) the state should regulate and/or intervene in an individual's private or public spiritual practice. On the one hand, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe has more cause to be associated with religious persecution than religious toleration. Both the Protestant Reformation and its Catholic or Counter-Reformation (not to mention the ongoing Inquisition) were responsible for the elimination of 'heretic' populations and communities in their thousands, a level of 'religious persecution and conflict on a scale Europe had never seen before or since.'¹⁵ Accordingly, Ole Peter Grell and Roy Porter begin their study of Enlightenment toleration by describing Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe as an 'uncompromisingly persecuting society,' in which the concept of toleration was in fact 'nowhere unequivocally and comprehensively embraced in either theory or practice'.¹⁶ On the other hand however, the widespread presence of intolerance was the very catalyst for the rise of a diverse but multitudinous group of thinkers whose protest against the persecution they saw was a series of arguments and defences of toleration on a level unprecedented in world history. Although these thinkers were originally in a minority, their persistent advocacy of toleration, their promotion of scientific observation over religious superstition and their spread of knowledge through a multi-national 'republic of letters' would all eventually serve to define the very 'heart' of the values of Enlightenment culture as it is known today.¹⁷ Nor was tolerationist sentiment restricted to philosophes; it became increasingly practised by normal, everyday citizens. For instance, it is thought that in eighteenth-century France, 'That Protestantism survived at all [appears...] to have been contingent upon the fact that a large body of the French people, more particularly the friends and neighbours of the Protestants, shrugged their shoulders at the barbarous edicts and ignored them.'¹⁸

¹⁴ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London: Strahan, 1755), I, n.p. For a useful critical survey of the relationship between the two terms, see Andrew Murphy, 'Tolerance, Toleration and the Liberal Tradition', *Polity*, 29.4 (1997), 593-623.

¹⁵ Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁶ Ole Peter Grell & Roy Porter, *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1. Emphasis mine.

¹⁷ John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 9, and Grell & Porter, *Toleration*, p. 18.

¹⁸ Shelby McCloy, 'Persecution of the Huguenots in the 18th Century', *Church History*, 20.3 (1951), 56-79 (p. 72).

If a limited degree of toleration was indeed a practised feature of certain commonplace populations across continental Europe, its function in Britain was particularly complex, where the abolition (and re-instatement) of the monarchy had endowed the notion of what the nation's populace would or would not tolerate with especial significance. Both philosophical and theological arguments for toleration had been a consistent feature of British public debate since the build-up to the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the subsequent passing of William and Mary's Toleration Act (1689). Although the Toleration Act only enacted formalised, statutory provision for dissenters who were orthodox Protestants, it subsequently birthed a political climate in which other groups – including Catholics, Jews and even atheists – also experienced a limited degree of toleration in practice, and is widely regarded as a 'watershed' moment in British political history.¹⁹ It was in response to this act that John Locke penned his famous *Letters Concerning Toleration* (1689-92), in which he continued to expand upon notions begun elsewhere that the true Christian patriot had a 'duty' to maintain 'love and charity in the diversity of contrary opinion.'²⁰ Locke's controversial letters, which were immediately translated and read widely across Europe, opined that whether an act should be tolerated or not depended singularly on the extent to which it affected others. Accordingly, all private actions or resolutions that implicated the individual alone, regardless of whether they constituted 'virtues', 'vices', or actions which were simply morally neutral, had 'an absolute and universal right to toleration.' Since they affected no-one else, the State or magistrate had no right to intervene; the power to reward or punish such acts belonged to God alone. But according to Locke, even those actions that *did* affect others deserved 'a title also to toleration; but only so far as they do not tend to the disturbance of the State or do not cause greater inconvenience than advantage to the community.'²¹ Together with those of other more radical British apologists of toleration, such as Joseph Priestley and John Toland, it was arguments exactly such as these that led, however incorrectly, to the association of England as a nation of freedom of thought and religious toleration. 'If one religion only were allowed in England, the Government would very possibly become arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut one another's throats; but as there are such a multitude, they all live happy and in peace', wrote Voltaire in his *Letters on the English*. He continued:

Take a view of the Royal Exchange in London, a place more venerable than many courts of justice, where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There, the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian transact together, as though they all professed the

¹⁹ John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), p. 149.

²⁰ John Locke, 'Pacific Christians' [1688], *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 305.

²¹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Toleration*, ed. Milton & Milton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), pp. 271, 276. It should be noted that despite his defence of a 'universal' toleration, Locke perceived both Catholicism and atheism as examples of such 'inconveniences' that were not to be tolerated.

same religion, and give the name of infidel to none but bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist, and the Churchman depends on the Quaker's word. At the breaking up of this pacific and free assembly, some withdraw to the synagogue, others to take a glass, [...] others retire to their churches. [...] And all are satisfied.²²

In reality, England was not quite the haven of religious freedom that Voltaire portrayed it to be, but in terms of its subjects' ability to think and worship as they liked, its capacity for toleration was certainly among the most advanced in Europe.²³

If British thinkers were being heralded for their defences of religious toleration in the eighteenth century, by the turn of the nineteenth century they were also turning their attention to toleration regarding non-religious matters. Even since the beginning of the Enlightenment, discussions concerning religious toleration had often necessarily involved related but otherwise secular or political arguments similarly preoccupied with the maintenance of societal peace and prosperity, such as the merits or demerits of the preservation of free speech or the free press. By the end of the eighteenth century however, a progressively globalised Europe was adopting an increasingly empirical outlook, and the toleration debate itself experienced a wider 'secularization' in which it 'developed above all in the direction of political problems relating to the running of society.'²⁴ A particular point of contention in these new debates was the extent to which a dissenter could constitute a good subject and a profitable citizen, and both opponents and proponents of toleration would invest considerable time attempting to prove its socio-economic benefits or hazards to a particular State or society. Yet, as Martin Fitzpatrick has pointed out, the 'secularization' of the toleration debate did not profoundly alter its ideological infrastructure.²⁵ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, discussions of toleration still inevitably returned to the fundamental principle that even the most intolerant and interventionist of States remained powerless against an individual's capacity to form ideological

²² 'Entrez dans la bourse de Londres, cette place plus respectable que bien des cours, vous y voyez rassemblés les députés de toutes les nations pour l'utilité des hommes, là le juif, le mahométan et le chrétien traitent l'un avec l'autre comme s'ils étaient de la même religion, et ne donnent le nom d'infidèles qu'à ceux qui font banqueroute, là le presbytérien se fie à l'anabaptiste, et l'anglican reçoit la promesse du quaker. Au sortir de ces pacifiques et libres assemblées, les uns vont à la synagogue, les autres vont boire... ces autres vont dans leur église... et tous sont contents... S'il n'y avait en Angleterre qu'une religion, le despotisme serait à craindre, s'il y en avait deux, ils se couperaient la gorge; mais il y en a trente, et ils vivent en paix et heureses.' Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (London: Davis & Lyon, 1733), pp. 44-5, and 'Lettres sur les Anglais', *Les Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire*, 146 vols., ed. Nicholas Cronk (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2020), VI, pp. 50-51. The letters were first published in English in London before subsequently being reprinted in French. See Nicholas Cronk, 'Rethinking Voltaire's *Lettres sur les Anglais*: in the footsteps of Gustave Lanson', *Voltaire Foundation* (7 January 2021), <<https://voltairefoundation.wordpress.com/2021/01/07/rethinking-voltaires-lettres-sur-les-anglais-in-the-footsteps-of-gustave-lanson/>> [accessed 10/10/22].

²³ Grell & Porter, pp. 10-11.

²⁴ Luisa Simonutti, 'Between Political Loyalty and Religious Liberty: Political Theory and Toleration in Huguenot Thought in the Epoch of Bayle,' *History of Political Thought*, 17.4 (1996), 523-54 (p. 554).

²⁵ Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Toleration and the Enlightenment Movement', in *Toleration*, eds. Grell & Porter, pp. 23-68 (pp. 32, 55).

judgments for themselves. A body could be coerced, but a mind must be persuaded. As the unfortunate counter-revolutionaries of the freshly-formed French Republic would find out only too well, there was only one possible way in which the State could once-and-for-all preclude an individual's capacity for private dissent.

Tolerating Adolescence: the Romantic-Era Teen

It is within the context of this precise set of debates concerning toleration, dissent and ideological autonomy that the present thesis therefore examines the concept of tolerating 'adolescence.' Like the toleration of religion or dissent, the notion of 'tolerating adolescence' necessarily implies an inherent difference of perspective between the tolerators and the adolescent subject. Accordingly, although the adolescents examined in this thesis do often exhibit specific opinions (such as the right to make decisions for themselves) or behaviours (such as engagement in pre-marital sexual activity) with which their surrounding adults do not agree, the primary subject of the toleration identified by the thesis is more simply the fact that the 'teens' of the Romantic era were themselves a unique social group who operated in fundamentally separate ways to the adult society around them. As such, this thesis contributes to over a century of socio-historical research from across the humanities which has attempted to formalise and theorise the 'rise' of the youth, and historicise the existence of the adolescent as a distinct social class from both the child and the adult. Producing a study on adolescence by analysing the writings and representations of the non-adolescent adults who tolerated them might initially seem counter-intuitive, until it is considered that the majority of the theorisation and conceptualisation about adolescence within this period was itself undertaken by adults. Despite the presence of a range of lively juvenilia from the eighteenth century, not least that of Frances Burney and Jane Austen,²⁶ the danger of those youth studies that have asserted the existence of a unique eighteenth-century 'adolescence' by focusing on juvenilia or youth sources alone is that they typically imply a difference or distinctness in the period's youth subjects themselves. In reality, youths have existed to some extent in every century and society, and have, almost universally, with the onset of puberty and its associated development of hormonal and reproductive systems, experienced certain behavioural changes around the period of their teens. Thus, the present study assumes less a distinctness in the behavioural traits of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century youths themselves but rather in the uniquely tolerant ways in which these traits were both responded

²⁶ The last thirty years have produced some excellent research on Romantic-era juvenilia. Material I have found particularly rich includes J. David Grey's anthology of essays *Jane Austen's Beginnings: The Juvenilia and Lady Susan* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), which includes commentary by Joan Austen-Leigh; Freya Johnston and Kathryn Sutherland's editorial work and commentary in *Austen's Teenage Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) and Lorna Clark, 'Teaching "the young idea how to shoot": The Juvenilia of the Burney Family,' *Journal of Juvenilia Studies*, 1 (2018), 20-36.

to and represented by adult society at the time. As Rowland has pointed out, the capacity for social historians to posit the 'discovery' or 'invention' of certain youth categories is itself predicated on the fact that histories focusing on conceptions and representations of youth are more accurately studies of not the categories themselves but contemporary 'adult attitudes' towards them, be they tolerant or not.²⁷

Currently, there is not to my knowledge any full-length literary study of either the notion of toleration in the Romantic era or of the presence of adolescence as a distinct life category in Romantic-era prose. By contrast, the nature and origins of the life stage of adolescence more generally have been studied by social and literary historians since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. The first academic piece of research to provide a comprehensive codification of 'modern' adolescence is commonly identified as G. Stanley Hall's influential work *Adolescence: its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (1904).²⁸ However, a broader conceptualisation of adolescence is almost universally thought to have predated Hall's work by a significant (and variously disputed) amount of time. Although a rough consensus can be (typically) identified as to the proximate features and characteristics associated with such a life stage, many twentieth-century researchers found little consensus as to the age boundaries commonly incorporated within it, and less still as to its historic period of origin, with arguments ranging from as far apart as the early-modern era to the post-war twentieth century.²⁹ Accordingly, the 'problem of adolescence, and the nuisance it causes to society... as a distinct age group' has been identified by

²⁷ Anna Weirida Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 7. Similarly, James Steward has emphasised the distinction between 'a social history of *children* and a cultural history of *childhood*' (emphasis his), and Hugh Cunningham the difference between 'children as human beings and childhood as a shifting set of ideas.' See Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origin of Modern Childhood, 1730-1830* (Berkeley, CA: University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 1995), p. 13 and Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), pp. 1-2.

²⁸ Critical references to 'modern' adolescence (as opposed to 'early-modern' adolescence) typically refer to a historic category that shares certain features with, though does not equate to, present-day theorisations of adolescence. Gustafson states that 'While not strongly imbued with today's associations with rebelliousness, peer identification, or psycho-sexual awakening, the [historic] category of the young person overlapped with many features of modern day young adulthood, especially around the end of the eighteenth century.' See Katherine Gustafson, 'Assimilation and Indeterminacy: *Moral Tales for Young People, Belinda*, and Edgeworth's Destabilizing Fictions of Maturity,' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 29.4 (Summer 2017), 635-661 (pp. 638-639). For more on the relationship between adolescence and modernity, see Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood*, pp. 9-10 and Teresa Michals, *Books for Children, Books for Adults: Age and the Novel from Defoe to James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), esp. pp. 101-3.

²⁹ Various twenty-first-century historians and sociologists have linked the conception of adolescence and teenagehood (especially in America) to specifically twentieth-century technological or socio-politic advances. For instance, Derek Thompson has argued that 'The teenager emerged in the middle of the 20th century thanks to the confluence of three trends... the invention of the automobile..., the post-war socio-economic boom [and the...] rise of compulsory education.' Thompson, *Hit Makers: How Things Become Popular* (London & New York: Penguin Press, 2017), pp. 154-5.

scholars to have its origins, for example, as early as in the fifteenth century according to Lawrence Stone; in the early-modern apprentice system according to Steven Smith and Natalie Davis; in the 'pre-Industrial... distant past' according to Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, and in 'post-Industrial... scientific and technological developments' according to Harvey Moore.³⁰ Concurrently, a separate group of social theorists have alternatively asserted that the concept of adolescence never existed at all, a strand of thought which has persisted to the present day.³¹ Although any attempt at compiling such a large and contradictory volume of research is beyond the scope of the present study, it remains necessary to understand how such a large amount of research can persist in such a varying range of conclusions. Put simply, the majority of researchers investigating the subject do not begin their respective studies united in their definitions of 'adolescence' or 'youth'. In particular, many historians of 'youth' conflate categories of childhood and adolescence, despite the fact that the two groups were historically conceptualised in markedly different (and at times opposite) ways.³² Other studies manifest the opposite tendency, and maintain such a strong distinction between childhood and adolescence that the possibility of any overlap goes seemingly unacknowledged.³³ In reality, youth should be acknowledged as a complex and varying phenomenon, and one inextricably connected to intersectional experiences of gender, class, sexuality, geography, race, religion and more. As various,

³⁰ See Steven Smith, 'The London Apprentices as Seventeenth-Century Adolescents,' *Past & Present*, 61.1 (November 1973), 149–161; Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France,' *Past & Present*, 50.1 (February 1971), 41–75; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), p. 376; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Adolescence as Cultural Invention: Philippe Ariès and the Sociology of Youth,' *History of the Human Sciences*, 8.2 (May 1995), 69–89 (p. 83) and B.G. Gunter and Harvey Moore, 'Youth, Leisure, and Post-Industrial Society: Implications for the Family,' *The Family Coordinator*, 24.2 (1975), 199–207 (p. 199).

³¹ Such views have been expressed frequently in both academic and popular contexts, and are often used in conjunction with the argument that adolescence/teenagehood is a purely social or cultural construct. These claims offer opinions such as: 'Adolescence is a modern invention/perversion. [...] A teenager is a biological adult, [and] the problem of rebellious or destructive teenagers is not a fault of the teenagers, but rather a fault of society. A "teenager" is an adult treated [merely] as a child' - extract from a 2014 online article *Teenagers Don't Exist* (<<http://freenortherner.com/2014/10/03/teenagers-dont-exist/>>), accessed 06/05/2018. For recent academic research on the non-existence of adolescence and/or teenagehood, see David Alan Black, *The Myth of Adolescence: Raising Responsible Children in an Irresponsible Society* (London: Davidson Press, 1999); Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, 'Suffering, Selfish, Slackers? Myths and Reality About Emerging Adults,' *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36 (2007), 23–29; and T.S. Saraswathi, 'Adult-Child Continuity in India: Is Adolescence a Myth or an Emerging Reality?' *Culture, socialization and human development: Theory, research and applications in India* (California: Sage Publications Inc., 1999), 213–232.

³² The most common distinction between the child and the adolescent according to Enlightenment philosophy was the adolescent's ability to exercise the hallowed faculty of reason. Consequently, children were often othered and allegorized in demeaning metaphors such as the 'savage' in ways that were rarely applied to the adolescent. See for instance Andrew O'Malley's discussion of the 'child-as-other' in *The Making of the Modern Child* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 11–13; Anna Weirida Rowland's study of the animalization of the child in Part I of *Romanticism and Childhood*, and Richardson, pp. 20–21.

³³ For this reason, despite the merit of their individual conclusions, the 'binary' rather than 'spectrum' approach remains my primary criticism with otherwise effective works such as Michals' *Books for Children, Books for Adults*, and the studies of Rowland and O'Malley, which only minimally credit the presence of adolescence at all.

more holistic theorists have observed, 'the shifting meanings of adolescence correspond to perceptual shifts about the nature as well as the value of [any given] society and the individuals within it.'³⁴

Despite this, within the last fifty years, an increased critical consensus within the fields of both childhood studies and histories of youth has centred on the eighteenth century in particular, and an acknowledgment of adolescence as a unique life stage in eighteenth-century Britain is now almost universally accepted within the academic community.³⁵ 'Framed by the writings of John Locke at its beginning and of the Romantic poets at its end, and with the strident figure of Rousseau at centre stage, for most [youth] historians the eighteenth century holds pride of place,' writes Cunningham.³⁶ The marked increase of this widespread acceptance of eighteenth-century adolescence partially stems from an increasingly wide-ranging and interdisciplinary interest in the subject, which itself owed much of its original conception in response to certain arguments advanced in Phillipe Ariés' landmark study *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1960).³⁷ In particular, Ariés' claim that adolescence did not exist in the pre-industrial Western world prompted a series of counter-studies from across the humanities and social sciences which increasingly documented the presence of vibrant youth subcultures within many contexts and countries across eighteenth-century Europe.³⁸ This research included a particularly rich critical tradition amongst literary scholars, who continue to this day to offer speculation on the correlative proximity between the conceptualisation of the adolescent and the coetaneous rise of the novel.³⁹ Katherine Gustafson, for example, has argued that it was the very popularity of early novels with teen protagonists and characters that subsequently led publishers and booksellers to begin marketing and aiming material specifically at young people, and Lynn Hunt

³⁴ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 9. See too Levi and Schmitt: 'Nowhere, in any historical period, can youth be defined simply by biological or legal criteria. Everywhere, always, it exists only in a form invested with values and symbols. From one context to another, from one era to another, young people assume different functions.' Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, eds., *A History of Young People in the West*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), II, pp. 2, 7-8.

³⁵ See for instance Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea*; Gustafson, 'Assimilation and Indeterminacy', 638-639 and 'Coming of Age in the Eighteenth-Century Novel' (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2012); Shawn Lisa Maurer, 'At Seventeen: Adolescence in Sense and Sensibility', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 25.4 (2013), 721-50; Anja Müller, *Framing Childhood in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals and Prints, 1689-1789* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); and Michals, *Books for Children*.

³⁶ Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, pp. 58-9. See too Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 23-7.

³⁷ Phillipe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Knopf, 1962).

³⁸ See for instance Levi & Schmitt, *A History of Young People in the West*; John Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770 - Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, trans. Graeme Dunphy (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986) and *Youth in the Middle Ages*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg & Felicity Riddy (York: York Medieval Press, 2004).

³⁹ See for instance Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea*; Maurer, 'At Seventeen'; Anja Müller, *Framing Childhood* and Michals, *Books for Children*.

sees the two as so interconnected that 'it is in fact impossible to tell which... was cause and which was effect.'⁴⁰ Stephanie Hershinow, the most recent authority on the subject, puts it slightly more bluntly: 'Quite simply... the claim that adolescence... does not constitute a distinct life stage [in the eighteenth century] evaporates once we turn our attention to [its] novels,' she states.⁴¹ Other social and literary historians have likewise been so convinced by the specifically literary origins of the adolescent that they have even attempted to ascribe a date to the process. Frank Musgrove for instance asserts that 'the adolescent was invented at the same time as the steam-engine. The principal architect of the latter was Watt in 1765, of the former Rousseau in 1762.'⁴²

The especial influence of Rousseau on the formation of the category of adolescence in the eighteenth century cannot be over-stated. *Émile* (1762), the work that was banned upon publication for its revolutionary portrayal of youth, consisted of five volumes discussing the maturation of its eponymous subject, the first three of which are devoted to Émile's childhood, with a fifth that discussed his adulthood. However, the volume that attracted controversy from his contemporaries was the fourth, which delineated an intermediary life stage asserted to be distinct from the categories either side of it. In this intermediary stage, Émile is described as 'neither a child nor a man,' and enters a stage described as both stirring and dangerous, worth quoting at length:

Comme le mugissement de la mer précède de loin la tempête, cette orageuse révolution s'annonce par le murmure des passions naissantes; une fermentation sourde avertit de l'approche du danger. Un changement l'humeur, des emportements fréquents, une continuelle agitation d'esprit, rendent l'enfant presque indisciplinable. Il devient sourd à la voix qui le rendoit docile; c'est un lion dans sa fièvre; il méconnaît son guide, il ne veut plus être gouverné... Si son emportement se change en fureur, s'il s'irrite & s'attendant d'un instant à l'autre, s'il verse des pleurs sans sujet, si, près des objets qui commencent à devenir dangereux pour lui son pouls s'élève & son oeil s'enflamme, si la main d'une femme se posant sur la sienne le fait frissonner, s'il se trouble ou s'intimide auprès d'elle... prends garde à toi; ...ne quitte plus un moment le gouvernail, ou tout est perdu.

⁴⁰ Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 21, and Gustafson, 'Coming of Age.' See too Gustafson's 'Assimilation and Indeterminacy.'

⁴¹ Stephanie Hershinow, *Born Yesterday: Inexperience and the Early Realist Novel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2019), p. 139n.3.

⁴² Frank Musgrove, *Youth and the Social Order* (London: Routledge, 1964), p. 33. See too Alan Richardson: '[the notion of the youth], not simply as distinct, but as somehow unique, qualitatively different from (and in some senses superior to) the adult becomes prominent only with Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), and it is to a large extent through Romantic literature that childhood has gained the central position it continues to hold in the Western cultural tradition' (*Literature, Education, Romanticism*, p. 9); J. H. Van de Berg, *The Changing Nature of Man: Introduction to a Cultural Psychology* (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 26; George Boas, *The Cult of Childhood* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1966), p. 31; David Grylls, *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in the Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), p. 18, and Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1982), pp. 57-9.

(As the roaring of the sea precedes the blustering storm, so the murmur of passions portends this tempestuous revolution in the human frame; a slow fermentation foretells the approaching danger. A change of temper, frequent transports of passion, and agitation of the mind, render the youth almost ungovernable. He becomes deaf to the voice, to which he had been hitherto so docile; he is a lion his fury; he knows no guide, and throws off all subjection... [I]f his transports are changed into frenzy; if his passion is raised one minute and subsides the next; if he bursts into tears without a cause; if when he approaches the objects which grow dangerous to his repose, his pulse beats high and his eye is inflamed; if he trembles at the touch of a female hand; if he is agitated or awed by fears when she is present; [...] take care of thyself! ...If thou quittest the helm but for a moment, the vessel is lost.)⁴³

Rousseau's description of *Émile* in his teens bears an undeniable resemblance to what modern readers might recognize as the psychological features of adolescence. However, in opposition to the claims of Musgrove and several other historians, this thesis rejects the treatment of Rousseau as the founder or 'inventor' of adolescence, on the simple grounds that such a stage affects male and female young people equally. Although *Émile*'s maturation resembles a demonstrably modern version of adolescence, Rousseau's perception of the complementary role of the sexes meant that *Émile*'s feminine counterpart *Sophy* is denied such a stage.⁴⁴ Accordingly, whereas the age of fifteen marks a chaotic and emotional new life stage for *Émile* which is between childhood and manhood, *Sophy* at fifteen is automatically already a 'mature' adult woman: ('Avec une si grande maturité de jugement, & formée à tous égards comme une fille de vingt ans, *Sophie*, à quinze, ne sera point traitée en enfant

⁴³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'Éducation*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1762), II, pp. 82-3, and *Emilius, or an Essay on Education*, trans. Thomas Nugent, 2 vols. (London, 1763), I, pp. 314-5. All French quotations from *Émile* in the thesis are taken from the Hague 1762 edition, which (along with the Amsterdam edition of the same year) was a direct copy of the original, outlawed Paris text; adjacent English translations are taken from Nugent's 1763 edition.

⁴⁴ Rousseau's perception of the role of the sexes is best summarised at the beginning of Book V: 'L'[homme] doit être actif & fort, l'autre passif & faible: il faut nécessairement que l'un veuille & puisse, il suffit que l'autre résiste peu. Ce principe établi, il s'ensuit que la femme est faite spécialement pour plaire à l'homme... Ce n'est pas ici la loi de l'amour, j'en conviens; mais c'est celle de la nature, antérieure à l'amour même. Si la femme est faite pour plaire & pour être subjuguée, elle doit se rendre agréable à l'homme au lieu de le provoquer' (II, p. 3). ('[The man] must be active and strong, the [woman] passive and feeble; one must necessarily have power and will; it is sufficient that the other makes but a faint resistance. This principle being laid down, it follows that woman is framed particularly for the delight and pleasure of man... This is not the law of love, I grant you; but it is that of nature, antecedent to love itself. If woman is framed to please, and to live in subjection, she must render herself agreeable to man, instead of provoking him to wrath' (*Emilius*, II, p. 177). Much critical scholarship has addressed Rousseau's problematic stance on gender relations but the two studies I have found most reliable are Nicole Ferman's *Domestic Passions: Rousseau, Woman and Nation* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997) and Mary Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). Trouille's study is of particular interest and seeks to reconcile Rousseau's anti-feminist views with their 'enthusiastic approval among so many women and [its...] tremendous impact on their ideals, behaviour and family life' (pp. 2-3). For an insightful discussion on *Sophy* specifically, see Denise Schaeffer, 'Reconsidering the Role of *Sophie* in Rousseau's *Émile*', *Polity*, 30.4 (Summer 1998), 607-26. Other well-respected studies of Rousseau and gender include Jean B. Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and Penny A. Weiss, *Gendered Community: Rousseau, Sex and Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

par ses parents', II, pp. 80-1).⁴⁵ The language of book five seems to recognise only two states for Sophy: past tense description of her childhood state ('La petite Sophie dans son enfance...') and present tense description of her state as a woman ('Sophie a l'esprit agréable sans être brillant', II, pp. 73-4).⁴⁶ The implications of this gendered discrimination mean that the present study perceives Rousseau's androcentric theory of adolescence to be of a fundamentally separate nature to the more egalitarian ideology of youth apparent in writers such as William Godwin, Maria Edgeworth or Jane Austen. It is for this reason that readers of this thesis will find its primary interest in Rousseau lies in the formal and generic literary innovations of *Émile*, as opposed to its developmental theories of adolescence.

Rousseau of course is not the only author associated with the rise of the adolescent protagonist. At the time of the commencement of this thesis in 2017, the most influential documentation of the literary origins of adolescence remained Patricia Meyer Spacks' 1981 work *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination*. The intention of Spacks' ambitious project was to focus not on the characteristic features of adolescence from one individual writer or period, but rather to compare eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels in conjunction, producing a 'survey' of youth's changing representations within fiction over time. Spacks' close readings of eighteenth-century novels in particular are especially noteworthy, and have provided an important point of reference for my own research. However, with such a large span of focus, *The Adolescent Idea* has attracted increasing criticism for its over-generalising and at times isolationist approach to its chosen texts, and I concur with those critics who have problematised the methodology of certain of its chapters to characterise the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries by just a single novel from each.⁴⁷ My own study has avoided this danger by shrinking Spacks' sphere of focus of three hundred years to fewer than fifty, identifying micro patterns across a specific series of decades rather than macro changes across a scale of centuries. Nevertheless, despite the mixed critical reception of its methodology, Spacks' theorisation of youth has directly or indirectly effected an undeniable influence on the wider literary critical tradition and has elevated the role of the literary adolescent to a prominence unknown before its publication. Its thoughtful observations on the complexities of the relationship between literary and social history have functioned as a model for

⁴⁵ 'So greatly improved in her judgment, and formed in every respect like a girl of twenty, Sophia, though she is only fifteen, will not be treated as a child by her parents.' *Emilius*, II, p. 253.

⁴⁶ 'When Sophy was little...' and 'Sophy's mind is pleasing but not brilliant.' *Ibid*, II, p. 246.

⁴⁷ For examples of this and other instances of the varied critical response to Spacks' *Adolescent Idea*, see Clara Claiborne Park's 'Review: Us or Them', *The Hudson Review*, 35.4 (Winter, 1982-1983), 654-659; Susan D. Tally's 'Too Good to Miss: Review of Spacks' "Adolescent Idea"', *English Journal*, 74 (Dec 1985), 49-50; Lois Kuznet's 'Living with Adolescent Literature', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 8.1 (Spring 1983), 21-32 and Sally Mitchell's "Review: The Adolescent Idea", *Library Journal*, 106.13 (7 January 1981), 1424.

several subsequent youth historians, and have been invaluable in informing my own research approach in the current study.⁴⁸

The most recent influential addition to the field of literary youth studies however has been Stephanie Hershinow's 2019 study *Born Yesterday: Inexperience and the Early Realist Novel*, published roughly halfway through the writing of the current study. In her own words, Hershinow's research

takes as its provocation the fact that the early realist novel so consistently chooses as its subject the figure of the adolescent without predictably following adolescence into adulthood... I explain why eighteenth-century novels find attractions in stubbornly youthful figures by illuminating the formal problems attendant to early realism that the figure of the adolescent promised to address – foremost among these, the technical difficulty of representing both everyday, lived experience and, at the same time, exemplary conduct.' (p.7)

To this end, Hershinow's primary innovation is to introduce the organizing principle of a motif: the figure of the 'novice', a youthful protagonist who can simultaneously model exemplary piety and innocence while also retaining a certain moral impunity from the consequences of their misjudgements and/or inexperience. By understanding eighteenth-century novels through 'novice' characters who operate within the world yet whose innocence remains untouched by it, Hershinow's focus lies not on 'the correction of young people by outside forces, or the process of reconciliation between young persons and their worlds', but rather 'the incommensurability between those worlds as a way of understanding character' (p. 25). In this manner, Hershinow's conclusion – that this incommensurability within the developing novel form increasingly constituted a 'skepticism towards character development' (p. 8) – could not have produced a more timely affirmation of the need for my own research, with a sphere of interest that begins in the same decades in which Hershinow's focus ends. In other words, by examining the eighteenth century's increased ability to tolerate a separation between 'novelistic form [and] individual formation', Hershinow's study examines the exact pre-conditions that prepared and established the patterns of broad-mindedness and permissiveness examined in my own study. *Born Yesterday* is, to all intents and purposes, a preliminary study of tolerance.

While I accept the broad remit of Hershinow's study, the proximity of our respective projects has also highlighted certain aspects of her argument which remain problematic to me. Perhaps foremost amongst these is the limited nature of her scope: Hershinow's 'novices' are described to be

⁴⁸ Spacks devotes much thought to this issue and concludes that although it is not the place of literary critics to derive historical conclusions from literary texts, they undertake the important role of adding 'nuance' and 'contour' to that scholarly 'terrain [typically] claimed by social scientists.' See Spacks, pp. 10-18; for Lawrence Stone's objections to such an approach, see "Old Views of Youth: a Review of 'The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination' by Patricia Meyer Spacks", *The New York Times* (20 September 1981), section 7, p. 12.

'prototypically female' and are (primarily) derived from just five characters from four novelists. Moreover, this already limited collection of characters is itself selected in a manner which seems far from being either universal or representative (for instance, the titular heroines of Richardson's *Clarissa* and Austen's *Emma* are already too pious and knowledgeable respectively to convincingly seem 'novices', and so Anna Howe and Harriet Smith are rather awkwardly conscripted to the role in these novels instead). To some extent, all research naturally relies on selective examples, and it is normal to find exceptions to every rule. Despite this, my own interest lies in more holistic patterns of representation, and so in novels which contain more than one teen character (such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Nightmare Abbey* and *Caleb Williams*,) I have on the whole attempted to provide a systematic consideration of each, in order to demonstrate an argument of principles as opposed to exceptions. It is hoped that the increased validity of this approach serves to justify the measure of balance which inevitably characterises certain of my conclusions as to these writers' overall levels of tolerance.

Despite the proximity of Hershnow's research to my own, the literary study that I have found to be most informative for my own project is Alan Richardson's 1994 work *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice: 1780-1832*. While Richardson's history is not a study of adolescence, its focus on the politicisation of Romantic-era educational thought offers the most comprehensive discussion I have yet encountered on Romantic-era literature and its portrayals of the developmental process. Richardson's central contention is that the expansion of education at the turn of the nineteenth century became adopted primarily as a method of ensuring increased submission and obedience to the educator, here symbolic of the patriarchal master. It was to this historic aim that Richardson accounts for the increased inclusion of previously infantilized demographic groups who had historically been denied education, those summarized as 'women, colonized peoples, and the nascent proletariat', in addition to children themselves. Richardson's argument is convincing and his detailed knowledge of primary material substantive (his analysis of William Blake and the Lake poets is particularly insightful). However, Richardson's assumption of primarily conservative and/or authoritarian patriarchal motives to the period's expansion of education, to the exclusion of more liberal or egalitarian pedagogical aims, has been roundly challenged. For instance, Charles Knight has critiqued Richardson's underemphasis of the 'independent educational movement' consisting of thinkers such as Godwin, Cobbett and Wollstonecraft, whom Richardson mentions principally only as 'a stimulus to more conservative theorists.'⁴⁹ While I certainly accept Richardson's notion of a certain amount of growing moral conservatism throughout the general trajectory of the Romantic-era, my

⁴⁹ Charles Knight, 'Review: Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 95.4 (Oct., 1996), 562-5 (p. 564).

focus on those thinkers of the period who avowed demonstrably permissive and/or tolerant views on adolescent independence and education is thus intended to contribute an invaluable measure of balance to these ongoing critical discussions. Moreover, while ‘youths’ and ‘young people’ do make a presence in Richardson’s history, they are by no means its focus. Although the Romantic child is discussed in detail and the young woman occasionally distinguished from the adult woman, the adolescent category often seems very much taken for granted within Richardson’s history.

Finally, no study on adolescence would be complete without acknowledgment of the fundamental legacy of Franco Moretti’s 1987 study *Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. Moretti’s innovation was not simply to examine the ways in which adolescence ‘achieve[d] its symbolic centrality’ because of the eighteenth century’s ‘rethinking of youth,’ but also to document the *Bildungsroman*’s formal ability to ‘abstrac[t] from “real” youth a “symbolic” one,’ equated specifically with the notion of modernity. According to Moretti, ‘Youth is, so to speak, modernity’s “essence”, the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the *future* rather than in the past.’⁵⁰ Accordingly, Moretti’s description of the ‘revolutionary impetus’, ‘dynamism and instability’ that modernity shares with youth has led subsequent theorists to turn away from Georg Lukacs’ understanding of the developmental novel as representative of a nostalgic drive to create ‘utopian perfection.’⁵¹ In its place, there has been an increasing acknowledgement and interest in the sometimes deviance of the *Bildungsheld* (the protagonist of the *Bildung* narrative), and an identification of what Jed Esty and Elisha Cohn have recently termed the ‘antidevelopment plot.’⁵² Such readings, also termed ‘anti-instrumentalist’, offer a challenge to the understandings of the purported aims of the *Bildungsroman*, a genre that has standardly been associated with self-improvement and application since Ian Watt’s influential study of the emergence of the novel itself.⁵³ These theorists have produced those modified codifications necessary to allow greater interpretative liberty to the characters and themes that the form contains, exactly such as the female *Bildungsroman*. As Lisa Downward has rightly observed, for the modern theorist, the *Bildungsroman* might more accurately be thought of ‘as spectrum’, as opposed to a genre.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Franco Moretti, *Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. Albert Sbragia (London: Verso, 1987), p. 5.

⁵¹ Georg Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (London: Merlin Press, 1963), p. 70.

⁵² Elisha Cohn, *Still Life: Suspended Development in the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 4; Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 2.

⁵³ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957).

⁵⁴ Lisa Downward, *New Perspectives on the European Bildungsroman*, eds. G. Summerfield, L. Downward (London: Continuum Publishing, 2010), esp. pp. 168-172.

Adopting the notion of the *Bildung* as 'spectrum' has proved useful to the aims of this thesis because it accounts for various presentations of supposedly problematic character categories such as women and adolescents (not to mention both simultaneously, in the form of young adolescent women). These characters often defy the narrative restraints imposed upon them and challenge former generic conventions (for example by showing superior development to their male or adult counterparts). In particular, approaching *Bildung* as spectrum releases adolescent characters from the standard developmental and didactic expectations that the form's own critical heritage has historically projected onto them. To a theorist such as Lukacs, the *Bildungsroman* as antidevelopmental fiction might seem a contradiction of terms. Yet it is precisely because of this rigidity that this thesis calls for a liberation of *Bildung* to the more accommodating concept of spectrum. At its heart, my research constitutes a critique of established methodologies for reading certain specific generic conventions, and encourages its readers to pause in those textual moments when educational treatises cease to educate and advice manuals cease to advise. In a discipline in which it is almost automatic to think of fictionalised youths in terms of their *Bildung* trajectory, this thesis lingers on adolescent characters who are suffered and tolerated when being slow (or even unwilling) to learn and develop. In highlighting those youths whose deviance from previous norms of propriety and submission is tolerated by those adults around them, this thesis follows those genres which identify and disseminate a counternarrative; one that encourages us to revisit our hermeneutic assumptions about forms and formation, *Bildung* and education, didacticism and tolerance.

Structuring Youth

The trajectory of the thesis is broadly chronological, beginning with Enlightenment and eighteenth-century developmental philosophers before culminating in the decades after the turn of the century. It is divided into three parts, each examining one specific aspect of adolescence that became the ideological site of adult tolerance: education (Part One), conduct (Part Two) and sexuality (Part Three). Generally, my genres of focus are divided up between these three parts by way of the relevant content of their themes: educational treatises and pedagogical novels to Part One, conduct manuals and didactic fiction to Part Two, and so on. However, the overall aim of the thesis is not to reclaim any such generic categories as liberal or radical, but rather to draw attention to them as the formal sites of certain representations and ideologies of youth that themselves exhibit demonstrable tolerance.

Although this thesis focuses on those adult theorisations of youth that are consistently and unitedly tolerant, its fundamental assumption is that there was no one universally organizing theory of youth of the time, and certainly none as neat and tidy as to merit retrospective discussion of the

single figure of the 'Romantic Adolescent' or the 'Romantic Youth.'⁵⁵ In reality, there were at the very least three co-existing ideological approaches that the current critical tradition recognizes to be widespread eighteenth-century attitudes towards youth.⁵⁶ Perhaps the most dominant at the time was the associationist model developed by David Hartley and John Locke, whose 'tabula rasa' theory of experience and the mind is usually acknowledged to be the most influential and lasting model of Enlightenment developmental theory. Also referred to as the 'environmentalist' view, this approach characterised the youth by a Lockean notion of inexperience, a blank slate that required external input in order to gain ideas and associations of its own.⁵⁷ Secondly, Rousseau's depiction of the 'natural' man and his youthful predecessor is often referred to as the 'utopian' approach and emphasised the child's relationship with nature. It is this approach that is often associated with the Romantic poets and their emphasis on the innate innocence of the child. While discussion of these first two approaches dominate Part One of this thesis, which examines the legacies of Locke and Rousseau on the later educational theory of the Romantic era, Parts Two and Three are equally pre-occupied with a third approach: the traditional Christian perspective. Circulated primarily by Methodist and Evangelical writers, the works of these thinkers interpreted youths to have inherited the effects of original sin from the Fall of Man, and to require urgent intervention to counter its divine consequence.

Inevitably, other historians have also identified other categories and ideological eighteenth-century approaches to youth in addition to these ascendant three. Lawrence Stone for instance examines the presence of a fourth 'biological' view, in which the youth's character and features are 'genetically determined at conception,' and Alan Richardson cites the hypothetical existence of at

⁵⁵ It is for this reason that I have similarly found it necessary within the present study to adopt that contentious term 'Romantic' only with application to a general historical period as opposed to an ideological set of ideas (such as my references to 'the Romantic-era Teen' as opposed to 'the Romantic Teen'). While I certainly accept the insights of Jerome McGann and others in their defence of the use of the term 'Romanticism' in contexts more inclusive than the terms' historic association with a specifically masculine and poetic canonical legacy, it is my feeling that more research is needed that unites both poetic and prose representations of adolescence within the period before a more encompassing understanding of the Romantic Teen can be reached. See *Romanticism, History, Historicism: Essays on an Orthodoxy*, ed. D.W. Davies (New York: Routledge, 2009), esp. 'Romanticism, Feminism, History, Historicism' by Anne Mellor and Susan Wolfson, pp. 143-162, and Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), p. 19.

⁵⁶ Richardson comments for example that 'Contrary to the common belief that Romantic authors work from a shared notion of childhood such as "original innocence", no single or simple conception of the child characterizes the writings of the canonical Romantics, let alone the still more diverse body of texts from which their works is usually abstracted... literary representations of children during this era range from Wordsworth's "best philosopher" and Lamb's dream children to the over-indulged Middleton brats in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and the barely sentient, drooling "varlet" of Joanna Baillie's "A Mother to her Waking Infant."' *Literature, Education, Romanticism*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁷ The most useful study I have found of Locke's developmental theory is Nathan Tarcov's *Locke's Education for Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), which offers detailed, comprehensive discussions of numerous aspects of Lockean educational philosophy. Alternatively, a more accessible introduction to Locke's views on education can be found in *The Continuum Companion to Locke*, eds. S. Savonius-Wroth, P. Schuurman & J. Walmsley (London: Continuum, 2010), esp. pp. 137-42, 265-69.

least four more: the 'sentimental' approach, the 'maternal,' the 'ethnographic' and the 'transcendental.'⁵⁸ Although it is beyond the scope of the present study to comment on the usefulness or import of these various categories or approaches, the especial socio-cultural effects of the ideological transition from Locke's Enlightenment model of childhood inexperience to Rousseau's Romantic model of childhood innocence (sometimes characterized as a shift from 'plastic' to 'organic' developmental theory) remains of especial interest to this thesis.⁵⁹ Rousseau's pedagogical theory had emphasised the tendency of conventional education in producing obeisant 'slave' children, both dependent on and wholly subject to adult authority. He explicitly refuted the Lockean principle of training children to be members of a society governed by overtly hierarchical structures to which they would aspire to be an 'obedient Subject' (Locke, p. 145). At a basic, fundamental level, it is the ideological unity prompted by this theoretical shift that unites the otherwise disparate genres and stylistic ideologies examined within the range of this thesis. Certain readers might think it strange that a thesis about an increase of tolerance gives such centrality to an ideological process that turns away from a thinker like Locke, himself the author the *Letters Concerning Toleration* and recently termed 'the great defender of liberalism and toleration.'⁶⁰ However, various recent scholars have attested that despite the liberality of certain aspects of Locke's educational philosophy, its initial effect on eighteenth-century attitudes towards youth was a heightened sense of conservatism and caution rather than that of increased tolerance. Uday Singh Mehta and Andrew O'Malley for instance have both characterised the eighteenth-century, post-Lockean attitude towards youth with that of an

⁵⁸ In particular, the sentimental approach is especially important for understanding attitudes towards the period's understandings of affect, psychology and relationships; Hunt observes that 'as sensibility... came to be more and more emphasized... a stern, repressive father was incompatible with the new model of the family as emotional center for the nurturing of children.' The landmark work on the period's sentimentalism has traditionally been G.J. Barker Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), but Benfield's treatment of sensibility has subsequently been challenged by more recent critics, most significantly Ildiko Csengei and Markman Ellis. To my knowledge, there remains no full-length study which has focused on sentimentalism as an ideation of youth. See Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ildiko Csengei, *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Stone, pp. 254-5; Hunt, p. 21, and Richardson, pp. 11-12, 15-17.

⁵⁹ For an insightful discussion of Rousseau's designation as (a) 'Romantic,' see Thomas McFarland's excellent Introduction in his study *Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), esp. pp. 1-24, and Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). The terms 'plastic' and 'organic' usually refer to Locke's description of the child as impressionable 'wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases,' and Rousseau's of the youth as 'la jeune plante... naturellement bon' ('a young sprig... naturally good). See Rousseau, *Émile*, I, pp. 3, 127; *Emilius*, I, pp. 3, 362 and John Locke, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education' [1763], *The Educational Writings of John Locke: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes*, ed. James Axtell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 325. All further references to Locke's *Thoughts* will be taken from this edition.

⁶⁰ See Samuel Zinaich Jr, *John Locke's Moral Revolution: From Natural Law to Moral Relativism* (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 2006), p. 4, and Janis Dawson, 'John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England by Samuel F. Pickering: A Review,' *The Journal of Educational Thought*, 17.1 (April 1983), 66-9 (p. 68).

'anxiety' and 'urgency' occasioned by youthful susceptibility to ideas and associations perceived harmful by society.⁶¹ As Ellenor Fenn wrote in the Preface of a children's book of 1783, 'If the human mind be a *rasa tabula*-, you to whom it is entrusted, should be cautious what is written upon it. Who would leave their common-place book among fools, to be scrawled upon?'⁶²

In analysing this shift from plastic to organic theories of development, Chapters One and Two first concern themselves with tolerant attitudes towards adolescence as manifest in the educational philosophy of the time, beginning with Locke and Rousseau and progressing on to William Godwin, Erasmus Darwin and Maria Edgeworth. I commence with Enlightenment educational theory because, to a certain extent, all representations of youth examined subsequently in the thesis can trace their ideological foundations back to the educational philosophies of Locke and Rousseau. Together with Godwin and Edgeworth, Part One presents Rousseau as a Romantic-era educational theorist who both adopted and adapted the novel format in order to defend the youth's unique right to liberty and independence. With a central focus on the generic constraints of those existing literary forms seeking to represent the maturational process, these first two chapters emphasise the significance of the new generic category of pedagogical fiction. Combining disparate aspects of the *Bildungsroman*, the didactic children's story, the pedagogical manual and the educational treatise, I argue that the pedagogical fiction of Rousseau, Godwin and Edgeworth represents not just a documentation of youth itself but also a structural investigation into the representative constraints of writing *about* the education of youth. This type of fiction narrates pedagogical theory within a diegetic chronology that evidences real-time consequences, and therefore shows itself equally concerned with the education of its readers as its protagonists. The result was the creation of an entirely new form that offered an ideology of youth which itself debated and destabilized existing literary structures for development. The pedagogical novel was, then, a narrative of its protagonist's education that was in itself educative.

Part One's focus on didactic and educational generic forms is carried over into Part Two's investigation of conduct literature. However, whereas the audiences of pedagogical manuals and educational treatises were typically those parents or pedagogues involved in the management of youths, the addressees of conduct literature were typically those very youths themselves. My main purpose in Chapter Three is to challenge the generic associations of conservatism and didacticism that the critical tradition has historically imputed to conduct literature as a whole. In it, I advocate new ways of reading the conduct genre which highlight the representational potential for an ideological

⁶¹ See O'Malley, *The Modern Child*, and Uday Singh Mehta, *The Anxiety of Freedom: Imagination and Individuality in Locke's Political Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁶² Ellenor Fenn, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: or, Dialogues in Short Sentences*, 2 vols. (London: Marshall, 1783), I, pp. ix-x.

tolerance within its formal goals and structures. In particular, I point to the ways in which Evangelical theology (and other key doctrinal principles of conservative Christianity) can be used to defend, as opposed to denounce, such 'teenish' traits as 'pertinacity', 'obstinacy' and 'resistance.' In doing so, I demonstrate that even those conduct books written by such devout Christians as Hannah More, Jane West and the Ongar Taylors can acknowledge and affirm the adolescent's right to independence, and evidence tolerant responses to teen (mis)conduct.

If Part Two's focus is on behavioural conduct, Part Three is concerned with (mis)conduct of a specifically sexual nature. The popular conception of contemporary attitudes to sex at the turn of the nineteenth century is that it was a taboo activity that was condemned in all contexts outside marital procreation. By contrast, in Chapters Four and Five I argue that the ideological tolerance afforded to the Romantic-era teen could at times extend itself even so far as to encompass adolescent sexual indiscretion. As will be shown, myriad recent studies across the humanities and social sciences have published data and other historical evidence that contradict popular narratives suggesting an absence of frequent recreational sex at this time. My methodology in challenging such popular narratives is twofold. In Chapter Four, I compare close readings of two separate texts with a shared generic interest in biography: one, the autobiography of the social reformer Francis Place; the other, *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), a satirical novel by Thomas Love Peacock, itself a burlesque biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Excepting the shared radicalism of their atheistic authors, these otherwise very different works are shown to share comparable generic innovations for the propagation of an ideological tolerance, such as certain narratological methods adopted by vocally permissive narrators. In Chapter Five, I identify a similar tolerance in the work of Jane Austen and her formal experiments with the courtship novel. Austen is not typically an author associated with sex, but my analyses of her courtship fiction identify not just the presence of sex in her works but also very clear hermeneutic models for how to read and respond to those characters who practise it. Through a detailed discussion of Austen's Anglican theology and close readings of those characters in her works who seek to condemn and ostracise figures who are guilty of sexual experimentation, I argue that Austen's position on adolescent sexuality is much more expansive than certain aspects of the critical tradition have historically suggested. Much as with the Evangelical conduct writers in Chapter Three, whose doctrinal beliefs encouraged the exercise of Christian forgiveness and tolerance over condemnation, I therefore advocate new ways of reading Austen's courtship fiction which highlight the presence of an ideological tolerance in its representation of the teen sexual impetus.

It is not within the scope of the present thesis to produce conclusive answers regarding the causation and sources of the ideological tolerance identified within these five chapters. Whilst this is partly because the breadth and complexity of such a project would require a separate study of its own,

it is primarily because it is necessary to first establish the evidence of a truth before one can effectively speculate as to its cause. To this end, it is only after having confidently established a consistent pattern of tolerance throughout such a wide-ranging series of genres that my thesis finally reaches its own maturity by reflecting back on its beginning, and offers closing speculation on one of the possible influencing factors on the rise of such tolerance. To some extent, the various historical, social and economical and literary pre-conditions responsible for such tolerance might reasonably be assumed to be similar to those unique factors that were themselves necessary for the rise of new subject categories like the child and the adolescent in the first place.⁶³ However, in an Epilogue inspired by the methodology of Frances Ferguson's enlightening exposition of the rise of the novel through an analysis of rape law,⁶⁴ I instead close my study by turning to seek symbolic connections between the British literary trends of the Romantic era with French family legislation passed by the new First Republic. In the same decades that British writers were disseminating their own tolerant ideas about adolescents in the ways discussed in this thesis, French revolutionary lawmakers and litigators were passing a series of unprecedented new laws and regulations that legally recognized the rights of youths and granted them state-sanctioned protections against the impositions of 'tyrannous' parental authority. Unsurprisingly, these tolerant new laws did not last, and many were determinedly revoked with the ascension of the more controlling policies and philosophies of the power-hungry Napoleon. This, at least, is the most common understanding of these events, which my conclusion finds room to challenge. Accordingly, my Epilogue speculates to what extent the tolerant patterns identified in the British literature examined in this thesis might be considered a resurrected or related form of originally French revolutionary ideas and practices. While it cannot be doubted that the collective British reaction against the anarchic violence of the Revolution was strong, I close my study by raising several important questions about the relationship between specific aspects of revolutionary litigation regarding youth and a corresponding tolerance of youth in British culture and literature. Ultimately, my conclusion calls for more research to be done on the French Revolution's legacy on British ideologies of youth independence and the infrastructure of the patriarchal family. As Balzac wrote in

⁶³ Andrew O'Malley, for instance, lists such factors as 'the onset of the industrial revolution, the democratic revolutions in America and France[,] the rationalization of the sciences and of medical practices [and...] radical changes to class relations' to be the immediate cause of the variety of literatures that themselves affirmed the consumer category of the 'modern child' (p. 1). Cunningham also cites the effects of increasingly secular attitudes towards children and childhood and the 'privacy and comfort of upper- and middle-class family life,' as well as the influence of writers such as Locke, Rousseau and the Romantic poets. *Children and Childhood*, pp. 58-9.

⁶⁴ Frances Ferguson, 'Rape and the Rise of the Novel', *Representations*, 20 (Autumn, 1987), 88-112.

1841, by executing the French king, the Republic also 'cut off the head of' many other fathers than that of merely Louis XVI's.⁶⁵

The Rise of the 'Teen': Terms and Definitions

Finally, a note on terminology. Achieving taxonomical validity in the present study is of paramount importance because many of the original terms commonly used to describe young people at the time were themselves the subject of contemporary debate. These discussions were observed especially closely by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century booksellers, who often marketed literary productions by specifying the age of their intended audience within the titles of works themselves (for example, *Self-Cultivation Recommended: Or, Hints to a Youth Leaving School* [1817], or *Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded, in a Series of Familiar Letters... Published... to Cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of Both Sexes* [1740]). However, given that booksellers repeatedly cashed in on the marketing potential of such a scheme, the stated and actual age of readers of such works did not always align. Sarah Trimmer was so frustrated at the frequency of such discrepancies that her *Guardian of Education* (1802) even contained its own definitions of what it meant to read as a 'youth':

Formerly, all were reckoned Children, till they had at least attained their fourteenth year. Now if we may judge from the many little volumes, compared with their contents, we have Young Persons of five, or six years old. However, in our arrangement... we shall, without regard to title pages, take the liberty of adopting the idea of our forefathers, by supposing all young gentlemen and ladies to be Children, till they are fourteen, and young persons till they are at least twenty-one; and shall class the books we examine as they shall appear to us to be suitable to these different stages of life.⁶⁶

To a certain extent, these debates continue to this day, with scholarly research continuing to evidence what Gustafson describes as a 'struggle taking place on a rhetorical level to find a historically accurate term to describe young persons.'⁶⁷ For instance, while Gustafson uses the term 'young persons,' Moretti prefers the term 'youth' and 'youths,' and Spacks and Michals use the terms 'adolescent' and

⁶⁵ 'En coupant la tête de Louis XVI, la République a coupé la tête à tous les pères de famille.' Honoré de Balzac, *Memoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées* [1842], quoted in Yvonne Knibiehler, *Les Pères aussi on t'une Histoire* (Paris: Hachette, 1987), p. 161.

⁶⁶ Sarah Trimmer, *Guardian of Education, a Periodical Work* (London: J. Hatchard, 1802), pp. 65-6.

⁶⁷ See for example *The English Novel 1770-1829, a Biographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, eds. Rainer Schowering, James Raven & Peter Garside (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), whose introduction discusses the complexities involved in its editorial decision to include in its survey 'novels for juveniles or young persons, but to exclude publications more clearly intended to be read by very young children' (pp. 24-5).

'adolescence,' all terms of which come with attendant problems.⁶⁸ Perhaps wisely, Hershinow's reliance on the terminology of the 'novice' allows her to sidestep much of this debate altogether.

In order to retain both a numerical clarity and a historical validity, the preferred term of the present study is that of the 'teen'. Although the unabridged terms 'teenager' (along with 'teenage' and 'teenaged') would not be used until the Edwardian era, the Oxford English Dictionary (O.E.D) documents written forms of the simpler root term 'teen' as early as 1596.⁶⁹ By the end of the eighteenth century, the term was commonplace in literary as well as everyday language.⁷⁰ It is used in myriad canonical writings of the period, including that of *The Tatler*, *The Spectator* and the poems of Lord Byron and Robert Burns, and often also features in the titles of works, such as David Garrick's popular play *Miss in Her Teens* (1717) and Isaac Taylor's *Advice to the Teens* (1818).⁷¹ The term's especial popularity at the turn of the nineteenth century is evidenced by its numerous derivatives which proliferated throughout the following decades - 'teenish' in 1811, 'teening' in 1819, and 'teener' and 'teenhood' further into the century. It is because of the overlap between the dates of my study with this precise period of popularity that these terms are selected as the most appropriate for my own scope of reference. Crucially, as the word 'teenish' would suggest, the notion of the teen was not necessarily restricted to a specifically numerical classification (i.e., a person aged between thirteen and nineteen) but also extended its sphere of reference to those who exhibited behaviour *associated* with people belonging to this age range; one 1818 periodical describes for example a group of raucous middle-aged women mischievously playing 'teenish tricks' on each other.⁷² With this reasoning, characters such as Austen's Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennet are on account of their vitality and youthful spirit counted by the present study as 'teenish' along with their other heroine cousins, despite their numerical age falling outside the thirteen-nineteen range. As this thesis proceeds to

⁶⁸ For instance, the early noun-form 'adolescent' was more a biological term denoting the early transitional state of any life cycle within the natural world, and thus equally applicable to animals and plants as to humans (the first 'adolescent' ever recorded, according to the *O.E.D.*, is not a young man or woman but instead a young horse - a 'folis', or foal [1440AD]). The meaning of the term evolved a series of other meanings over time and did not undergo a standardisation of meaning until the late nineteenth century. See s.v. 'adolescent' and 'adolescence' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed (June 2018), <www.oed.com/view/Entry/2650?redirectedFrom=adolescent#eid>, accessed 11/08/21. Likewise, as Trimmer noted, the vagueness and ambiguity of the terms 'youths' and 'young people' caused similar semiotic problems.

⁶⁹ See s.v. 'teen,' *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed (June 2018), <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198553?rskey=rBOtkP&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>>, accessed 06-09-21.

⁷⁰ See for instance s.v. 'teens' in Johnson's *Dictionary* (II, n.p.) and Daniel Fenning's *The New and Complete Spelling Dictionary and Sure Guide to the English Language* (London: Crowder, 1767), n.p.

⁷¹ See for example Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, 10 (May 3rd 1709), p. 91; Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, no. 533 (November 11th 1712), p. 233; Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (London: Davidson, 1819), II, p. 183.cxxviii, and Robert Burns, *Alloway Kirk, or Tam O'Shanter* (Glasgow: Brash & Reid, 1796), p. 6.

⁷² 'Their teenish tricks, at fifty-six, all wise folks should forego.' See *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 4.21 (1818), p. 256 and *The Morning Post* (Dec 20th 1811), <<https://newspaperarchive.com/london-morning-post-dec-20-1811-p-3/>>, retrieved 05/08/21.

demonstrate, the very fact that certain behaviours (such as the assertion of independence or a tendency towards sexual experimentation) were associated with the adjective form 'teenish' necessarily affirms the fact that contemporary thinkers distinguished such a period as a unique life stage associated with universally recognized characteristics.

For the sake of clarity however, I will also at certain specific times use the differential terms 'adolescence' and 'adolescent' instead of 'teenhood' and 'teen.' This is because it is often useful to be able to distinguish between real or fictional teens of the period and a more abstract sense of the conceptual, theoretical notion of adolescence in general. However, as adolescence is a shifting concept which itself requires its own definition, the meaning of the term as elected by the present study is borrowed from that denoted by Spacks. Breaking away from those theorists who assign a specific age bracket to such a stage, Spacks' study instead designates adolescence as 'the time of life when the individual has developed full sexual capacity but has not yet assumed a full adult role in society' (p. 7). I find this definition particularly effective because it does not interpret adolescence to be a numerical category experienced between arbitrarily-selected age boundaries. Instead, it individualises the adolescent subject in a manner that refers to their own unique and subjective experience of sexual development, whenever and however that might occur. Because this conception of adolescence seeks neither specific behavioural traits (as Smith does, for example, identifying teenage-like behavioural attributes in early-modern apprentices) or temporal age boundaries (as prescribed by Johnson and Fenning),⁷³ Spacks' unique definition thus allows for a degree of historical stability that other taxonomers of youth lack. Although the immediate focus of the present study remains within a relatively short historical period, its references to theories and ideologies which both predate and proceed it by such a large range of time mean therefore that the semantic stability of Spacks' definition of the 'adolescent' will therefore on occasion be more appropriate than the term 'teen'.

⁷³ See Smith, *London Apprentices as Seventeenth-Century Youths*; s.v. 'teen' in Johnson's *Dictionary* (n.p.) and Fenning's *Dictionary*, p. 247.

Part One

Chapter One:

Permissive Pedagogies: Tolerance and the History of Ideas

Introduction

In the year 1797, Ann Radcliffe published her fourth, best-selling gothic Romance novel *The Italian*. The main plot of the novel borrows from a trope that had been used consistently throughout the eighteenth century in numerous romances and novels of sensibility: a young, teen couple in conflict with one or more of their parents as a direct result of their romantic attachment. Vivaldi, the young hero of the novel, spends much of the narrative opposing his aristocratic parents' disavowal of his love interest Ellena – a dispute which causes Vivaldi's mother to attempt Ellena's abduction and murder. The conclusion of Radcliffe's *Italian*, however, differs in an extraordinary way from the early eighteenth-century novels of the same theme which preceded it. Earlier novels of sensibility tended to present two options when parents or guardians detected a young person was romantically interested in someone they disapproved of. Usually, the young person is presented as resisting their romantic feelings in accordance with their parents' wishes, until either a parental blessing or an alternative suitor can be obtained. A happy conclusion to the narrative is thus ensured (as is broadly the case, for example, with Richardson's *Pamela* and Burney's *Evelina*). Sometimes however, an alternative structure was used whereby the young person resisted their parents' recommendation and was duly chastened as a consequence. For Clarissa Harlowe, the most famous example of her kind, the result of rejecting the preferred suitor of her family is rape and eventual death.

By the eve of the nineteenth century however, Radcliffe was able to employ an alternative and radical third option in rejection of these two earlier models. In the conclusion of *The Italian*, after a series of inevitable tribulations, Vivaldi and Ellena are indeed allowed to marry, and do so in a state of great triumph. Rather than featuring a dying young person rejected by the parents in the style of Clarissa Harlowe, the novel instead concludes with the death of the antagonist mother. Furthermore, before her expiration, the Marchesa repents her opposition to her son and officially retracts all she has said to his and Ellena's discredit, offering the couple her full blessing from her deathbed. Confessions, written retractions and formal apologies are given by the other adults who wronged them, and their defiant relationship – the very source of their opposition to parental authority - is officially sanctified by the church in marriage. Such a bold alteration to the typical eighteenth-century romance plot is as striking as the radicalism of its literary import. It is one of the first British novels to

reward its teen characters so completely for nothing other than their persistent resistance to adult authority.

Just three years earlier, William Godwin had begun composing a narrative on a similar theme, but its plot supplied a very different conclusion. *Things As They Are: Or, Caleb Williams* (1794) was intended to function as an accessible, narrative demonstration of the metaphysical critique of the government that Godwin had recently published in the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). Like *The Italian*, the plot of *Caleb Williams* contained the accounts of two teens, both persecuted by adult tormentors. The first, seventeen-year-old Emily Melville, becomes the target of her guardian Mr Tyrell because of her admiration of his rival, Mr Falkland, after he saves her life. Though Emily shares the same high-born lineage as Tyrell and was once his family favourite, her apparent crime causes him to contrive her rape, in an attempt to induce her to accept punishment in the form of a demeaning and unhappy marriage. After she manages to break free from her near-assault, Tyrell has her arrested as his debtor for eighteen years of provisions and board, and she dies in jail only days later. The remainder of the narrative follows eighteen-year-old Caleb himself, who is continually arrested, hounded and persecuted for possessing knowledge of the murderous secret of his master Falkland. After narrating years of misery and pursuit, Godwin's original manuscript for *Caleb Williams* culminated in a legal ultimatum in court. In a case of Falkland's word against Caleb's, Caleb's status as a servant – and a youth – ensures his defeat. He is charged with libel, descends into a mad delirium, and dies. His last words prophesy the epitaph of his own gravestone – '*Here lies what once was a man.*'¹

From this description, the tragic conclusions of the accounts of Caleb and Emily differ strikingly from those of the more positive ones of Vivaldi and Ellena. But this manuscript version was not the ending that Godwin finally submitted for publication. Instead, the narrative in the first and all subsequent official editions of *Caleb Williams* terminates in an altogether different manner.² In the final ultimatum in court, the kind-hearted Caleb falters before the task of accusing Falkland and emphasises in his prosecution the supposed virtue and humanity of his former master. In this version, Falkland confesses all, offers a full legal retraction of all the false claims he had laid to Caleb's account, and concludes by praising Williams' conduct and noble fortitude before the court. Caleb is granted full

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all quotes from *Caleb Williams* are taken from the 1988 Penguin Classics edition, ed. Maurice Hindle, which includes the alternate ending as well as Godwin's 1832 'Account of the Composition.' See William Godwin, *Caleb Williams: Or, Things As They Are* [1794] (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 346.

² The alternative ending was first rediscovered in 1965 by D. Gilbert Dumas, who published an assessment of his findings in the article 'Things As They Were: The Original Ending of *Caleb Williams*', *Studies in English Literature*, 6 (1966), 575-97. Hindle provides a comprehensive discussion of the debates surrounding the text's history and revisions in the extensive prefatory material to his edition of *Caleb Williams*; see Hindle, pp. ix-xlv and pp. lxi-lxii.

and official vindication by all those elders who rejected him. Just as in *The Italian*, the youth is again able to triumph over the cruel machinations of a world of adult oppressors.

From the 1780s until about 1830, myriad fictional accounts of a similar nature to *Caleb Williams* and *The Italian* were transforming the British literary marketplace. Renouncing the narrative trajectories modelled by eighteenth-century fictional youths and their deference to adult authority,³ these new novels exhibited teen characters that were dynamic, independent, and who often even possessed superior moral insight to those adults around them. Although this thesis evidences these kinds of characters to inhabit a wide range of both fictional and non-fictional forms, the focus of Chapters One and Two examines representations of such youths within the specific genres of the pedagogical manual and education treatise. In doing so, these first two chapters add to findings from a growing body of scholars attempting to establish the generic conventions of the ‘pedagogical novel,’ a literary category that is yet to be formalised and which remains only rarely associated with any writers other than Rousseau. In identifying William Godwin and Maria Edgeworth as pedagogical novelists alongside Rousseau, I interpret their fiction to function as accessible, replicatory vehicles that disseminate the same tolerant, developmental theories set out in the formal, less accessible contexts of their education treatises and pedagogical manuals. My purpose in singling out these developmental theorists thus identifies not just an ideological tolerance in the theories themselves, but also in those formal innovations used to disseminate such ideas to a wider, more inclusive audience. As I shall argue, by emphasising the necessity for youth independence and rejecting the punitive pedagogical systems typical of conservative eighteenth-century upbringings, Rousseau, Godwin and Edgeworth were simultaneously reproducing and participating in those wider societal discussions that represent a monumental historic shift in socio-cultural attitudes towards youth.

Locke, Rousseau and the Pedagogical Tradition

The genre of the pedagogical manual or treatise has its written origins in Plato and Socrates. Building on the theories of his own mentor, Plato viewed education as both a moral and ethical enterprise, and founded an academy of his own outside Athens in which to trial new pedagogical systems of his own devising.⁴ In both *The Republic* and *The Laws*, Plato outlines the correct education

³ By this generalised statement my intention is not to deny that there are exceptions regarding the tendency towards youthful deference in the eighteenth-century novel, but merely to point out that in nearly all British novels published before the French revolution the ideal teen is generally represented as submissive and respectful of adult authority. Even supposedly non-compliant characters such as Clarissa Harlowe retain the utmost reverence and respect for their families and often refuse to pass judgment on them (or indeed allow others to do so, such as Anna Howe).

⁴ For the influence of Plato on modern Western pedagogical assumptions see Robin Barrow’s study *Plato and Education* (London & New York: Routledge, 1976).

of youths to be one of the most fundamental conditions for his utopian vision of the idealised Republic, and emphasised the educator's responsibility in leading his mentees in the search for truth and virtue. Although many of these Platonic educational ideals were later taken up in the European Christian tradition, there were few new sustained inquiries on the subject until the seventeenth century. Consequently, it would not be until the time of John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), the Czech philosopher recently termed 'the father of modern education' in light of his early championing for universal education, that any notable works of pedagogical theory would gain an enduring presence within the European history of ideas.⁵

With the dawn of the Enlightenment came a revival of educational philosophy, and the period was marked by the theories of several prominent thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel. However, by far the most influential educational treatise of the Enlightenment was John Locke's landmark *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). In the eighteenth century alone, Locke's *Thoughts* went through at least 53 editions, was translated into all major European languages, and has historically been thought to supersede even Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) in its influence within the European history of ideas.⁶ Further expanded by David Hartley,⁷ Locke's developmental theory returned to the (originally Platonic) principle that the human mind was a 'tabula rasa' or blank slate, with no innate ideas of its own.⁸ For this reason, Locke asserted that the individual must almost always be a product of their education: 'Of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are - good or evil, useful or not - by their education' (p. 114). Although Locke includes suggestions as to the structure of the ideal academic curriculum, the majority of the *Thoughts* is more centrally preoccupied with the question of how to instil virtue and reason into the education (and thus the general temperament) of the youth. For the purpose of early encouraging these desired features, Locke criticised those conservative

⁵ S.v. "John Amos Comenius", *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2nd ed., 17 vols. (1998), <www.encyclopedia.com/people/social-sciences-and-law/education-biographies/john-amos-comenius>, retrieved 10/08/2020.

⁶ See Margaret Ezell, 'John Locke's Images of Childhood: Early Eighteenth-Century Responses to *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17.2 (1984), 139-55 (p. 141), and Samuel Pickering Jr., *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), p. 10.

⁷ Hartley's revered work *Observations on Man* (1749) had already cautiously condoned a liberal education insofar as suggesting that the pursuit of knowledge should involve both pleasure and imagination, and allowed that the private enjoyment of these pleasures was useful 'in [its] proper place and degree.' The utility of such pleasure according to Hartley came from its role in furnishing the mind with 'a due stock, and no more than a due stock, of knowledge, in natural and artificial things, of a relish for natural and artificial beauty.' See David Hartley, *Observations on Man*, 2 vols. (Poole and Washington DC: Woodstock Books, 1998), esp. II, p. 244.

⁸ It is Plato's *Theaetetus* that first likens cognitive ideas to impressions on a 'wax tablet.' For an insightful discussion of the influence of Plato on Locke's educational theory, see Martin Simon's 'Why Can't a Man Be More Like a Woman? (A Note on John Locke's Educational Thought)', *Educational Theory*, 40.1 (Winter 1990), 135-46 (pp. 143-144).

systems of education that forced children to memorise complex and inexhaustible sets of rules and prohibitions, and argued instead that youths should be respectfully treated as rational, reasoning beings. The liberalism of this pedagogy causes Nathan Tarcov's influential work *Locke's Education for Liberty*, which remains the most comprehensive study of the treatise, to emphasise its radical progressiveness and fraught political implications. Locke himself was only too aware of the treatise's provocativeness: he omitted his name from all early editions, and addressed the treatise only to those 'so irregularly bold... that they dare venture to consult their own Reason, in the Education of their Children, rather than wholly to rely upon Old Custom' (p. 325). It is likely for these reasons that despite the *Thoughts*' apparent popularity, its calls for a liberal reformation in education remained largely unheeded, and was largely confined to individual, 'domestic' applications only.⁹

The other major educational treatise of the eighteenth century was Rousseau's *Émile: or, On Education* (1762). Avowed by Rousseau to be the 'best as well as the most important' of all his work,¹⁰ *Émile* was initially banned and burnt in Paris and in Rousseau's hometown of Geneva for its controversial rendering of the effects of religion on the mind of the developing youth. Despite this, its arguments for protecting the right to liberty and freedom during one's education would inevitably, in a time of revolution, ensure its popularity, and eventually served to inspire a radical new education system. For this reason, Rousseau continued to attract particular scrutiny in Britain, whose thinkers had often suspiciously attempted to separate the supposedly innocuous principles of his theories from those perceived to be corrupting or anarchist. Despite this, Rousseauian theories of education achieved a remarkable circulation; Ferguson states that to describe *Émile* as merely 'widely known in Romantic-era Britain' is to vastly 'understate its influence.'¹¹ What scholars have described as 'the vogue of *Émile*' would prompt at least eight British editions to be published within 20 years, and gained, according to one contemporary clergyman, the 'full possession of [British] public attention.'¹²

⁹ As a possible explanation for this, Janet Bottoms suggests that although many people readily 'believed in Locke's dictum that "we naturally... even from our Cradles, love Liberty," belief also in his "white paper" theory of the infant mind led rationally towards the need to be constantly alert to any thing that might be impressed upon it.' See Bottoms, "'Awakening the Mind": The Educational Philosophy of William Godwin' *History of Education*, 33.3 (May 2004), 267-282 (p. 269). See too Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, p. 64.

¹⁰ Literally, 'le meilleur de mes écrits, ainsi que le plus important.' Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Les Confessions', *Les Oeuvres de J. J. Rousseau* (Paris: Chez Desoer, 1822), II, p. 540. The English quotation is taken from the (anonymous) 1783-90 translation in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions of J. J. Rousseau*, ed. Havelock Ellis, 2 vols. (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1938), II, p. 286.

¹¹ Frances Ferguson, 'Rousseau, *Émile* and Britain', *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and British Romanticism: Gender, Selfhood, Politics and Nation*, eds. R. Goulbourne & D. Higgins (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 187.

¹² James Warner, 'Émile in Eighteenth-Century England', *PMLA*, 59.3 (Sep. 1944), 773-91 (pp. 774-6). The quoted clergyman is the Reverend David Williams, one of many pedagogues who structured their own academies around Rousseauian principles. See *Lectures on Education* (1789), quoted in Jacques Pons, *L'Éducation en Angleterre entre 1750 et 1800: Aperçu sur l'Influence Pédagogique de J. J. Rousseau* (Paris: Éditions Ernest Leroux, 1919), pp. 42, 71-73.

It attracted further publicity when several prominent public figures attempted to reproduce the education of *Émile* or *Sophy* in youths of their own.¹³

The relationship between the educational theories of Locke and Rousseau is complex and continues to prompt scholarly analysis.¹⁴ Rousseau referred to Locke's conceptions of youth consistently throughout *Émile* and both praised and critiqued them. He is referred to as the 'sage Locke' and is commended for his attempts to make practical suggestions for educational reform, as opposed to his contemporaries, who were condemned for their inability to go beyond offering mere criticism of the existing system (I, pp. ii, 33). At times, Rousseau even opines that it would be redundant for him to dwell on certain aspects of education, such as the physical ('gymnastique') elements to youthful development, because 'on ne peut la-dessus donner de meilleures raisons ni des règles plus sensées que celles qu'on trouve dans le livre de Locke' (I, p. 158) ['Better or more sensible reasons on this subject [could not be given] than [those] to be found in Locke's discourse'] (I, p. 160). At other times, however, their proposed systems of education differ greatly, particularly regarding the role of the child's socialisation. Locke interprets social codes of expectation and the formation of positive habits to be the most effective methods to educate the child, whereas Rousseau famously responded by asserting that 'La seule habitude qu'on doit laisser prendre à l'enfant est de n'en contracter aucune' (I, p. 48) ['The only habit we should suffer a child to contract is, that of contracting none' (I, p. 50)]. Rousseau contended that if educated successfully, the child would need have no other guide than his own reason. Because of these such differences, scholars have historically interpreted *Émile* as a purposeful rejoinder to or 'refutation' of Locke's *Thoughts*,¹⁵ but criticism in the last three decades has begun to problematise this assumption. Recent scholars have sought to retrieve what Tarcov has called 'a non-Lockean Locke' who remains separate from associations with a reductionist moral psychology, or narrow-minded notions of virtue and compliance.¹⁶ Similarly, a partially de-radicalized, non-Rousseauvian Rousseau has also been identified by scholars who argue the presence of a middle ground between the liberty of individualism and the inevitability of social conformity in

¹³ For instance, that of Thomas Day, Emily FitzGerald (Duchess of Leinster) and the unnamed aristocrat (minutely described, for purposes of public recognition) in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's 'What is Education?' *The Monthly Magazine*, 5 (1798), pp. 183-185.

¹⁴ The analyses of Jonathon Marks offer particular elucidation on this subject. The following section is especially indebted to the critical survey offered in his article 'Rousseau's Critique of Locke's Education for Liberty', *The Journal of Politics*, 74.3 (July, 2012), 694-706.

¹⁵ For example, see Marks: 'Rousseau's critique of Locke's *Thoughts* is not a point of incidental contact between two thinkers, but a direct and studied treatment of one by the other' (p. 694).

¹⁶ See Nathan Tarcov, 'A "Non-Lockean" Locke and the Character of Liberalism,' *Liberalism Reconsidered*, ed. Douglas MacLean & Claudia Mills (Tottowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), pp. 130-40; Steven Forde, 'Natural Law, Theology, and Morality in Locke,' *American Journal of Political Science*, 45.2 (2001), 369-409, and William Galston, 'Liberal Virtues,' *American Political Science Review*, 82.4 (December 1988), 1277-90.

Rousseau's philosophy.¹⁷ In an insightful survey of this critical shift, Jonathon Marks concludes that 'Locke can no longer be viewed simply as the thin liberal he was sometimes cast as during the liberal-communitarian debate, nor can Rousseau be viewed simply as his radical, if not unhinged, opposition' (p. 695). For scholarship on Rousseau in particular, it certainly remains a necessary exercise to separate those critical caricatures of Rousseauian ideas from those set out in the texts themselves.

Despite the differences between Lockean and Rousseauian understandings of education, their relevance to discussions of the toleration of adolescence lies primarily in their most apparent point of agreement: namely, the necessity for liberty in successful youthful maturation. Locke perceives the 'love [of] liberty' to be the central factor of a youth's psychology and posits that withholding such liberty denies them the most effective means of developing an 'Appetite to Reason', as well as any meaningful sense of 'Dignity' or 'Industry' (pp. 207, 314). Although Rousseau takes a more cautious approach towards granting freedom to the youth during their earliest childhood, he perceives liberty to remain the most crucial feature of later adolescent development. In his vision of education, all experience must come naturally and nothing should be forced upon the youth before its time: '[vos jeunes gens] sont ennuyés, excédés de vos fades leçons, de vos longues morales, de vos éternels catechisms... la contrainte les en a rebutés' (II, p. 101) he states bluntly ['young people [are] quite surfeited and tired with moral lectures, and tedious catechisms; ...constraint has surfeited them' (II, p. 102)]. To Rousseau, any insurrectionary consequences of this rejection were not the responsibility of the youth but rather that of the adult; youthful rebellion was in fact a perfectly natural response to adult attempts at restricting their liberty:

Les longs & froids sermons d'un pédant effaceront-ils dans l'esprit de son élève l'image des plaisirs qu'il a conçus? Banniront-ils de son coeur les désirs qui le tourmentent? Amortiront-ils l'ardeur d'un tempérament dont il sait l'usage? Ne s'irritera-t-il pas contre les obstacles qui s'opposent au seul bonheur dont il ait l'idée; & dans la dure loi qu'on lui prescrit sans pouvoir la lui faire entendre, que verra-t-il, sinon le caprice & la haine d'un homme qui cherche à le tourmenter? Est-il étrange qu'il se mutine & le haïsse à son tour? (I, p. 120)

[Will the tedious insipid sermons of a pedant be able to cancel the ideas of pleasure in the mind of his pupil? Will they banish from his heart those insatiable desires? Will they extinguish that fire of constitution, with the use of which he is so well acquainted? Will he not be irritated against the obstacles that oppose the only felicity of which he has any idea? And while he finds himself restrained by a severe law, without being convinced of its reasonableness, in what other light shall he be able to consider it, but as the capricious aversion of a man, who only

¹⁷ See for example Laurence Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Jonathon Marks, *Perfection and Disharmony in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Joseph Reiser, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Friend of Virtue* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), and Tzvetan Todorov, *Frail Happiness: An Essay on Rousseau*, trans. J. Scott & R. Zaretsky (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

seeks to torment him? Is it therefore in the least surprising, that he should mutiny and shew the same aversion towards his master? (I, p. 354)

To Rousseau therefore, the necessity for liberty in youthful development was so prescribed by nature that the youth would inevitably attempt to seize it for themselves if it were denied to them. In this way, Émile's relationship with his tutor functions as a sort of younger version of the subordinated individual subject portrayed in Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social* ([lit. 'The Social Contract'], 1762). Émile, if subjugated, would naturally seek liberty from oppression in the same way that the adult individual would themselves resent the inhibiting demands of a repressive state. In some ways, this sentiment marks Rousseau's biggest departure from Locke; the inevitably revolutionary undertones of this philosophy were a far cry from Locke's emphasis on the adult's responsibility for ensuring the youth's successful integration into (and so implicitly, the consequent maintenance of) those same social hierarchies. In the context of this current chapter however, this crucial contrast in Lockean/Rousseauian purposes of socialisation only heightens the significance of their unified emphasis of the youth's imperative need for liberty. Despite their contrasts, the Lockean/Rousseauian systems of education both equally interpret the failure of the youth to achieve either their individual or social potential to be a direct result of the inhibiting restrictions imposed by oppressive adult educators.

Experiments in Form: The Pedagogical Novel as a Genre

As the theories of Locke and Rousseau became widespread and prompted a series of corresponding educational treatises and pedagogical manuals by other writers, they also became increasingly influential on what was fast becoming the most popular literary form of the time – the novel. Subtitled 'On Education' (*Émile; Ou De L'Éducation*), Rousseau's work was itself a hybridised generic form, its title an emblematic fusion of both a naming element (representative of the *Bildungsroman*) and an 'On' format (representative of the essay treatise). The work is now recognised as one of the first examples of the hybrid 'pedagogical novel,' a term which remains to be formalised and had not gained any noticeable presence in vocabularies of literary criticism until the early 2010s.¹⁸

¹⁸ For examples of this presence in recent criticism, see Patrick Fessenbecker, 'Jane Austen on Love and Pedagogical Power', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 51.4 (Autumn 2011), 747-63 (pp. 749, 756); Phillippe Chardine, 'Truth and Justice', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 354.2 (2015), 205-217; Marta Miquel-Baldellou, 'Masculinities in Distress: Aging and Gender Trouble in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Caxtons*' in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 13.2 (Summer 2017); Laura Wagner, *Novel Reading: Pedagogies of Form in George Eliot and Thomas Mann* (diss.) (Berkeley: University of California, 2017), p. 28; Erica van Boven, 'The Emergence of the Middlebrow Novel in the Netherlands: the 'New Novels' Series of World Library,' *Belphégor: Littératures Populaire et Culture Médiatique*, 15.2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.4000/belphegor.973>, accessed 12/08/20; Meskin & Zolokhutina, 'The Pedagogical Novel in Russian Children's Literature of the Second Third of the XX Century', *RUDN Journal*, 22.2 (2017), 246-55, and Emily Witts' 'Review of Kate Elizabeth Russell's *My Dark Vanessa*', *The London Review of Books*, 42.10 (21 May 2020).

Generally understood to reference some sort of dialogic fictional form thematically concerned with education, there remains to this day no sustained formal or critical analysis of the pedagogical novel as a genre.¹⁹ The term was used as early as in Mikhail Bakhtin's 1938 study *The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism*, the work famously consumed by Bakhtin as cigarette paper during the Siege of Moscow. In this work, Bakhtin listed five subgenres of the *Bildungsroman*, the fourth of which he termed 'the didactic-pedagogical novel.'²⁰ The form is passingly described as 'based on a specific pedagogical ideal, understood more or less broadly, and depicts the pedagogical process of education in the strict sense of the word' (pp. 22-3). *Émile* is named as a 'pure type' of the genre, and the work of Goethe and Rabelais noted to contain 'elements' of it.²¹ After these brief comments, Bakhtin then dismisses the form in favour of the fifth and most 'true' type of novel of emergence, a dismissal similarly reflected in the scholarship of the rest of the twentieth century. Indeed, apart from a single 1965 study of Thomas Mann by Herman Weigand, it is hard to find any scholarly discussion of the pedagogical novel as a genre for the next sixty years.²²

It is testament to the increasing scholarly interest of the present day in topics such as developmental psychology and the history of pedagogy that the pedagogical novel as a form has attracted significantly more attention during the last decade. Although the term can be found in occasional use in the 1990s and 2000s, there has been a dramatic increase in the term's use since the

¹⁹ There are however a handful of studies that address the 'novel of education' as a genre (most notably, the two historiographic surveys by Helmut Germer). However, the phrase 'novel of education' is most often understood by both the Romantic and Victorian critical traditions as an alternative direct translation of the German term *Bildungsroman*, and does not therefore have the specifically pedagogical focus of the term 'pedagogical novel.' Although in this chapter I have attempted to honour the position of those scholars who use the term *Bildungsroman* in this manner, I would also point out that a separate term already exists in German for this subgenre (the '*Erziehungsroman*' – literally, the 'education novel'). See Germer, *The German Novel of Education from 1764 to 1792: A Complete Bibliography and Analysis* (Bern & Frankfurt A.M.: Herbert Lang & Co., 1982) and *The German Novel of Education 1792-1805. A Complete Bibliography and Analysis* (Bern & Frankfurt A.M.: Herbert Lang & Co., 1968).

²⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*, ed. C. Emerson & M. Holquist, trans. Vern McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 22.

²¹ Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Fénelon's *Télémaque* are also cited as early examples of the didactic-pedagogical form.

²² Importantly, Wiegand's study actually rejects *Der Zauberberg* as pedagogical novel and instead interprets it as a 'novel of self-development.' Regardless, I interpret the very nature of his discussion as acknowledging, in a limited way, the pedagogical form as a plausible generic alternative, and to thus merit mention. The term is also dismissively mentioned in passing in Arnold Lazarus' 1957 article 'Fiction, Science and Education' and Madeleine Ellis' 1977 study on Rousseau, and Lowenstein's 1980 essay on Hegel and Rousseau. See Hermann J. Wiegand, *The Magic Mountain: A Study of Thomas Mann's 'Der Zauberberg'* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 3-4; Arnold Leslie Lazarus, 'Fiction, Science, and Education', *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 38.4 (January 1957), 136-40 (pp. 136, 138); Madeleine Ellis, *Rousseau's Socratic Aemilian Myths: A Literary Collation of Émile and The Social Contract* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), and Julius J. Lowenstein, 'Merging of Rousseau's "Ever True" General Will with Hegel's "Solely True" Philosophy', *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, 52 (1980), 73-83 (p. 75).

2010s.²³ However, in many of these cases, the function of the word ‘pedagogical’ within the term often remains merely a descriptive adjective as opposed to a specific generic classification.²⁴ Despite this, the works that have been referred to as pedagogical novels consistently show the same unified features. By fusing the educational treatise and *Bildung* narrative into one, pedagogical novels allow their authors a degree of narrative experimentation that neither form offers independently. The result is the creation of a genre that features not just a model for maturity, but a hybridic form that itself questions and destabilizes those forms that would otherwise constitute traditional and/or accepted narratives of development. Examples of fiction identified in such a context include Thomas Day’s *Sandford and Merton* (1780), all six novels by Jane Austen (1811-1818), Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Caxtons* (1849), George Eliot’s *Felix Holt* (1866) and Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (1902).²⁵ *Émile* however remains the only work that has been categorised as a pedagogical novel consistently and independently.²⁶

Although at least two scholars other than Bakhtin have further offered definitions of the pedagogical novel,²⁷ I here propose an alternative: a narrative that uses a diegetic chronology to demonstrate the causal consequences of a specific pedagogical or developmental system. The success or failure of the pedagogical system in question can thus be tracked and tested in what Ian

²³ I do of course grant that the exponential growth of internet publications during this period perhaps deems this increase inevitable. For some of the few passing references to the term in the 1990s and 2000s, see Frank Palmeri, ‘The Metamorphoses of Satire in Eighteenth-Century Narrative’, *Comparative Literature*, 48.3 (Summer, 1996), 237-64 (pp. 246-7, 260); Finola O’Kane, ‘Design and Rule: Women in the Irish Countryside 1715-1831,’ *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris An Dá Chultúr*, 19 (2004), 56-74 (p. 68), and Paul A. Rahe, *Soft Despotism, Democracy’s Drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville, and the Modern Prospect* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 93, 97.

²⁴ I.e., used in a sense synonymous to a novel being merely educative or instructive (e.g. ‘Eliot’s pedagogical novel therefore also involves its readers in a parallel form of education.’ Wagner, *Novel Reading*, p. 28).

²⁵ These have been suggested, in order of mention, by Arnold Leslie Lazarus (1957), Patrick Fessenbecker (2011), Marta Miquel-Bartellou (2017), Laura Day Wagner (2017), and Herman Weigand (1965).

²⁶ By this I mean that of all the examples of pedagogical novels discussed so far, *Émile* is autonomously described as a pedagogical novel by six scholars independently of each other. By contrast, only one other novel (Mann’s *Der Zauberberg*) is identified as a pedagogical novel more than once independently (i.e. by both Weigand and Wagner). However, it should be remembered that Weigand concludes by refuting *Der Zauberberg* as a pedagogical novel, leaving *Émile* to remain the only work I have found with any legitimate consensus at all. The six scholars I have found who have used the term in reference to *Émile* are Lowenstein, p. 75; Rahe, pp. 93, 97; Palmeri, pp. 246-7, 260; Ellis, pp. 17, 19-21, 30; O’Kane, p. 68, and Bakhtin, p. 23.

²⁷ These are Weigand and Gustafson, but neither (in my opinion) provide sufficient emphasis on the pedagogical novel’s use of diegetic chronology to test and prove the educational system depicted. Weigand interprets the pedagogical novel as ‘concerned with a very specific sort of education - an education that sets out to mould the plastic personality of a child along lines determined by its educators; and the process of education is pronounced complete when the youthful personality has come to conform dependably to the moral pattern that represents the educator’s ideal.’ Separately, Gustafson opines that ‘the pedagogical novel fuse[s] together the generic features of both the educational treatise and the sentimental novel for the purpose of exposing the flaws within each genre’s representation of the developmental process of the maturing youth,’ but more often simply uses the term interchangeably with ‘didactic children’s fiction.’ See Weigand, p. 3, and Gustafson, ‘Coming of Age’, p. 179.

Watt and Eric Larsen describe as diegetic 'real-time',²⁸ converting the evaluative reading process itself into an educational experience relating to the merits and demerits of the developmental hypotheses portrayed. Examples of such novels become particularly prominent in the period following the publication of *Émile*, often written by those hoping to disseminate developmental theories in a literary form more popular and accessible than the pedagogical manual or educational treatise. It is in exactly this way for instance that Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist critique of the education system expressed in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) found its ultimate culmination in the novels *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) and *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria* (1798).²⁹ Similarly, Hannah More's conservative and anti-Jacobin assessment of the purposes of contemporary education in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) later find fictionalised expression in *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809). Several examples of the genre, such as Mary Hays' *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), continue to this day to attract critical attention within a specifically pedagogical context.³⁰ The form became a particularly popular medium for progressive, feminist writers supporting the expansion of female education, such as Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791), Susanna Rowson's bestselling *Charlotte Temple* (1791), and Jane West's *The Advantages of Education, or The History of Maria Williams* (1793) and *A Gossip's Story* (1796). As I shall later demonstrate in Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1796) and Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), the effectiveness of many of these pedagogical novels of the Romantic era is derived from their adoption of that same generic hybridity first exhibited in Rousseau's *Émile*, the first Enlightenment text to fuse the educational treatise, pedagogical manual, and realist novel into a single narrative. It was the strategic amalgamation of these disparate formal categories that characterised subsequent pedagogical theory, and which catalysed the dissemination of new cultural ideologies regarding the youth's right to liberty and independence.

Form and Hybridity: *Émile* as Pedagogical Novel

²⁸ Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, pp. 21-27, and Eric Larsen, 'How Do You Read a Book?' (2006), from <<http://www.eric-larsen.info/JOHNSON-WATT%20ESSAY.pdf>>, retrieved 01/08/20.

²⁹ Although a more dedicated analysis of Wollstonecraft's educational philosophy and its influence on her novels is omitted only due to time and space, several excellent studies have recently already investigated precisely this trend. See Barbara Taylor, 'Rousseau and Wollstonecraft: Solitary Walkers,' *Thinking with Rousseau: From Machiavelli to Schmitt*, ed. H. Rosenblatt & P. Schweigert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Richardson, 'Wollstonecraft on Education,' *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 24-41, and Elizabeth Frazer, 'Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay on Education,' *Oxford Review of Education*, 37. 5 (2011), 603-17.

³⁰ Although seldom referred to as a pedagogical novel, *Mansfield Park* is increasingly described by modern critics as a novel 'concerned explicitly with female education, manners and development' and a deliberate investigation of 'the opposition between rival educational modes.' See in particular Alan Richardson's examination of *Mansfield Park* as a female novel of education in *Literature, Romanticism and Education* (pp. 7, 194-202), and Peter Coveney, who interprets *Mansfield Park* as 'as much a novel about education as any in the language.' Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 106.

Most contemporary readers of *Émile* would have identified the root of its unconventionality in its developmental philosophy. However, its radicalism was also evident in the novel's innovations in form; it contained not just generic features of the novel and the educational treatise but also numerous other additional subforms. A significant proportion of *Émile* for instance features a narrator who applies reasoning and logic to existent biological and developmental theories in strictly objective tones reminiscent of Enlightenment scientific or medical works. However, also interspersed throughout *Émile* are extended series of evidently subjective personal reflections, at times resembling the narratorial style of a memoir or spiritual autobiography, and which would presage the intimate writing style of the *Confessions*, begun by Rousseau just three years later. This generic hybridity is further compounded by the narrator's frequent switches of focus from his own personal or philosophical musings to those of certain other significant characters, such as Sophy or the Savoyard priest. These characters themselves become the subjects or speakers of extended meta-narratives, which in turn borrow from still more genres and narratorial styles (most notably, the conduct manual for Sophy and the confessional form for the Savoyard). Finally, all these subjects and subgenres remain in competition with the wider structural focus on the *Bildungsheld* and titular hero himself: a typical *Bildung* structure, following the developmental trajectory from *Émile*'s early childhood through to his adolescence and finally adulthood, is itself integrated within the formal features of the essay treatise as a whole. Thus, *Émile* is the subject of a coming-of-age plot which is itself both a component of, as well as the wider structural platform for, the complex interplay of the work's overall generic hybridity.

This fluidity of genre is important because its form itself represents both a toleration and liberation. The generic hybridity of *Émile* constitutes a softening of the typically rigid forms associated with traditional natural philosophy, which often contained structured, numerical arguments and formulaic assessments. As a result, *Émile*'s generic fluidity itself functions as a formal embodiment of those structural paradoxes already involved in Rousseau's theories of education. Modern scholars typically understand *Émile* as Rousseau's extended attempt to resolve one of the essential contradictions in his own conception of liberty first raised in *The Social Contract*.³¹ In the Rousseauvian conception of society, all conventional methods of both government and education were inherently hierarchical, and would inevitably instil authoritarian values in the youth or individual regardless of content or curriculum. To remedy this, Rousseau proposed a pedagogy that would cultivate free and independent thinking. However, the notion of independent thinking remained problematic because to Rousseau, the youth is not autonomously capable of it; they are by necessity born into relationships

³¹ See for example Marks, *Rousseau's Critique*, Kerry Burch, 'Rousseau on Love, Education, and Selfhood in *Émile*,' *Counterpoints*, vol. 114 (2000) 115-41, and Christopher Bertram, "Jean Jacques Rousseau", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), ed. Edward Zalta, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/rousseau/>>, retrieved 29/07/20.

of dependency and hierarchy with their parents, tutors and wider society. Thus, the youth must consequently, according to Rousseau, paradoxically be 'forced to be free.'³² In a state of what Rousseau terms 'liberté bien réglée,'³³ Émile's freedom is arguably an illusion: his development is achieved through an interminable series of manufactured contrivances whose efficacy depends on Émile's belief in his non-existent freedom. Describing such an existence as an 'unavoidably paradoxical state of being,' Burch concludes that Rousseau's conception of education thus asserts 'the principle that one must learn to know the limits of freedom, since the achievement of absolute freedom is unattainable. One should want only what one can attain and attain only what one wants' (p. 112). The end goal of Émile's (and even more so, Sophy's) education culminates therefore in their acknowledgment of their limitations; their acceptance that the struggle for liberty would be inevitably continual in a world of fundamental constraint.

It is for this reason that the formal hybridity of *Émile* is so important. As a hybridised generic category, the form of Rousseau's novel can therefore itself become a structural site that embodies these same paradoxical restrictions involved in the Rousseauvian philosophy of youth. *Émile* is a conglomeration of separate generic forms, each staging an individual structural experiment in the literary representation of the freedoms of and constraints upon youth. By assimilating all these genres, Rousseau's pedagogical novel effected a structural process that questioned and ultimately undermined the developmental narratives which each subgenre typically offered, and exposed the limitations of each subform's representation of the developmental process. For instance, the narrator's philosophical and often abstract chains of reasoning are only given clarification when applied to Rousseau's personal account of his own maturation, as described in Book IV. Just so, it is only the insertion of the confessional form of the Savoyard priest that offers retrospective, adult insight to answer those speculative hypotheses embedded within the coming-of-age plot of Émile's own adolescence. Assimilating these subforms has the hermeneutic effect of destabilizing and ultimately undermining the narratives of maturity which each individual form could offer on its own. Operating in symbiosis with each other, each of the various subgenres of *Émile* become therefore as much interactive experiments in generic constraints as they are of educational or developmental ones. As the assimilation site of so many competing narrative logics, it is, in short, a novel that offers a structural investigation into the representative constraints of writing *about* the education of youth, as well as itself presenting a pedagogical system that seeks to school its readers in what an ideal education looks like. In *Émile*, the struggle for narrative supremacy between the pedagogical manual

³² Literally, 'on le forcera d'être libre.' See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social, ou Principes du Droit Politique* (Amsterdam, 1762), I, p. 23.

³³ 'Liberty under proper regulation.' *Émile*, I, p. 96, and *Emilius*, I, p. 98.

and the Bildungsroman novel produces a narrative of the *Bildungsheld's* education that is in itself educative.

To Vivasvan Soni, whose structuralist analysis of *Émile* compares Rousseauian developmental theories to those set out in the novels of Jane Austen, it is precisely this generic hybridity of *Émile* that demonstrates the legitimacy of Rousseau's wider pedagogical philosophy. According to Soni, Rousseau's conscription of the *Bildung* form itself embodies a central tenet of the Rousseauian educational method; like the *Bildungsheld* themselves, education must constantly evolve and adapt itself to the developing judgment of the growing teen. '[*Émile*] is not simply a pedagogical manual about strategies for teaching *Émile* to judge well,' Soni explains; 'It is a narrative of the advent of judgment.' Soni's point is that education and judgment-formation in youth are adaptive and must depend on *narrative*:

It requires experience, and experience is something we only acquire in the course of a temporally and narratively extended life. As Aristotle has observed, it takes time to develop practical wisdom and good judgment, because judgment is predicated on having a storehouse of examples and experiences against which we can compare the current situation.³⁴

By situating a pedagogical manual within a real-time diegetic chronology, Rousseau thus provides a narratological temporality which manifests the causational consequences of his theories. As such, *Émile* is a work with equal narratological investment in convincing and educating its *reader* of the causational success of its pedagogy as it is in the education of its protagonist. The reader of the pedagogical novel thus occupies a unique hermeneutic position: because at the heart of the narrative is its educational philosophy, the reader is as much a student as the novel's imaginary pupil-protagonist. As Vanpee has observed, the very presentation of *Émile's* education as 'discursive' has the effect of 'confer[ring] a special status upon the reader.'³⁵ By choosing a hybrid form combining both the educational treatise and *Bildungsroman*, Rousseau's use of the pedagogical novel form thus literally 'schools' its readers into tolerant pedagogical attitudes in diegetic real time. Its expression of tolerant liberation is as much embedded in its structure as it is its content. As we shall see, it was precisely this generic hybridity that would subsequently allow the pedagogical novelists of the upcoming decades to model similarly tolerant pedagogical attitudes towards teens of the new, post-Revolutionary order; those such as Thomas Day, with *Sandford and Merton*; Wollstonecraft, with

³⁴ Vivasvan Soni, 'Committing Freedom: The Cultivation of Judgment in Rousseau's *Émile* and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*', *The Eighteenth Century*, 51.3 (Fall 2010), 363-87 (p. 365).

³⁵ Janie Vanpee, 'Rousseau's *Émile ou de l'Éducation*: A Resistance to Reading', *Yale French Studies*, 77 (1990), 156-76 (pp. 158-9).

Mary: a Fiction, and William Godwin, with *Fleetwood*, *Mandeville*, and – as we shall now re-consider – *Caleb Williams*.

The *Bildung* of Caleb Williams: Godwin's Liberal Pedagogy

Godwin was heavily influenced by Rousseau, and Godwin's novels, like *Émile* and *Julie: or, the New Heloise* before them, would become universally preoccupied with themes of adolescence, identity formation and education.³⁶ For instance, Godwin's comedic caricature of himself in his first novel *Damon and Delila* (1784) takes the revealing form of an educator-turned-writer named 'Mr. Godfrey',³⁷ and the elixir of life which grants perpetual adolescence in *St. Leon* (1799) is now read as a narratological refashioning of the educational philosophies of *Émile*.³⁸ Similarly, *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805) devotes nearly a third of its narrative space to a discussion of learning, and *Mandeville* (1817) features as its central theme the long-term consequences of one's schooling and youth.³⁹ In all of these novels, adult characters demonstrably struggle to forge new identities from the inherited programming of their upbringings, and enact scenarios in which the consequences of various pedagogical strategies are demonstrated within a diegetic time-frame. The expansive range of these scenarios, which feature differences in class, gender, nationality and historical period, ensures that the consistency of their individual conclusions collectively constitutes a series of universally applicable pedagogical truths. In this way, the developmental theories espoused by the well-to-do, masculine, Swiss gentleman Ruffigny in the seventeenth-century setting of *Fleetwood* accord exactly with the rhetoric on education avowed by the female, French and recently-impooverished character Marguerite in the sixteenth-century context of *St. Leon*. Godwin's characters function therefore as accessible, fictional tools that both embellish and embody a specific pedagogical strategy. Like *Émile* before them, Godwin's novels are as concerned with the *Bildung* education of their readers as they are with the characters and *Bildungshelden* they follow.

³⁶ For more on the relationship between Godwin and Rousseau, see p. 53 of this chapter.

³⁷ For the identification of Godwin as Godfrey in the recovered *Damon and Delila*, see Jean Archibald, 'Note: William Godwin's *Damon and Delila*', *The Electronic British Library Journal* (1979), < <http://www.bl.uk/eblj/1979articles/article10.html> > [accessed 01/09/20].

³⁸ Critical interest in *St. Leon* has typically been scarce and has partly been revived as a direct result of the landmark essay by Anne Chandler here referred to. See 'Romanticizing Adolescence: Godwin's "St. Leon" and the Matter of Rousseau', *Studies in Romanticism*, 41.3 (Fall, 2002), 399-414.

³⁹ *Fleetwood* not only features a character widely believed to embody Rousseau (Ruffigny) but also includes the presence of Rousseau himself as an (absent) character, whose friend and host is one of the protagonists (MacNeil). The quantitative summation of a third comes from Suzanne Barnett and Katherine Gustafson, who include a brief section on the pedagogical significance of *Fleetwood* in their introduction to Godwin's *Fables*. See Barnett & Gustafson, 'The Radical Aesop: William Godwin and the Juvenile Library, 1805-1825,' *Fables Ancient and Modern, by William Godwin* [1805] (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2014), <https://romantic-circles.org/editions/godwin_fables/editions.2014.godwin_fables.introduction.html >, accessed 24/05/20.

That *Caleb Williams* merits equal interpretation within the pedagogical contexts of Godwin's other *Bildung* novels of development is evident from the narratorial commentary that persistently emphasises Caleb's age, education and inexperience. His age and lack of education are consistently and emphatically stated to be the primary reason that he is ill-equipped to combat the persecutions of his adult oppressors. 'I endeavoured to evade his questions, but my youth and ignorance of the world gave me little advantage for that purpose,' Caleb laments early on in his stay at Falkland Manor (p. 10). The powerlessness resulting from his youth becomes a recurring theme of the novel: 'I had no practical acquaintance with men [to aid me],' he later comments; and again still later, 'I had had no intercourse with the world and its passions' (pp. 7, 11). Again and again this is repeated: 'I was only betraying my imbecility... unacquainted as I was with experience and the world, [and thus...] afraid'; 'I was destitute of that experience of the world, which can alone render us fertile in resources'; 'New to the world, I know nothing of its affairs... I am unpractised in its wiles, and have even no acquaintance with its injustice' (pp. 154, 162, 180). Similarly, Emily Melville is described in the same vocabulary of powerlessness and inexperience ('Sometimes [Emily] thought of flying from a house which was now become her dungeon; but the habits of her youth, and her ignorance of the world, made her shrink from this project, when she contemplated it more nearly', p. 55.) In addition, Caleb and Emily's youth is represented as the direct cause of their adult persecutors turning on them in the first place: Emily because of the 'innocent effusions' of her 'youthful heart,' and Caleb because of his 'youthful curiosity to discover [a] secret' (pp. 42, 48, 331). Explicit narration of this cruel truth features similar repetition, most notably in Emily's eulogizations by Mrs Hammond and the tragic retrospection of Caleb himself ('What could I do? Young as I was, could it be expected that I should play the philosopher, and put a perpetual curb upon my inclinations?' p. 149). The innocence of youth and its inability to defend itself from adult oppressors are therefore simultaneously the causation and the crisis of *Caleb Williams*' diegetic climax. Godwin presents youth as a cyclical double-bind that is both the cause of Caleb and Emily's persecution and the reason they are unable to counter or evade it.

It seems appropriate therefore that in the last forty years, critics have begun responding to *Caleb Williams* as more of a 'psychological' novel containing pedagogical theories of youth development than a propagandist novel primarily interested in politics.⁴⁰ Having been typically viewed as a Jacobin or political novel throughout most of the twentieth century, literary criticism of *Caleb Williams* only truly diversified after Maurice Hindle's influential Introduction to the novel in 1987. By pairing the novel with Godwin's unpublished essay 'Of History and Romance', Hindle interprets the

⁴⁰ Most recently, these have included Sumaya Mohammad, 'The Psychological Effect of Political and Social Injustice on the Individual in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*', *English Language and Literature Studies*, 7.3 (Aug. 2017) 48-52; Nicole Jordan, 'Caleb Williams', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 22.4 (2010) 736-8 and John Rodden, 'Godwin's *Caleb Williams*: "A Half-Told and Mangled Tale,"' *College Literature*, 36.4 (2009), 119-46.

radical change to *Caleb Williams*' conclusion as reflecting Godwin's alignment with a larger literary movement that was finding importance not merely in the injustice of the political system, but the system's psychological impact on human subjectivity and the individual's development of selfhood.⁴¹ For Hindle, Godwin's revision of the ending to emphasise psychological development instead of political therefore represents a wider contemporary cultural transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism: 'with such a dramatic reconstruction [of the ending], Godwin edged himself and his readers towards that word-laden retreat from [the politicised propaganda of] contemporary history – the age of Romantic imagination' (p. xxxix). Having been liberated from its historic designation as a prototypically political/Jacobin novel, *Caleb Williams* has recently been studied through as varied a range of generic lenses as the Gothic novel, as prose tragedy, as *roman à theses* (novel of purpose), as spy novel, as an 'end-of-sensibility novel', as thriller, as a spiritual biography, as novel of 'modern existentialism', and even as a Pre-Freudian Oedipal novel.⁴² The implicit discussion of youth and 'personal development' involved in many of these subgenres has now successfully secured its association with the developmental contexts of both the pedagogical novel and the *Bildungsroman*.⁴³

Approaching *Caleb Williams* as a pedagogical narrative of *Bildung* in this way also allows a powerful new reading of Godwin's original Preface, which continues to prompt critical speculation. Written in 1794 but suppressed until publication of the second edition in 1795, Godwin explains that he chose the titular topic of 'Things As They Are' at the time of publication because one of the biggest 'question[s then] afloat' in post-Revolution Europe was the ideological conflict between a Burkean reverence for the past and a conflicting drive towards progress and modernity: 'While one party pleads for reformation and change, the other extols in the warmest terms the existing constitution of

⁴¹ More specifically, Hindle suggests that the revised ending 'indicate[s] a preference on Godwin's part for stressing the psychological complexity of the relationship between Falkland and his servant rather than "politics", a change which was complete by the time he wrote his "psychological" account of the composition of *Caleb Williams* in 1832.' See too Dumas, whose own study suggests that Godwin's choice of the published ending over the unpublished devalues reason and elevates feeling. See Hindle, p. xxiv, and Dumas, p. 590.

⁴² For instances of readings of *Caleb Williams* as Gothic novel, see David Hogsette, 'Textual Surveillance, Social Codes, and Sublime Voices: The Tyranny of Narrative in *Caleb Williams* and *Wieland*', *Transatlantic Romanticism*, 38 (Summer 2005), 38-52 and Frances Ferguson, 'The Gothicism of the Gothic Novel,' *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 97-113; as prose tragedy see Raymond Hilliard, 'Clarissa and Caleb Williams as Tragic Novels,' *Ritual Violence and the Maternal in the British Novel, 1740-1820* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), p. 61; as *roman à theses* see Hindle, p. xxvi; as spy novel see Monika Fludernik, 'William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*: The Tarnishing of the Sublime', *ELH*, 68.4 (Winter, 2001), 857-96; as end-of-sensibility novel see Isabelle Bour, 'Sensibility as Epistemology in *Caleb Williams*, *Waverley*, and *Frankenstein*,' *SEL*, 45 (August 2005), 813-27; as thriller see Sumaya Mohammad, 'The Psychological Effect' and Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 196; as spiritual biography see Nicolle Jordan, 'Caleb Williams,' p. 738; as novel of 'modern existentialism' see Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p. 196, and as Freudian or Oedipal novel see John Rodden, 'Godwin's *Caleb Williams*: "A Half-Told and Mangled Tale"'.
⁴³ See Moretti, *Way of the World*, Sumaya Mohammad, 'The Psychological Effect' and Isabelle Bour, 'Sensibility as Epistemology.'

society.⁴⁴ Situating *Caleb Williams* within the new pedagogical novel tradition initiated by *Émile* provides a new, *Bildung*/educational context within which to particularise the kinds of ideological conflicts Godwin alludes to. Viewed in this light, the 'existing constitution of society' comes to represent therefore the traditional, eighteenth-century models of youth and education, pitted against those new, more radical and tolerant understandings of youth development which represented 'reformation and change.' In other words, Godwin's dismissal of *Caleb Williams*' original ending can be interpreted as not only a repudiation of the corrupt British political system as a whole, but also as a specific comment on its outdated subordination and abuse of the youths that it governed.

Caleb Williams and Godwin's Educational Treatises

Despite the growing critical acknowledgment of *Caleb Williams* as a *Bildung* psychological novel, there remains to this day little recognition of the fundamental links between Godwin's pedagogical theories and his wider political philosophy.⁴⁵ At the time of writing, I am unaware of any research other than my own which seeks to compare the educational theory of Godwin's novels to that set out in his educational treatises and pedagogical manuals. Despite this, it seems clear that novels like *Fleetwood*, *Mandeville* and *Caleb Williams*, with their implicit denunciation of the adult oppressor and defective education, demonstrably work in tandem with the developmental theories embodied in Godwin's educational works. As I shall demonstrate, his expansive range of pedagogical texts, written and published exclusively for youths, adolescents, and the adults responsible for raising them, collectively voiced their opposition to the maltreatment and exploitation of youth in precisely the same terms as Godwin's political novels. Although these texts have historically attracted little attention, even within the Godwinian critical tradition,⁴⁶ they have recently enjoyed a significant revival of interest since the New York Public Library's exhibition *William Godwin's Juvenile Library* in

⁴⁴ Godwin, 1794 Preface to *Caleb Williams*. See p. 3 of Hindle edition; Dumas, pp. 580-2, and C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), I, pp. 139-140.

⁴⁵ There are certain exceptions to this trend, but on the whole these subjects are treated as almost entirely distinct. The most notable anomaly is Marilyn Butler's joint analysis of Godwin and Burke, which provides a compelling argument for *Caleb Williams*' status as political novel precisely *because* of its interest in internalised character psychology. 'Instead of generalising about how society ought to be, and summarising its present defects, Godwin in *Caleb Williams* enacts coercion, and the impulse to personal liberty, on a private level, and thus uncovers the psychological roots of political behaviour that in the first *Political Justice* philosophic abstraction had tended to conceal,' writes Butler. 'It is, therefore, a psychological novel, but a psychological novel set in the special conditions of revolution.' Isabelle Bour has also reached a similar conclusion: '*Caleb Williams* combines a topical political discussion of social inequality with a new kind of interest in the human psyche...; social history is seen as indivisible from psychological interaction between individuals.' See Butler, 'Godwin, Burke, and *Caleb Williams*,' *Essays in Criticism*, 32.3 (July 1982), 237-57 (pp. 255-6), and Bour, 'Sensibility as Epistemology', p. 814.

⁴⁶ For instance, Barnett & Gustafson have pointed out that in 'the Modern Language Association's International Biography... only 8 of the 179 books and articles about Godwin's corpus published over the last twenty years investigate his children's books or the Juvenile Library.' Their article also includes several convincing suggestions for the reasons behind this; see 'The Radical Aesop', esp. pp. 6-9.

2010.⁴⁷ The Juvenile Library, a shop and publishing house that Godwin established in 1805, was ‘one of the most successful of the children’s booksellers in London’ and became the main source of income for Godwin and the five youths that constituted his household in the first decades of the early-nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Under Godwin’s management, The Juvenile Library produced nearly fifty publications for youths between 1805 and 1821, and featured contributions from writers including William Hazlitt, Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Charles and Mary Lamb, as well as Godwin and Wollstonecraft’s daughter Mary (later Shelley).⁴⁹ At least ten works were written by Godwin himself, six of which were explicitly addressed to adolescents (i.e. to ‘the youth of both sexes’ or ‘young persons’), many of which were so popular that they outsold even the best-selling *Caleb Williams* and the *Enquiry*.⁵⁰ However, in addition to those Juvenile Library texts written for youths, Godwin also produced several texts *about* them, intended for adult guardians and pedagogues. The essay series entitled *The Enquirer*, the educational treatise *Account of the Seminary*, and the various Prefaces of The Juvenile Library books which addressed the readers’ parents, collectively constitute Godwin’s most explicit pedagogical statements on the developmental import of teenhood, and feature, I shall argue, the same pedagogies of tolerance as exhibited in not just *Caleb Williams* and Godwin’s other novels, but also his within his wider political philosophy as a whole.

⁴⁷ More recently, Pamela Clemit has drawn attention to the Juvenile Library as part of *The Letters of William Godwin* project, co-run by Queen Mary, University of London and the Victoria and Albert Museum; see for instance her article ‘Anarchy in the Nursery: William Godwin’s Juvenile Library’, *Idler*, 66 (June 2019), 73-7.

⁴⁸ Manly, ‘Literature for Children’, p. 226. For a more contextualised description of the Juvenile Library, see William St. Clair’s biography *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), esp. pp. 283-94. The Juvenile Library has since featured in studies such as Janet Bottoms, ‘“Awakening the Mind”’, 267-82; Pamela Clemit, ‘Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin’s Juvenile Library, 1805-25’, *The Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (2000/2001), 44-70 and ‘William Godwin’s Juvenile Library’, *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 147 (July 2009), 90-7; Margaret Fearn, ‘William Godwin and the “Wilds of Literature”’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 29.3 (Oct. 1981), 247-57; Margaret Kinnell, ‘Childhood and Children’s Literature: the Case of M.J. Godwin, 1805-1825’, *Publishing History*, 24 (1988), 77-99, and ‘Sceptreless, Free, Uncircumscribed? Radicalism, Dissent and Early Children’s Books’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 36.1 (Feb. 1988), 49-71.

⁴⁹ Complete lists of the publications of the Juvenile Library have been compiled by both Suzanne Barnett and Brian Alderson. See Suzanne Barnett, ‘Bibliography of titles released by Godwin’s Juvenile Library and City Juvenile Library’ in William Godwin’s *Fables Ancient and Modern* [1805] (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2014), and Alderson, ‘A Chronological List of Books published by the firm of M. J. Godwin & Co’ (Newcastle University, 2008), <research.ncl.ac.uk/sites/Booklist-_Godwin_22Oct2008>, accessed 10/08/20.

⁵⁰ Both Pamela Clemit and William St. Clair have demonstrated that many texts from the Juvenile Library and Godwin’s other children’s productions achieved a wider and longer-lasting impact than even those more well-known works with which he is now associated, with a readership as far away as India. Clemit’s study in particular does much work to document the contemporary popularity of Godwin’s pedagogical writings, demonstrating, for instance, that such texts – and particularly *The Pantheon* – remained in contemporary circulation long after the dissolution of Godwin’s shop in 1825. See William St. Clair ‘William Godwin as Children’s Bookseller,’ *Children and Their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*, eds. G. Avery & J. Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 168-82 (p. 177), and Pamela Clemit, ‘William Godwin’s Juvenile Library’.

Like many of the other works examined in this thesis, Godwin's 'forceful and undervalued' theory of youth in these educational texts was inclusive, liberal and fundamentally tolerant.⁵¹ Like Rousseau before him, Godwin's conception of the teen was that of an innately good and innocent young individual, but who was extremely susceptible to malign adult influences. In particular, Godwin's educational writings all consistently feature two key principles that had, since *Émile*, come to embody liberal, 'modern' attitudes towards the new adolescent class. The first was that Lockean concept that *Thoughts Concerning Education* presented as the primary condition necessary for successful youth development: the importance of youthful liberty and independence. As the title of *The Enquirer* suggests, the adolescent class of the new order was encouraged to reason, question and challenge any given truth, a principle diametrically opposed to the mandate of the early and mid-eighteenth-century order of youth, which had dictated submission and obedience at all times.⁵² Although the second core principle repeated in these educational writings is also present in Locke's pedagogy, it is more manifestly derived from Rousseauvian theory, and involved the same attitude to adults already identified in *The Italian*, *Caleb Williams*, *Émile* and a myriad of other texts which will appear throughout this thesis. Too often, these texts posited, did developing teens become the sacrificial victims of adult oppressors who abused their positions of power. Accordingly, like those of Rousseau before him, the adult characters of Godwin and their worldly system of values are often presented to be the greatest potential threat to successful youthful development, and are consistently shown to bring about the 'premature and calamitous end' to successful maturation (or even, as in Godwin's *Lady Jane Grey* and *Caleb Williams*, their very lives).⁵³ Just as in *Émile*, real-life readers of Godwin's educational writings were intended to become just as much the educated as were the depicted protagonists. While the youths in such texts are entreated to be cautious of their surrounding adults and shun those whose influence would do them harm, implied adult readers of such texts are urged to exercise their better judgment and become tolerators and allies, not enemies, of the maturing youth.

Godwin's most explicit pedagogical statements are found in his two educational treatises, the *Account of the Seminary* (1783) and *The Enquirer* (1797). The latter was a lengthy essay series published in three parts; the former, more fully titled *Account of the Seminary that will be Opened... for the Instruction of Twelve Pupils*, was the prospectus for a small school Godwin intended to open

⁵¹ Richardson, *Literature, Education, Romanticism*, p. 107.

⁵² Specifically, teens were encouraged to 'learn to think, to discriminate, to remember and to enquire.' William Godwin, *The Enquirer: Reflections On Education, Manners, And Literature, In A Series Of Essays* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797), p. 6.

⁵³ Edward Baldwin [pseud. of William Godwin], *Life of Lady Jane Grey, and of Lord Guildford Dudley, her Husband* (London: M. J. Godwin & Co, 1824), p. 19.

and govern in Epsom, Surrey. The project did not come to fruition, and the *Account* has since been relegated to a place of relative neglect within the Godwin critical tradition. Despite this, the *Account's* denunciation of the 'bitterness and slavery' of outdated and conservative programs of education represents a crucial, early formalised expression of the needs and rights of the new adolescent class.⁵⁴ Although many of its notions borrow from Locke, Hutcheson and – as we shall later see - Adam Smith, the *Account* is most indebted to Rousseau, acknowledged to be so influential to the *Account's* pedagogy that Godwin offers careful justifications on those rare occasions on which their understandings differ.⁵⁵ The work begins from the same notions of development found in *Émile*, and blends together the core principles of Locke's emphasis of youthful liberty with Rousseau's focus on the culpability of malign adults. As a result, Godwin's intended seminary sought to provide a pedagogical setting in which youthful development could be facilitated, not hindered, by adult intervention, and would be protected from the corrupting pedantry typical of earlier eighteenth-century attitudes to youth. Separated from exposure to malign adults, Godwin's youths were to commune primarily with nature, 'the kind and blameless mother of all her children,' and were to read from 'the page[s] of the universe [before...] any human composition' (pp. 7, 37, 53). According to Godwin, expressions of autonomy and independence derived in response to these wholesome sources need not therefore be feared; nature, unlike human society, was uncorrupted, and would inspire 'benevolence' in its pupils instead of selfishness. Because, the *Account* reasoned, the restrictive conservatism of traditional pedagogical practices so rarely voluntarily endorsed youth independence and autonomy of its own volition, the typical youth could only ever truly experience liberty through seizure, dissent and resistance. As a result, Godwin's proposed pedagogy sought to eradicate any unmanageability in its youths by ensuring that their right to liberty would always be respected. The seminary's teens would therefore never need to resort to resistant or delinquent behaviour in order to manifest a show of independence.

At the same time that the *Account* championed a Lockean-style necessity for youth liberty and independence as its first core principle, its second, more Rousseauvian foundational principle was to reject that contemporary system of education which gave absolute power to the adult, transforming parents and teachers into tyrants. Lamenting 'the inequality of parents and children,' the *Account* condemns hierarchical relationships between guardians and teens in traditional eighteenth-century

⁵⁴ For more on Godwin's link between tyrannous pedagogues and slavery, see p. 58 and n. 62 of this chapter.

⁵⁵ Occasions on which Godwin differs from Rousseau are rare however, and seldom significant (for example, believing the most appropriate commencement age of adolescent education is at ten years old, instead of Rousseau's twelve). The only significant divarication of the two in the *Account* involves the two writers' differing opinions regarding either the edifying (Rousseau) or potentially inhibiting (Godwin) effects of solitude on adolescence. See William Godwin, *Account of the Seminary that will be Opened... for the Instruction of Twelve Pupils* (London: Cadell, 1783), pp. 20-21, 53-4.

pedagogies as one of 'the principal corruptions of modern education' (p. 27). Because adults, according to Godwin, too often abused their position of power, his own seminary would by contrast be 'inoppressive', 'attentive to the native gaiety of youth,' and would never 'undermine... [the] reason' of the students, or 'clog and destroy the native activity of the[ir] mind' (p. 32). Switching to the second person to address the reader (implied to be an advocate of the old system) directly, Godwin delivers an emotional appeal on behalf of the victimised teen:

How is it you can consent to deprive these little innocents of an enjoyment, that slides so fast away? How is it you can find in your heart to pall these fleeting years with bitterness and slavery? The undesigning gaiety of youth has the strongest claim upon your humanity. There is not in the world a truer object of pity, than a child terrified at every glance, and watching, with anxious uncertainty, the caprices of a pedagogue. If he survive, the liberty of manhood is dearly bought by so many heart aches. And if he die, happy to escape your cruelty, the only advantage he derives from the sufferings you have inflicted, is that of not regretting a life, of which he knew nothing but the torments. (pp. 24-5)

According to Godwin then, regardless of whether the oppressed youth 'survived' or 'died', the subordinated youth, according to the *Account*, symbolised only regret and wasted opportunity.

The links between Godwin's pedagogy of the *Account* and *Caleb Williams* are thus apparent. Regardless which of Godwin's two endings to the novel one follows – the one in which Caleb 'survives' or the one in which he 'dies' – the narratives equally function as diegetic confirmations of Godwin's pedagogical theory. In other words, *Caleb Williams*'s 1794 description of the often-fatal extremities to which adults persecuted youths is an extended, narratological version of the theory of education established ten years previous in the *Account*. Its logic and influence on *Caleb Williams* are further manifest in Tyrell himself, who in his own education is denied the liberty and independence deemed so necessary by the *Account*. Under the dogmatism of 'the pedant who held the office of his tutor,' Tyrell becomes 'indocile and restive.' Denied any independence in his learning, his only chance to express it is by resistance: he rejects all traditional forms of pedagogical authority and becomes 'scholar' to 'the groom and the game-keeper' instead. Under these teachers, he develops that future cause of his eventual downfall - his 'callous and unrelenting disposition' (p. 19). Meanwhile, Emily Melville in the same household is fortunate enough to have 'hitherto been in an unusual degree exempted from the oppression of despotism.' Raised with a different set of classist and gendered expectations, Emily's 'happy insignificance had served her as a protection. No one thought it worth his while to fetter her with those numerous petty restrictions with which the daughters of opulence are commonly tormented' (p. 50). Her primary caregiver is Mrs. Jakeman, an ideal Godwinian preceptor who solicits 'friendship' from Emily instead of obedience in exactly those terms recommended by the *Account*. Under the terms of this relative equality, Emily 'fully repaid the

affection of her instructress, and learned with great docility the few accomplishments Mrs. Jakeman was able to communicate' (p. 41). The same term 'docility' which characterises Emily's pedagogical experience thus directly contrasts the 'restive and *indocile*' one of Tyrell's. Never forced, Emily is first 'permitted' and then 'encouraged' by Mrs. Tyrell to attend lessons delivered by the subsequent educators of Tyrell himself. Given a Lockean level of liberty and independence, Emily is a swift, eager learner. Tyrell, on the other hand, for whom lessons are compulsory, most often refuses to attend, and the tutors 'would commonly have had nothing to do, had it not been for the fortunate presence of Miss Melville' (p. 41).

By arguing in both these texts that oppressive, conservative pedagogies and attitudes to youth have a negative effect on both the adolescents themselves and their wider society, Godwin therefore de-radicalises the concept of the right to liberty and independence demanded by the new, Romantic-era ideology of youth. For the young Tyrell, it is the constraint felt because of the same lack of independence that later results in his deleterious effect on his own social circle as an adult, as well as the consequent oppression of Emily when under his authority. Alluding to the tyrannous despotism of the punitive adult pedagogues described in the *Account*, Godwin writes that Tyrell's 'despotic and unforgiving propensities stimulated him to a degree little short of madness' (p. 61). Emily's experience of liberty in her upbringing and education are by contrast represented as resulting in a natural inclination towards that which is right, and she naively hopes that all others will likely do the same. Representative of those vulnerable adolescents of the new social class, Emily's Rousseauistic belief in her entitlement to independence means she is unable to fathom how Tyrell could challenge such a basic human right as free will: 'He knows very well that I am right to have a will of my own in such a thing as this, and nobody is punished for doing what is right.' 'Nobody ought, my dear child,' Mrs. Jakeman warns, 'but there are very wicked and tyrannical men in the world.'⁵⁶ As the ideal Godwinian pedagogue, Mrs Jakeman and her cautionary words again voice the exact same developmental theories as the *Account*. Emily's victimisation by the 'tyrannical' 'despotism' of Tyrell in *Caleb Williams* is used by Godwin to represent the inevitably tragic consequences for youths if his warnings in the *Account* are left unheeded.

Over a decade later, Godwin would escalate the urgency of the *Account's* warnings in *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (1797). It was one of two texts published that year that boldly and publicly called for a liberal, progressive reform of the contemporary education system, the second being Erasmus Darwin's *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in*

⁵⁶ *Caleb Williams*, p. 52. As Godwin well knew, Thomas Paine had introduced the notion of human rights in his 1791 *Rights of Man* – see n. 71 of this chapter.

Boarding Schools (1797). Like *Godwin's Account*, the *Plan for the Conduct* contained the prospectus for a school, set up for Darwin's two illegitimate children, and both works became the target of a mocking pamphlet in the *Anti-Jacobin* that year which satirised their progressive agenda.⁵⁷ Darwin's radical vision of female education included the study of biology, chemistry, natural history and experimental philosophy; girls were to be trained in financial economy and entrepreneurship, and were even for these reasons encouraged to visit various industrial sites for inspiration:

the cotton works on the river Derwent in Derbyshire; the potteries in Staffordshire; the iron-founderies of Coalbrooke Dale in Shropshire; the manufactories of Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham... [all] might be advantageously exhibited to young ladies.⁵⁸

Like that of Godwin, Darwin's tolerant pedagogical approach condemned the over-management of the teen, and strictly condemned the humiliating punishments frequently practiced in other schools. Above all, and because this was a specifically female system of education, Godwinian-style warnings against the corrupting intentions of flattering adult predators are narrated with particular urgency. "Know yourself" is a celebrated injunction... but "know other people" is equally necessary,' Darwin warns. Doing so 'arms the possessor against the ill designs of others; hence they should be taught to beware of flatterers, gamesters, drunkards, and of all ill-tempered persons' (pp. 53-4). Having witnessed first-hand the social precarity of his own illegitimate daughters, Darwin's words are pregnant with cautionary concern. Revealingly placed immediately before his 'Justice and Chastity' section, Darwin concludes that once the girls acquired an accurate 'picture of human nature' and a realistic 'knowledge of mankind', they would understand exactly why he had so repeatedly termed a preventative prudence around adults to be so 'necessary.'

Like Darwin's *Plan for the Conduct*, Godwin's *Enquirer* was critical of those tyrannous adult educators attempting to continue the suppression and subordination of the new adolescent class. Published in the same year in which Mary Wollstonecraft died, *The Enquirer* is believed by biographers to derive from the lengthy conversations between Godwin and his ailing wife on the way that she wanted her own two children to be raised in the event of her death.⁵⁹ Unlike the utopian vision of an

⁵⁷ See Pitt Canning, H. Frere and H. Ellis, 'The Loves of Triangles' in *The Anti-Jacobin* (London: Canning, 1798).

⁵⁸ Erasmus Darwin, *Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools* (Derby: J. Drewry, 1797), p. 40.

⁵⁹ As her own educational writings affirm, Wollstonecraft had much interest in the contemporary education system. She frequently inspected and critiqued schools (including Eton), was a keen reader of pedagogical writing (especially that of Rousseau, Catherine Macaulay and Thomas Day), and opened a school of her own in Newington Green, which she co-managed for several years. Particularly educational for her was the time she spent as governess to Lady Kingsborough's daughters, whom she described as suffering such an excessive 'variety of prohibitions that they were controlled in everything' before her arrival. The suggestion that the views of *The Enquirer* are partly hers derives from William St. Clair's respected biography of the family: 'During their few months together Wollstonecraft and Godwin had talked a great deal about how they would bring up the children, much of which found its way into *The Enquirer*. They talked about the children as she lay dying and he

idyllic pedagogical experience offered by the *Account's* ideal seminary, the work shifted its focus to that cold, existent reality for the contemporary youth already alluded to in *Caleb William's* subtitle, 'Things As They Are.' Taking up Darwin's attack on the contemporary education system and the treatment to which it continued to subject those in its care, *The Enquirer* would use even more insistently the same vocabulary of 'tyranny', 'despotism', and 'slavery' first employed by Godwin's *Account* to blast the continuing oppression felt by the modern youth. As the political nuance behind these terms might suggest (as well as the duplicated verb of their titles), the observations of *The Enquirer* follow on quite naturally from the political ideals set out in Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*.⁶⁰ Godwin produced constant alterations to the *Enquiry*, publishing substantially revised second and third editions in 1796 and 1798; the *Enquirer*, printed between them in 1797, and by the same publisher, was almost certainly a product of the same process. However, although Godwin's characteristic veneration of truth, reason and (above all) liberty are preserved and reproduced almost exactly in *The Enquirer*, their application is different. Just as *Caleb Williams* translated the themes from the *Enquiry* into a narrative form accessible to a different set of readers, so the *Enquirer* reproduced the same principles for another audience again – this time, those already directly involved in the care or education of youths. Furthermore, exactly as has been demonstrated with the *Account of the Seminary*, the rhetorical comparisons, persuasive arguments and pedagogical theories of the *Enquirer* are all translated into a fictionalised, mimetic form in Godwin's pedagogical novels such as *Caleb Williams*.

In its developmental theory, *The Enquirer* functions as a sort of aggressive bigger brother to *The Account*. Its various essays, with titles such as 'Of Awakening the Mind', 'Of the Happiness of Youth', and 'Of Public and Private Education', contain its same two core principles, but assert them much more belligerently, unanimously demanding the 'liberation' of the modern teen and condemning their adult oppressors. 'The present order of society... is the greatest slaughter-house of genius and of mind, [...] the unrelenting murderer of hope and gaiety' (p. 14) one essay inveighs. 'All [its] education is despotism' (p. 48) declares another. 'Of all the sources of unhappiness to a young person,' begins a third, 'the greatest is a sense of slavery. [...They are] checked, controled [sic], and tyrannised over in a thousand ways' (p. 53). This time, Godwin incorporates within his presentation of

was determined that baby Mary and three-year-old Fanny should both be educated in the way their mother would have wished.' St. Clair also describes Godwin's extensive efforts to further clarify these opinions and stances, visiting and interviewing her closest acquaintances to ensure he had an accurate understanding of her views. See William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1798] (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990), pp. 56-7, and St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, pp. 278-84.

⁶⁰ Various scholars have already traced the importance of the theme of education in the *Enquiry*. 'For Godwin, education was the origin of political action,' Barnett and Gustafson have observed; according to Godwin, 'social change required education, which catalysed intellectual and moral abilities.' See 'The Radical Aesop', p. 17.

the Lockean and Rousseauvian core principles a number of strategic rhetoric techniques to maximise the persuasiveness of *The Enquirer's* arguments. For instance, nearly all the essays leave the specific perpetrators of this abuse unnamed and unparticularised: the sadist oppressor figures are described only with vague terms denoting generalised despotic authority ('the artificer', 'the persecutor', 'the task-master', 'the tyrant'), so as to be most easily applicable to any adult figure, be they parent, guardian, relation or teacher. Less vague however was the presentation of the extreme dehumanisation that Godwin associates with traditional education. 'The condition of a negro-slave in the West Indies, is in many respects preferable to that of the youthful son of a free-born European,' Godwin writes. 'When [the slave] has finished his daily portion of labour, his master concerns himself no further about him.' By contrast, the exploitation of the youth, according to Godwin, was 'endless. The youth is never free from the danger of its grating interference.'⁶¹ These striking allusions to enslavement are used to recall similar statements already made in *Caleb Williams*, in which young Hawkins, Emily Melville and (in the original manuscript) Caleb himself all lack such basic legal rights that they are all disenfranchised and finally killed by a corrupt and classist justice system. The *Enquirer's* references to adult oppressors as 'unrelenting murderers' are not therefore hyperbolic exaggerations; they serve as a very serious pedagogical warning. Addressing the implied adult not in a series of second-person appeals like the *Account* but with more direct versions in the first person, *The Enquirer* embodies a voice that warns of the insurrectionary, Rousseauvian consequences of such mistreatment:

Under th[eir] slavery the mind pusillanimously shrinks. I am left alone with my tyrant, and am utterly hopeless and forlorn. But ... my mind begins to erect itself ... I do not feel annihilated by my condition, but ... adjust the account in my own mind with my task-master, and say, Thus far you may proceed; but there is a conquest that you cannot achieve. ...[A]nger glows in the

⁶¹ *The Enquirer*, pp. 53-4. Slavery, termed a 'vile and sordid condition' by Godwin, is a prominent theme that occurs throughout both Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's oeuvre (Wollstonecraft too termed the traditional, patriarchal system of education as an 'absurd and tyrannic... system of slavery.') As an active abolitionist, Godwin most vocally condemned the institution of slavery for the ten years during which he covered the slave debates as political correspondent for the *New Annual Register* (1780-90), and was actually present (according to Malchow) at the 1791 parliamentary session in which William Wilberforce's abolitionary motion was defeated. The topic is equally prominent in much of Godwin's other work, including his 1807 work *Fables Ancient and Modern* (which includes the tale 'Washing the Blackamoor White') and in his novel *St. Leon* (1791), which featured a black-skinned turnkey as a moral exemplar. It should be noted that the use of slavery in his educational writings is particularly complex, and at no point seeks to minimise the conditions of enslaved populations. Rather, Godwin's comparison between the lack of legal representation for youths and slaves seems to be responding to a widespread public attitude which often perceived slavery to be a remote problem which occurred only in distant, uncivilised nations. Godwin's point is that it would be hypocritical to condemn the practice of slavery overseas while simultaneously beating, abusing or denying rights to those who were vulnerable and disenfranchised in the 'Mother Country' itself. See Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (London: J. Johnson, 1792), p. 64. For an introduction to racial attitudes in this context, see Anne Mellor, 'Frankenstein, Racial Science and the Yellow Peril,' *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 23.1 (2001), 1-28 and H.L. Malchow 'Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Past and Present*, 139 (May 1993), 90-130.

breast of both the contending parties; my heart pants with indignation against the injustice... in the final triumph of my Brobdingnagian persecutor I recognise the indulgence of hatred and revenge.⁶²

Caleb Williams and Rousseau's *Émile* had both already demonstrated that the youth who suffered under the unjust maltreatment of an adult or who was denied freedom or independence would consequently and quite naturally seek to seize it for themselves. But *The Enquirer's* first-person narration of this phenomena asks the adult reader to position *themselves* within this dynamic. The hermeneutic function of these texts is thus in both cases pedagogical; they seek to prompt their more engaged readers to educate themselves in the affect of injustice of the victimised teen.

With this affective pedagogical function, Godwin's *Enquirer* employs the same identificatory empathy as that he described regarding the even younger readers of his later work *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1805) in The Juvenile Library series: 'If we would benefit a child, we must become in part a child ourselves.'⁶³ Godwin's intention in such texts is to call forth from the reader the same notion of empathetic compassion that had previously been established in Adam Smith's still-popular *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Several scholars describe Godwin's moral philosophy as 'much indebted' to Adam Smith, and Smith's notions of sympathy constantly reappear in both the *Account* and *The Enquirer*.⁶⁴ As an early theory of collective affect, Smith's understanding of sympathy showed fundamental parallels with Godwin's program for youth because of their similar emphasis on the beneficent role of the imagination.⁶⁵ Godwin's invocation of this principle in *The Enquirer* and *Fables Ancient and Modern* is equally demonstrated in *Caleb Williams*. Having originally begun the novel in

⁶² 'Of Public and Private Education,' p. 49. Godwin's conception of the 'Brobdingnagian persecutor' reflects his admiration of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which Godwin lauded for its 'profound insight into the true principles of political justice' and which he refers to at length in the *Enquiry*. See David Taylor, 'Gillray's Gulliver and the 1803 Invasion Scare,' *The Afterlives of Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, eds. Daniel Cook & Nicholas Seager (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 212-32 (p. 218).

⁶³ Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern* (London: Hodgkins, 1805), pp. iii-iv.

⁶⁴ See for example *The Enquirer's* declaration that 'There is no motive more powerful in its operations upon the human mind, than that which originates in sympathy' ('Of Public and Private Education,' *The Enquirer*, p. 45) or the logical reasoning of the *Account*: 'The area of foresight is the area of imagination, and imagination is the grand instrument of virtue. The mind is the seat of pleasure and pain. It is not by what we see, but by what we infer and suppose, that we are taught, that any being is the object of commiseration. It is by the constant return of the mind to the unfortunate object, that we are strongly impressed with sympathy' (pp. 47-48). Scholars who have commented on the relationship between Adam Smith and Godwin include Pamela Clemit 'The Signal of Regard: William Godwin's Correspondence Networks,' *European Romantic Review*, 30.4 (2019), 353-66; Kevin DeYoung, lecture 'Conflict of Visions: Adam Smith, William Godwin, and Marquis de Condorcet' (April 2020) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fplatK5pr8Y>> accessed 03/09/20, and Mark Philp, "William Godwin", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/godwin>>), accessed 19/06/20.

⁶⁵ 'As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation; ...it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations.' Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. Raphael & A. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 9.

the third person, Godwin later revealed that he switched its format to the first person halfway through the writing process, the method which became ‘infinitely the best adapted... to my vein of delineation, where the... imagination revelled the most freely.’⁶⁶ Whereas the *Account* had appealed to this capacity in second-person, by the time of *The Enquirer* Godwin is able to use the benefits of the first-person mode, encouraging its adult readers to imagine themselves as victimised teens. By a series of Smithean, personal and emotional appeals from these embodied adolescent victims to adult implied readers, Godwin recreates the tone of Caleb’s similar appeals to the adult jury at the end of *Caleb Williams*. Like his own switch from the tragic response to such appeals in the first conclusion to an ending which featured compassion and justice, Godwin thus enlisted the narratorial mode most suited to provide a sympathetic education for his readers as well as that for his protagonists. As this thesis will continue to demonstrate, the fact that the sympathetic function of pedagogical works like Godwin’s is utilised specifically in defence of the new adolescent social class is itself demonstrative of a growing societal shift that recognised their status as a social class deserving equal rights to adults.⁶⁷

Before moving on to another pedagogical novelist, Maria Edgeworth, in Chapter Two, it is also important to note that viewed in the *Bildung*, pedagogical context established in *The Enquirer* and Godwin’s other pedagogical works, Godwin’s rejection of *Caleb Williams*’ initial, more punishing conclusion gains additional clarifying significance. While acknowledging the ‘fruitless[ness]’ of speculating as to the precise motives behind Godwin’s alteration, critics have offered various suggestions as to the significance of the change of *Caleb Williams*’ conclusion.⁶⁸ Unusually, Godwin himself, who recorded detailed accounts of his writing and editing processes, provides no explanations or clues as to his motivations behind such a significant change. The topic is entirely neglected in his own 1832 published ‘Account of the Composition of *Caleb Williams*’, and Dumas, the theorist who first discovered the unpublished ending, was unsuccessful in a search through Godwin’s known correspondence and other bibliographic material for any allusion to it.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Godwin, *Account of the Composition of Caleb Williams*, Hindle’s appendices, p. 350.

⁶⁷ My identification of adolescence as constituting a class is borrowed primarily from Spacks, who describes adolescents as a fundamentally ‘oppressed class’. Spacks, *Adolescent Idea*, p. 5.

⁶⁸ For example, the theory supported by those such as Williams, but countered by those such as Hindle or Dumas, that the initial ending was dismissed for the same reason as was Godwin’s overtly radical 1794 Preface, suppressed in self-avowed ‘compliance with the alarms of booksellers’, as well as those of Godwin’s trusted peers such as Elizabeth Inchbald; or Dumas’ emphasis of the importance of the substitute’s clear prioritisation of ‘dramatic immediacy’ and ‘heighten[ed...] emotional impact’, thus latterly clearly ‘mak[ing] its appeal to the heart rather than to the head.’ See Godwin’s 1795 Preface and Hindle’s conclusion, pp. xxxvii-xxxix, 3; Raymond Williams, ‘The Fiction of Reform’, *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1983), 143-165; Dumas, pp. 580-2, 588, 591-7; Leslie Stephen, ‘William Godwin’s Novels,’ *Studies of a Biographer*, 3 (New York & London, 1902), 119-154 (p. 140), and Paul, *Godwin’s Friends and Contemporaries*, I, pp. 139-140.

⁶⁹ See ‘Godwin’s Account of the Composition of *Caleb Williams*’ in Godwin’s Preface to the 1832 ‘Standard Novels’ edition of *Fleetwood* (London: 20 Nov 1832), and Dumas, ‘Things As They Were’, p. 576.

Crucially however, viewing *Caleb Williams* as a fictional representation of youth and *Bildung* has the effect of altering the hermeneutic availability of both the novel and its conclusions, re-enacting Hindle's interpretive shift from a primarily political focus to one more accurately described as both psychological and pedagogical. As a genre that (typically) places particular emphasis on the conclusion of its novels (i.e. the cessation of motion achieved by successful/unsuccessful integration into society), the identification of *Caleb Williams* as a *Bildungsroman* is a useful critical exercise because it highlights the disparity between the symbolism of the two alternate endings. The novel's original ending, modelling the old, eighteenth-century notion of youth subordination, actively prevents a successful endpoint to Caleb's maturation or socialisation. By contrast, the published ending, representative of the new class of adolescent, actively prioritises the theme of reconciliation and its reparative potential for the maturation process. Godwin's rejection of the initial, unpublished ending to *Caleb Williams* through this *Bildung*/pedagogical lens seems quite logically therefore to symbolize a rejection of the outdated eighteenth-century model of adolescence that it represented. In the initial conclusion's place was inserted a modernising ending wherein the new adolescent class is acknowledged to deserve legitimate access to justice and political power, and to be granted what Thomas Paine described as the same, basic 'human rights' as adults.⁷⁰ In this legal and political validation of the teen's developmental subjectivity, the arguments of Godwin's educational writings and popular fiction thus find natural unification with those of the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. As this chapter has demonstrated, Godwinian ideas of the development of youth have for too long been separated from his political ideas of the development of society as a whole. As has been shown, when viewed in the light of Godwin's educational writings, the youths of Godwin's novels are clearly represented as just as powerless as a result of their age as they are because of their class. By rejecting the conclusion which models the youth as symbolically trampled and silenced, Godwin, along with Locke, Rousseau, Darwin, and Edgeworth, aligned himself with what St Clair describes as a 'new and shocking' pedagogical movement,⁷¹ which decried youth subordination to adult oppressors and educators, and which would model tolerant attitudes to youth independence in new types of popular fiction.

⁷⁰ The phrase 'human rights' had only recently been popularised by Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* in the same decade: '[I]gnorance, neglect, [and] contempt of human rights, are the sole causes of public misfortunes... [they are] natural, imprescriptible, and unalienable rights.' Godwin was a staunch admirer of Paine's treatise and commented that 'The seeds of revolution it contains are so vigorous in their stamina that nothing can overpower them.' See Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution* (London: J.S. Jordan, 1791), p. 110. Godwin's comment is quoted in Peter Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 80.

⁷¹ See St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 281.

Chapter Two

Permissive Pedagogies: Tolerance in the Mainstream

The Edgeworths' Pedagogy: *The Parent's Assistant* and *Practical Education*

While liberal defences of the new adolescent class as seen in Chapter One might be expected in the educational theories of such radical or controversial thinkers as Rousseau and Godwin, their presence in the pedagogy of the more innocuous Edgeworths is perhaps consequentially more striking.¹ Despite (and partly because of) the commercial success and continual reprints of the works of Rousseau and Godwin, their philosophies – both political and pedagogical – were often received with suspicion by more conservative readers and were at times associated with anarchism and/or Jacobinism.² With this in mind, the purpose of Chapter Two is to turn to the pedagogical novels of an educational theorist recently styled ‘the [period’s] most highly regarded woman writer in both Britain and Ireland,’ whose popularity and writings were more closely representative of the wider, mainstream literary marketplace.³ Maria Edgeworth was unquestionably the highest paid and most critically acclaimed woman writer of the period, and is now thought to be the earliest writer of both

¹ I use the term ‘innocuous’ advisedly, and simultaneously acknowledge (as the original reaction to works such as *Belinda* evidences) that certain of her contemporaries found Edgeworth to be far from such. The most recent criticism remains divided on where Edgeworth might fall within the liberal/conservative ‘war of ideas.’ Scholars such as Marjorie Lightfoot, Audrey Bilger, and Eleanor Ty have asserted Edgeworth to be radical/progressive, whereas scholars such as Andrew McInnes and Andrew McCann define her as anti-Jacobin/conservative. Although this chapter identifies Edgeworth’s educational philosophy in particular to be unusually progressive, I concur on the whole with scholars like Gary Kelly and Marilyn Butler, who concede that Edgeworth often seems to be ‘both a conservative and a progressive’ simultaneously and ‘do[es] not belong unequivocally to one side.’ See Eleanor Ty, ‘Freke in Men’s Clothes: Transgression and the Carnavalesque in Edgeworth’s *Belinda*,’ *The Clothes That Wear Us*, ed. Jessica Munns & Penny Richards (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 157-73; Marjorie Lightfoot, “‘Morals For Those That Like Them’”: The Satire of Edgeworth’s *Belinda*, 1801,’ *Eire/Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 29.4 (1994), 117-31; Audrey Bilger’s *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); Andrew McInnes, *Wollstonecraft’s Ghost: The Fate of the Female Philosopher in the Romantic Period* (London: Routledge, 2016); Andrew McCann, ‘Conjugal Love and the Enlightenment Subject: The Colonial Conquest of Non-Identity in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*,’ *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 30.1 (1996), 56-77; Gary Kelly, ‘Amelia Opie, Lady Caroline Lamb, and Maria Edgeworth: Official and Unofficial Ideology,’ *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 12.4 (October 1981), 3-24 (p. 20), and Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 124.

² See M. O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 20, 66-69.

³ Cliona O Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), p. 1. Edgeworth’s popularity within the mainstream marketplace is also affirmed by Butler: ‘The public bought her novels in large numbers, ensuring that almost all went into at least three editions within a few years of first appearing. Her publishers paid her up to £2,000 for a single work, a remarkable sum before Scott did even better; Murray offered Jane Austen a conditional £450 for *Emma*.’ Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 1.

the regional novel genre and the 'first true historical novel' genre in British literature.⁴ Growing up in the company of Erasmus Darwin, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and Thomas Day (all themselves known for their progressive educational theories), Edgeworth and her writing would come to be praised and emulated by Thackeray, Ruskin, Byron, Jane Austen (who sent her a copy of *Emma*) and Walter Scott (who dubbed her 'the great Maria.'⁵ Today, Edgeworth is primarily celebrated for her 'society' novels (e.g. *Belinda* [1801] and *Helen* [1834]) and her Irish novels (e.g. *Castle Rackrent* [1800], *Ennui* [1809] and *The Absentee* [1812]). Like Godwin, however, she also published many popular stories for and about youths; most notably, those in *The Parent's Assistant* (1796-1800), the *Moral Tales* (1801) and the *Popular Tales* (1804).⁶ As the eldest daughter of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, she wrote many of these stories for the instruction and amusement of her 19 younger siblings, of whom she was often the sole carer.⁷ The insights she gained from the education of the Edgeworth youths were first formalised into writing as part of the exceedingly successful educational treatise *Practical Education* (1798), but would also, exactly as in the novels of Godwin, reappear just as forcefully in a series of pedagogical fiction.

The influence of Godwin on the Edgeworthian theories of youth and education is apparent.⁸ Co-authored by Maria and her father, *Practical Education* was published a year after Godwin's *Enquirer*, and both Edgeworths specifically acknowledge their indebtedness to its ideas. The works share both theoretical and thematic similarities: both, for example, have chapters discussing similar or near identical theories of learning, obedience, reading and independence; many of them ('Of/On Servants,' 'Of/On Public and Private Education') share near identical titles, arguments and formats. The Edgeworthian subscription to the Godwinian vision of the ideal youth is particularly clear; one

⁴ See Michael Gamer, 'Maria Edgeworth and the Romance of Real Life,' *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 34.2 (2001), 232-66 (p. 232); 'Maria Edgeworth', *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. M. Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 306 and 'Maria Edgeworth', *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Literature*, eds. S. Serafin & V. Myer (New York & London: Continuum, 2003), p. 301.

⁵ 'Maria Edgeworth,' *Continuum Encyclopedia*, p. 301.

⁶ It is important to acknowledge however that certain scholars have criticised this separation of Edgeworth's adult 'society' novels from her children's fiction. For example, Gustafson argues that '[t]he division between Edgeworth's so-called adult and children's fictions does not reflect the historical context in which the Edgeworths published.' Gustafson, 'Coming of Age', p. 172.

⁷ Richard Lovell Edgeworth had twenty-two children by four wives, and the first three of these wives died before him. Although Maria was the third child of his first marriage, she was the first daughter, and became the chief caregiver in the Edgeworth household in the three periods between her father's subsequent marriages.

⁸ Throughout the chapter I use the term 'Edgeworthian' to indicate the points at which I believe it is important to acknowledge Richard Lovell Edgeworth's influence on his daughter's pedagogy. Although Marilyn Butler has offered convincing arguments for the independence of Richard and Maria's stances on various personal and professional issues, the firmness of Maria's avowals of her accordance with her father's views on education seem hard to dismiss (for instance her assertion that 'In the lighter works... I have only repeated the same opinions [i.e. as his] in other forms.'). Sharon Murphy provides a useful summary of the critical tradition's shifting attitudes regarding the relationship between the two. See Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Biography*, p. 272, and Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), esp. pp. 10-3.

chapter closes ‘We cannot better conclude a chapter upon Truth, than by honestly referring the reader to a charming piece of eloquence... Mr. Godwin[‘s...] essay upon Deception and Frankness. We are sensible how much we shall lose by the comparison.’⁹ Equally shared with Godwin was the influence of Rousseau. Richard Lovell and his close acquaintance Thomas Day admired Rousseau’s theories to the point of conducting various Rousseauistic experiments in education themselves, whose sometimes disastrous outcomes are described in the Edgeworths’ *Memoirs*.¹⁰ In *Practical Education*, certain specific Rousseauvian developmental ideas set out in *Émile* are contested by the Edgeworths: most fundamentally, Rousseau’s conservatism regarding the complementary role of the sexes is refuted in the strongest terms, and replaced with a far more egalitarian program of education.¹¹ However, the Rousseauvian stress on the primary importance of liberty and independence to the youth is wholeheartedly embraced by the Edgeworths and becomes one of the central tenets of their overall pedagogy.¹² ‘[Rousseau’s] remarks upon the absurd and tyrannical restraints which are continually imposed upon children by the folly of nurses and servants, or by the imprudent anxiety of parents and preceptors, are excellent,’ they conclude. ‘Whenever Rousseau is in the right, his eloquence is irresistible’ (I, p. 178).

The pedagogy of the Edgeworths, like Godwin and Darwin before them, was a compound blend of both a Lockean defence of youth independence and a Rousseauvian warning of the culpability of adult oppressors. To the Edgeworths, a youth could only mature into a rational, reasoning member of society if their opportunities for freedom and independence were not merely respected but also actively nurtured and encouraged, as emphasised by Locke. Secondly, in order to safely benefit from this liberty, youths must be protected from (and indeed, learn to separate *themselves* from) the corrupting machinations of adult oppressors who would manipulate undiscerning youths into serving corrupt purposes of their own, as emphasised by Rousseau. The presence of these two core assumptions is already apparent in Maria Edgeworth’s earliest (and often overlooked) fiction in *The Parent’s Assistant*. Originally published as just five short children’s tales in 1796 with a prefatory

⁹ Maria & Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 2 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1798), I, p. 225. Unless otherwise stated, all references to *Practical Education* come from this edition.

¹⁰ Maria & Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth*, 2 vols. (1820), I, pp. 273-6.

¹¹ For a discussion of Rousseau’s conception of the importance of male and female education, see pp. 19-20 in the Introduction.

¹² Catherine Toal has contrastingly interpreted *Belinda* as a purposeful denunciation of the pedagogy set out in *Émile*. Toal’s study does include some insightful close readings, especially those offering feminist commentary on Lady Delacour; however, her essay’s proportional focus on *Belinda*’s Virginia episode overlooks the pedagogical agenda of the narrative as a whole, and is demonstrably undermined by both the Edgeworths’ avowed praise of Rousseau (which Toal conveniently overlooks) and the proximity of their joint agenda for ‘rationalising’ education, albeit from very different gendered positions. See Toal, ‘Control Experiment: Edgeworth’s Critique of Rousseau’s Educational Theory,’ *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and her Contexts*, eds. H. Kaufman & C. Fauke (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 212-34.

'Address to Parents', extra and longer stories were quickly added to the collection after its instant popularity, and later editions featured as many as ten extra tales, as well as two simple plays for youths. The narratives all concern fictional youths being presented with plausible, real-life moral dilemmas in their everyday school, work or home lives, or in scenarios modelled on what Edgeworth described as 'the ordinary course of things.'¹³ Although most of the depicted youths possess a natural desire to do right and some of them even have affirming or positive adult role models, most of the young characters encounter corrupt adult figures who attempt to trick and manipulate them into doing wrong for their own selfish gain.¹⁴ These villainous adults are particularly dangerous because they are seemingly omnipresent; they transcend class barriers and appear in forms as diverse as evil attorneys, beggars, gentle-ladies, butlers, landlords, gardeners, housekeepers, fishermen and cooks.¹⁵ Although some of them feature tell-tale names like 'Theresa Tattle', 'Goody Grope,' 'Picklock' the thief and 'Corkscrew' the drunken butler, most of them have completely normal names – Hopkins, Mr. Oakly, Mr. Case - and appear, on the surface, to look like normal people (and indeed, often take the form of those who are the most well-to-do or respectable-looking).

Despite their differences in rank and appearance however, these adult figures are united in their eagerness to exploit and abuse the innocence of the youths they have influence over. Thirteen-year-old Franklin in 'The False-Key', for example, is constantly beaten and humiliated by the cook and butler in the house in which he serves, for the simple crimes of telling the truth and always doing as he is told – and, consequently, inadvertently revealing the corruptness of the former and the drunkenness of the latter. Similarly, in 'The Basket-Woman', when a gentleman accidentally gives Paul and Anne a guinea instead of a halfpence in charity, they are only tricked out of their attempts to

¹³ 'Address to Parents' in Maria Edgeworth, 'The Parent's Assistant', *Works of Maria Edgeworth*, 13 vols. (Boston: Parker, 1826), X, p. 8. This stance reflects Edgeworth's position on the debates which would occur from 1790-1820 between thinkers such as on the one hand Anna Laetitia Barbauld and her brother John Aikin, who insisted that edifying children's fiction must resemble the real world and shun non-existent imaginative material (e.g. fairies, giants), and on the other, those who fiercely defended the child's exercising of the imagination (such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Charles Lamb). The Edgeworths were firmly on the side of the former group, and were lambasted as part of the 'cursed Barbauld Crew, those Blights and Blasts of all that is Human in man and child' by Charles Lamb in a letter to Coleridge. See letter dated 23 October 1801, *The Complete Works and Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. Saxe Cummings (New York: The Modern Library, 1963), p. 727. NB: Given that the different tales in *The Parent's Assistant* all come from different editions with different publication dates, all subsequent references to the tales will be taken from the completed collection in the 1826 *Complete Works* for the sake of consistency.

¹⁴ See for example tales such as 'Forgive and Forget', 'Simple Susan,' 'The False Key,' 'The Orphans', 'The Mimic', 'The Little Merchants' and 'The Basket-Woman.'

¹⁵ Indeed, although Edgeworth's primary audience was (according to Comitini) the 'middling' classes, this class-wide omnipresence is representative of her wider, more universal pedagogy, which 'entail[ed] an attempt to improve all classes and both genders.' For instance, the second edition of *Practical Education* revised its comments on domestic staff to accommodate readers of a lower class. See Patricia Comitini, *Vocational Philanthropy and British Women's Writing, 1790-1810: Wollstonecraft, More, Edgeworth, Wordsworth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 112.

return it to him because of his own corrupt man-servant, who pockets the guinea but continues to blame the youths. In no less than seven of these tales, well-meaning youths are persuaded out of doing right, often without even realising that their well-intentioned obedience to adult corrupters has actually led them into wrong.¹⁶ In case younger readers are themselves unable to spot the consistency of the pattern, a wise narratorial voice frequently breaks the diegetic frame of the stories with interruptions that state it explicitly for them. 'No tyranny is so dreadful as that which is exercised by villains over their young accomplices, who become their slaves,' one such interruption warns. 'The advantages of truth and honesty, and the value of a character for integrity, are very early felt,' asserts another.¹⁷

In her prefatory 'Address to Parents' in *The Parent's Assistant*, Edgeworth offers a pedagogical justification for tales of this nature. She explains to the parents of her intended audience that, theoretically, if young people could only be guaranteed a separation from the wickedness of such adults around them, her warnings against their 'despicable and vicious characters' in the tales would not be necessary. But maintaining such a separation in reality, she argued, would be impossible, and it was therefore essential that children early have enough freedom - and consequently, exposure to such wickedness - to enable them to learn to reject it for themselves: 'In real life, they *must* see vice, and it is best that they should be early shocked with the representation of what they are to avoid' (I, p. viii; emphasis original). Although this statement implies an assumption that the addressed parents will be in accordance with Edgeworth and share her condemnation of adult exemplars of vice, the unspoken message of these words simultaneously carries an accusatory warning. As adult readers of *The Parent's Assistant* would discover, nearly all the badly behaved youths in the tales are only delinquent as a direct result of parental culpability. In 'The Little Merchants,' for instance, Pedro and Francisco are 'two boys originally equal in birth, fortune, and capacity, but different in their education - and consequently in their habits and conduct' (I, p. 224). Francisco's father ensures he is truthful and industrious, but Pedro's father's more corrupt child-rearing methods turn out to be the reason that Pedro himself becomes deceitful and sly. The pair merely replicate the moral characteristics of their parents and respective educations, and maintain these features for life. Similarly, Young Case and Barbara in 'Simple Susan' both grow into 'tyrants' as a direct consequence of following the example of their heartless attorney father and, in 'Lazy Lawrence', Lawrence is only 'good for nothing' because

¹⁶ See n. 15 for a list of the seven tales.

¹⁷ *Parent's Assistant*, X, pp. 224, 261. Other such narratorial interjections include "Youth and white paper, as the proverb says, take all impressions' (X, p. 224); 'The fair dealer is always sooner or later seen to prosper; the most cunning cheat is at last detected and disgraced' (X, p. 224); 'Good people, when they are made sensible that they have treated any one with injustice, are impatient to have an opportunity to rectify their mistake' (X, p. 83) and so on.

his father, 'being generally drunk, could take no care of his son' ("It's all my fault," cried he; "I brought him up in *idleness*."")¹⁸ The message to adult readers of the tales is clear: youthful wrongdoing was most often caused not by any natural delinquency, but by adult culpability through inadequate or corrupt guardianship. The function of *The Parent's Assistant* was therefore as much a pedagogical warning for adult guardians as it was a series of cautionary tales for their children. Regardless of whether its young readers were educated privately or publicly, its suggestion to their parents was that unless they looked to their own conduct, they would themselves become those same culpable adults who unwittingly ensured the downfall of their children.

These ideas are replicated almost exactly in the educational treatise *Practical Education*, published in 1798. Showing all the influence of Lockean associationism, the Edgeworths' formalised pedagogy took as its main assumption the fact that the ideas and disposition of the adolescent were the direct product of the ideas and disposition of the child: 'What we are when we are twenty, depends on what we were when we were ten years old. What a young man is at college, depends upon what he was at school, and what he is at school, depends upon what he was before he went to school' (II, p. 505). The youth, by this reasoning, was the direct product of their upbringing or 'education' at the hand of caregiving adults, such as guardians or tutors. Though ultimately concerned with the proper conduct of adolescent and mature young people, *Practical Education* therefore gives its primary attention to the preceding and more tractable period of childhood, this being the most pragmatic way for guardians to manage the stage of teenhood which would immediately follow it: because with adolescents it would be 'inconvenient, if not injurious, to restrain a young [person's] inclinations by force or authority... precautions should therefore be taken long before this period' (I, p. 338). As both *The Parent's Assistant* and the title of *Practical Education* already suggested, the most effective way to ensure the future adolescent would safely benefit from such liberty was to beforehand provide them a 'practical' education whereby as children, they had already experienced enough liberty to early experiment with independence while still within a safe, monitored environment. With these 'precautions', the Edgeworths argued, youths should theoretically, by the time of their formal coming-of-age as teens, be sufficiently well-equipped to negotiate their first exposure to the moral and social complexities of an advanced adult world.

¹⁸ Ibid., X, pp. 98, 114; emphasis original. The reverse is equally shown in tales like 'The False-Key', in which the effect of Franklin's corrupt father in his earliest years is replaced by the lengthy, more virtuous upbringing he has through Mr. Spencer: '[Having] not [been] suffered to be with [his] parents [...he] therefore cannot be hurt by their example. [...He] was unfortunate in his father, but he has [now] had an excellent education,' explains Mrs. Churchill (X, p. 78). Edgeworth includes similar commentary on the effect of good or bad parenting in 'The White Pigeon,' 'The Birthday Present,' 'Forgive and Forget,' 'Waste Not Want Not,' 'The Mimic,' 'The Barring-Out,' 'The Little Merchants' and 'The Basket-Woman.'

As in the theories of Locke, Rousseau and Godwin, as well as those ideas that had already begun to take shape in *The Parent's Assistant*, the successful development of youthful independence and liberty remained therefore the first core pedagogical principle in *Practical Education*. It persistently warns adult caregivers not to allow 'their unseasonable love of command [to] restrain young people... In the choice of their friends, their acquaintance, in all the great and small affairs of life, let them have liberty in proportion as they acquire reason' (I, p. 152). Its call for liberty was even maintained (albeit conditionally) regarding the still-contentious topic of reading matter: 'When young people have established their character for truth and exact integrity, they should be entirely trusted with books as with everything else' (I, p. 340). In accordance with the titular principle of Godwin's *Enquirer* and the pedagogy of Rousseau, Edgeworthian youths in *Practical Education* were actively encouraged to question and challenge the precepts they encountered instead of automatically accepting them ('When the young reader pauses to think, allow him to think, and suffer him to question the assertions which he meets with in books with freedom', I, p. 351).¹⁹ Additionally, the Edgeworths also reaffirmed the *Enquirer's* warnings about the potentially disastrous consequences of withholding independence from the youth, confirming that the more restrictions imposed on the youth, the more 'possibility for resistance' there was. 'Let [youths] not be put to the trial,' they conclude. 'The fewer the laws we make... the better' (I, pp. 174, 242).

The Edgeworths' Theories of Youth and the Pedagogical Novel Form

The generic form of *Practical Education* is rooted in the advice tradition and maintains a rigidly instructional format. Its structure is strictly functional, transmitting detail in concise language within precise, categorised sections; digressions are rare and are omitted entirely unless demonstrably relevant to the section's overall category ('On Temper,' 'On Obedience' and so on). By contrast, what I term Edgeworth's various 'pedagogical' fictions translate the insights and benefits of *Practical Education* and Edgeworth's other educational writings into continuous and free-flowing sequential narratives, in which the causational logic of their theory can be demonstrated within the same kind of diegetic chronologies already identified in Rousseau and Godwin.²⁰ Recent scholars have tended to

¹⁹ See too Jessica Richard: 'The Edgeworths' educational theory is aimed at producing inquiring and industrious young citizens. Their system, in which children are encouraged to query how the world works, could be turned to radical ends, but characters such as Belinda, the earl of Glenthorn in *Ennui*, and Lord Colambre in *The Absentee* suggest that the properly rational Edgeworthian character will work to maintain the established social order.' Richard, "'Games of Chance": Belinda, Education and Empire', *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and her Contexts*, ed. H. Kaufman & C. Fauke (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 192-211 (p. 208).

²⁰ Although I am the first (to my knowledge) to identify *Belinda* as a pedagogical novel, my discussion on the pedagogical agendas of Edgeworthian fiction builds upon recent scholarship which has more generally identified Edgeworth's promulgation of rational, domestic femininity to have itself been an intervention in contemporary discussions of women's education. See Jordana Rosenberg, 'The Bosom of the Bourgeoisie: Edgeworth's

read Edgeworth's novels as an assertion of enlightenment rationalism over that of sentimental romance, as well as containing critiques of societal models of womanhood and colonialism.²¹ However, their educative/pedagogical agendas have begun to attract increasing critical notice, a trend most noticeably catalysed by the emphasis of this theme in the influential 1972 literary biography of Edgeworth by Marilyn Butler ('Maria... really did try to insist from first to last that [her] fiction and the educational books were indivisible.')²² The intentionality of this pattern was confirmed by Richard Lovell himself, who stated that 'It has... been my daughter's aim to promote, by all her writings, the progress of education, from the cradle to the grave,' and singled out *The Parent's Assistant*, *Moral Tales* and *Popular Tales* (1804) in particular as '[written] to exemplify the principles contained in *Practical Education*.'²³ Indeed, in the fiction contained within all three of these collections, a narrative pattern is consistently established in which youths who are described as having been brought up with the right degree of independence and who resist or remain unaffected by corrupting adult oppressors exercise industry and innovation as a result of the former, and integrity and strength of judgment because of the latter. Conversely, those youths depicted as constantly either tyrannised or over-indulged in youth, or who come to be influenced by other adult manipulations, inevitably fall prey to misery or wrongdoing. Accordingly, the resemblance of Edgeworth's fiction to the pedagogical novel

Belinda, *ELH*, 70.2 (2003), 575–96; Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*; Mitzi Myers, 'My Art Belongs to Daddy? Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth, and the Pre-texts of *Belinda*: Women Writers and Patriarchal Authority,' *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*, ed. Paula Backscheider (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 104–46, and Heather MacFadyen, 'Lady Delacour's Library: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Fashionable Reading,' *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 48.4 (March 1994), 423–39. For formal studies on its influence on the novel, see Laurie Fitzgerald, 'Multiple Genres and Questions of Gender in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*,' *SVEC*, 304 (1992), 821–23, and Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

²¹ Celebrated studies of *Belinda*'s representations of womanhood and/or domesticity include Deborah Weiss, 'The Extraordinary Ordinary *Belinda*: Maria Edgeworth's Female Philosopher' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 19.4 (Summer 2007), 441–61; Myers, "'My Art Belongs to Daddy'"; Rosenberg, 'The Bosom of the Bourgeoisie', and Joanne Cordon, 'Revising Stereotypes of Nationality and Gender: Why Maria Edgeworth Did Not Write *Castle Belinda*,' *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Julie Nash (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), pp. 131–160. Noteworthy studies of the presence of colonial/imperialist ideologies in *Belinda* include Susan Greenfield, "'Abroad and at Home": Sexual Ambiguity, Miscegenation, and Colonial Boundaries in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*,' *PMLA*, 112.2 (March 1997), 214–228; Richard, "'Games of Chance'", and Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick, "'Gentlemen Have Horrors upon this Subject": West Indian Suitors in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*,' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 5.4 (July 1993), 331–348.

²² To name just a few other examples since this biography, Gary Kelly has interpreted the Edgeworthian novel as 'an educational plan for training in merit,' Comitini has identified *Belinda* as an 'educational endeavour' to 'teach the middling-class woman reader a new way of reading,' and Osmareiter suggests the heuristic function of Edgeworth's fiction is '[to educate readers] in being able to master the social and economic reality of life.' See Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 287; Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789–1830* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 91; Patricia Comitini, *Vocational Philanthropy*, pp. 120, 127, and Ria Omasreiter, 'Maria Edgeworth's Tales: A Contribution to the Science of Happiness,' *The Function of Literature: Essays Presented to Erwin Woff on his 60th Birthday*, ed. Ulrich Broich (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984), 195–208 (p. 198).

²³ R.L. Edgeworth, 'Preface,' *Tales of Fashionable Life* [1809] *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Marilyn Butler and Mitzi Myers, 12 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), I, p. 159.

form discussed in Chapter One is clear: it trials her educational theories in diegetic 'real-time' in almost identical ways to those used in *Caleb Williams*, *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville* to evidence Godwin's pedagogy, and in which *Émile* and *Julie* similarly both establish and trial those of Rousseau. These narratives of education all find unity in their shared preoccupation with not just those newly educated protagonists who serve as their heroes/heroines, but also the type of reader whose hermeneutic engagement with the text will ensure their own education. In other words, like the pedagogical novels of her forebears, the fictionalisation of Edgeworth's educational philosophy shares an equal preoccupation with the schooling of its readers as it does its protagonists.

In none of Edgeworth's novels is the liberal pedagogical agenda of *Practical Education* demonstrated so clearly as in *Belinda* (1801) and *The Absentee* (1812).²⁴ In fact, the notion of an ideological divide between old and new pedagogical attitudes is present in some degree in *all* of Edgeworth's novels, which usually feature young protagonists who struggle to free themselves from the restraints, prejudices or demands of adult systems that seek to inhibit their own agency and wrongly prescribe their developmental path. For instance, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), in its march through four successive generations of Rackrent heirs, constitutes in itself a symbolic progression from the old to the new, and only finds its ultimate resolution in the independent agency of Thady Quirk's youthful son. Even more overtly, the primary theme of *Ennui* (1809), *Harrington* (1817) and *Ormond* (1817) is none other than the necessity of rejecting and unlearning the prejudices and outdated ideas of one's parents or heritage. However, I have singled out *Belinda* and *The Absentee* for particular emphasis because, like *Practical Education* and *The Parent's Assistant*, as well as *Caleb Williams* and the pedagogical writings of Godwin, these two novels most obviously return to the tolerant pedagogies of Locke and Rousseau in particular. Given *The Absentee's* nominal focus on the intersectionality of Anglo-Irish identity with class and gender, recent commentary on the novel has featured an almost exclusively colonial and/or feminist critical focus,²⁵ to the detriment of its obvious debt to

²⁴ My identification of Edgeworth's liberal radicalism in her educational philosophy is not unsupported; Susan Manly has gone even further by deeming it a 'progressive... challenge to the Burkean respect for precedents, "wise prejudice" and the sanctity of custom' because of its unashamed promotion of 'the merits of experimentation' and its 'encouragement of rational inquiry.' Gallagher too confirms that 'the Edgeworths were certainly not traditionalists; indeed, they famously advocated an educational system that stressed individual liberty, regardless of the child's gender.' See Susan Manly, "Introductory Note," *Practical Education*, ed. Susan Manly, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, XI, p. 3, and Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Disappearing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 267.

²⁵ See for instance Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth*, pp. 103-131; Heidi Thomson, "'The Fashion Not To Be an Absentee": Fashion and Moral Authority in Edgeworth's Tales,' *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and Her Contexts*, ed. H. Kaufman & C. Fauske (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 165-191; Elizabeth Harden, *Maria Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1971), pp. 159-180, and W. J. McCormack & Kim Walker, 'Introduction' to Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee* [1812] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. ix-xliii.

Rousseauian theory and its preoccupation on the effect of corrupt adult society on 'natural' development. *Belinda*, on the other hand, as an Edgeworthian 'society novel' and part of the *Moral Tales* series, is gradually being acknowledged as an extension or 'companion piece' to Edgeworth's educational philosophy, and has recently been recognised as an 'affirmation' of certain of *Practical Education's* theories.²⁶ However, by demonstrating these texts to be pedagogical novels in their own right, I argue that these works fulfil a much more important function than merely 'affirming' certain of the ideas raised in *Practical Education*. By continuing those formal innovations begun by pedagogical theorists such as Godwin and Rousseau, Edgeworth's role as a bestselling female writer not only consolidated tolerant ways of educating and interacting with adolescents, but also popularised new and tolerant ways of representing those youths in the mainstream literary marketplace.

Critiquing 'Fashionable' Education: *Belinda* as Pedagogical Novel

As a narratological exposition of Edgeworthian pedagogical theory, *Belinda's* vision of the ideal education finds its most direct manifestation in the pedagogical system of the Percival family, here worth quoting at length:

[Belinda] found herself in the midst of a large and cheerful family, with whose domestic happiness she could not forbear to sympathize. There was an affectionate confidence, an unconstrained gaiety in this house, [...] there were no family secrets, nor any of those petty mysteries which arise from a discordance of temper or struggle for power. In conversation, every person expressed without constraint their wishes and opinions; and wherever these differed, reason and the general good were the standards to which they appealed. The elder and younger part of the family were not separated from each other; even the youngest child in the house seemed to form part of the society, to have some share and interest in the general occupations or amusements. The children were treated neither as slaves nor as playthings, but as reasonable creatures; and the ease with which they were managed, and with which they managed themselves, surprised Belinda; for she heard none of that continual lecturing which goes forward in some houses, to the great fatigue and misery of all the parties concerned, and of all the spectators. Without force or any factitious excitements, the taste for knowledge, and the habits of application, were induced by example, and confirmed by sympathy.²⁷

²⁶ Mitzi Myers and Mona Narain have also recognized *Moral Tales* as an extension of and 'companion piece' to *Practical Education*. See Toal, 'Control Experiment,' p. 222; Myers, 'Quixotes, Orphans, and Subjectivity: Maria Edgeworth's Georgian Heroism and the (En)Gendering of Young Adult Fiction', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 13.1 (1989), 21-40 (pp. 28-29) and Mona Narain, 'Not the Angel in the House: Intersections of the Public and Private in Maria Edgeworth's Moral Tales and Practical Education', *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth: The Nineteenth Century Series*, ed. Julie Nash (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 57-71, (p. 57).

²⁷ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda* [1801], ed. K. Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 215-6.

In a paragraph that both begins and ends with the Smithean notion of sympathy, the Percival youths enjoy a demonstrably liberal and ‘practical’ Edgeworthian education. The reason that they are able to grow in ‘knowledge’ and ‘cheerful... domestic happiness’ is precisely because they are trusted with a level of independence akin to the Smithean, sympathetic pedagogies of Godwin and Darwin: they are avowedly raised ‘without constraint’ and ‘without force.’ Untroubled by adult-youth hierarchies or ‘struggle[s] for power’, the youths of Oakly-Park are able to express their ‘wishes and opinions’ in the same way as (and participate in the same ‘occupations and amusements’ as) the adults of the household. They are treated ‘neither as slaves nor as playthings’, and are as a rule trusted to ‘manag[e] themselves.’ The semantic field of abolition so prevalent in this passage (‘power’, ‘constraint,’ ‘slaves,’ ‘misery’, ‘force’) is borrowed directly from *Practical Education* and the works of Godwin before it. In fact, concepts of pedagogical despotism and restriction are conspicuous only by their absence: in the place of ‘continual lecturing’ reigns ‘unconstrained gaiety’.²⁸ Indeed, the educational methodologies of Rousseau, Godwin and Edgeworth are all repeatedly defined negatively: they fundamentally *lack* those features of adult culpability commonly found in the pedagogical systems of their more conservative contemporaries. Their youths are raised ‘without force’, and ‘neither as slaves nor as playthings;’ there were ‘no family secrets, nor... struggle[s] for power,’ and ‘none of that continual lecturing [...of certain other] houses.’ Through the novel’s diegetic chronology of the Percival family through real-time mimesis, Edgeworth suffers the causational consequence of this tolerant pedagogical system to speak for itself: the Percivals’ ‘affectionate confidence’ and ‘domestic happiness’ prevail throughout the novel. Indeed, one of its converts, Helena Delacour, will crucially later become the main reason for her mother Lady Delacour’s eventual reform, and a second young convert, the eighteen-year-old Belinda herself, will also gain from the Percival household the independence that she needs to flourish. Read in the context of *The Parent’s Assistant*, Belinda therefore becomes another example of another young girl whose exposure to such corrupting adult shallowness as that of Mrs Stanhope and Lady Delacour is remedied by the same type of Edgeworthian pedagogy represented by the developmental sanctuary of Oakly-Park.

That Edgeworth believed that the tolerant, ‘practical’ education practiced by the Percivals was still viewed as radical or unusual to her contemporaries is confirmed in instances such as Belinda’s reaction to first encountering it – i.e. that of uncommon ‘surprise’ (p. 216). Accordingly, as soon as the novel establishes the clear superiority and desirability of the Percivals’ ‘practical’ system of education, the pedagogical trajectory of the narrative gains additional clarity. As a representative of the new

²⁸ Emphasis mine. Edgeworth’s complex position(s) regarding the question of abolition are raised in Susan Greenfield’s ‘Abroad and at Home’; Jessica Richard’s ‘Games of Chance’ and Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick’s ‘Gentlemen Have Horrors upon this Subject.’

adolescent class, Belinda's developmental task is to determine whether to pursue the independent and 'surprising' new path of *Bildung*, or to follow instead the traditional but restrictive one dictated to her by the outdated, eighteenth-century pedagogy of Mrs. Stanhope, and already neatly embodied in the glamorous Lady Delacour. As scholars such as Gary Kelly and Patricia Comitini have noted, this 'educative goal' has a specifically gendered nuance; Edgeworth, like Wollstonecraft, believed that 'women must be well-educated and rational if they are to resist aristocratic court culture which could only transform them into coquettes.'²⁹ According to the narrator, although Belinda lacked such an education, she is 'fortunately' already predisposed against the old, eighteenth-century model because precisely as *Émile*, the *Enquirer*, and *Practical Education* had warned, the dictatorial over-management of the youth would itself inevitably result in a resistant quest for independence:

It is sometimes fortunate that the means which are taken to produce certain effects upon the mind have a tendency directly opposite to what is expected. Mrs. Stanhope's perpetual anxiety about her niece's appearance, manners, and establishment, had completely worn out Belinda's patience. (p. 9)

Here, as with the tales of *The Parent's Assistant*, an Edgeworthian pedagogical truth originally derived from the 'Address to Parents' and *Practical Education* is directly interjected into the narrative when a diegetic incident shows a suitable demonstration of its principle. Julia Douthwaite has argued that contemporary readers would have been familiar with this kind of narrative device as borrowed from the genre of sentimental romance fiction; here, however, it is appropriated from the genre of the formal educational treatise Edgeworth had already published.³⁰ As with the quotation above, many of these interjections involve not just general pedagogical truths but specifically those concerning a Lockean-style capacity for youthful independence and agency. Another revealing authorial interjection of this nature comes for instance after the first month of Belinda's stay with Lady Delacour. Away from the 'perpetual' dictatorial oppression of Mrs. Stanhope, Belinda's newfound liberty allows her to

see things in a new light; and for the first time in her life she reasoned for herself upon what she saw and felt.

It is sometimes safer for young people to see than to hear of certain characters. At a distance, Lady Delacour had appeared to Miss Portman the happiest person in the world; upon a nearer view, she discovered that her ladyship was one of the most miserable of human beings. To have married her niece to such a man as Lord Delacour, Mrs. Stanhope would have thought the most fortunate thing imaginable; but it was now obvious to Belinda, that neither

²⁹ See Comitini, *Vocational Philanthropy*, p. 123, and Gary Kelly, *English Fiction*, p. 91.

³⁰ Julia Douthwaite, 'Experimental Child-rearing After Rousseau: Maria Edgeworth, *Practical Education* and *Belinda*,' *Irish Journal of Feminist Studies*, 2.2 (1997), 35-56 (p. 46).

the title of viscountess, nor the pleasure of spending three fortunes, could ensure felicity (p. 69).

Like the narrator's prior 'It is sometimes fortunate' statement, the pedagogical truth embedded in the similarly structured 'It is sometimes safer' construction is another replication of that which Edgeworth has already stated in the 'Address to Parents' and *Practical Education*. Edgeworth's point is to reaffirm that although a restrictive and sheltered upbringing without liberty might partially shield children from the malign influence of adults, it would be far better and 'safer' for them to early experience it for themselves if they are to profit from its example. Accordingly, in the fictional, mimetic context of *Belinda's* diegetic real-time, Edgeworth thus repeats for a second time that

the very means which Mrs. Stanhope had taken to make a fine lady of her niece tended to produce an effect diametrically opposite to what might have been expected. The result of Belinda's reflections upon Lady Delacour's history was a resolution to benefit by her bad example. (p. 70)

By herself exercising the advantages of her belated independence and replacing Stanhope's and Lady Delacour's corrupt and superficial adult influences with the Percival's more edifying ones, Belinda herself functions therefore as a fictionalised, narratological personification of the Edgeworthian 'practical' pedagogy, the proof of a theory whose principles can be demonstrated in fictionalised, hypothetical real-time.

Crucially, it is not incidental that Belinda can only welcome the new, modern pedagogical regime of the rational Percivals after she first rejects the outdated, eighteenth-century behavioural code dictated by her own education and upbringing, of the restrictive but fashionable kind condemned in *Practical Education* and personified in Mrs Stanhope. It is because of the finality of this rejection that I cannot concur with scholars such as Jane Spencer and Anne Mellor, who characterize *Belinda* as a 'didactic' novel: '[its] author functions as a moral teacher, racing the development of her youth to a mature, acceptance of the status quo and role of dutiful wife.'³¹ Although it is possible that Belinda will indeed turn out as dutiful wife, she exhibits in the novel anything but a submissive 'acceptance of the status quo,' not only rejecting its claims on her own life but also vocally repudiating its influence on others. Mellor and Spencer suggest that Belinda's rejection of the Stanhope/Delacour system for the Percivals' one is deliberately designed to symbolise the rejection of the female one for the male; didactic novels of this nature were therefore 'about learning to repudiate faults seen as specially feminine, and accepting male authority instead of challenging it.'³² Similar critiques of such reasoning

³¹ See Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. p. 40, and Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), esp. p. 143.

³² Spencer, *Rise of the Woman Novelist*, p. 143.

have been proposed by recent commentaries on *Belinda's* Virginia episode, which have emphasised the satiric nature of Edgeworth's characterisation of the hyper-feminised and incapably helpless Rachel Hartley.³³ However, these readings seem inconsistent with the firmly egalitarian notion of independence which Edgeworth invests such considerable time establishing in *Practical Education* ('by no means [should] women... yield their better judgment to their fathers or husbands; ...they may [yet] support the cause of reason with all the graces of female gentleness', I, p. 148). Nor does it account for the mixed-gender education of the Percival youths, who are suffered to express 'differ[ences]', challenges and 'appeals' to the adults of the family regardless of their age or gender.

Furthermore, I would also argue that the characterisation of Belinda's potential for resistance itself manifests Edgeworth's criticism of gendered and/or sentimental models of development. Like Virginia, Belinda begins the novel in a position of total and abject subservience to her guardian Mrs. Stanhope, a character used to symbolise the outdated pedagogical model of eighteenth-century conservatives. Accordingly, Stanhope demands of Belinda a servility described as 'unlimited, habitual, blind obedience' (p. 10). But, as with the pattern already established in novels such as *The Italian* and *Caleb Williams*, it is the adult culpability of Stanhope herself and the subordination model she practices which become condemned over the course of the narrative, not Belinda's defiance of them. On the contrary, the interruptions of the narrator make it repeatedly clear that it is only through Belinda's growing levels of 'prudence and integrity' that she becomes able to defy her aunt's outdated opinions and commands (not least those concerning Baddeley). Thus, by the end of the narrative, Belinda has successfully discerned for herself the developmental dangers of the older, eighteenth-century pedagogy, and defiantly throws Stanhope's influence off herself altogether. Although to a modern sensibility there may remain certain aspects of a gendered conservatism that seem all too apparent in texts like *Belinda*, Edgeworth's consistently damning depictions of subservient and sentimental young female subjects unable to act in a defiant or resistant fashion thus confirm Spencer's reduction to be an over-simplification.

Through this condemnation of adult culpability and *Belinda's* implicit depictions of youthful defiance, Belinda's modelling of a new, regulated potential for independence applies Rousseauvian, male-oriented pedagogical theory to the more egalitarian scheme of development already established

³³ In particular, Eleanor Ty interprets the criticism implicit in the Virginia episode as constituting a defence of the female right to education in the style of Wollstonecraft, and Toal perceives the episode as symptomatic of the subtle radicalism of Edgeworth's educational philosophy as a whole: 'The way in which Virginia evades and escapes her Rousseauvian sequestration show[s] how the precepts of *Practical Education* (most visible in its quarrels with Rousseau) provide a comfortable conservative framework for the novel, one so sturdy that it permits the broad inclusion and indulgence of apparently extreme, lawless perspectives and behaviours.' Toal, 'Control Experiment,' p. 214; Ty, 'Freke in Men's Clothes,' p. 163.

in *Practical Education*. In doing so, Belinda acts as a sort of moderating counter-point between the other female characters: her 'prudent' degree of defiance is by nature of a less aggressive sort than that of the impudent Harriet Freke, but simultaneously much more assertive than the unthinking and hapless Rachel Hartley. As a teen of the new, egalitarian and 'practical' order, Belinda is accordingly praised by the narrator for her efforts to alter her own situation by leaving Lady Delacour. By contrast, Virginia, symbolic of the old, eighteenth-century model of sentimental education, remains passive throughout the narrative and can only helplessly rely on the agency of others to improve her own situation. As it happens, Belinda's use of her newfound agency as a modern, independent female adolescent improves not only her own situation but also prompts reform in other characters: not just in women like Lady Delacour and Marriott, but also in culpable males such as Clarence Hervey, Lord Delacour and Mr. Vincent, who all ultimately reject their respective egotistical pursuits of masculine exhibition for more rational or egalitarian ones as a direct result of their interactions with Belinda. I would posit therefore that the moral trajectory in *Belinda* seems to involve less a gendered turn from a feminine pedagogy to a masculine one than an ideological transition from old and outdated eighteenth-century educational ideals to updated new ones, in which the sentimental and traditional ideology of Stanhope is rejected for the rational and 'practical' values of a new and tolerant pedagogy. From an educational perspective, the male/female dichotomy that Spencer and Mellor identify in *Belinda* cannot be said to be as marked as the polarised representations between a modern, 'practical' education of a tolerant, egalitarian nature and an old and outdated pedagogy which contrastingly produced sentimental but subordinated young women.

Like *Ennui*, *Harrington* and *Ormond*, the narrative trajectory of *Belinda* and the primary developmental task of its *Bildungsheld* thus converge into one and the same: all rely on the protagonist's ability to reject and defy the outdated societal dictates imbibed during childhood, and to wrest back control of their own development to more 'practical' and meaningful ends. Far from upholding and bolstering the values of the patriarchal system as Spencer and Mellor suggest, Edgeworth's withering critique of Stanhope's outdated attitudes to education specifically associates adult culpability with hypocrisy and shallowness, exposing its reliance on appearance over substance: 'I have covered my old carpet with a handsome green baize, and every stranger who comes to see me, I observe, takes it for granted that I have a rich carpet under it'; 'No pains have been spared in your education, and (which is the essential point) I have taken care that this should be known—so that you have the *name* of being perfectly accomplished' (p. 9, emphasis original). Edgeworth uses Stanhope's revealing metaphor of the covered carpet to criticise the contemporary over-prescriptive and hyper-managed state of traditional female education, which demonstrably represents precisely the opposite model to that established in *Practical Education*. Under this outdated and clearly restrictive style of

upbringing, Belinda as a young woman is expressly denied any opportunities for the Lockean notion of independence that *Practical Education* insisted was so important: 'Her mind had never been roused to... reflection; she... acted but as a puppet in the hands of others' (p. 10). Edgeworth's critique of those outdated, conservative pedagogical systems in her educational philosophy thus demonstrates their causal consequences by translation into the narratological chronology of the novel genre. Consequently, not only does *Belinda's* representation of Mrs. Stanhope demonstrate that her concern for her niece's personal development is clearly secondary to a requirement for a slavish subordination as warned by Rousseau, but it will also demonstrate, by the end of the narrative, that this method of upbringing does not actually work. One by one, Belinda's sister and cousins demonstrate the results of Stanhope's subscription to the outdated system of restrictive female education: one is divorced, one is nearly so, one is estranged, and one is bankrupt. Having exercised independence for the first time in her life, Belinda's egress to Oakly-Park in defiance of Stanhope thus allows her to truly understand the damage of the developmental system she has rejected:

the regret which Belinda felt at having grievously offended her aunt was somewhat alleviated by the reflection that she had acted with integrity and prudence. Thrown off her guard by anger, Mrs. Stanhope had inadvertently furnished her niece with the best possible reasons against following her advice with regard to Sir Philip Baddeley, by stating that her sister and cousins, who had married with mercenary views, had made themselves miserable, and had shown their aunt neither gratitude nor respect.

The tranquillity of Belinda's mind was gradually restored by the society that she enjoyed at Oakly-park. (p. 215)

The plot of *Belinda* therefore rewards its titular heroine for having the 'integrity and prudence' to reject or resist those adults who symbolise a pedagogical system that would not ultimately lead to her best interests in exactly the same way as novels such as *The Italian* and *Caleb Williams*. Also like these novels, in addition to trading an education of 'perpetual anxiety about... appearance, manners, and establishment' for one that instead allows her 'tranquillity,' the further passage of diegetic real-time will eventually reward Belinda with an even more significant pay-out: a happy ending, in the form of a successful union to the compatible Clarence Hervey. Belinda's achievement of a happy marriage thus directly contrasts those of her sister and cousins, all raised in the older, more traditional pedagogy, and whose subscription to 'mercenary' matches ensures they unanimously 'made themselves miserable.' Like its predecessors by Rousseau and Godwin, *Belinda's* narrative chronology clearly demonstrates that educations which do not encourage liberty or rationality in the youth result in misery, and those which involve liberty, independence and a resistance to corrupt adult authority result in success and 'domestic happiness.'

The Absentee as an Irish Pedagogical Novel

Finally, if the Rousseauvian critique of the developmental damage of outdated and corrupting mores of traditional education is already evident in *Belinda*, it arguably becomes even more pronounced in *The Absentee*. Originally written as a play before Sheridan concluded it more suited to be a prose tale, *The Absentee* was published as the last instalment in Edgeworth's *Tales of Fashionable Life* series, and features, as its title suggests, a nominal focus on the effect of Irish landowners 'absenting' their estates to live in London or England. However, its real focus arguably concerns the maturational process of 'coming-of-age,' and the kinds of influences that adverse adults, locations or pedagogical systems can have on impressionable youths approaching maturation. To this end, and with a narrative device similar to that of the mixed-gender education of the Percival youths, *The Absentee* adds a young male protagonist (Colambre) to work in tandem with its young, Belinda-like ingenue (Grace). Consequently, it is the shared, gender-neutral project of these two protagonists to school both readers and fellow characters in the dangers and developmental challenges faced by those undergoing the coming-of-age process. Despite her youth, what the narrator terms as Grace's moral 'superiority' to the adults around her is already evident from her moment of introduction: she can 'play [them] off' against each other in order to gently 'magnify the[ir] ridicule' - her preferred method of preventing her own hapless and debt-ridden guardians from themselves saying or 'doing any thing preposterously absurd, or exorbitantly extravagant' (pp. 14-5). Although the young Lord Colambre attempts to aid her in this pursuit, the adults of his acquaintance are more interested in the imminent realisation of his fortune, he being only a year away from coming of age. Over the course of the narrative, the proximity of this realisation causes these adults (including, as *The Parent's Assistant* had already warned, both of his parents) to pursue various strategies of courting his influence, and to attempt to manipulate him into using his upcoming assets for their own personal gain. The plot of *The Absentee* thus becomes structured around the countdown to Colambre's birthday, his coming of age equally the central focus of both the novel and its characters. Thus, despite the continuing critical focus on the colonial and geographical tensions present in *The Absentee*, these thematic concerns clearly vie for attention with the novel's wider preoccupation with the dangers of adult influence of the youthful developmental process.

It is important to note that the Rousseauvian theory from which Edgeworth's pedagogy is partially derived would not itself frame these geographical and pedagogical thematic concerns as being in competition with each other. In Rousseauvian pedagogical theory, geographical location itself had a huge influence on youthful development, and could by no means be separated from the process of identity formation. Toal, for instance, states that '*Émile* gives such prominence to the theme of geographical space, that geographical contractions and enlargements become almost synonymous

with the tactics of the education process itself' (Toal, p. 215). This is why *Émile's* pedagogue is instructed to shield his young ward from the corruption of urban metropolises such as Paris or London with such particular urgency:

Je veux élever Émile à la campagne, loin... des noires mœurs des villes, que le vernis dont on les couvre rend séduisantes et contagieuses pour les enfants... Au village, un gouverneur sera beaucoup plus maître des objets qu'il voudra présenter à l'enfant; sa réputation ses discours, son exemple, auront une autorité qu'ils ne sauraient avoir à la ville [I, pp. 102-3].

([I desire] to bring up Emilius in the country, far... from the corrupt morals of towns, which are covered with such a varnish as to render them infectious to children... In a village, a governor will have a greater power over the objects he is desirous to represent to his pupil; his reputation, his speech, his example, will give him such weight and authority, as he never could have acquired in a town [I, pp. 104-5]).

Likewise, in *The Absentee*, the successful coming of age process for both Grace and Colambre explicitly depends on their ability to reject and transcend the moral depravity of the (implicitly urban) corruption of fashionable adult society. As with *Belinda*, it is clear that the ideal Edgeworthian adolescent in *The Absentee* must possess the same capacity for defiance that would allow them to assert their own independence and aid them in recognising corrupting adult influence. Indeed, from the novel's very first chapters, the central developmental task for both young protagonists is quickly established to be the necessity for defying and rewriting the legacy of their guardians' absenteeism and their ability to strike out on their own path - both literally and symbolically - in rejecting London for the country estate of their ancestral homeland. As in *Émile*, the developmental and geographical tensions of the novel thus become inextricably connected; for the same reason, Richard Lovell himself described the novel, as well as certain other projected tales of the *Fashionable Life* series, as a narratological '[i]llustration] of the ideas that are unfolded in *Essays on Professional Education*.³⁴ Likewise, although Sharon Murphy characterises *The Absentee* (along with *Ennui* and *Ormond*) by its 'lively and sympathetic portrayal of Ireland and the Irish', she also emphasises the novels' '[thematic] concern... with the national and, implicitly, the imperial consequences of the "defective Education" of the individual.³⁵ It is with the support of these such sources that I include *The Absentee* as a tolerant pedagogical fiction of the likes of *Belinda* and the tales from *The Parent's Assistant*, it being either more or as equally concerned with tolerant notions of adolescent development as it is with the moral politics of nationhood and identity.

The *Absentee's* pedagogical methodology is twofold. In one plotline, the purpose of the London-based characters of Lord and Lady Clonbrony (Colambre and Grace's parents and guardians

³⁴ R.L. Edgeworth, 'Preface', *Selected Works*, I, p. 159.

³⁵ Murphy, *Edgeworth and Romance*, p. 13.

respectively) is to demonstrate the dangers of urbanised adult society. Through watching them fritter away their own fortunes and live in perpetual fear of creditors, and then successfully learning vicariously from their negative adult example, Grace Nugent accordingly fulfils the pedagogical function of a typical *Bildungsheld*. Unsurprisingly, the educative purpose of her character is thus a precise replication of that Edgeworthian pedagogical theory already established in both *The Parent's Assistant* and *Belinda* (recall, 'it is best that they should be early shocked [by...] what they are to avoid'; 'The result of Belinda's reflections upon Lady Delacour's history was a resolution to benefit by her bad example.') However, in a second plotline, Colambre experiences a quite different developmental conflict of his own, in which the choice between the moral and geographical sites of the London metropole and the Irish country estate becomes mediated through the fashionable yet manipulative diletante Lady Dashfort. In a process resembling Clarence Hervey's relationship with *Belinda's* Lady Delacour, the naïve Colambre is at first taken in by the enchanting wiles of the cunning Lady Dashfort, whose intention is to secure Colambre - and his upcoming fortune – in London, for the gain of her own family:

To confirm him an absentee was her object, previously to her ultimate plan of marrying him to her daughter. Her daughter was poor, she would therefore be glad to get an Irish peer for her; but would be very sorry, she said, to see Isabel banished to Ireland... From this time forward, not a day, scarcely an hour passed, but her ladyship did or said something to depreciate the country, or its inhabitants, in our hero's estimation. With treacherous ability, she knew and followed all the arts of misrepresentation... they succeeded beyond her most sanguine expectations. (pp. 105-6)

In this way, Lady Dashfort in *The Absentee* is an extension of the kind of adult Edgeworthian villain found in the tales of *The Parent's Assistant* who tricks and manipulates otherwise innocent youths into serving selfish interests of their own. Equally as established in *Practical Education*, it is only through the independence and rigour with which Colambre eventually begins to question and challenge the information that he encounters through the Dashforts that he is ultimately liberated from this manipulation by the correct interpretation of a series of slips and *faux pas* on the part of the Dashforts. Accordingly, in a move mirroring Belinda's defiant abandonment of Delacour for the Percivals, Colambre relinquishes his acquaintance with the Dashforts directly and finally becomes able to choose between London and Ireland through what Rousseau might term the 'natural' way – i.e., without adult or societal interference. In this way, like that of Grace, Colambre's *Bildung* development is in many ways merely a repetition of the plot movements already found in not only *Belinda* but also the narrative structures of morality found in Edgeworth's other pedagogical fiction and *Moral Tales*. By incorporating existing educational theory taken directly from *Practical Education* with new subtopics regarding the import of nationhood and geography to youth development, *The Absentee*

was intended to be as educative to its readers as both *Practical Education* and Edgeworth's other pedagogical fiction.

Before moving from pedagogical literature to the (related) form of conduct literature in Part Two of this thesis, it seems fitting to conclude Part One by returning to the same principle with which it began. Having observed that the plotlines of novels such as *The Italian* and *Caleb Williams* concluded with vindication narratives in which the defiance of their young protagonists was not only justified but also praised and rewarded, it is appropriate therefore to conclude the chapter by emphasising the same point in the pedagogical fiction of Edgeworth. Belinda of course is vindicated in not just her defiance of Stanhope and Lady Delacour, but also in her discernment regarding Mr. Vincent, which is shown to exceed that of even the rational-minded Percivals. Similarly, in *The Absentee's* conclusion, the only thing powerful enough to convert the corrupt adult characters of either English or Irish extraction is the joint effort and eventual union of the adolescents Grace and Colambre, who utilise their independence to remedy the novel's crisis through the formation of what critics have variously termed 'hybrid' and 'anti-essentialist... fluid identities' of their own.³⁶ Accordingly, all corrupt adult characters of *The Absentee* are vanquished: the treacherous estate agents defeated, the ill influence of Sir Terence and Lady Dashfort dispelled, and Lord and Lady Clonbrony (reluctantly) cajoled and frog-marched into more responsible exercises of authority. As in *The Moral Tales* and *The Parent's Assistant*, Edgeworth's message in both *Belinda* and *The Absentee* is clear – it is only through the discernment and rejection of corrupt adult (and/or urban) influences that adolescents will be able to withstand the temptations and manipulations of a morally ambiguous adult world. Perhaps most striking of all, like the young protagonists in works such as *The Italian* and *Caleb Williams* before them, the adolescent characters of Edgeworth's pedagogical novels not only resist the potential corruption that adults posed, but also ultimately end up schooling those adults in a better way of living visible only to the youths themselves. According to these new, tolerant brand of pedagogical novels, teens were not only blameless in their defiance of adults, but could also educate adults in the way of the blameless too.

Conclusion

In Part One I have argued that by combining certain aspects of generic forms such as the pedagogical manual, the educational treatise and the *Bildungsroman*, the pedagogical novel of the Romantic era was used as an experimental medium for representing the newly-recognised social class that was the adolescent. This new literary form, well exemplified in the novels of Rousseau, Godwin, and Edgeworth, was revolutionary in its capacity to integrate abstracted or theoretical educational

³⁶ Gallchoir, *Women, Enlightenment, Nation*, pp. 106-7.

philosophy into sequential narratives that could trial their causational consequence. As the titles of Edgeworth's *Tales of Fashionable Life* and Godwin's *Things As They Are* suggest, these pedagogical novels constituted a specific attack on those outdated, traditional methods of education that in some areas of society still remained fashionable, or which represented (to repeat Edgeworth's words) 'the ordinary course of things'. By using a new, hybrid literary form as a tool of rejection of these outdated, eighteenth-century, subordinating attitudes to youth, the popularity of pedagogical novelists such as Rousseau, Godwin and Edgeworth transformed them into champions and catalysts of a new attitude towards teenhood: one which respected the adolescent right to liberty, and denounced their subordination by tyrannical adult oppressors. The patterns of these structures thus belie the tolerant progressivism behind the pedagogical novel as a genre: its formal assumption was that traditional, authoritarian attitudes to child-rearing and education were outdated and redundant, and that updated, more flexible structures and approaches could more effectively promote the welfare and development of the adolescent. Together with similarly new kinds of conduct books, as described in the next chapter, these innovations in both form and content provide clear evidence of the presence of new, permissive and tolerant attitudes towards youth, education and conduct at the turn of the nineteenth century. To adults and teens of the new order, the education and parenting style that was best for true youthful development was too often the opposite of those conservative values espoused by what was increasingly perceived to be a draconian and antiquated eighteenth-century ideology of youth.

Part Two

Chapter Three:

Tolerating Resistance: Pertinacity and Youth Conduct Literature

‘Pertinacity is fortitude pushed to excess.’
Jane West, *Letters to a Young Lady* (1806)¹

‘A soft pliant temper may prove barren sand,
[But] strong pertinacity, oak-bearing land.’
John Black, *A Poetical Review* (1800)²

Conduct books have long had a reputation for being dull and spiritless. According to Sheridan’s character Lydia Languish, the only value to conduct books was that their covers provided decoys for other, more stimulating reading, and Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) famously cannot bear to hear more than three pages of James Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women* (1766). Jane Austen herself shared similar reservations to those of her character Lydia; she declared that she ‘had quite determined not to read’ a conduct book recommended to her by her sister, denounced Hannah More’s conduct-novel *Coelebs In Search of a Wife* (1809) as full of ‘pedantry and affectation’, and included parodies of conduct-writers John Gregory, Lord Chesterfield and Fordyce in her novels.³ Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft’s dislike of conduct-literature is well-documented; attacking Gregory and Fordyce in particular, she wrote that ‘the baneful effect’ of their ‘delusive, idle words’ was best imagined ‘drawled out in a whining voice’ (pp. 209, 212, 216). Over the next two centuries, this ambivalence towards conduct-literature would even be reproduced in the literary critical tradition, which often to this day perceives the genre as necessarily illiberal and narrow-minded. Nancy Armstrong has declared that ‘after reading several dozen or more conduct books,’ one cannot help but be ‘struck with a sense of their emptiness’ (p. 60); Mary Poovey styles them ‘litan[ies] against

¹ Jane West, *Letters to a Young Lady*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1806), III, p. 244.

² John Black, *A Poetical Review of Miss Hannah More’s Strictures on Female Education* (London, 1800), p. 57.

³ Gisbourne evidently exceeded Austen’s expectations however, as she subsequently told Cassandra ‘I am glad you recommended Gisborne, for having begun, I am pleased with it.’ Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 30 August 1805 and 30 January 1809, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, pp. 112, 170, 172. For a discussion of Gisbourne, see p. 100 of this chapter. For an account of Austen’s parodies of conduct-literature, see Mary Waldron, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Her Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 18-21, 46, 51-3, 116, 148-50.

female appetite' (p. 20), and Mary Waldron deems the 'pomposities of conduct-literature' to be 'ludicrous[,...] repetitious and stultifying' (p. 16). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have even described the genre's 'education in docility, submissiveness [and] self-lessness' to be 'sickening,' on a quite literal level: 'to be trained in renunciation is almost necessarily to be trained to ill health'.⁴

After demonstrating in Part One that the parents and educators of Romantic-era youths were increasingly being encouraged into new, liberal philosophies of youth development, I now turn to the same theme within the parallel genre of conduct-literature. Whereas the educational treatises and pedagogical manuals analysed in the first chapter typically addressed the adult pedagogues or guardians involved in a youth's upbringing or education, the various subgenres within the category of conduct-literature utilised narrators who typically bypassed these adults and addressed themselves directly to the youths in question. The purpose of this next chapter is to call for a scholarly reassessment of the conduct-genre by challenging the continuing critical association between conduct-literature and an ideological conservatism. My intention is to problematise what have historically been conservative understandings of conduct-literature by analysing a series of conduct books whose defence and even advocacy of disruptive adolescent conduct demonstrably challenge established models of gendered domesticity, and which perpetuate the tolerant attitudes towards youth already discussed in the educational/pedagogical texts of Part One. I have deliberately focused on three of the most successful Evangelical conduct writers for this latter task - those such as Hannah More, Isaac Taylor and Ann Taylor – in order to emphasise that progressive and tolerant values regarding youth conduct did not remain exclusive to more liberal, radical or secular theorists, such as Rousseau, Godwin or Edgeworth. My purpose is not an attempt to recuperate the conduct-genre as liberal or radical as a whole, but rather to challenge the assumption that progressive attitudes towards issues such as women's equality and youthful (mis)conduct could not be featured in prescriptive or didactic generic forms, or co-exist with otherwise conservative political or religious beliefs. In reality, although a shrinking minority of conduct-writers would attempt to defend and maintain the conservative, early and mid-eighteenth-century attitudes towards youth, a growing plethora of new titles at the turn of the nineteenth century joined the pedagogical texts discussed in Part One in denouncing and condemning the adult subordination of youth, and increasingly advocated the liberal agenda of a new, tolerant attitude towards young people. Consequently, there emerged conduct books which normalised and even validated behaviour traits such as 'obstinacy', 'pertinacity' and 'resistance' during adolescent maturation of the like seen in the pedagogical novels already discussed, and many explicitly condemned the very features of passive domesticity that critics like Poovey have

⁴ Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 54.

identified with idealised, 'Proper' conduct of the period. These conduct books expose the reductionism of the critical tradition's assessment of the genre as a whole, and demonstrate that liberal and/or tolerant attitudes towards youth (mis)conduct were being perpetuated in the very genre associated with promulgating exemplary adolescent behaviour.

From Courtesy to Conduct: the Advice Tradition

The conduct book had long been a cornerstone of the eighteenth-century literary marketplace. Having evolved from a conceptual tradition of courtesy books which originated in thirteenth-century Europe,⁵ the conduct-genre flourished during the 1700s and reached the height of its popularity around the turn of the nineteenth century. William St. Clair has found at least a hundred separate editions of the form published or reprinted in Britain and Ireland alone between 1785 and 1820, and Shoemaker, calculating the standard print run for such literature to be around 1000 copies, confirms that conduct books would have reached an especially 'large and socially diverse audience.'⁶ Originally intended to preserve medieval ideals of virtuous, aristocratic conduct in men of established families, the genre expanded its intended audience by addressing itself to women and children of the middle classes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and to the working classes by the turn of the nineteenth.⁷ Because of this expansion of readership, much conduct-literature of the 1700s began to explicitly demarcate the class and gender of its various intended audiences, such as *The Compleat Housewife: or, Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion* (1727), *The Footman's Friendly Advice to his Brethren of the Livery* (1731), or even that modelled for readers as specific as 'respectable Country Gentlem[en], with a young family, whose Net Income is from £16,000 to £18,000 a year, and whose expences do not exceed £7000.'⁸

⁵ For an excellent introduction to the origins of the genre in the Middle Ages, see Kathleen Ashley's 'Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors for Female Conduct', *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality*, eds. Nancy Armstrong & Leonard Tennenhouse (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 25-38. This anthology includes various other generic studies of the evolution of conduct and courtesy texts, including Ann R. Jones' particularly informative article 'Nets and Bridles: Conduct books for Women 1416-1643'. See too Jessica C. Murphy, *Virtuous Necessity: Conduct-Literature and the Making of the Virtuous Woman in Early Modern England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

⁶ St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 505, and Robert Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 22.

⁷ Both Suzanne Hull and Ruth Kelso have shown that the trajectory of courtesy and conduct books descended the levels of class hierarchy over the course of their generic evolution. Kelso in particular has emphasised the parallel shift from a male to female target audience during this process. See Suzanne M. Hull, *Chaste Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1982), and Ruth Kelso, *The Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1956), and *The Doctrine for the English Gentleman of the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1929).

⁸ Eliza Smith, *The Compleat Housewife, or, Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion* (London: J. Pemberton, 1727); Robert Dodsley, *The Footman's Friendly Advice to his Brethren of the Livery* (London: T. Worrall, 1731), and Samuel & Sarah Adams, *The Complete Servant, Being a Practical Guide to the Peculiar Duties and Business of all Descriptions of Servants* (London: Knight & Lacy, 1825), p. 7.

Despite the exponential expansion of both the audiences and content of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conduct-literature, scholarship on the form has largely focused on a subsection of conservative, mid-eighteenth-century examples addressed specifically to adolescent females. This has produced a critical tradition that has primarily associated the genre with gendered models of domesticity, as well as an ideological conservatism which sought to restrict feminine agency. Landmark studies such as those of Mary Poovey and Nancy Armstrong have defined the genre by a 'single domestic ideal' – a unifying though sometimes paradoxical set of assumptions that define the idealised, domesticated conduct of what Poovey has styled the 'Proper Lady.' As Armstrong explains:

[I have] regarded these quite different texts as a single voice and continuous discourse. My purpose... has been to show how I think domestic culture actually worked as a principle of continuity... to provide a stable conceptual framework within which these "outside" changes appear as so many variations on the sexual theme. (pp. 69, 94)

Inevitably, these methodologies have meant that the critical tradition has inherited a legacy which has sought to reduce a wide and diverse body of conduct-literature to a narrow set of theories and assumptions, interpreting intertextual differences as mere 'variations' or paradoxes of the same 'single domestic ideal.' Consequently, scholarship has typically perceived conduct-literature to be not only necessarily conservative but also monotonous and one-dimensional – a reduction which seems not unconnected to its summation of the genre's supposed 'emptiness'.⁹

Until recently, this association has remained almost entirely unchallenged. However, a series of related studies has since questioned the validity of these gendered understandings of domesticity. For instance, Harriet Guest's landmark study *Small Change* has drawn on the work of scholars such as Kathleen Wilson, Amanda Vickery, Elaine Chalus and Hannah Barker, whose research constitutes a collective challenge to 'the thesis that middle-class women were increasingly confined to domesticity by the demands of propriety.' Guest's conclusion is that in reality, any notion of a specifically gendered

⁹ This attitude is gradually, however, becoming both increasingly acknowledged and critiqued. Vivien Jones, for instance, has recognised that conduct books are 'seen as symptomatic of, indeed have been held responsible for, most of the ills of eighteenth-century bourgeois femininity,' and that the critical tradition has 'homogenize[d] conduct-literature and... play[ed] down... the differences between individual texts.' Similarly, Soile Ylivuori, whilst noting the inevitably superior 'lofty moral tones' of conduct books, has critiqued the assumed extremism of the genre's didacticism, asserting that 'most conduct-manuals... hover somewhere in the middle ground.' Gary Kelly, going further than all, has not only argued that conduct books 'sometimes projected women's role[s] beyond domesticity,' but has even asserted that their facilitation of feminine self-expression meant that 'conduct-literature is the context for Revolutionary feminism.' Vivien Jones, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Literature of Advice and Instruction," *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 121; Soile Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England Bodies, Identities, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 11, and Gary Kelly, *Revolutionary Feminism: the Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 29.

domesticity in the period was 'always a contested proposition.'¹⁰ Similarly, Cliona Gallchoir has argued that

The assumption that public and private spheres in the eighteenth century were conceived as utterly distinct and gendered spaces, thus preventing women from playing any role in relation to the nation as manifested in the public sphere, is in fact no longer a sustainable position.¹¹

Other recent studies have derived similar findings on domesticity by analysing conduct-literature in particular, suggesting that the assumptions of this critical legacy risk 'underplay[ing]... those aspects of conduct books which might suggest that their ideological effects were rather more precarious and mixed.' Vivien Jones has consequently argued that 'even th[e] most recalcitrant of [conduct books] offer possibilities for pleasure,'¹² and Lucy Morrison has demonstrated that certain women-writers of the early nineteenth century were able to 'subvert' earlier, more 'constricti[ve]' models of domesticity in eighteenth-century conduct books by 'publishing repeated redefinitions' of them in the nineteenth.¹³ Catherine Kerrison likewise confirms a similar ideological divide in America, where eighteenth-century conduct books sold alongside their more progressive nineteenth-century counterparts, offering 'conflicting advice as old and new battled it out.'¹⁴ Collectively, these and other feminist studies have sought to restructure the conduct-genre, historically associated with those patriarchal values of the popular male writers such as Gregory, Kames and Fordyce, in order to restore those equally successful female writers of conduct-literature and the model of 'enlightened womanhood' that they represented.¹⁵ However, even this approach has been increasingly problematised. Alan Richardson has pointed out that understanding conduct-literature through the grouping of the shared features of a proliferating band of sister women-writers itself 'collapses

¹⁰ Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 15.

¹¹ Gallchoir, *Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation*, p. 19.

¹² Indeed, Jones' stated purpose is to '[refute] those monologic accounts of the genre as straightforwardly repressive.' Vivien Jones, 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct-Literature,' *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter & M. Roberts (London: Palgrave, 1996), pp. 108-132 (p. 109).

¹³ Morrison's landmark essay 'Conduct (Un)Becoming' has identified 'liberal subtexts' within certain women writers' conduct books, which 'demonstrate[d] their authors' acknowledgement of a transitional society's gradual release of women from the confines of domesticity.' She concludes that female conduct writers 'assimilated and simultaneously defied the restrictions placed upon them' both by and through such literature. Lucy Morrison, 'Conduct (Un)Becoming to Ladies of Literature: How-to Guides for Romantic Women Writers,' *Studies in Philology*, 99.2 (Spring, 2002), 202-28 (pp. 202, 213).

¹⁴ Catherine Kerrison, 'By the Book: Eliza Ambler Brent Carrington and Conduct-Literature in Late Eighteenth-Century Virginia,' *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 105 (Winter, 1997), 27-52 (p. 46).

¹⁵ The introduction of the concept of 'enlightened womanhood' in this period is the main argument of Mitzi Myers, who sees the increasingly authoritative, public voice of women moralists at this time as demonstrating a 'stylish new mode of enlightened domesticity,' which allowed for the unique exercise of 'maternal and pedagogical power.' Mitzi Myers, 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books,' *Children's Literature*, 14.1 (1986), 31-59 (pp. 33-36).

together [their] ideologically disparate positions,' and inevitably conflates such opposing and otherwise incompatible stances as the 'outspoken radicalism of Wollstonecraft, the liberal compromises of Edgeworth and Barbauld, and the deep-seated conservatism of Trimmer and More.'¹⁶ Similarly, Markman Ellis has cautioned against treating such a large range of conduct literature as one, 'monolithic discourse,' and Kathryn Sutherland has called upon modern scholarship to 'adjust any simple gendered assumptions of influence' in such texts, given that many were 'writ[ten] in consciously interpretative or revisionary dialogue with the genre.'¹⁷ The necessity for more such fluid assessments of the genre's gendered conceptualisations of female conduct cannot be over-stated. For the group of almost exclusively white, married, middle-class women-writers associated with conduct-literature, there is still a lack of intersectional re-evaluation which seeks to acknowledge gendered features as distinguished by class, age, nationality and marital status, and which recognises versions of womanhood that fell outside the norms of just 'polite,' white, middle-class femininity.

One reason that these updated, more discerning reassessments of conduct-literature are so necessary is because conduct-material as a literary category was influencing new generations of readers whose social positions extended increasingly further beyond the realms of polite, middle-class society. As already stated, by the turn of the nineteenth century, conduct books had gained a readership that stretched from the highest echelons of society to the lowest, including all apart from those at the most elite levels of the aristocracy, and those too poor or illiterate to buy or read them.¹⁸ That the genre remained so popular across such a wide cross-section of the population in a national period of such intense political division is testament to the rise in a liberalised neutrality with which many conduct books began to address their readers in the decades immediately after the French Revolution. Calling for unity in a time of national conflict, British conduct-material at the time of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars typically promoted those shared national values universally considered to be assets to one's character, regardless of wealth, class, religion, political affiliation, and

¹⁶ As Richardson points out, 'Barbauld, in fact, rejected a proposal (Edgeworth's) to co-edit a "periodical paper" featuring the work of "all the literary ladies of the present day" on the grounds of political differences: "There is no bond of union 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 Mrs. Hays, or if she were living, Mrs. Godwin."' Richardson, *Literature, Education, Romanticism*, p. 168.

¹⁷ Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 34 and Kathryn Sutherland, 'Writings on Education and Conduct: Arguments for Female Improvement,' *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 25-45 (pp. 31, 43).

¹⁸ Nancy Armstrong similarly states that 'Conduct books addressed a readership comprising various levels and sources of income and included virtually all people who distinguished themselves from the aristocracy, on the one hand, and from the labouring poor on the other.' *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 71.

even (as shall later be addressed in more detail) gender.¹⁹ The Edgeworths announced that ‘On religion and politics we have been silent because we have no ambition to gain partisans, or to make proselytes, and because we do not address ourselves to any sect or party’.²⁰ Similarly, the Ongar Taylors denounced the nurturing of a ‘spirit of party, of bigotry, [or] of intolerance’ as the most ‘egregious mistake,’ assuring their readers that ‘nothing shall be advanced that that will remind you of sects or parties,’ and roundly condemning those who were ‘more solicitous to instil this hostile and intolerant spirit into their flocks, than to instruct them in the pure doctrines of the gospel of peace; - thus setting every man’s hand against his brother, [and] infect[ing them] with the spirit of religious animosity’.²¹ As my wider thesis argues, this criticism of ‘intolerance’ was a deep-set feature that had become temporarily ingrained into the wider national psychology at the time, and was demonstrably manifest in both fictional and non-fictional literary productions. However, its presence in conduct-literature of the time is uniquely explicit. As Poovey has argued, ‘the ideals disseminated by conduct books... cut across denominational lines and the infinitesimal strata of the “middling classes” and helped [those...] of different beliefs and slightly different social positions [to be] more nearly of one faith and one class’ (p. xi-xii). Thus, by appealing to core, universal principles of tolerance that were valued to be assets to one’s character regardless of the presence or absence of religious or political affiliation, even the most conservative conduct-literature at the turn of the nineteenth century typically became increasingly neutralized, liberalised, and ‘frankly secularized’.²²

Celebrity Conduct-Writers: The Ongar Taylors

Before turning to close readings of the better-known Hannah More and Jane West, I begin my analysis of conduct books with the Taylor family of Ongar, these being particularly good examples of conservative Evangelical writers of progressive and tolerant conduct books. Isaac Taylor was an

¹⁹ This phenomenon is the main topic of Armstrong’s argument, who devotes a chapter to demonstrating that the ‘conduct book presupposed horizontal affiliations among the literate public where no [other] such [social/political/cultural] affiliations would exist.’ Her wider thesis is that both conduct-literature and other forms of domestic fiction ‘show how such points of difference came to be contained within a framework that was remarkably predictable [and...] produced a single [i.e. domestic] ideal of the household’ (pp. 72-75).

²⁰ *Practical Education*, I, p. vii-viii.

²¹ It is because of the commonality of these such attitudes that Hannah More stated so defensively that religion had been reduced to ‘something which involves controversy, and dispute, and mischief; something of an inflammatory nature, which is to stir up ill humours; as of a sort of party business which sets friends at variance... that religion, as likely to excite anger and party distinctions, should be carefully excluded.’ Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 2 vols. (London: Cadell & Davies, 1799), II. p. 52. All following references to the *Strictures* will be taken from this first edition unless otherwise stated. See too Ann Taylor, *Retrospection: A Tale* (London: Taylor & Hessey, 1821), p. 139; *Reciprocal Duties of Parents and Children* (London: Taylor & Hessey, 1818), p. 53 and *Practical Hints to Young Females* (London: Taylor & Hessey, 1815), p. 143.

²² Poovey, p. xi. Armstrong too has affirmed that the new conduct book ‘sought to define the practice of secular morality as... natural duty’ (*Desire*, p. 76).

Evangelical minister and engraver who began to arrange, publish and illustrate some of the notes and thoughts he had originally intended for sermons, and encouraged his wife and children in parallel literary projects of their own ('It was almost impossible to be a Taylor and not write', explains one biographer).²³ By the end of the 1810s, their resultant productions had ushered the Taylor family into literary stardom. The myriad novels and conduct books of both Isaac and Ann Taylor were largely addressed to 'Teens' and 'Youth[s] leaving School,' and many ran through ten or twelve editions.²⁴ Like the writings discussed in Chapters One and Two, these publications were almost universally preoccupied with youth, adolescence, and theories of development. Yet, unlike writers such as Rousseau, Godwin or Edgeworth, the Taylors were neither educational philosophers nor elite social figures who moved within well-known literary circles. Unable to afford formal education or even dowries for their daughters, the Taylor parents addressed themselves to audiences of similarly lower to middling, ordinary working families, part of the reason for their extraordinary popularity. The Taylor children achieved similar success: aged 22, 21 and 17 respectively, Ann (Junior), Jane and Isaac (Junior)'s first bestselling book *Original Poems... By Several Young Persons* (1804) ran through at least 7 editions in its first year of publication and over 30 by 1834.²⁵ Addressing a similar class to that of their parents, the writings of the Taylor children were written both by and to representatives of a sort of adolescent everyman, and would come to include some of the most frequently reprinted works of the nineteenth century, of which some examples still remain popular even today ('Twinkle twinkle

²³ See Lucas' Introduction to *The Original Poems' and Others, by Ann & Jane Taylor and Adelaide O'Keeffe*, ed. E.V. Lucas (London: Gardner, Darton & Co., 1905), p. ii. There have been a number of biographies of the Taylor family throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the most notable of which are Christina Duff Stewart, *The Taylors of Ongar: An Analytical Bio-Bibliography*, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1975); Doris Mary Armitage, *The Taylors of Ongar: Portrait of an English Family of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Heffer, 1939); G. Edward Harris, *Contributions towards a Bibliography of the Taylors of Ongar and Stanford Rivers* (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1965) and Helen Cross Knight, *Jane Taylor: Her Life and Letters* (UK ed., London: Nelson, 1880). The largest collection of these and other such material on the Taylors remains in the Suffolk Record Office in Bury St Edmund, which includes both biographical and autobiographical writings as well as many of the Taylors' engravings, letters, poems and books. Also recommended is Stephen Painter's excellent online repository of the Taylors, which has done valuable work collating these sources and identifying certain genealogical errors in their biographical history (<http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~taylors-of-ongar/family/index.html>, accessed 20/10/20). For autobiographical accounts of the family, see Ann Gilbert, *Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert, Formerly Ann Taylor*, ed. J. Gilbert (London: King & Co, 1874) and Isaac Taylor, *The Family Pen: Materials Biographical and Literary of the Taylor Family of Ongar*, 2 vols. (London: Jackson, 1874), which itself includes *Memoirs, Correspondence and Poetical Remains of Jane Taylor*, ed. Isaac Taylor (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1832).

²⁴ The publication history of Ann and Isaac Taylor is complex and remains disputed; for instance, the Dictionary of National Biography cites eleven and twelve editions of *Practical Hints* and *Maternal Solitude* respectively, but simply 'numerous' editions of other works. See Thomas Seccombe, *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Elder, Smith & Co., 1885-1900), LV, s.v. 'Isaac Taylor, 1759-1829.'

²⁵ Darton proposes that Ann and Jane were the first British 'creators of the Moral Tale in verse.' F.J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 176.

little star', for instance, was first written by Jane Taylor in 1806).²⁶ After outselling Keats, Coleridge, Hazlitt, De Quincey and John Clare, the Taylors soon became their publisher's most profitable writers.²⁷ Ultimately, they would go on to produce nearly 30 works between them and become 'amongst the most famous and prolific children's authors and illustrators of the nineteenth century.'²⁸ To distinguish them from the radical views of another literary family of the time (the Taylors of Norwich), the family were given the epithet of the tiny village they had brought to fame. The legacy of the 'Taylors of Ongar' would continue well into the nineteenth century and beyond.

The conduct books of the Taylors provide a useful challenge to the critical tradition as their progressive values are asserted because of their Evangelicalism, rather than despite it. In contrast to what scholars describe as the 'general placidity' and 'rife absenteeism' of the Anglican establishment of the Regency era, Evangelical Christians were characterised by their zealous fervour, their energetic abolitionist campaigns and their swelling congregations.²⁹ Their theology primarily emphasised the supremacy of scripture and the importance of conversion. Accordingly, despite their varying subjects, each of the Taylors' conduct books concludes with a chapter reassessing the supposed import of 'proper' conduct when contextualised against the true thing needful – salvation, achieved exclusively through Christ's atonement. Believing that even the most perfect exhibition of domesticised behaviour could not earn salvation, the Taylors insisted that the genuine spiritual maturation of youths should not be sacrificed to a misleading and idolatrous fixation on the kind of conduct desirable to 'polite' but secular society. Moreover, because the Taylors believed that each individual young soul was of equal and infinite importance, their writing, as shall be demonstrated, explicitly rejects and transcends the traditional hierarchies of age and gender assumed by the critical tradition's notion of idealised domestic propriety. These applications of theology were markedly different to those seen in the conduct-literature of previous Christian moralists of the early and mid-eighteenth century. Earlier religious conduct-writers, such as Fordyce and Gregory, avowed particular emphasis on young females ('The world, I know not how, overlooks, in our sex, a thousand irregularities, which it never forgives in

²⁶ Perhaps most famous was Anne Taylor's *My Mother*, one of the 'most reprinted and imitated poems of the century.' See Ann & Jane Taylor, *Rhymes for the Nursery* (London: Darton & Harvey, 1806), p. 10, and Laura York, 'Taylors, Jane and Ann' entry in *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (17th Oct 2020), <<https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/taylor-ann-and-jane>>, accessed 22/10/2020.

²⁷ Tim Chilcot, *A Publisher and His Circle: The Life and Work of John Taylor, Keats's Publisher* (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 67, 178.

²⁸ S.v. 'Anne and Jane Taylor, *Correspondence between a mother and her daughter at School*', The Hockliffe Project, De Montfort University (<http://hockliffe.dmu.ac.uk/items/0231.html>, accessed 22/10/20).

²⁹ A more sustained evaluation of the Anglican church at this time can be found in Chapter Five, pp. 162-4. Laura Mooneyham-White, *Jane Austen's Anglicanism* (Ashgate, 2011), p. 13. See too Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988) and Raymond Cook, 'As Jane Austen Saw the Clergy', *Theology Today*, 18.1 (1961), 41-50 (p. 41).

yours'), especially while still within the familial structure (the moral constitution of the family being 'much more dependent on the conduct of daughters than of sons').³⁰ By contrast, the Taylors subscribed to a combination of both theological and secular utilitarian arguments concerning the role of the sexes which interpreted the soul of the youngest daughter of a family to be of equal importance to its patriarchal head, and the pursuit of fruitless domestic accomplishments to be a waste of feminine resources.³¹

These arguments are situated specifically within the Evangelical doctrine of original sin. Of the multiple discussions of Adam and Eve in Ann Taylor's first conduct book *Maternal Solitude*, Eve is denied any individually distinguishing role in the 'ruin of unborn millions', and is only as culpable as Adam in introducing a legacy of accountability to all future parents.³² According to the Evangelical faith, because all males and females are the progeny of Adam and Eve, all symbolically inherit an equal fallibility from what Ann terms '[thei]r first parents', and so were equally in need of being 'born again.' Insisting that 'In Christ there is neither male nor female', the Taylors thus rejected many of the traditionally segregated arrangements of familial hierarchy (*Solitude*, pp. 9, 15). In the familial structure of their own household for instance, the Taylor daughters were apprenticed into their father's business along with the sons (and loudly relished the opportunity).³³ Isaac also fully endorsed his daughters' writing pursuits, encouraging them to 'be able to support to themselves' and to work for their own living.³⁴ The same egalitarianism guided the Taylors' pedagogical system. Regardless of sex, the Taylor children were all home-educated in the same gender-neutral program of Isaac's own devising, comprising literature, art, mathematics and the sciences.

³⁰ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 2 vols. (London: Millar & Cadell, 1766), I, p. 17.

³¹ Although these ideas would find more developed form in John Stuart Mill's seminal work *The Subjection of Women*, early or precursory elements of utilitarian philosophy and its application to women's rights had been advanced since the eighteenth century, by thinkers like Hutcheson, Hume and Sidney Smith. Smith's 1810 essay 'Female Education' was particularly influential, and argued that insufficient education for women was '[causing], at present, half the talent in the universe [to] run to waste, [which] is totally unprofitable.' Sidney Smith, 'Female Education', *Edinburgh Review*, 15 (January 1810), 299-315 (pp. 310-11).

³² It was of no consequence to Ann that Adam and Eve had been so long expired; a constant refrain of her conduct books is that the cause and effect of all parental decisions, both current and 'original', continue to affect the lives of others long past the date of their actual death: 'It is hard that children should suffer to the very close of life (as they sometimes do) from the despotism of parents, who when sleeping in the dust cannot witness the sad effects of their own misconduct, or make reparation for the misery they have occasioned.' Ann Taylor, *Maternal Solitude for a Daughter's Best Interests* (London: Taylor & Hessey, 1814), pp. 14-15, and *Reciprocal Duties*, p. 120.

³³ Jane and Anne claimed that although only too conscious of 'the inconveniences connected with our engagements there... [our] experience teaches us that comfort and happiness are compatible with inconveniences. We have every inducement to industry, and we are thankful that that which is necessary is also agreeable to us.' Quoted in Knight, *Jane Taylor: Life and Letters*, p. 25.

³⁴ Laura York, *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne Commire, s.v. 'Taylors, Jane and Ann.' (Waterford, CT: Yorkin Publications, 1999).

The liberal and egalitarian scheme of work and education that characterised the Taylors' household arrangements is also reflected in their conduct-literature. Just as the Taylor daughters were educated and apprenticed equally with the sons, so the Taylors' programme of youth was reproduced equally for both the male and female audiences of their conduct books. Accordingly, the philosophy of youth that Isaac expounds to teen boys in *Self-Cultivation Recommended: Or, Hints to a Youth Leaving School* (1817) and *Advice to the Teens: Practical Hints towards the Formation of One's Own Character* (1818) is reproduced almost exactly from that which Ann addressed to teen girls in *Maternal Solitude for a Daughter's Best Interests* (1814) and *Practical Hints to Young Females* (1815), and to both sexes in *Reciprocal Duties of Parents and Children* (1818). For example, Isaac's striking affirmations of the innate integrity of the teen in *Self-Cultivation Recommended* and *Advice to the Teens* ('Know your true value, and do not cast yourself away in trifles'; 'Be true to *yourself*, and all will be well') are merely reconstructions of passages from *Maternal Solitude* in which Ann espouses the same principle to girls who 'take [pains] to appear what they are not,' and from *Reciprocal Duties*, in which an education in 'self-respect... treasures up a stock of happiness.'³⁵ Likewise, countless passages throughout all five texts show thematic duplications which remain blind to the sex of their implied audience, on topics as varied as the theory of memory, domestic economy, the dangers of solitude, choosing reading material, selecting companions, and many more. As the repetition of their titles suggests, all these works exhibit a shared focus on specifically 'Practical Hints' and 'Practical Helps', a pragmatism which owed much to the liberal gender politics of the Edgeworths' *Practical Education* (1798), which the Taylors respected deeply.³⁶ Although the titles of their conduct books were addressed to separate genders, nearly all explicitly avowed themselves to be equally applicable to both sexes, and often conflate male and female adolescent development with a complacency that suggests their audience will take the transferability of certain points for granted.³⁷ Although there are no known works which are co-authored by both Ann and Isaac Taylor together, their joint production of 'practical' conduct-material was clearly a collaborative process which disseminated a unified philosophy of youth, and contained differences only in the nominal genders of its audiences.

³⁵ Isaac Taylor, *Self-Cultivation Recommended: Or, Hints to a Youth Leaving School* (London: Fenner, 1817), p. 97 and *Advice to the Teens: or, Practical Helps towards the Formation of One's Own Character* (London: Fenner, 1818), p. 59; Taylor, *Reciprocal Duties*, pp. 17-21, and *Solitude*, p. 58.

³⁶ The Taylors opined that '[Edgeworth's] admirable tale[s]... can scarcely fail to produce conviction.' *Hints*, p. 39.

³⁷ Ann for instance repeatedly states that her books were equally applicable to boys and girls: although females were 'more immediately addressed... at the same time, a hope is indulged, that readers of a different description may gain an occasional hint, by which their conduct in domestic life may be improved' (*Hints*, pp. iii-iv), and expected that her sons would read them as well as her daughters: 'though these pages are immediately addressed to you, my dear child... I am not without hope, that others of my family, who will occasionally peruse them, may glean a few hints from this my labour of love.' *Solitude*, pp. 9-10.

The Reciprocity of Parent-Teen Relations

If the Taylors' egalitarian stance regarding youth conduct already renders them distinct from earlier eighteenth-century moralists, their advocacy of adult-teen equality further highlights their tolerant progressiveness. The 'drudgery' and 'laborious exercises' of the domestic regimes recommended by earlier writers such as Gregory and Fordyce are explicitly condemned, being 'oppress[ive]' and 'injur[ious to] both the spirits and health'; instead, the Taylors' readers are encouraged to treasure their youth as a 'season of sprightliness and vivacity' (*Hints*, p. 66). Moreover, in perhaps their largest point of departure from their conservative forebears, the Taylors further insisted that the parent-teen relationship be both mutual and 'reciprocal'. In contrast to the old, eighteenth-century model in which the honour and obedience of the child were an obligation necessarily owed to their parents, the Taylors deliberately inverted this principle by insisting that teens themselves were owed honour and respect equally: 'Duties are always reciprocal. It were unjust to expect all, and yield nothing.' Because the Taylors' readers were still exhorted to be obedient to their parents, even in those cases when they 'require too much,' Isaac explained that it was only therefore just and fair that parent-child obligations were effected both ways: 'You expect much from [your father]; you are right, [your] relationship warrants it' (*Advice*, p. 67). Similarly, Ann perceived parent-teen reciprocity to be so important that she dedicated an entire treatise to the theme. Like Godwin in *The Enquirer*, whose avowed intention had been to 'reliev[e], at once, the well-meaning but misguided oppressor, and the unfortunate and helpless oppressed' simultaneously,³⁸ *Reciprocal Duties* addressed both teens and adults (of both sexes) alternately, and was composed for the stated purpose of reminding those 'parents [who had] forgot[ten], that there is a *respect* due to the *young*, as well as to the old' (*Duties*, p. 21). Calling on parents to enact a Smithean notion of sympathy, Ann argued that

[t]o withhold [teens from] enjoying those advantages... which belong to their circumstances and their age, is unjust and cruel. Let it be repeated *the morning of life should be held sacred by parents*, as well as the evening of it... To ascertain what are the just claims of others upon us, it is always requisite to imagine ourselves in their circumstances, and they in ours. It is only by so doing that the golden rule of duty to our neighbour can be applied: what a surprising change would take place in some families, if this simple process were suddenly to commence! (pp. 70-1).

By repeatedly demanding that 'fathers and mothers... recur to their own youthful days, with all the desires, aversions, propensities, and levities which characterised them,' Ann's Evangelicalism leads her to combine the secular, Smithean concept of imaginative sympathy with the biblical commandment that Jesus identified as the most important 'golden rule' of scripture - 'Love thy

³⁸ Godwin, *The Enquirer*, pp. 56-7.

neighbour as thyself.³⁹ With this scriptural mandate, Ann consequently interprets harsh or tyrannous parents to be not only uncaring but also inherently sinful. Referencing the transgressive predisposition of iniquitous 'human nature', she explains that

Self-will in a parent is *tyranny*: the obedience it exacts from the family is not that of *sons*, but of slaves. Some persons under the idea of maintaining parental authority... assume the character rather of the master than of the father: human nature is equally prone to love power, and to abuse it; those who are intrusted with it, should be constantly aware of this tendency. (p. 44)

Published after the heightened state surveillance retrospectively dubbed 'Pitt's Terror',⁴⁰ Ann's careful evocation of the Evangelical notion of the fallen state of man diverts this seemingly revolutionary or politically-subversive critique of 'tyrann[ous...] authority' into a more abstract statement regarding universally sinful 'human nature'. She concludes that truly virtuous parents must treat their children with respect and leniency if they were not to 'abuse' that power divinely 'intrusted' to them. Furthermore, in an extraordinary inversion of the notion of honour, Ann asserts not just that children were equally as 'deserving' of respect as adults, but also that only those adults who gave honour to their children were themselves 'worthy' of its return:

Are [youths] not deserving of it...? There is no crime in the inexperience of youth. ...Were the above principles mutually acted upon, they would produce the happiest effects on domestic life: parents, worthy of respect, would more frequently be respected by their children; while children, feeling a due return, would more often endeavour to deserve it. (pp. 21-2)

Thus stands the Taylors' condemnation of the '[un]happy effects' of traditional, hierarchical notions of 'domestic life,' as well as modern scholarship's formulations of conservative domesticity. To the Taylors, honour was not something that was unconditionally owed to parents, but which parents must themselves both earn and return. This principle grows all the more striking when again contextualised within the gender-neutral setting of *Reciprocal Duties'* addresses. By addressing parents and teens of both sexes alike, *Reciprocal Duties* suggested that even the male, patriarchal head of the family was not 'worthy' of the respect of his children unless he himself practised a sufficiently respectful style of parenting – even from the youngest, female and most powerless members of his own family. As Ann elaborates, any treasonous 'filial sentiments' of this nature from girls and boys alike would be merely 'the reward, the *just* reward of oppression; yet the oppressor, the hard man is frequently so unreasonable, so ignorant of human nature, as to be surprised that he is not beloved by his family, and to complain of their ingratitude and deficiency in respect and esteem!' (p. 72). Far from

³⁹ Matthew 22:39, King James Version, and *Duties*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 72-4.

threatening and cajoling young girls into the self-effacing submissiveness of a patriarchal conception of the idealised 'Proper Lady', the Taylors' Evangelicalism led them therefore to replace a vertically-arranged domestic hierarchy with a horizontally-arranged spiritual one. In the Christian family, they argued, all souls were equal, and no male or female was due any more or less honour than anyone else.

The Taylors' Theory of Adult Culpability

It is for this reason that the Taylors' conduct-literature comprises something of a challenge to those wider readings of the form which assert a genre-wide 'single domestic ideal.' Likewise, the Taylors' work discredits the dismissal of the conduct-genre as universally conservative or didactic. Despite their Evangelicalism, the Taylors do not preach or pontificate; instead, their conduct books take the form of friendly 'Practical Hints' intended to benefit youths themselves, rather than merely their parents or any wider societal program. This difference in content is also reflected in style and tone. Earlier conduct-writers such as Gregory and Fordyce tended to use hard and unmitigated language, addressing youths as stern authority figures with the primary intention of reproving or reforming them: 'What! would you parley with the destroyer, when he gives you warning? ...your folly is without excuse, and your destruction without alleviation' (Fordyce, I, p. 129). By contrast, the Taylors eschew this severity. As Locke, Godwin and Edgeworth had all advised, the Taylors address their readers not as a uniform collective but as individual, rational human subjects, each one uniquely capable of logical deduction and autonomous moral reasoning.⁴¹ Consequently, the Taylors' role represents that of sympathetic adult allies, acknowledging the vulnerability of their young audience and attempting to bolster and affirm them. Ann converses freely and openly with her readers and addresses them as 'my dear young friends' (*Hints*, p. 62), and even the supposedly more masculine narratorial style of Isaac employs the soft and gentle language of an intimate friend and confidante ('Give me your ear a moment; we are quite by ourselves', *Advice*, p. 167).

Before moving on from the Taylors, it is finally important to draw attention to the ominous series of warnings that Ann and Isaac directed to parents who clung to outdated, Fordyce-like theories of family hierarchy, and who scorned the supposed debasement of having reciprocal relationships with their children. As a logical consequence of their opposition to traditional, vertical notions of domestic hierarchy, the Taylors conclude by deductive reasoning that any wayward or disobedient teen behaviour was itself the natural product of domestic settings which did not grant sufficient

⁴¹ By contrast, Hannah More in her writings twenty years earlier advised the opposite, and actively recommended that youths 'distrust their own judgement' (*Strictures*, I, p. 152). I examine More's evangelicalism and her exceptional relationship to the conduct-tradition as a whole in more detail in the middle section of this chapter.

tolerance, in the form of reciprocity and respect. They advise that ‘parents who, in the bitterness of their hearts, lament the unkind or unmanageableness of grown-up children,’ should first consider ‘[thei]r *own* mismanagement,’ before they ‘feel surprised at the result, or consider their present circumstances as unaccountable’ (*Duties*, pp. 5, 25). This principle quickly becomes one of the most repeated themes throughout the Taylors’ oeuvre. So convinced are they by the Rousseauvian concept of the malign influence of corrupt and inadequate parenting that nearly all youthful misdoing is attributed not to the youths themselves but rather to their guardians or educators: ‘Scarcely will the temptation to deviate from rectitude rise from yourself... it [will be from] someone older, who thinks to rule you; someone more cunning, who thinks to deceive you’, or ‘those whose pleasure or profit is connected with leading a youth astray’ (*Duties*, pp. 54, 159; *Advice*, p. 156). Like the Rousseauvian conception of an innate and natural maturation susceptible to corruption by external, societal forces, the Taylor’s views profess absolute confidence in the teen’s own instinctual sense of uncorrupted integrity and innate inclination towards reasoning autonomy.⁴² According to these descriptions, the Taylors’ notion of reciprocity was therefore merely an additional, paraphrased version of Godwin’s and Edgeworth’s theory of adult culpability, all three of which equally attributed disrespectful teen behaviour to similarly disrespectful or ‘tyrannous’ parenting. Read together, the Taylors’ conduct books therefore seem to collectively comprise an accumulative manifesto of adult culpability, committed to warning vulnerable young readers of the dangerous consequences of parental fallibility. Indeed, to the Taylors, inadequate adults who subscribed to outdated notions of domestic hierarchy and refused to respect their children’s wishes risked sacrificing not just the normative maturation of their children but also their very lives:

I knew a case of a young lad, religiously brought up, sent from a country town to London, to a fine situation for business. When he had been there but a week or two, he wrote home, to beg they would remove him, for the temptations by which he found himself surrounded were such, as he was sure it would be impossible long to resist. Was it his parents who were deaf to his remonstrances! He was bound: and in a few years, before his term expired, he died, laden with iniquities, a prey to disease. I envy not the feelings of those who recollect all the circumstances of the case, and who must know, that they sacrificed their child’s welfare, life, and soul, to business!
(*Advice*, p. 55)

⁴² It is perhaps even more remarkable that the Taylors continue to assure the addressed teens of a certain amount of impunity even in those circumstances when their moral capability or ‘discernment’ fails them. According to Isaac, the model adult who was truly understanding would always ‘make some allowance for youth’ regardless, even when ‘that conduct which requires allowance to be made, is confessedly not proper.’ Ann too champions a similar attitude of permissive tolerance towards teenish misjudgement, no matter whether there was ‘just ground for reproof’ or not: ‘It is no wonder if the traveller, who is unacquainted with the road, should sometimes turn wrong, or be so entangled in intricate windings as to be unable to retrace his steps; nor is it too great a stretch of candour to believe, that many of the actions, which afford copious matter for the tongue of [...either] calumny, or just ground for reproof, are the result not so much of ill-intention, as of inconsideration or mistake.’ See *Self-Cultivation*, p. 105, and *Hints*, pp. 8-9.

Although they later clarify that there are certain instances in which responsibility for youthful transgressions of duty might not be the parents' blame exclusively, both Ann and Isaac remain conscious of their own parental fallibility and do not shy away from acknowledging their own culpability as caregiving adults. They deny the right to preclude or 'forestall' adolescents from condemning those adults who fail them, and instead encouraged their young readers to treat parental failure with patience and understanding: 'I will not forestall from you any suggestion against your father as unworthy as esteem. I know he is not perfect: but ...do not be hasty in pronouncing sentence; stay till you arrive at his years, have had his exercises, have become yourself a parent, before you condemn.' Far from offering Fordyce-like attempts to reform and reprogramme the thinking of youths, Isaac even goes so far as to offer practical tips and suggestions to help readers convert their parents to their own way of thinking: 'Be open; I will engage this will open him. Should he not at first feel the influence of a conduct towards him so unexpected, yet will it in time avail much to your advantage' (pp. 69-70). Ann similarly goes into great detail regarding the ways that teens could coach and educate the adults around them:

There are subjects on which the young may be better informed than [adults] themselves; cases in which they may be allowed, in a certain sense, to dictate to their parents, who may listen to their suggestions without at all endangering parental authority, or derogating from the wisdom of age. They have, in some instances, more general intercourse with the world than their parents now have, and, probably, they feel a more lively interest in what passes there: this may produce a quicker discernment on various subjects of minor importance, which may be as well conceded to them. There is no virtue in wearing the habit, speaking the language, or persevering in the customs of fifty years ago. (Duties, pp. 60-1)

Although the liberal allowances of this passage might initially seem unusually radical or progressive for the period, they are in reality merely a repetition of the same sentiments that have already been demonstrated in other hugely popular works, such as *Belinda* and *Caleb Williams*. Despite this, the Taylors' words belie a nervous awareness of the proximity of their subversive approach to authority to that ultimate challenge of hierarchy, the French Revolution, and it is not surprising that the Taylors' critique of patriarchal authority is part-concealed within language that is simultaneously conciliatory as well as revolutionary. Their emphatic insistence that their critique of traditional domestic hierarchies could never 'at all endanger parental authority' is also supported by a repetitive accumulation of hedging mitigations: 'the young *may* be better informed... allowed, *in a certain sense*, to dictate... in *some* instances... and, *probably*, they feel... this *may* produce... which *may* be *as well* conceded to them.' These mitigations are doubly reinforced through Isaac's own illustrations included at the beginning of the Taylors' conduct books, typically featuring composed, trustworthy-looking teens in serene postures of self-knowledge. One, seated in a library between an open book and a globe, gently turns his back on the appeals of his younger sibling to leave his studies and join in

youthful play (*fig. 1*). The demeanour of calm responsibility in these images of teens ensures readers of their reliability and trustworthiness. The images join the Taylors' other mitigation strategies to assure readers that their depicted statements ('I must now think for *myself!*') are less a revolutionary threat than simply heartfelt appeals to be trusted and treated fairly, as rational, reasoning beings. Given the rapid suppression and notoriety of supposedly 'Jacobin' literature at the time, it could be surmised that the very popularity of the Taylors' conduct-literature indicates that these de-escalatory strategies were effective. Regardless, it is important that as modern readers we do not allow these tactics to disguise the inherent radicalism and progressiveness of the Taylors' overall pedagogy. It is because of the difference between exactly the sorts of liberal and tolerant attitudes represented by the Taylors in the early nineteenth century and the contrastingly didactic, traditional ones of the mid-eighteenth-century conduct-writers that the critical tradition must stop perceiving conduct-material as a universally conservative and didactic genre of literature, which disseminated a single ideal of domestic conduct only.

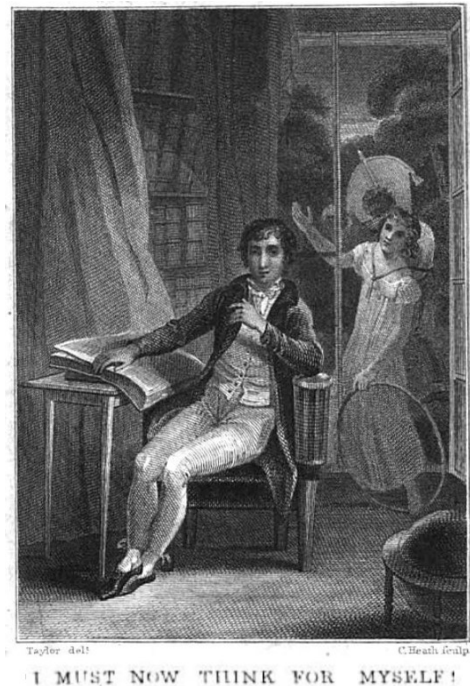


Fig. 1: Isaac Taylor's 1817 illustration of a teen boy.

Adult Culpability and Christian Conduct Books

If the Taylors' philosophy of youth demonstrates that being Evangelical and having progressive values were not mutually exclusive, it also links their pedagogy to a growing sample of conduct-literature written by other Christian conservatives. Far from being an exception to the general rule, the Taylors' tolerant attitudes were echoed by a small but growing range of other Christian conduct-writers of the early nineteenth century, whose increasingly progressive and modernised youth philosophies differed ostensibly from their early and mid-eighteenth-century predecessors. This generational differentiation became particularly fraught because the popularity of certain 1760s writers such as Fordyce, Gregory and Chesterfield had prompted new editions and reprints which persisted well into the new century, and thus sold in direct competition with their more modern market rivals. It was the conservative ideologies of exactly these market rivals which perpetuated 'the customs of fifty years ago' which the Taylors condemned in the 1810s, and in which they joined that same host of writers that Morrison describes as issuing 'repeated redefinitions' of these older, outdated pedagogies.

As the influence of Locke's theories grew more widespread, other theories of adult culpability became an especially common feature of these new, updated conduct books, and were promulgated

by both Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians in a diverse range of contexts.⁴³ The work of the Clapham-Sect member Thomas Gisbourne, for instance – the same sent from Cassandra Austen to Jane, and which would ultimately conquer some of the latter’s reservations⁴⁴ – presaged the Taylors in reserving its most pressing condemnation not for youths but for parents and educators who were ‘ignorant,’ ‘neglectful’ and ‘regardless of [their] duty’ to the young, even if they were ‘well-intentioned’ in the process. ‘Is it surprising,’ Gisbourne demands, ‘that a young woman should give free scope to the desires which she has ever been led to cherish, that she should practise the arts in which her childhood was initiated?’⁴⁵ Likewise, John Aikin, brother of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, admitted in a manual addressed to his son intended for the church that ‘the neglect with which admonitions [given to youths] are treated, is not unfrequently owing to the manner in which they are given, which is often too general, too formal, and with too little accommodation to the feelings of young persons.’⁴⁶ Isaac Taylor III, son of Isaac and Ann, similarly affirmed the need for ‘the unwarped reason of the youth’ to resist the imposition of ‘the worst prejudices... authoritatively forced upon the young, which the feeble-minded retain through life as shackles,’ and which ‘only the strong resentfully throw off.’⁴⁷ And one American Methodist devoted an entire treatise to the theme, written for the avowed purpose of ‘demonstrat[ing], by arguments as plain as ABC, and clear as a ray of light, that the radical causes of the miseries and premature degradation of a large majority of the human race, are the effects of paternal indulgence... Many complain of disobedient children; but who are to blame for it? Undoubtedly the parents themselves.’⁴⁸

Hannah More and Pertinacity

Perhaps the most striking exposition of adult culpability in these new conduct books comes from the Evangelical whose didacticism has recently been credited with the very ‘invention of

⁴³ Although the theory of adult culpability only gains consistent prominence in the early-nineteenth century, it did have precursory attention in the eighteenth. Even Fordyce, for instance, would recognise that there was ‘not perhaps in the whole science of female vanity, female luxury, or female falsehood, a single article that is not taught, and also exemplified’ by those ‘beings called Parents, and Christian parents [too]’ (I, p. 13). However, Fordyce’s commentary on this theme cannot be termed gender neutral, and would certainly not concede the wronged teen the right to challenge or amend dissatisfactory adult conduct as would the Taylors.

⁴⁴ See p. 83 and n.3 of this chapter.

⁴⁵ See too Gisbourne’s belief that ‘Beauty is a possession so grateful to every woman and yet so productive of hazards and temptations, that if a young person is thrown into life with her original wishes and opinions on that subject uncorrected, her instructors will have been negligent of their charge in a very important point.’ Thomas Gisbourne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1797), pp. 38-9, 76-80, 82-3.

⁴⁶ John Aikin, *Letters from a Father to a Son, on Various Topics, Relative to Literature and the Conduct-of Life* [1794], 2 vols., (New York: Garland, 1971), I, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Isaac Taylor [III], *Home Education* (London: Jackson & Walford, 1838), p. 167

⁴⁸ Thomas Branagan, *The Excellency of the Female Character Vindicated* (Philadelphia, 1808), pp. 14, 34.

conservative culture' in nineteenth-century Britain.⁴⁹ Hannah More has been described as both 'the most successful propagandist of the 1790s' and 'probably the most influential woman of her day.'⁵⁰ She therefore provides an ideal comparison to the Taylors as both a prominent Evangelical and an author of bestselling conduct-literature. Like the Taylors, she placed particular emphasis on theories of adult culpability, and in fact begins her most popular conduct-treatise with the progressive concession that youthful misdoing typically arose not from any personal volition but rather a defective education. Accordingly, her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), part pedagogical treatise and part Evangelical conduct-guide for those raising adolescent daughters, opens by denouncing the 'unjust' hypocrisy of adults who blame young people for faults that they are more accurately responsible for themselves:

It is a singular injustice which is often exercised towards women, first to give them a most defective Education, and then to expect from them the most undeviating purity of conduct;— to train them in such a manner as shall lay them open to the most dangerous faults, and then to censure them for not proving faultless. Is it not unreasonable and unjust, to express disappointment if our daughters should, in their subsequent lives, turn out precisely that very kind of character for which it would be evident to an unprejudiced by-stander that the whole scope and tenor of their instruction had been systematically preparing them? (I, p. x)

Over the past few decades, More's critical reputation has greatly benefitted from researchers such as Patricia Demers and Ann Stott, who have jointly avowed a mission to 'complexify' her position against a critical backdrop that has interpreted her didacticism in similar ways to that of the conduct genre as a whole - as 'pushy, humourless [and] unctuously sycophantic.'⁵¹ This complexification is particularly welcome because despite More's apparent condemnation of the 'unreasonable and unjust' consequences of adult fallibility, her position on female education is complicated, and increasingly acknowledged to contain seemingly 'contradictory messages.'⁵² On the one hand, her single-minded drive to improve and educate young people through a vast program of charity schools was deemed so progressive that it was branded 'dangerously radical' by certain of her contemporaries,⁵³ and her condemnation of the tyrannous drudgery of the Fordycean model of accomplishments could have come straight from the pages of the Taylors. She compares 'sacrific[ing the] true and proper

⁴⁹ Kevin Gilmartin, "'Study to Be Quiet": Hannah More and the Invention of Conservative Culture in Britain,' *ELH*, 70 (Summer, 2003), 493-540.

⁵⁰ F.K. Prochaska and A.D. Harvey, both quoted in Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 15.

⁵¹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992), p. 274. See too Patricia Demers, *The World of Hannah More* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p. x, and Ann Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵² Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 171. See too Poovey's notion of More's self-contradictory 'double consciousness' in *Proper Lady*, p. 40.

⁵³ Mary Alden Hopkins, *Hannah More and her Circle* (London: Longmans, 1947), p. 2.

enjoyments of sprightly and happy' young people to 'blotting out spring from the year,' and asserts that

Instead of bounding with the unrestrained freedom of little wood-nymphs over hill and dale, their cheeks flushed with health, and their hearts overflowing with happiness, these gay little creatures are shut up all the morning, demurely practising the *pas grave*, and transacting the serious business of acquiring a new step for the evening, with more cost of time and pains than it would have taken them to acquire twenty new ideas. (I, pp. 86-7)

On the other hand however, More offered as much sarcastic ridicule of the notion of 'the rights of children' as she did 'the rights of woman', and damningly likens what the Taylors might deem innocent self-assertion to revolutionary mania: 'Who can forbear observing and regretting in a variety of instances, that not only sons but daughters have adopted something of that spirit of independence, and disdain of control, which characterise the times?' (I, pp. 134-5). Distrustful of the Rousseauian notion of the youthful capacity to make moral judgements as a matter of natural course, More nominally interprets notions of agency and autonomy in adolescent daughters as incompatible with that kind of modesty and passivity expected in the ideal 'Christian woman' (II, p. 37). It was precisely these applications of her Evangelicalism that have given rise to her association with conservatism and dogmatism; George Eliot would come to represent several generations of critics in declaring that she 'like[d] neither her letters, nor her books, nor her character.'⁵⁴

Despite the complexity of her approach to youthful autonomy, however, More remains consistently unable to fully condemn adolescent independence and self-knowledge. Because she believed that British society was then experiencing 'the most tremendous confederacies against religion and order, and governments which the world ever saw', More acknowledged that the very maintenance of traditional or Christian values would itself require a particularly robust and resilient amount of self-will if it was to successfully resist the pressures of such widespread cultural and religious turmoil: 'Nothing short of absolute decision can make a confirmed Christian,' she insists (I, pp. 5, 242). As the Taylors would testify, characteristics such as resolution and indomitability were already by default important to the Evangelical faith, which stated that true salvation by its very nature required a defiant act of autonomous self-agency, a resistant 'second birth' that could reject and rewrite the natural course of inherited sin. Unlike their Catholic and even Protestant and Anglican contemporaries, one could not be born or baptised into Evangelical Christianity; redemption could not be inherited through one's parents or obtained through charitable works or church attendance. Instead, salvation occurred exclusively through the active resolution to be 'born again,' thereby

⁵⁴ See too Birrell, who deemed her 'one of the most detestable writers that ever held a pen.' Augustine Birrell, quoted in Stott's *First Victorian*, p. vii, and George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. G. Haight, (London & New Haven, 1954), I, p. 254.

substituting the sinful legacy of one's 'first parents' with that of a new, 'heavenly Father' (I, p. 271; II, pp. 249, 279). As the Taylors confirm, it was because only the most spirited and unshakeable young people could be relied on to resist the corrupting pleasures of worldly temptations that many Evangelical conduct-writers were forced to concede therefore that a strong sense of obdurate self-agency was one of the most valuable qualities for youths to possess - even for young females. 'Without [possession of] a firm persuasion... there is no salvation,' More insists repeatedly throughout her works (II, p. 251). 'A sincere Christian... can by no means deserve [such a title] if she is ever afraid to avow her principles, or ashamed to defend them [with...] the spirited yet modest rebuke of a pious young woman.'⁵⁵

It is this reasoning that prompts one of More's most extraordinary concessions: that 'strong and pertinacious temper[s]' were therefore positive features in youths, rather than negative. According to More,

The skilful labourer knows that even where the surface is not particularly promising, there is often a rough strong ground which will amply repay the trouble of breaking it up; and we are often most taken with a soft surface, though it conceal a shallow depth, because it promises present reward and little trouble. Strong and pertinacious tempers, of which perhaps obstinacy is the leading vice, under skilful management often turn out steady and sterling characters; while from softer clay a firm and vigorous virtue is but seldom produced.

(*Strictures*, I, p. 138)

Here as elsewhere, More conflates those synonyms which would customarily have a varying range of positive or negative connotations, consequently equating the supposedly undesirable traits of youth 'obstinacy', 'roughness' and 'pertinacity' with more positive counterparts – 'strength', 'steadiness', 'firmness', 'vigour' and 'sterling character'.⁵⁶ Her suggestion is that 'skilful' custodians would be able to discern that ordinarily negative adolescent characteristics actually possess the most maturational potential; that parents should not seek to 'confound [or...] extinguish the passions but correct them' (I, p. 139). After this extraordinary normalisation of the positive potential of 'obstinate' teenish behaviour, More goes on to expand her metaphor further:

Hired teachers are also under a disadvantage resembling tenants at rack-rent; it is their interest to bring in an immediate revenue of praise and profit, and, for the sake of present rich crop, those who are not strictly conscientious, do not care how much the ground is

⁵⁵ Hannah More, *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies* (London, 1777), p. 174.

⁵⁶ This is not the only instance in the *Strictures* where More defines traits such as youthful 'pertinacity' and 'obstinacy' as positive rather than negative; see for example II, pp. 63-4, in which she laments that young women too often 'pursue their object eagerly, but not regularly; rapidly, but not pertinaciously; for they want that obstinate patience of investigation which grows stouter by repulse.'

impoverished for future produce. But parents, who are the lords of the soil, must look to permanent value, and to continued fruitfulness.⁵⁷

Demers has identified these agricultural metaphors denoting 'careful nurturance and organic growth' as evidence of the combined influence of More's 'lifelong passion for gardening' and her subscription to Locke's associationist or 'organic' theory of development.⁵⁸ However, I would argue that the allegorical significance of these passages seems to be primarily theological as opposed to botanical, given that More's adoption of the scriptural motif of the seed-bearing soil deliberately inverts the emphasis of the original parable from which it derives. In the biblical account of this allegory, the seed-sower scatters grain indiscriminately and the allegorical focus is on the receptive quality of the ground on which it falls (i.e. the path, the rocks, the thorns, and so on.)⁵⁹ Contrastingly, in More's reframing of the parable, there are only two types of surface and even the shallow one can bear 'reward'; instead, the repetition of the necessity for 'skilful management' by 'skilful labourers' averts the focus from the potential fruitfulness of the represented young people themselves to the competence of the ones who raise and educate them. Exactly as with the denunciation advanced in the opening lines of the *Strictures*, More here evokes the same theory of adult culpability as seen with the Taylors (Ann Taylor's *Maternal Solitude*, in fact, uses the exact same metaphor: 'Were our young plantations cultivated by more skilful hands, we should have fewer thorns and more roses', p. 152). Evoking the lessons of neighbouring biblical parables with injunctions against irresponsible stewardship, More joins the Taylors in attributing the responsibility for youthful misconduct to inadequate parenting, and suggests that those exhibiting 'strong and pertinacious tempers' will only channel their energies into problematic or sinful endeavours if their parents and educators fail to cultivate them as they should.⁶⁰ Conversely, similarly 'skilful' intervention was required in the case of teens who were *too* passive, and whose lack of 'vigour' and 'obstinacy' meant that that their soil was 'soft' and vulnerable to the corrupting seeds of a morally ambiguous, adult world.

'Militant' Femininity

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 82-3. Although the term 'rack-rent' was first coined around 1605, it was only now gaining a consistent lexicological presence and would be further popularised two years later with Edgeworth's publication of *Castle Rackrent* in 1800. See entry 'rack-rent, n.' *OED Online*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2008), <www.oed.com/view/Entry/157173>. Accessed 7 January 2021.

⁵⁸ Demers, *Hannah More's World*, p. 87.

⁵⁹ See Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.

⁶⁰ Taken in isolation, it could be argued that in their attempts to release youths from responsibility, these passages necessarily also challenge the ability of youths to take responsibility for their own actions. However, the contextual placement within the overall aim of the *Strictures* would problematise such a reading, given that More states the avowed intention for the work (and indeed for all other youth studies) is to 'enable [a young woman] to regulate her own mind, and to be useful to others' (II, pp. 1-2).

As with the Taylors, More's reaction to pertinacity is particularly significant because it appears to be equally applicable to teen girls as teen boys. Although the *Strictures* are predominantly concerned with the conduct of young females, More joins the Taylors in explicitly stating that much of her advice was 'unavoidabl[y]' relevant to both sexes and 'by no means' implicated girls exclusively. Anticipating the Taylor's allusion to the apostle Paul almost word for word, she insists that 'in Christ Jesus... there is neither Male nor Female,' and often addresses her commentary on religious or moral development to the gender-neutral conduct of Christians of either sex.⁶¹ Her condemnation of the weak and implicitly feminised 'softer' clay is a particularly revealing example of this. Although the *Strictures* consistently encouraged 'modesty' in adolescent girls, More, like her rival Mary Wollstonecraft, remained unmitigatedly critical of what More termed feminine 'softness' and Wollstonecraft 'weak and vain... indolence.'⁶² Accordingly, More's criticism of the 'soft' effeminate clay of the irresolute young Christian likewise equates 'natural softness of heart with [an] indolence of spirit,' and slates those she describes as 'soft and smiling hypocrites,' who elevated 'softer' qualities such as 'sympathy and feeling... at the expence of principle' (I, pp. 66, 144, 165). Indeed, the very reason that More condemned activities such as novel-reading was because they 'soften[ed]' that natural inclination towards pertinacious 'resistance' which would otherwise occur in the youthful, energetic mind: 'by their very nature and constitution, [novels] excite a spirit of relaxation, by exhibiting scenes and ideas which soften the mind: they impair its general powers of resistance' (I, p. 166). Because of this, More issues a passionate call-to-arms to 'softened' young women, urging them to join their male counterparts in the gender-neutral resistance of what she calls 'the young Christian militant' (I, p. 83):

I say, to a mind so softened, to rescue itself from the dominion of self-indulgence, to resume its powers, to call home its scattered strength, to shut out every foreign intrusion, to force back a spring so unnaturally bent, and to devote itself to religious reading, reflection, or self-examination. (I, p. 168)

Continuing these martial metaphors, More explains that it is in this precise context of spiritual struggle that pertinacious 'passions' furnish the 'arsenal' of the young Christian militant:

[B]y some of the most troublesome passions of our nature being converted... to the side of virtue, a double purpose is effected... [for] it is the effect of religion on the passions, that when she seizes the enemy's garrison, she does not destroy the works, she does not burn the arsenal

⁶¹ For instance, More acknowledged that the 'many errors... here ascribed to women... by no means belong to them exclusively... [I address] faults which are common to the species... This is in some measure unavoidable. In speaking on the qualities of one sex the moralist is somewhat in the situation of the Geographer, who is treating on the nature of one country:—the air, soil, and produce of the land which he is describing, cannot fail in many essential points to resemble those of other countries under the same parallel.' *Ibid.*, I, pp. x-xi; II, pp. 30-1.

⁶² *Vindication*, I, p. 391.

and spike the cannon; but the artillery she seizes, she turns to her own use, and plants its whole force against the enemy from whom she has taken it. (I, p. 140)

To More, passionate or pertinacious resistance should not be discouraged or 'extinguished' precisely because these were the very features that formed the most effective weaponry in the young Evangelical's struggle against the dangers of the adult secular world.

As one might expect, More is also quick to reject any association with radicalism in her approach: 'Far be it from me to desire to make scholastic ladies or female dialecticians,' she states immediately after the above quotations (I, p. 168). However, this only renders more important her insistence on the distinction between the blind conduct of unthinking submission and the kind of Christian modesty that contained the capacity for principled resistance. *Coelebs's* Lucilla for instance, More's very paragon of ideal Christian femininity, is shown to police her own mind to outside influences so rigorously that she several times 'chid[es]' even *Coelebs* for his 'want of taste' and near 'corruption' of her principles, and is not afraid to assert her own in its place: 'I believe [that...] it is possible to be religious in a court, and worldly in a monastery.'⁶³ Under constant media scrutiny from the numerous, widely-publicised scandals surrounding the staffing and reputation of her own schools,⁶⁴ More was only too aware of what the Taylors would deem the fallibility of adult educators, and understood the necessity of instilling in susceptible adolescents the firm appraisal of what Locke would perceive as any external ideas or associations. In denouncing 'soft', unthinking obedience in favour of those same faculties of 'resistance' and 'absolute decision' required for born-again salvation, More thus encouraged pedagogical systems that prepared adolescents for the kind of independent agency which ensured both self-regulation and active spiritual outputs: 'A lady studies... not that she may learn to debate, but to act... The great uses of study to woman are to enable her to regulate her own mind, and to be instrumental to the good of others' (II, pp. 1-2). As exemplified in the systematic methods of reasoning in both the masculine contexts of *Village Politics* and the feminine ones of *Coelebs's* Lucilla, More demonstrates that the young British subject should primarily be able 'to think, to compare, to combine, to methodize,' regardless of their gender (*Strictures*, II, p. 3). To More, ideal Christian conduct connoted not blind obedience but rather the exercise of judgment and understanding, and the capability of reasoned resistance whenever necessary.

It is of course this same focus on feminine rationality and agency that leads scholars such as Kathryn Sutherland and Eve Tavor Bannet to interpret More as 'counter-revolutionary feminist,' or

⁶³ Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, 2 vols. (London: Cadell & Davies, 1808), II, p. 153. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁴ For an account of the many scandals associated with More, see Demers, *Hannah More's World*, pp. 99-118.

proto-feminist 'matriarch'.⁶⁵ While I am more convinced by Rena-Dozier's observation that any arguments attempting to frame More's values 'as in any way explicitly feminist' require a 'tremendous amount of interpretive contortion',⁶⁶ I have here argued that one does not *need* to re-interpret More as feminist in order to reconcile certain of her more progressive views with other of her more conservative claims denying the existence of the 'rights of woman' or 'children.' As with certain other of her Christian peers, More defends the capacity for steadfast or pertinacious resistance precisely because of her simultaneous commitment to the doctrinal conservatism of Evangelical Christianity and its insistence on the independent autonomy required for salvation. Her strict moral dogmatism certainly differentiates her from the benevolent advocacy of the Taylors, but her use of Evangelical theology to justify adolescent agency can thus be shown to derive from the same fundamental doctrines. While her denunciation of an education system which produced 'accomplished' but submissive and 'softened' young women is unequivocal, the nature of her suggestions for its reform is thus complex, and certainly subject to a wider and much more permissive range of interpretative nuance than the critical tradition has historically acknowledged.

'Pertinacity is Fortitude': Hannah More and Jane West

Finally, joining Hannah More in recontextualising the connotations of 'pertinacity' was her more orthodox contemporary Jane West. Unlike More, West's writing combined its author's 'Evangelical, militant Christianity' with an Anglicanism which reflected West's endorsement by other high-profile Anglicans such as Sarah Trimmer and Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore.⁶⁷ Although many of West's writings achieved a lasting popularity in the early decades of the nineteenth century, she is today often primarily associated with *A Gossip's Story* (1796), a conduct novel whose sentimental character Marianne and her wiser sister would later inspire Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). At the time however, West's novels were far outsold by her conduct books. Like the Taylors' condemnation of the outdated pedagogies from 'fifty years ago', West's hugely popular *Letters to a Young Man* (1801) and *Letters to a Young Lady* (1806) offered similarly vehement denunciations of what they styled the 'old school' of thinking and 'old theories' of youth. As the gendered division of these conduct books implied, West viewed the social and political roles of men and women as fundamentally separate, even (and at times especially) during one's adolescence and earlier youth.

⁶⁵ Eve Tavor Bannet, *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000) and Kathryn Sutherland, 'Hannah More's Counter-Revolutionary Feminism,' *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, ed. Everest (Milton Keynes, 1991), pp. 53-61.

⁶⁶ Emily Rena-Dozier, 'Hannah More and the Invention of Narrative Authority,' *ELH*, 71 (Spring, 2004), 209-227 (p. 209).

⁶⁷ Mary Wood, "'Vehicles of Sound Doctrine"? Anti-Revolutionary Novels by Women, 1793-1815 (PhD thesis, York University, Ontario, 1999), p. 230.

However, like Hannah More and the Taylors, the personal and spiritual maturation of youths was a point of unity between the sexes for West and forms a sharp contrast to the specifically gendered addresses in both conduct books. For youths of both sexes, West joined Gisbourne, Branagan and the Taylors in launching continuing attacks on the outdated attitudes of the mid-eighteenth-century moralists, who West blamed for having provoked a ‘universal rage for disciplining the youthful hope of Britain’ (III, p. 185). Indeed, ten years before Ann Taylor’s condemnation of ‘slavish’ parental ‘tyranny’, West had already lamented that a parent would ‘[too often], either from partiality to the *old school*, or from the love of indulging his own humour, stretc[h] authority into tyranny, and requir[e] not the obedience, but the slavish subservience, of his children’ (III, p. 237, emphasis mine).

In offering this criticism, West refers specifically to the outdated, eighteenth-century theory of youth presented by moralists such as Gregory and Fordyce, which she interpreted as vindictive, restraining, and disruptive to familial harmony:

While I reprobate the alarming tendency to domestic insubordination which is apparent in the prevailing system of instruction, I by no means wish for the unmodified resumption of the old theory, which imposed a continual restraint upon child and parent, and chilled the exhilarating glow of mutual endearment. (III, pp. 236-7)

West’s criticism is striking because it reveals that new, progressive and tolerant attitudes to youth were becoming so ‘prevalent’ in society that they were already beginning to represent a threat and ‘alarm’ to certain of the views of conservative Christians like herself. According to West, the number of parents and educators subscribing to the liberal theories of pedagogues such as Rousseau and Edgeworth was producing such an abundance of families who allowed their children a ‘practical’ education that they were collectively producing an ‘alarming tendency to domestic insubordination’ within society’s wider ideals of parenthood. However, apparently far more insidious than the new ‘practical’ pedagogy was the ‘old theory’, whose programmes of excessive punishment and discipline West deemed ‘chilling’ and full of ‘continual restraint.’ Because the features that West prized highest in youths were simplicity, honesty and sincerity, she found the affirming agenda of the new school far superior to the punishing dictates of the old, whose ‘incessant discipline... shall [only] fashion automatons instead of characters’ (III, p. 184). Echoing Ann Taylor’s belief that the ‘morning of life’ remained sacrosanct, West stated that ‘however [much] we may be amused’ by a Fordyce-like, ‘well-cultivated’ youth, that

if it has lost the diffidence and credulity (shall I not say the *endearing* folly?) of its age, we rather consider it with wonder than delight. The fruits of autumn cannot properly mingle with the snow drops and violets of early spring; the painter who should combine them would become unnatural. (III, pp. 188-9)

West's typically Romantic allusions to nature and the growing youth not only resemble the cultivation metaphors of More and the Taylors, but also condemn the 'old school' for enforcing a submissiveness that went *against* nature, producing 'unnatural' youths. According to West, 'the blush of simplicity and surprise, the naïveté of ignorance, [...] or the struggle of occasional waywardness, impress the affections more forcibly, than the cold propriety of an artificial puppet, moved by the wires of discipline under the inspection of vanity' (III, pp. 189-90). This again prompts a particularly strong corrective to current scholarship: whereas Poovey and the critical tradition interpret conduct-literature's construction of the 'Proper' lady to represent the very model of domestic idealisation, West's conduct books not only branded such behaviour 'unnatural' but also actually weaponized 'cold propriety' as an insult. To West, it was far better to have an 'occasionally wayward' teen who was honest and upfront about their desires, than an accomplished but deceptive 'automaton... puppet' who kept them hidden.

Accordingly, although West retains reservations regarding the 'new school' of youth (and was indeed at times openly critical of the secular liberalism of Edgeworth in particular),⁶⁸ her condemnation of older, more conservative theories of domestic conduct remained both consistent and unmitigated. Moreover, like More and the Taylors, West concurred with the progressive notion that characteristics like obstinacy and indomitability were positive features, these being the surest indications that youths would not be easily swayed from virtue or sincerity. Again adopting similar terminology to More, West accordingly declared that 'Pertinacity' was merely 'fortitude pushed to excess' (III, p. 244). She advocates the Christian principle of humility when dealing with youth, and proposes that

[W]hen we perceive a spirit of resistance to our commands, let us, before we rouse to the defence of our impleaded authority, do the intractable child the justice to reconsider the grounds of his dissent, and the reasonableness and propriety of our own injunction; and if we discover the error to have been in ourselves, let us beware of committing our supremacy and his obedience in future. Non-resistance was (as I before observed) the ruling error of past times. (III, p. 244)

Again, these words show the unmistakable influence of the same notion of virtuous resistance as seen in novels such as *Caleb Williams* and *Belinda*. Echoing More's praise of pertinacity and condemnation of 'softness,' West interprets the capacity for 'resistant' and 'intractable' youthful 'dissent' as superior to what she terms 'non-resistance,' the feature she repeatedly attributes the

⁶⁸ West, like Hannah More, was particularly affronted by Edgeworth's criticism of religious sectarianism (see n. 21 of this chapter). She accused Edgeworth of 'confounding Christian sects with Christianity itself,' and condemned her as both over-secular and classist throughout *Letters to a Young Lady*. See for instance III, pp. 186-187, 210-11, and 218.

primary 'ruling error' of Fordyce's 'old theory'. She also presages the Taylor's theory of adult culpability, acknowledging the fallibility of adult guardians and educators and asserting that the responsibility of youthful 'error' was often to be found 'in [adults] ourselves.' Accordingly, West concluded that if the potentially insurrectionist new theory was not perfect, the products of its ideology were at least 'pardonable,' and certainly preferable to the punitive rigidity of the old: 'We may hope that an energetic and independent mind will remain, when time has corrected its early errors: [for a youth] to pursue its sport, therefore, with an avidity bordering upon extravagance, is pardonable' (III, pp. 206-7). Confirming alignment with the project of generating 'energetic and independent mind[s]' in youths, West's concession seems to belie her own awareness that her only real criticism of the so-called new school – the danger it created for a tendency towards 'domestic insubordination' – was by her own confession only an 'excess' and by-product of that very 'energetic independence' of her own construction of the ideal youth. Like her Evangelical contemporaries already discussed, West's sanction of teenish 'struggle' and 'waywardness', her description of adolescent 'folly' as 'endearing' and 'natural', her defence of teenish 'dissent' and 'pertinacity', her 'pardon' of avid and extravagant youthful 'sport', all belie an attitude towards youth conduct which seem intractably tolerant. Exactly as has been seen with Gisbourne, Aikin, Branagan and Hannah More, Jane West demonstrates that even the most conservative of Christian conduct-writers were either actively or unwittingly participating in those wider, liberal and tolerant discussions that affirmed and normalised expressions of teenish independence and resistance, and attributed the culpability of excessive teenish waywardness to adult guardians and educators.

Conclusion

In her 2007 poem 'The Conduct Books', Sarah Kennedy finds the notion of feminine 'softness' that has here been discussed to form the ideological centre of mid-eighteenth-century conservative conduct-literature. In the setting of twenty-first century America, Kennedy's narrator begins by condemning the misogynist advocacy of feminine passivity in eighteenth-century conduct-manuals before herself remaining torpid and inactive when encountering a naked and vulnerable young boy, presumably a child victim, in the narrative present.⁶⁹ Having condemned exactly such writers as John Gregory and Hester Chapone by name for their promotion of female subordination and passivity ('a

⁶⁹ 'I'd be lying
if I said we turned as one and ran to
phone child welfare...
the truth is, we stood, unsure – the world sparkled
with secret evil intentions – though cars
continued to obey traffic lights and
dogs walked by in their respectable coats.'

Sarah Kennedy, 'The Conduct Books,' *Mississippi Review*, 35.1/2 (Spring, 2007), 22-23 (p. 23).

witch | hunt of a more insidious sort... hanging... cunning women | on a scaffold of “good society””, pp. 22-3), Kennedy’s poem links feminine passivity past and present to the ongoing pressures of social conformity. Because asserting independence or taking action in any situation is almost universally a breach of softness and conformity, Kennedy’s suggestion is that the collectivised, conformist passivity advocated by conservative eighteenth-century conduct-manuals is still to this day evident in the ideology of much feminine conduct. With this in mind, it was therefore as extraordinary as it was radical that a new brand of conduct book temporarily arose in the early nineteenth century that rejected the ‘softness’ of passivity and affirmed the right to independent agency in its teen readers, as this chapter has demonstrated. It has long been acknowledged that some of the most effective critiques of a genre come from within that genre itself: the wall scene in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has long been read as comedic commentary on the sometimes absurd artificiality of dramatic representation, and novelists such as Austen are admired precisely because they satirized the very form that they themselves adopted. It should not therefore seem surprising that the nineteenth century saw the rise of a new generation of conduct books which so consistently mocked and critiqued their own generic predecessors.

That the potential remains for progressive attitudes towards youthful (mis)conduct in conduct-literature to remain surprising to a modern readership is partly, I have argued, a result of a critical legacy that has prioritised certain conservative assumptions of the genre over other more tolerant ones. Perhaps, if the findings of certain recent socio-political studies are to be believed, it might also be something to do with an increasing ideological partisanship within modern society, in which judgments are more frequently made ‘along party lines’ and in which it is more often assumed that attitudes on individual matters must necessarily align with one’s wider social/political affiliations.⁷⁰ In contrast, this chapter has challenged the assumption that progressive attitudes towards issues such as women’s equality and youthful (mis)conduct could not co-exist with the otherwise conservative political or religious beliefs of Evangelical Christian conduct-writers. Despite the modern association of Hannah More and Jane West with conservative didacticism, I have sought to relocate these writers within a wider group of conservative and Evangelical Christian moralists who collectively offered a set of tolerant concessions to the youths concerned in their writings. Even the most conservative conduct books by these authors reflect the more permissive and tolerant ethos of the time, and joined other, more radical or progressive thinkers like Rousseau, Godwin and Edgeworth in conceding that the natural ‘pertinacity’ and ‘resistance’ in both teen boys and girls was one of their

⁷⁰ Matthew Levendusky, ‘Clearer Cues, More Consistent Voters: A Benefit of Elite Polarization’, *Political Behavior*, 32 (2010), 111-131; Logan Dancey & Geoffrey Sheagley, ‘Partisanship and Perceptions of Party-Line Voting in Congress’, *Political Research Quarterly*, 71 (2018), 32-45; and Eliza Carney, ‘Standing Together Against Any Action’, *CQ Weekly*, 37 (2015), n.p.

primary assets, all being in agreement that the 'impair[ment]' of such resistance 'la[id] the mind open to error and the heart to seduction' (*Strictures*, I, p. 167). Borrowing from the language of these conduct-writers themselves, perhaps it is now time to recognise that the scholarship proclaiming the conduct-genre's supposed conservatism and 'emptiness' might be from an outdated, 'old school' of thought from nearly 'fifty years ago.' As Morrison has evidenced, it is only by challenging the ideologies of an inherited tradition that one can subsequently begin to publish 'repeated redefinitions' of it.

These radical new attitudes towards conduct in the earliest decades of the nineteenth century would not, of course, last; the continuing rise of Evangelicalism and the moral dogmatism of the coming Victorian era would ensure the notion of the right to resistant adolescent conduct was subsequently de-popularised. But many remembered the past, and would preserve in their own writings the experience of growing up in such uniquely tolerant conditions. In Chapter Four I turn to two examples of writers exactly such as this, both of whom spent their own adolescence within this window of tolerance, but who subsequently lived to see their own teen children brought up in a much more conservative society than that which they themselves experienced in their own youth. The novelist Thomas Love Peacock and the writer and economist Francis Place both draw explicit attention to this generational gap in attitudes towards the toleration of adolescent independence in their work – even encompassing, as we shall see, the toleration of sexual (mis)conduct as well as behavioural.

Part Three

Chapter Four

Atheists and Anglicans: Tolerating Teen Sexuality

Introduction: Contextualising Adolescent Sexuality at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

In Parts One and Two of this thesis I demonstrated the extent to which a series of new and tolerant attitudes were voiced by adult writers regarding notions of teen independence, as well as teenish ‘obstinacy,’ ‘pertinacity’ and ‘dissent’. I argued that myriad novels, conduct books, educational treatises and other literary forms of the time increasingly portrayed and praised those subsections of society willing to tolerate and promote the teen’s right to independence and/or defiance. In Part Three, I turn my focus towards one specific manifestation of such teenish independence and defiance - the expression of sexuality.¹ Recent academic research has been increasingly preoccupied with the changing attitudes towards sex over the course of the long eighteenth century.² Certain studies have highlighted the specific relevance of certain life stages in particular – those, for example, of children or the elderly.³ There remains no full length study however of either the change in medico-scientific understandings of adolescent sexuality in the period, or the change in societal perceptions of adolescent expression of sexuality in the same period from a socio-historical perspective. As puberty was seen at the time as the process which made sexual engagement possible,⁴ the theme of societal responses to the specific enactment of teen sexual potential seems particularly important, both to a thesis on adolescence and to the fields of sex, body and gender studies as a whole.

¹ By referencing ‘sexuality’ in this chapter, I invoke Foucault’s understanding of the term as set out in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*. I find Foucault’s view of sexuality (of which sexual intercourse itself is a mere function) useful because it encompasses a range of other motifs and representations that also hold meaning in relation to sex; something Nancy Armstrong paraphrases as simply ‘the cultural dimension of sex.’ Thus, when for brevity’s sake I reference teen sexuality, I more fully mean the range of behaviours and desires that hold meaning in relation to the expression of sexuality by the teen subject. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. R. Hurley, 4 vols. (New York: Parthenon Books, 1978), esp. I, pp. 17-35, and Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 11.

² For a summary of the findings of this body of research, see pp. 114-6 of this chapter. Notable studies on sexuality in this period include Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities 1700-1800* (London: Macmillan, 1997); Justin Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, 3rd ed. (London: Pearson Publishing, 2012); *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920*, eds. Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt & Samantha Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), and Harry G. Cocks ‘Approaches to the History of Sexuality since 1750’, *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body*, S. Toulalan & K. Fisher (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 38-54.

³ See for instance Julie-Marie Strange, ‘Fairy Tales of Fertility: Bodies, Sex and the Life Cycle, c.1750-2000’, *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body* (2013), pp. 296-310; Helen Yallop, *Age and Identity in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Routledge, 2016), and Francoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality, Class and Gender in Nineteenth-Century London*, trans. J. Howe (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 24-33.

⁴ For instance, Samuel Johnson’s dictionary jokingly defines puberty as ‘The time of life in which the two sexes begin first to be acquainted.’ Johnson, *Dictionary*, II, s.v. ‘puberty’ (n.p.).

Since (and even before) the rejection of the repression hypothesis in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*,⁵ scholars have offered much comment on the sexual dynamism present in the specific transition between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶ Within the scholarly tradition of the history of sexuality, the notion that post-pubescent teens were expressing and acting on their sexuality throughout this period became increasingly popularised after the work of the influential medical historian Charles Rosenberg.⁷ Nearly fifty years ago, Rosenberg's landmark study of 'Sexuality, Class and Role' in the nineteenth century famously argued that the two generations after 1830 experienced 'increasingly organized efforts to force chastity upon the unwilling,' ensuring that 'youth and adolescent sexual activity [became] explicitly and emphatically discountenanced.'⁸ Rosenberg's second conclusion of import, however, was that although there seemed to be a palpable decline in expressions of youth sexuality after 1830, it was eagerly and assertively expressed *before* this period. Although sexual excess at such a young age was 'routinely indicted' at this time, Rosenberg found that these injunctions had a 'calm, even bland tone,' and concluded that 'these writers accepted sexual activity after puberty as both normal and necessary' (p. 135).

More recently, the integrative research methodology that comprises what has now been called the 'Rosenberg approach', which utilises both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to draw historical/political conclusions from medico-scientific data, has been

⁵ See volume one of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, which defines the repressive hypothesis as the treatment of sex as a private, unspeakable, marital affair, attributable to the rise of the bourgeoisie since the eighteenth century. Foucault goes on to challenge this hypothesis and ultimately questions the extent to which modern day discourses on sexuality can claim to transcend this older legacy of repression.

⁶ The landmark studies on this topic are Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), and Foucault's *History of Sexuality* itself. An accessible introduction to the topic can be found in Julie Peakman's *Amatory Pleasures: Explorations in Eighteenth-Century Sexual Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

⁷ It is important to note that although the general focus of the following chapter and the evidence I set out in it focuses on the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, these behaviours did persist and extend beyond this period - particularly so in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Estelle Freedman for instance states that 'By the late nineteenth century, increasingly autonomous young adults engaged in premarital sex and used contraceptive devices, indicating a new willingness to separate sexuality from reproduction.' Examples of particularly interesting or convincing literary studies on adolescent sexuality in the fin de siècle include Ann Kordas, *Female Adolescent Sexuality in the United States, 1850-1965* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2019); Beth Rogers, *Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Joseph Bristow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); John Neubauer, *The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); John & Virginia Demos, 'Adolescence in Historical Perspective,' *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 31 (1969), 632-8; Martha Vicinus, 'The Adolescent Boy: Fin De Siècle Femme Fatale?', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 5.1 (1994), 90–114, and Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, 'Premarital Pregnancy in America, 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 5 (Spring 1975), 537-70. See too Estelle B. Freedman, 'Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America: Behaviour, Ideology, and Politics', *Reviews in American History*, 10.4 (Dec., 1982), 196-215 (p. 198).

⁸ Charles E. Rosenberg, 'Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th-Century America', *American Quarterly*, 25.2 (May, 1973), 131-153 (p. 134).

questioned by new research ideologies acknowledging the complexities of retrospectively researching sexual identity and behaviours of the past.⁹ Despite this, Rosenberg's most basic claim concerning the normalisation and tolerance of adolescent sexuality at the turn of the nineteenth century continues to be supported by recent studies that have re-examined the same subject matter. New findings from queer, gender and illegitimacy studies are increasingly hypothesising that 'as the eighteenth century passed into the nineteenth, there was a culture of pre-marital sexuality that was prevalent and quite possibly extensive', and provide a 'salutary reminder that sexual activity outside marriage was not as strictly prohibited in the past as received wisdom would sometimes suggest.'¹⁰ Such studies have also complemented similar findings from existing histories of sexuality within the post-Foucauldian tradition, which have since the 1970s increasingly associated the turn of the nineteenth century with a culture characterised by what Roy Porter calls the 'public visibility and tolerance of sexuality,' and its 'extraordinary openness' to erotic practice.¹¹ Stephen Garton and Lawrence Stone have affirmed that 'there was widespread tolerance of premarital sexual intercourse' around the turn of the century in which extra-marital sexual relations were 'extremely common', and Edward Shorter defines the same period by its 'sexual revolution,' as working-class adolescents freed from the constraints of pre-industrial society flocked to the cities and availed themselves of both fiscal and sexual opportunities.¹² 'For most post-pubescent youths,' agrees Julie Peakman, having sex and 'sowing wild oats' was simply

⁹ See in particular Naomi Rogers' insightful article 'Explaining Everything?: The Power and Perils of Reading Rosenberg', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 63.4 (2008), 423-34.

¹⁰ *Illegitimacy in Britain*, pp. 6, 11 and 13. The revived interest in illegitimacy studies has recently formed a particularly fruitful sub-field of the history of sexuality. I do not consider high rates of illegitimate births to directly function as evidence of high rates of teenage sexual intercourse for three main reasons: 1) not all (or even most) of teenish extra-marital sexual activity resulted in childbirth; 2) not all illegitimate birth mothers were adolescents, and 3) such a correlation would necessarily discount teenish sexual activity occurring within marriage (an especially important factor given the very young age at which couples typically married). However, despite this, given that it has been proven that the majority of illegitimate births were conceived by adolescents or young adults (as opposed to middle-aged or older adults), and given that rates of teenish sexual intercourse would necessarily have been far higher than rates of teen illegitimate births, the assumption that the unusually high rates of illegitimate births within this period also signals a high rate of teenish sexual activity remains a logical deduction. See John Black, 'Who were the Putative Fathers of Illegitimate Children in London, 1740-1810?' *Illegitimacy in Britain*, pp. 50-66 (pp. 63-4); Steven King, 'The Bastardy Prone Sub-society Again: Bastards and Their Fathers and Mothers in Lancashire, Wiltshire and Somerset, 1800-1840', *Illegitimacy in Britain*, pp. 66-85; Barry Reay, *Microhistories: Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 197; Andrew Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society: Northeast Scotland, 1750-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), esp. pp. 6, 100-104 and 192n.26, and A.D. Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England: Attitudes and Prejudices from the 1720s to the 1820s* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1994), esp. pp. 4-5, 59, 70-74.

¹¹ Roy Porter, 'Mixed Feelings: The Enlightenment and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain,' *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Bouce (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 1-27 (p. 11).

¹² Stephen Garton, *Histories of Sexuality: Antiquity to Sexual Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 89, Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 374, and Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London: Collins, 1968), pp. 255-68.

‘part of the process of coming of age, an activity encouraged by their peers and condoned by society.’¹³ Tim Hitchcock too has affirmed that this was especially true ‘among the artisanal classes,’ whose writings attest that ‘most young people in the 1780s and 1790s were having penetrative sex; that lack of sexual probity in this regard was felt to be no barrier to marriage; and that both women and men considered their sexual lives essentially outside of a moral framework.’¹⁴ Similarly, Suzanne Desan describes the period as ‘a world in which open wooing and scenes of seduction were taken as a given, permeating daily life in routine ways.’¹⁵ And Lisa Forman Cody in her recent study *Birthing the Nation*, which represents a significant advance in critical understandings of gender history and the sexed body before 1830, has similarly demonstrated that ‘by the second half of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth,’ there was in the old and young alike a prurient obsession on a national scale in both ‘sexual pleasure and obstetrics’, a fixation of such strength that these once private subjects were ‘transform[ed...] into topics fit for public discussion and display.’¹⁶ In short, it is clear that depictions of 1780s-1830s Britain as advanced by the modern critical tradition are increasingly suggesting that sexual activity in both marital and extra-marital contexts was not only tolerated by society but also often normalised by it.

My purpose in Part Three of this thesis is to utilise close readings informed by such studies to emphasise the tolerance and normalisation of specifically teen expressions of sexuality at the turn of

¹³ Rosenberg also adds that parents would even ‘proudly send their sons off to bawdy houses to establish their masculinity.’ Rosenberg, ‘Sexuality, Class and Role,’ p. 134. See too Julie Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies: A Sexual History of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Atlantic Books), p. 46.

¹⁴ Numerous studies have now affirmed that in many rural or low-income settings, ‘it may have been socially necessary in some places for women to prove their fertility before marriage,’ and that in certain regions, such as rural and north England and Scotland, it was even the custom that marriage would only typically happen after a young woman had proven her ability to give birth. P.E. Hair, ‘Bridal Pregnancy in Rural England in Earlier Centuries,’ *Population Studies*, 20.2 (1966), 233-43 and ‘Bridal Pregnancy in Rural England Further Examined,’ *Population Studies*, 24.1 (1970), 533-44. See too *Illegitimacy in Britain*, esp. pp. 13-14, 141-167 and 192n.26; M. W. Flinn et al., *Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 363; G. Seton, *The Causes of Illegitimacy Particularly in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1860); Steven King, ‘The Bastardy Prone Sub-society,’ pp. 82-3; Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, Sex and Society*, p. 119; Tim Hitchcock, ‘Redefining Sex in Eighteenth-Century England,’ *Sexualities in History: A Reader*, eds. Kim Phillips & Barry Reay (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 185-202 (p. 186); ‘“Unlawfully Begotten on Her Body”: Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke’s Chelsea,’ *Chronicles of Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the Poor, 1640-1840*, eds. T. Hitchcock, P. King & P. Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 70-88; Peter Kitson, ‘Family Formation, Male Occupation and the Nature of Parochial Registration in England, c.1538-1837’ (diss., University of Cambridge, 2005), pp. 208-9; R. Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 81 and G.N. Gandy, ‘Illegitimacy in a Handloom-Weaving Community: Fertility Patterns in Culceth, Lancashire, 1781-1860’ (diss., University of Oxford, 1978), p. 248.

¹⁵ Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 188.

¹⁶ Phillips & Reay have recently made a similar point, opining that 1800 according to this principle is the boundary year before which ‘there was sex but no sexuality.’ See Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science, and the Conception of Eighteenth-Century Britons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 10, and Kim M. Phillips & Barry Reay, *Sex Before Sexuality: A Premodern History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 7.

the nineteenth century. In doing so, my final two chapters attempt to encounter the Regency teen in the same way that its writers and readers did – as dynamic, sexually-experimental beings who were often quick to take advantage of the temporary indulgences allowed to their youth, and who resisted the expectation of chastity imposed upon them by conservative and/or religious ‘polite’ society. In compiling a series of comparisons between texts of different generic forms, and from writers from various religious/political backgrounds, I identify unifying patterns in both adult writers and characters within late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century culture that evidence a manifest degree of permissive tolerance towards expressions of teen sexuality, despite the diversity of their literary genres. For this reason, while Chapter Five analyses romance novels derived from the courtship tradition and written by a female, Anglican Christian (Jane Austen), Chapter Four by contrast focuses on political and biographical narratives written by vocally atheist males (Thomas Love Peacock and Francis Place). Despite their ideological and generic differences however, these three writers jointly depict a society which offered a series of tolerant allowances and exemptions to its teens and was frequently able to overlook their sexual transgressions. Furthermore, I argue that these texts do more than just share an impartial interest in such societal reactions, or include incidental observations that affirm Rosenberg’s identification of its presence. Far from remaining neutral on these important topics, Austen, Peacock and Place all actively contribute their own ideas and arguments to these debates, energetically encouraging their constructed readers into positions of tolerance and forgiveness for the teenish indiscretions they encounter. It is for this reason that this thesis adds tolerant societal attitudes towards teen sexuality to those similar attitudes regarding youth education, independence and (mis)conduct already discussed. It is because of the range, breadth and consistency of precisely these kinds of toleration that my thesis assumes a wider treatment of the teen subject as a unique social and political class of the period.

Biographies and Narratives: Francis Place and Accounts of Sexuality

Along with Byron, Blake, Shelley, Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Robert Owen, Jeremy Bentham and Richard Carlile, Francis Place (1771-1854) is one of a number of writers now associated with what Richard Sha has recently described as ‘Romanticism’s sexual liberation.’¹⁷ These thinkers incorporated

¹⁷ Richard Sha, *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 17. There are a number of excellent studies of the relationship between Romanticism and sexuality, including David Sigler, *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism: Gender and Psychoanalysis, 1753-1835* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015); William Ulmer, *Shelleyan Eros: The Rhetoric of Romantic Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Mary Sokol, ‘Jeremy Bentham on Love and Marriage: A Utilitarian Proposal for Short-Term Marriage’, *The Journal of Legal History*, 30 (March 2009), 1-21; James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 135, and Jean Hagstrum, *The Romantic Body: Love and Sexuality in Keats, Wordsworth and Blake* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985).

into their writings various arguments which attacked marriage, defended contraception, and advocated the free practice of extra-marital sexual intercourse (then commonly termed sexual ‘non-conformity’ but soon to be known as ‘free love’ in the 1840s). The ideas of these writers (and especially Place’s) became particularly influential when also circulated amongst more mainstream literary channels through the medium of cheap and easy-to-read tracts, pamphlets, chapbooks and ballads, in which ‘pre-marital sex was represented as commonplace and female sexual desire as given.’¹⁸ As himself the illegitimate child of a father who he described as addicted to ‘Drinking [and] Whoring,’ Place experienced poverty throughout much of the first thirty years of his life before emerging as a successful businessman, eventually taking early retirement in his forties to concentrate on reform projects.¹⁹ Throughout much of the twentieth century, it has been for these socio-political projects for which Place is remembered, with the result that he is now, along with other social reformists such as James Mill, David Ricardo and the followers of Richard Carlile (the ‘Zetetics’) and Jeremy Bentham (‘the Benthamites’) collectively associated with what has since been termed the emergent values of ‘modern’ liberal culture.²⁰ Place’s most successful lobbying targeted the Combination and Corn Laws, but he was also known for his strident advocacy of contraception, advanced most formally in his controversial work *Illustrations and Proofs of the Principles of Population* (1822).²¹ However, it is Place’s autobiography, also begun in 1822, that is singled out in this chapter, it being a rich source of information on labouring life in Regency London, and providing a unique inside-view of the sexual codes practised among the artisanal and working classes. The sections of Place’s autobiography which deal with his youth are full of accounts of labouring- and middle-class teens engaging in various erotic

¹⁸ For example, one 1817 pamphleteer affirmed that ‘seduction is allowed to be practised in this country’ with ‘perfect impunity’; another stated that ‘I do not hesitate to aver, that the seduction of unmarried females is more practised, and more openly practised, in Great Britain, than in any other civilised state in the world.’ Place’s most successful pamphlets were those discussing contraception and recreational sex, including ‘To the Married of Both Sexes’, ‘To the Married of Both Sexes in Genteel Life’, and ‘To the Married of Both Sexes of the Working People.’ See S. T., *Address to the Guardian Society* (1817), p. 17, qtd Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England*, pp. 70, 74, and Norman Himes, ‘The Birth Control Handbills of 1823’, *The Lancet*, 210 (6 August 1927). See too Tanya Evans, ‘“Blooming Virgins All Beware”: Love, Courtship and Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century British Popular Literature,’ *Illegitimacy in Britain*, p. 21.

¹⁹ Francis Place, *The Autobiography of Francis Place*, ed. Margaret Thrale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 20.

²⁰ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, p. 135.

²¹ The *Illustrations* of Place, who is thought by some modern scholars to be the ‘founder’ of the birth control movement, constitute an intervention in the long-standing debate on the nature of human civilisation between utopian socialist William Godwin and the classical economist Thomas Malthus. The *Illustrations* strenuously condemn Malthus’s dismissal of birth control as a solution to over-population, and reject the suggestion that England’s poor must be persuaded into abstinence until they were financially independent enough to support a family, opining such a solution to be unpractical and unrealistic. In remedy, Place’s *Illustrations* unequivocally advocated the use of contraceptive measures as the most effective ‘means of preventing the numbers of mankind from increasing faster than food is provided.’ Although the *Illustrations* were originally slow-selling, Place’s ideas grew in popularity after he published the three more accessible 1823 handbills on similar topics. See Norman Himes, *Medical History of Contraception* (New York: 1963), p. 10.

behaviours, and depict a society in which both the normality and omnipresence of teen sexual intercourse was not only tolerated by the adults around them but also often taken completely for granted. This provides a stark contrast to the attitudes of the stricter and more prudish moral atmosphere that would come just a few decades later, a change which is itself manifest in the autobiography's publication history. Originally self-edited and sanitised by Place himself in the 1830s, the manuscript was re-edited and further censored by his son Francis Place Jr. in the 1870s. At this point, all material considered too indelicate for a Victorian, Evangelical audience was discarded and has since remained lost. However, even despite these removals, the manuscript was still deemed unsuitable for print and remained unpublished for a further century. It was not until 1972 that it would finally achieve publication in the form of a Cambridge edition for the first time in history.

Since its publication, most scholars have received Place's autobiography as a politico-historical text; an expository account of the circumstances leading to the politics of his later radicalism.²² In this chapter however I approach the work closer to the way in which I believe Place intended it to be viewed - as a narrative. Since the rise of post-structuralist and deconstructionist theory, the autobiography as a generic form has attracted significant critical debate. Discussions concerning the significance of authorial intentionality and subjectivity in historicized accounts of identity formation have typically resulted in a 'dissolution of preconceived notions about the relationship between the [autobiographical] work and the circumstances of which it speaks.'²³ Consequently, many scholars have offered commentary on the 'autobiography as narrative' and discuss the autobiographical form in the context of storytelling: 'All autobiography is storytelling, all writing is autobiography,' writes J.M. Coetzee.²⁴ As these theorists might affirm, Place's autobiography, with its constantly fluctuating narratorial tone, seems too conversational and full of incidental digressions – for example, nostalgic anecdotes about the antics of minor characters, or fond memories of favourite games, hobbies, walks

²² For instance, this is the main conclusion of Place's biographer Dudley Miles, who views the autobiography primarily as a historical data 'source for radical history in the early nineteenth century.' *Francis Place: The Life of a Remarkable Radical* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), p. 4.

²³ *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, eds. Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis & Jill Kowalik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 2.

²⁴ J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Atwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 391. The concept of 'Autobiography as Narrative' was first popularized in what is now seen to be one of the defining works of Alfred Kazin, originally delivered as a Hopwood Lecture at the University of Michigan, 1964. Notable subsequent examinations have included H. Porter Abbott, 'Autobiography, Autography, Fiction: Groundwork for a Taxonomy of Textual Categories,' *New Literary History*, 19.3 (Spring, 1988), 597-615; Liz Stanley, *The Auto/biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Donald Murray, 'All Writing is Autobiography,' *College Composition and Communication*, 42.1 (Feb., 1991), 66-74; Margaret Gullette, 'From Life Storytelling to Age Autobiography,' *Journal of Aging Studies*, 17 (2003), 101-111, and David Hopkins, 'Storytelling, Fairytales and Autobiography: Observations on Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Soldiers' and Sailors' Memoirs,' *Social History*, 29.2 (2004), 188-198.

and other activities - to fully merit treatment as a solely political manifesto, or a work of historical significance merely.²⁵ Unlike Place's political compositions (such as the *Illustrations*), it seems clear that the role of the narrator of the autobiography resembles less a reformist historian recounting facts or arguments than a storyteller narrating a series of tales. By pairing Place's autobiography with Peacock's novel *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), itself a pseudo-biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley, my intention in this chapter is to draw attention to these works' shared depiction of the maturational process. On a fundamental level, each of these two works is a narrative of development, a *Bildung* account of maturation. However, unlike the wry and detached amusement of Peacock's extradiegetic narrator in *Nightmare Abbey*, Place's narration in the autobiography is particularly striking as he himself is situated as the protagonist subject of his own development plot. In that true *Bildung* style already seen in Godwinian novels such as *Caleb Williams* and later to be mastered by Charles Dickens, it is the retrospective voice of Place's adult self which narrates the autobiography, rendering its chronological account of sexual and other anecdotal incidences the structure of a typical developmental plot. By maintaining a dichotomy between the adult voice of the present and the teen self of the past, the autobiography's narratorial emphasis is thus perpetually drawn to the wider maturation process which enabled the developmental transition from the one to the other. Like *Émile* and the pedagogical novels of Part One, my analysis thus concludes that Place's autobiography and Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* are narratives of their protagonists' educations with agendas that are in themselves fundamentally educative.

It is clear that sexuality and youth are inextricably linked in Place's autobiography. According to Place's account of his own youth, the world for the 1790s teen was full of sex and sexual experimentation. The chapters describing his adolescence, schooling and apprenticeship are full of anecdotes and examples of him and his peers engaging in all kinds of sexual behaviour; in fact, nearly every young person mentioned in the memoirs is involved in sexual encounters of some kind. The large majority of these erotic behaviours are fully penetrative; most are pre- or extra-marital, and all – significantly - are fully consensual, entered into with seeming equal willingness by both sexes.²⁶ Some of them, bearing the influence of the increasingly prudish societal atmosphere of Place's 1830 edits, are implied by euphemism only; others retain the explicitness of their original description in the matter-of-fact tone so typical of the work as a whole. The instances of these are far too numerous to enter into in full detail; however, to list but a few, one of his young female acquaintances, at only

²⁵ According to James Treadwell, this was in fact a markedly common tendency within Romantic-era writers of autobiography. See *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁶ I use the terms 'both sexes' here because all sexual encounters described in the Autobiography are of a heteronormative nature.

seventeen years of age, was already the founding director of her own sex business, and managed 'genteel lodgings where she was visited by gentlemen'; her sister, even younger than seventeen but just as 'fine' and 'handsome,' did equally well for herself, being 'kept' by a rich merchant captain of the East India Company, 'in whose absence [abroad] she used to amuse herself as such women generally do' (p. 71). Another young woman, named only 'Miss Louise', '[lodged with a] family as a visitor and with her the husband usually slept... [the] husband gave himself no concern about her, and as long as she was dressed in fine cloaths and treated as a child she was content.' (Place notes that 'the poor ideot [sic] wife never suspected' and sardonically comments that her own daughters were also 'as chaste as Miss Louise, [as were] the generality of her [other] female friends', pp. 90-1). Most of the wages of Place's fellow young apprentices were spent on the equally young Fleet Street prostitutes; the apprentices are described as constantly 'spending their money with them in debauchery, and occasionally receiving money *from* them' for specific sexual favours (p. 75). Even these girls were by no means the only sexual companions of teen apprentices however:

Beside the connections with the Fleet Street women each of my companions had a sweetheart who was the daughter of some tradesman, some of these girls were handsome, well dressed and in their general conduct respectable. With these girls I and my companions were as familiar as we could be, each with his own sweetheart. (p. 75)

Being as 'familiar' with someone as it was possible to be is one of Place's polite euphemisms for fully penetrative sexual intercourse, a mitigation that the adult narrator feels necessary to use when addressing audiences in the later context of the less permissive later nineteenth-century society. One quickly finds the autobiography to be full of these euphemisms. For instance, one girl with 'several lovers' only gives up her sexual freedom when it is euphemistically stated that she becomes pregnant ('at length... circumstances made it prudent she marr[y]),' and when Place describes his own interactions with a different set of prostitute girls, this time those along the notorious St Catherine's Lane, his initial statement ('I went frequently among these girls') later has to be clarified in order to explain its ambiguous suggestiveness, with Place admitting that this actually meant that he 'spent many evenings' with them in their chambers (p. 77). Similarly euphemistic terms such as 'intrigues' and 'intimacies' are used in the same way:

My continuing to be shut out at nights was of short duration, [as] an intrigue with my masters [sic] sister gave me a home at all hours of the night... She was several years older than I was, had as I knew had an intrigue or two before I was acquainted with her, and was as intimate as she could be with [another man] Mr. Piercey. (pp. 95-6).

The proliferation of 'Chair' clubs and 'Cock-and-Hen' clubs provided a convenient solution for those teens who did not have a room or private space of their own in which to enjoy these 'intrigues' and

‘intimacies’. These venues encouraged visits from young customers in particular by hosting erotic games and entertainments targeted specifically at the juvenile demographic:

There were many of these [clubs]... I think there were not less than fifteen such between Black Friars Bridge and Scotland Yard. There was a famous Cock-and-Hen Club at a public house in the Savoy... This club was held in a large long room the table laid nearly the whole length of it. *Upon* one end of the table was a chair filled by a youth, *upon* the other end another chair filled by a Girl. The amusements were drinking – smoaking – swearing – and singing flash songs. The chairs were taken at 8pm, and the boys and girls paired off[f] by degrees ‘till by 12 o clock none remained. (p. 77)

Place also recounts that chastity was by no means considered requisite for marriage and was not therefore considered a barrier to such entertainments. He notes that many of the girls and ‘sweethearts’ that he and his fellow apprentices had ‘intrigues’ with continued on into happy and successful relationships with other men, and were

now living long since married to [other] young men who were [also] as well *acquainted* with them before marriage as afterwards, and I never knew any one of them who made a bad wife. I have for many years past particularly noticed four of these women, all still living [and] all having families as truly respectable... These cases must be very numerous. (p. 76)

In short, not only are the autobiography’s accounts of teen sexuality ‘numerous,’ but equally numerous are its confirmations that such behaviour was perceived as normal and not considered any sort of impediment to one’s future prospects of marriage. Between these and many other anecdotes of a similar nature, Place’s adult narrator depicts teen life as being definitively sexual.

One particularly notable theme in these descriptions is Place’s repeated insistence that this behaviour was shared by youths of both genders and of varying social positions. While numerous scholars have confirmed the existence of a sexualised masculine culture in the lifestyles of the unsupervised, wage-earning young apprentices of the eighteenth century,²⁷ it is significant that Place attributes the same culture by extension to all young persons within the working and middle classes. Although some of the girls he describes as frequently indulging in erotic behaviours are sex workers or ‘kept’ women, the majority are simply normal teen girls – the daughters of merchants or tradesmen who were otherwise ‘well-dressed’ and ‘respectable’. The language of the autobiography constantly

²⁷ There were about 30,000 apprentices in London around the year 1800; they have been confirmed by several scholars to have ‘made up a youthful subculture which displayed many of the psychological characteristics ascribed to modern adolescents.’ Steven Smith, ‘Almost Revolutionaries: The London Apprentices During the Civil Wars’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 42.4 (Autumn, 1979), 313-28 (p. 313). See too Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 84-132, and Anne Wohlke, ‘Regulation and Resistance: Wayward Apprentices and other “evil disposed persons” at London’s Fairs’, *The ‘Perpetual Fair’: Gender, Disorder and Urban Amusement in Eighteenth-Century London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

confirms this universality; not some but 'all' of his male peers visited prostitutes, and 'each' of them also had a regular 'sweetheart' in addition (pp. 75-6). It was apparently the universality of this libidinality that most offended Francis Place Junior, who defended his deletion of much the original manuscript with the justification that its contents contained too much sexual license ('The Consequence [of the activities described within the deletions] was bad for [all] parties giving rise to much licentiousness.')²⁸ Regardless, even without the many pages and incidences that were expurgated in this way, it is clear from reading even the censored version of Place's autobiography that his own experience and assumption was that an active sexuality was the norm for a teen at this time, and that erotic experimentation was a shared and universal aspect of the adolescent's developmental process.

Adults, Youths, and Sex as a Sub-Economy

Despite the usefulness of identifying the demonstrably active sexuality of teens in Place's account of the period, what I wish to emphasise in this chapter is not the affirmed universality of youthful sexual practices but rather the ways in which such behaviours were reacted and responded to by adult moralists and thinkers. Common sense would suggest to the modern scholar that teen sex would still have occurred in this period to some degree, regardless of whether or not there were accounts such as Place's to affirm such an assumption. Thus, the value of Place's account to the present study lies more in its depiction and documentation of the attitudes shown *towards* teen sexuality by the adults who witnessed it, and whether these attitudes reflect or refute the notion of an ideological tolerance advanced in the rest of the thesis.

According to Place's account, it is clear that adult reactions to instances of specifically *sexual* transgressions were as tolerant and permissive as that seen in Parts One or Two concerning adolescents' *behavioural* transgressions. More specifically, the autobiography's suggestion seems to be that the capitalist drive of the mercantile classes perceived the universality of the youthful erotic appetite to constitute not a moral threat but rather an economic opportunity. Numerous historians have confirmed the notion of a commercialisation of sex throughout the Enlightenment era.²⁹ The period's ideological affirmation of the mercantile prerogative, together with patterns such as

²⁸ Place, *Autobiography*, p. 56n.1. For more on the deletions of Place Jr, see Thrale, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

²⁹ The landmark work on this subject has historically been Peter Wagner's *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1988), but more recent studies to reach similar conclusions include Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) and Roy Porter, 'Forbidden Pleasures: Enlightenment Literature of Sexual Advice', *Solitary Pleasures: The Historical, Literary, and Artistic Discourses of Autoerotism*, eds. P. Bennett and V. Rosario (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 75-98. See too Peakman, *Amatory Pleasures* and Karen Harvey, 'The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), 899-916.

increased rates of literacy and more effective understandings of contraception, ensured that the commodification of erotic materials such as sex manuals, pornographic books and prints (not to mention advertisements for sex aids and sex therapists) would all transform the British marketplace.³⁰ In particular, the implications of the increased acknowledgement of the adolescent as an economic entity was not ignored by the merchant classes, who courted the youths' new spending power by exploiting their assumed voyeurism and supplying them with as many illicit products as their young customers could afford.³¹ Furthermore, increasing numbers of adults sold not only materials for or about sex to youths but also traded youths themselves, either to individuals willing to pay or to the proliferating number of sex establishments, such as those in the infamous vicinities of the Strand and the Fleet.³² Of course, to some conservative and/or religious thinkers of both the labouring and middle classes, such practices remained the epitome of vice, but Place's account seems to imply that to many or even most tradespeople, the fact that young people might desire such materials or attempt to replicate their content was rather an opportunity than an anxiety. For instance, on Palm Sundays, Place describes how all the taverns for miles around London would purposely sell cheap, strong mixes of 'rum and milk' to youths, along with the permission for slots of time with their daughters for pre-arranged prices, thus making great profit from the resultant licentiousness:

Taken early and fasting, vast numbers of what are now called, as indeed they were then, respectable lads and lasses, got fuddled... The sons and daughters of multitudes of tradesmen and others were then under comparatively little restraint, and the boys used to knock at the doors of the parents to get the girls to go with them, as had been previously agreed, and out they went. (p. 77)

If Place's account is to be believed, the adults were just as complicit in the illicit unions of their sons and daughters as were the teens themselves, both in their role in intoxicating the prurient youths and

³⁰ One area in which this is particularly evident is the rise of pornography in this period, as 'England went from being an occasional producer of bawdy humour to a society awash with erotica... not only producing large quantities of cheap erotica but... becom[ing] an exporter' (Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, p. 44). For an account of eighteenth-century sex therapists, see E. Jameson, *The Natural History of Quackery* (London, 1961), ch. VI. See too Peakman, *Amatory Pleasures*; Karen Harvey, 'The Century of Sex', and Anna Clark, 'In the Victorian Twilight: Sex Out-of-Wedlock, Sexual Commerce and Same-Sex Desire, 1750-1870', *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 123-141.

³¹ Elsewhere, Place affirms that vendors directly targeted youths for such sales: 'Obscene Prints were sold at all the principal Print Shops and at most others. At Roach's – in Russel Court where Play books and school books and stationary were sold, Mrs Roach used to open a portfolio to any boy and to any maid servant, who came to buy a penny or other book or a sheet of paper, the Portfolio contained a multitude of obscene prints – some coloured, some not, and asked them if they wanted some pretty pictures, and she encouraged them to look at them. And this was done by many others. This was common to other shops.' Quoted in Thrale, p. 51.

³² For instance, Place describes one acquaintance called Duke who 'sold his niece whom he had brought up, to a rich man who came from the East Indies and lodged in his house, [and] contrived to live upon them some time,' and another called Bury who 'when his circumstances declined sold his protage's [sic] daughter as Duke had..., before she was fifteen years of age. She had a child before she was sixteen and at seventeen was married to a [different] young man [who had] gained some money' (pp. 87-8).

then handing them over to their concupiscent partners. In doing so, they benefitted not just from the sale of alcohol and their daughters but also gained further pecuniary benefits through the strategic prevention of marriage and the payment of dowries: 'Fathers, and even mothers... take little or no notice [of], and sometimes rather encourage, the intrigues of their own sons as a means of preventing early marriages.'³³ Indeed, in the less public forum of his private correspondence, Place is even more explicit in his accusations of adult exploitation of such activities: 'Girls and Boys have less regard to decency than cattle; th[eir guardians and] overseers... are debased below any other description of persons, and permit, if they do not promote, such atrocities as none without the most positive and credible evidence can believe is possible.'³⁴ It is certain that the success and wealth of those who ran institutions like Chair and Cock-and-Hen clubs prompted other enterprising parents and adults to hire out their own spare rooms so that youths could, for very small sums of money, take guests into a series of 'room[s] to which none but such as ourselves were admitted' (*Autobiography*, p. 75). One London City missionary described the kinds of activities that adolescents would perform in such settings:

There are dances at some of these lodging houses especially on Sunday evenings... one penny is charged for each dance to each person. These dances are often scenes of great evil. Boys entice the girls to dance with them and afterwards to sleep with them. One missionary knocked in the middle of the day... a voice directed him to enter, when he saw two young men and two young women dancing together, all in an entire state of nudity, a fiddler playing in another part of the room, while they danced.³⁵

From musicians to entertainers, booksellers to landlords, and taverns to clubs, an entire mercantile class found profit in the erotic encounters of the new teen class. To these tradespeople, the youthful appetite for eroticism was less a moral anxiety than a business opportunity. Teens having sex fuelled their own sub-economy; it was not only to be tolerated but also to be encouraged, by rum, fiddles, or any other means.

Then vs Now: Place's Adult Critique of Societal Intolerance

Despite Place's status as an economic reformist, it was not the fiscal implications of the adult tolerance of teen sexuality that form the main point of emphasis in the autobiography. Instead, his main retrospective preoccupation with the adult tolerance of teen sexuality was its finite temporality. Place almost fixatedly repeats the theme that although an actively sexual teenhood was commonplace and completely accepted in the time of his own youth, the same was not the case at the time of the

³³ Place to Harriet Martineau, quod in *Illustrations* ed. Himes, p. 327.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

³⁵ *The London City Mission Magazine*, 10, (August 1845), p. 176.

autobiography's writing forty to fifty years later. In demonstration of this principle, the narration oscillates between diegetic immersion in the brazen sensuality of the youth world of the 1780s and 90s and the contrasting staidness of the society of Place's adulthood in the 1820s and 30s. As an older man documenting his experiences of youth with the eyes of a reformist, Place in this way insistently draws attention to the changes that had occurred in society which meant that the kinds of Lockean independence that he experienced during his own youth were no longer available to the new teens in the generations after him. His descriptions of his past, sexualised self are constantly interrupted and mediated by observations and reflections of the writing self in the present, naming and emphasising the time difference between the two periods which meant these conditions no longer existed: 'Want of chastity in the daughters of such persons as I am speaking of is [now] as rare as it was common [then]' he states, and 'My boyhood was like that of most boys in my rank of like, very different indeed from what it is *now* among boys of the same class' (p. 11). References to lewd plays or songs popular in his youth have to be explained to readers in extensive footnotes or reproduced in full, and it is assumed that the 1830s generation from the time of his edits will no longer interact with the sorts of material of his youthful past:

Want of chastity in girls was common. The songs which were ordinarily sung by their relatives and by young men and women and the lewd plays and interludes they occasionally saw were all calculated to produce mischief in this direction. The whole of this materially changed, the songs have all disappeared and are [now] altogether unknown to young girls. (p. 57)

Examples of the plays and songs popular among adolescents are listed or quoted in the appendices and include graphic descriptions of fully penetrative sex:

First he niggled her, then he tiggled her
Then with his two balls he began to batter her
At every thrust, I thought she'd have burst
With the terrible size of his Morgan Rattler.³⁶

Place also affirms that the explicit, graphic nature of this material was replicated in the everyday 'conversation' of young people, as well as in their consumption of lewd books, prints (such as Gillray's and Cruikshank's) and sex manuals, such as late reprints of *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1684-1710):

When I was about thirteen years of age... I was [by] that time pretty well acquainted with what relates to the union of the sexes. Conversation on these matters was much less reserved than it is now, books relating to the subject were much more within the reach of boys and girls than they are now, and I had little to learn on any part of the subject... I had read a book at that

³⁶ See also 'A Hole to put poor Robin in'. Quoted in Thrale, pp. 58-9.

time openly sold, on every stall, called Aristotle's Master Piece, it was a thick 18 mo, with a number of badly drawn cuts in it explanatory of the mystery of generation.³⁷

In all these passages, the adult Place maintains the same diegetic dichotomy between the ideological attitudes of the past and the present. The repetition of temporal terms ('at that time', 'less...than it is now,' 'more... than they are now,') is used to solicit from readers a regretful awareness of the new and increasingly brutal treatment which sexually-initiated youths would come to receive in the crueller world of the nineteenth century:

A tradesmans [sic] daughter who should *now* misconduct herself in the way mentioned would [currently] be abandoned by her companions, and probably by her parents... [C]onsequently, her ruin would be complete – but it was not so *formerly*... [B]eing unchaste did not necessarily imply that the girl was an abandoned person as she would be *now* and it was not therefore then as now an insurmountable obstacle to her being comfortably settled in the world.

(p. 82, emphasis mine)

Of particular note here is Place's emphasis of the relative indifference to girls 'being unchaste' before the soon-to-come Victorian fixation with virginal purity; his use of both meanings of the term 'abandon' affirms that it was possible for youths to engage in sexually-abandoned behaviours without themselves being abandoned and ostracised. 'Want of chastity in girls... was common,' he repeats for the third time, 'but it was not by any means considered so disreputable,'³⁸ and again for the fourth time: 'Want of Chastity in the girls was common, and was scarcely a matter of reproach if in other respects they, as was generally the case, were decent in their general conduct' (p. 71). This four-strong insistent repetition of the 'want of chastity was common' refrain thus becomes something of a mantra for Place; it is even reproduced in his private letters ('Young men in every rank and station pride themselves in the[ir] want of chastity' he declares in a letter to Harriet Martineau).³⁹ For Place, an active sexuality was clearly the single most defining characteristic of both male and female adolescence. Moreover, three examples out of four of these refrains in the autobiography also maintain specific repetition of the same then-versus-now dichotomy, transforming neutral statements of comparison into sentences quite obviously constituting a reproach. Because it was 'now' no longer an accepted state of affairs as it was then, the refrains argue, the cost of this moral shift was the 'abandonment' and 'consequent... ruin[ation]' of the young boys and girls victimised and ostracised

³⁷ Place, *Autobiography*, p. 45. '18 mo's,' or octodecimos, were miniature folios of 4"x 6.5", seldom printed after 1845. According to Hitchcock, 'the anonymous *Masterpiece* went through at least forty-three editions by 1800, and became, if anything, even more popular during the nineteenth century' (Hitchcock, *Redefining Sex*, p. 194). For a more detailed account of its publication history, see Roy Porter, 'The Literature of Sexual Advice before 1800', *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes Towards Sexuality*, ed. Roy Porter & Mikulas Teich (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 134-57 (p. 136).

³⁸ Place, *Autobiography*, p. 81; the first two times I have already quoted on p. 126.

³⁹ Place to Harriet Martineau, qtd in *Illustrations* ed. Himes p. 325.

by the punitive extremism of the adult Place's present. An illegitimate child himself, Place was particularly sensitive to the increasing stigmatisation and ostracization of parents and children of such ruin.⁴⁰ His protest was that the society he inhabited as an adult had become a crueller, less forgiving environment towards young unmarried couples and their resultant children than the tolerant one that he and his own illegitimacy had benefitted from as a youth. In this way, Place's insistent dichotomy between the then and the now serves a double rather than single function. Partly, its use continues to signal the temporal, chronological change between the generations of his youth and his adulthood, but it is also used to highlight a different separation of an ideological nature. This second disparity transcends mere differences in time, linking together those adults with tolerant/forgiving views on sexually-active adolescents who were common in the past but increasingly rare in the writing present, and distinguishing them from that larger group of adults in the present whose punitive position supported the enforcement of the 'abandonment' and 'consequent ruin' of the sexualised teen.

In these ways, the youth sections of Place's autobiography often belie a cautious sense of condonation - perhaps even a celebration - of youthful erotic culture. His own sexual 'intrigues' and partners are described not with regret or disgust, but with an amused tone of fond remembrance.⁴¹ Although some of the dichotomised comparisons of the past and present borrow language that seems nominally negative ('Scarcely can any lads the son of such persons now be found who... follow any of the despicable pursuits so common when I was an apprentice', p. 73), it becomes increasingly apparent that these adaptations represent not Place's own views on such behaviour, but rather constitute an attempt to speak a language compatible with a conservative audience of the later generation, who would be unlikely to share his views. This becomes especially apparent when Place tepidly quotes the supposed justifications behind the change in manners which meant that an unchaste girl would become 'ruined' and 'abandoned' instead of tolerated, sardonically noting that the much crueller nation of the present prided itself on being 'a much better people now than we were then, better instructed... less gross and brutal, and [with] fewer of the concomitant vices of a less civilised state' (p. 82). Modern-day readers with access to Place's more authentic and less-censored private correspondence would be unconvinced by these words; his letters explicitly condemn the self-righteous punishment of (as well as attempts to restrict) a lack of chastity in the most extreme terms: '[I hold] all recommendations made with that view to be absurd. There may be

⁴⁰ This sensitivity is most obviously manifest in the defensive ambiguity with which Place describes his parent's relationship in both the autobiography and its Preface. See Miles, pp. 5-8, 13, and Place, esp. pp. 1-2, 11-15, 17-40, 85.

⁴¹ For instance, see pp. 95-6, or admissions such as his most regular sexual partner becoming his 'sweetheart, and I was very fond of her,' pp. 75-6.

more hypocrisy, more treachery... but there can be no good as a consequence.⁴² It is through instances precisely such as the mantra-like repetition of the 'want of chastity' refrains then that Place's more authentic thoughts on the practice of teen sexuality become truly visible in the autobiography; as he states in his preface, his real purpose in writing it was to emphasise to his readers the 'change in manners' which led to not just a more advanced and 'polite' society but also a crueller and less forgiving one:

Should these memoirs be published, many will object to parts of them... Some will think that I ought to have concealed the frailties and vices of my father. Some that I ought to have suppressed many particulars relating to myself and especially those of my youth... To these I reply with anticipation, that if there be really any use in these memoirs, if the knowledge they may perchance convey of the change of manners and the increase of intellect be worth knowing, they can alone be made so by telling the truth however agreeable or disagreeable.

In this passage, Place's anticipation of a readerly condemnation of the sexual 'vices' of himself and his father is directly linked to a generational 'change of manners' and 'increase of intellect' in society. This is Place at his most placatory; his tactful reference to a supposed 'increase in intellect' in society, like his sardonic mention of its 'better people... better instructed,' is diplomatically used to stand in for an increase of judgmentalism, pedantry and lack of forgiveness (and followed by a telling refusal to state whether the 'truth' behind the change is 'agreeable or disagreeable'). However, his tone elsewhere in the preface resembles the more authentically assertive tone from his letters, not only refusing to offer an apology for the 'improp[riety]' of his sexual conduct as a youth but also actively 'applauding' it:

Whether my story in *all* its particulars be one which ought to be plainly told, or whether some parts be improper to be laid before the public I leave to my successors to determine... however... [b]e they either good or wicked, still the writer however erroneously must have a good opinion of himself, must applaud his own conduct... This is not said by way of apology for any thing this memoir may contain. It is simply a statement of the circumstances in which they who write about themselves are placed. (pp. 7-8)

Linking defiant passages like this from the autobiography with the passages defending contraception and recreational sex in the *Illustrations*, Margaret Thrale has characterised the convergence between the two texts by Place's ability, as an 'egoistic atheist radical', to 'think about sex independently and originally' (p. xxv). As a social reformer, Place looked for positive change and improvement to the overall human condition – the cessation of the anti-Semitic persecution in London, for example, signified to Place 'a considerable improvement in right habits of thinking' (p. xxv). To Thrale, in both

⁴² Perhaps one of the boldest stances Place takes against these attitudes in his letters is his belief that celibacy in young women was actually unsafe, unhealthy, and actively endangered the perpetuation of the human race: 'If all women were to live unmarried and chaste until 28 or 30 years of age, there would soon be a lamentable deterioration of the human race.' See Place to Harriet Martineau, quoted in *Illustrations* ed. Himes, pp. 327-8.

the *Illustrations* and the autobiography, the increasingly extreme intolerance of teen sexuality in later nineteenth-century society was quite obviously an area in which Place saw these same 'right habits of thinking' in abject decline. Analysing Place's insistence that the teens of the late eighteenth century never expected to remain virgins until marriage and yet still made good, 'respectable' husbands and wives, Thrale concludes that 'Place's chain of reasoning' was that

sexual intercourse is normal and appropriate; celibacy is unhealthy. Therefore people should be encouraged to marry young. Poverty and the fear of a large family often prevent early marriages. What should be repressed are poverty and fertility, not sexual instincts. (p. xxv)

Here, as in both the *Illustrations* and the autobiography, it is not merely a justification of general 'sexual instinct' that is put forward, but the enactment of sexual instinct specifically in the 'young'. Place describes sexual curiosity and experimentation at this time to be considered a natural and normal part of the maturation process. Moreover, although Place's act of giving a voice to his tolerant attitudes may have put him in what was soon to become a minority, he would have certainly not have been the only adult who remembered the more permissive times of their own teenhood, or who shared in his secret tolerance of the older, more progressive order. When the older adult Place showed the part of his manuscript describing the sexually indulgent ways of a 1790s teenhood to a contemporary of a similar age, the reaction he got was far from condemnatory: "'God bless my soul! – why yes! – that's true! – Ah! - Ah! I had forgotten that!'" After this 'vehement and amus[ed]' reaction, Place was assured that despite being from a different part of the country, '[by] course the same manners prevailed and the same line of conduct was pursued,' and the gentleman 'related [to Place] a number of similar cases and circumstances' (p. 75). These two men could not have been the only adults in later nineteenth-century society to have missed the liberality allowed to youth in their own generation. If a tolerance of teen sexuality was accepted in the generations before the 1820s and 1830s, it was at the very least remembered, though no longer freely reproduced, in the generations after.

Adults and Teens: Thomas Love Peacock and Teen Sexual Identity

Though Thomas Love Peacock was born fourteen years after Francis Place, the London that Peacock experienced in the 1790s and 1800s contained much of the same sexual opportunism as that which Place had encountered in the 1780s and 1790s. Although Peacock's later work might sometimes seem to reflect and cater to the values of a more conservative society, his earliest fiction thus typically reflects an atmosphere of sexual permissiveness and articulates attitudes similar to that of Place and his 'vehemently amused' peer. The plot of Peacock's first novel *Headlong Hall* (1816) for instance features no less than five sexual unions in both marital and extra-marital contexts; similarly, *Maid Marian* (1822) abounds with sham marriages, illicit encounters and more than Peacock's usual share

of innuendo (including, but not limited to, euphemistic references to long wooden staffs, the obviously questionable maiden status of 'maid' Marian, and various manners of penetration by the 'barbs' from either 'martial... or erotic arrow[s].')⁴³ Of all Peacock's novels however, *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) is the one that focuses most exclusively on young teen characters, and which also features, by an extension which its author seems to treat as inevitable, the most sex. Arguably the best known of his work, *Nightmare Abbey* was written in homage to Peacock's close friend Percy Bysshe Shelley after the latter's departure for Italy in March 1818.⁴⁴ In it, the figure of Shelley is resurrected in teen form as the novel's main hero Scythrop, and the *femmes fatales* he pursues are typically understood to be representations of Shelley's two wives, Harriet Westbrook and Mary Godwin (later Mary Shelley).⁴⁵ As in many of Peacock's other novels, a significant proportion of the narrative consists of the humorous and highly satiric portrayal of supposedly serious debates between caricatures of other real writers and intellectuals, such as Coleridge and Byron. Unlike Peacock's other novels however, readerly attention is directed most often towards the frolics of the teen inhabitants of the abbey, whose antics and pulsing sexual energy provide ample comedic distraction from the adults' exaggeratedly solipsistic debates on metaphysics.

The plot trajectory of *Nightmare Abbey* is designed to satirise the then-persistent public appetite for gothic romance. In its opening, teens Celinda and Scythrop are intended for marriage by their parents, despite having never met. Celinda, asserting the right to choose her own husband, runs away from home, only unknowingly to meet and fall in love with none other than Scythrop himself, she being ignorant of both his identity and his own prior declaration of love to the attractive Marionetta. Unwilling to give up either of his two love interests, Scythrop secretes Celinda in a series of hidden chambers connected to his bedroom and continues his relationship with both of the girls while their unsuspecting parents debate philosophy in the parlour. Several mock gothic incidents occur, including a series of ghostly appearances, before Celinda is eventually discovered and her identity revealed. Outraged at the revelation of a rival, both Celinda and Marionetta renounce Scythrop and marry other characters out of spite. Despite Peacock's rather merciless treatment of

⁴³ Thomas Love Peacock, *Maid Marian* [1822], ed. Richard Garnett (London: J.M Dent & Co., 1891), p. 72. The widespread eroticism in *Maid Marian* is by no means limited to these examples. One of the six 'Principles of Society' of Robin Hood's followers is supposedly Chastity, but Robin's followers seem to have rules of their own. Songs are sung of how 'very ill' chastity vows are kept, and though such vows are often successfully kept in Robin's immediate presence, in reality the men 'roam where [they] list' and are 'as free as the wind' with women, their 'good vow[s] in the forest [left] behind.' See for example pp. 111-14, 133, 152-55.

⁴⁴ See Lisa Vargo's 'Introduction' in Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007 [1818]), p. 21, as well as Joukovsky's in Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey*, ed. Nicholas A. Joukovsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. lxiii-lxvii.

⁴⁵ Mulvihall and Vargo treat this as 'commonly accepted' fact, although most recently, Joukovsky has in fact questioned this. See James Mulvihall, *Thomas Love Peacock* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), p. 61; Vargo, p. 14, and Joukovsky, pp. cxiii-cxviii.

their caricatures throughout the narrative, both Shelley and Byron were delighted with the novel, and assured its author of their approval.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Coleridge, who undoubtedly came off worst of the three, reacted to his characterisation as lightly as his contemporaries.

Historically, most critical discussion of *Nightmare Abbey* has typically centred on the novel's caricatures and has tended to avoid discussion of the latent sexuality of the novel's cast of teens.⁴⁷ This is surprising, considering how persistent the presence of sex is throughout the novel. As I shall argue, Peacock wants his readers to understand that these teen characters are having sex: the characters, both teen and adult, incessantly make statements containing veiled references belying their own awareness, interest and participation in erotic activity. According to numerous recent critics, a certain amount of coy suggestiveness is perhaps to be expected from a Gothic novel of this period.⁴⁸ However, *Nightmare Abbey* goes much further than simply making coy or veiled references. As I shall demonstrate, it features several scenes in which it is explicitly suggested that the teen characters have some form of sexual intercourse. Unlike Place, however, Peacock makes use of the more creative medium of the novelistic form to present these scenes, granting him the artistic licence to construct plots that can be manipulated to either reward or condemn the sexual activities of its teen characters, forming either comic or tragic endings. Despite this, far from being punished for their concupiscence, it is the opportunistic teens who exhibit the most lustful spontaneity that are rewarded with the most gratifying endings. Furthermore, I argue that through the employment of a familiar and conspiratorial narrator who courts the implied reader through a series of direct addresses and manipulations, the

⁴⁶ Shelley's letters feature various amused references to his identification with Scythrop, calling the character 'admirably conceived & executed' in mischievous self-compliment. He also boasted to several of his acquaintances how similar his own lodgings were to that of his caricature. Byron too enjoyed his characterisation enough to send Peacock (via Shelley) a single symbolic rose as a token of assurance of his good humour, a petal of which Peacock preserved in a gold locket with both their initials on (still available to see in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle in the New York Public Library). See Mulvihall, p. 59, Felix Felton, *Thomas Love Peacock* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), pp. 154-55, and Joukovsky, pp. xcii-xciv.

⁴⁷ Scholars typically find that the primary significance of *Nightmare Abbey* lies in its critique of either Romanticism or in its specific responses to Shelley, Coleridge, and Byron (caricatured as Scythrop, Flosky, and Cypress respectively). As a consequence, the only scholars I have encountered who comment on the overt sexuality in the novel are Marilyn Butler and Nicolas Joukovsky, although neither actually include the theme as part of their analyses. See Marilyn Butler, *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in his Context* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), and Joukovsky's extensive prefatory material in Johnston's 2016 Cambridge edition of the novel.

⁴⁸ See John Grantham Turner, 'The Erotics of the Novel,' *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, eds. P. R. Backscheider & C. Ingrassia (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 214-34. Numerous recent studies continue to confirm the latent sexuality of early nineteenth-century Gothic literature (and most especially the novel), in both Britain and the rest of the Western world. For Britain in particular, see Cody, *Birthing the Nation*; and Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*; for similar trends in other countries, see studies such as Freedman, 'Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America' and Andrew Counter, *The Amorous Restoration: Love, Sex, and Politics in Early Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

implied reader of *Nightmare Abbey* becomes a careful textual construction who reproduces the narrator's and adult characters' tolerant reaction to the sexual antics of the teens. Consequently, in contrast to Place's anticipation of a moral critique from a later audience, the resultant collusion between Peacock's narrator and the implied reader creates a hermeneutic space which promotes readerly support in favour of the concupiscent teens and presents a world in which an acceptance of teen sexuality is taken entirely for granted. As I shall demonstrate, through the subtle coercion of a series of manipulative narrative techniques, the carefully constructed implied reader of *Nightmare Abbey* is cozened into a position of tolerance that therefore resembles not just the narrator and adult characters of the novel but also those same tolerant adult attitudes ascribed to the society of the youthful Francis Place.

Like Place, Peacock characterises the very essence of teenhood in *Nightmare Abbey* in the specific expressions of his characters' budding sexualities. For instance, the female characters Marionetta and Celinda ('Stella') are both adolescent girls who quite evidently epitomise a libidinous sensuality. Although their exact ages are not stated, their physical features, especially those linked to sexuality – their bodies, mouths, eyes - are described at length. Marionetta's 'form' is 'very blooming'; her eyes 'sparkling', 'her features regular; her lips full, and of equal size; and her person surpassingly graceful.'⁴⁹ Stella's description is also overtly suggestive, her 'female form and countenance [being] of dazzling grace and beauty, with long flowing hair of raven blackness, and large black eyes of almost oppressive brilliancy, which strikingly contrasted with a complexion of snowy whiteness' (p. 63). The fact that their bodies, 'female forms' and lips are described as 'full' imply a sense of impending functionality, a readiness for use. Their personalities too are similarly described specifically by way of association to flirtatious energy and sexual potential. Marionetta is vivacious and 'sprightly', completely uninterested in 'moral sympathies', and full of 'some coquetry, and more caprice'; Stella is 'energetic,' 'impassioned,' 'lively,' and ruled by the 'vivid pictures [of] her imagination' (p. 66) – all terms full of libidinous energy. These sexualised descriptions of the female teen are also mirrored in Peacock's other early novels: in *Maid Marian*, Matilda's proficiency with phallic weaponry is evidently symbolic of her sexual capability, and in *Headlong Hall*, Cephalis, the only teen girl and thus seemingly representative of the whole female teen class in the novel, is 'lovely', frequently described with the epithet 'the beautiful', and particularly noteworthy for her faux innocence and coy ability to 'blush... like a carnation' upon convenient demand (*HH*, p. 12). The sexual potential of Peacock's teen girl characters is thus crucial to their overall identity. When in *Nightmare Abbey* Scythrop cannot choose between Marionetta and Stella, the narrator explicitly states that his indecision is a consequence of

⁴⁹ *Nightmare Abbey*, p. 18. All future quotations are from Johnston & Joukovsky's Cambridge edition unless otherwise stated.

the difficulty of forming a physical, libidinous preference for just one – it is not Celinda herself but her ‘form’, and not Marionetta herself but her ‘image’, that render him unable to choose between them.⁵⁰ The girls, fully aware of the power of their own sexuality, do not ‘debar’ themselves ‘the pleasure of tormenting’ the poor impassioned Scythrop, ‘inflaming’ him with lust and ‘ke[eping him] in a perpetual fever’ (p. 27). The teen girl as portrayed by Peacock is thus a lively, vivacious and inherently sexual human subject.

Scythrop too, the young hero of the *Nightmare Abbey*, is also defined primarily by his sexuality, although it quickly becomes clear that the distracted teen is portrayed much more as a victim at the mercy of his desires than his more capable female counterparts. Because he is a male and heir, the narrator prioritises an exposition of Scythrop’s education and background over description of his appearance; despite this, his own physical desirability and sexual appeal remain just as evident throughout the novel. For instance, in the scene of his first meeting with Stella, after gazing at Scythrop lustfully for several minutes, she declares that she finds his ‘physiognomy’ pleasing enough to desire further acquaintance with him - a satirical euphemism from the narrator that ostensibly references the attractiveness of his features. Marionetta too is struck by Scythrop immediately upon her arrival at the abbey, and although the narrator is unable to determine whether she has a genuine ‘penchant’ for her cousin, or ‘was merely curious to see what effect the tender passion would have on so outré a person’, ‘she had not been three days in the Abbey before she threw out all the lures of her beauty and accomplishments to make a prize of his heart’ (p. 18). Given that even before her arrival Scythrop has already been left panting from his near-consummation of his union with the equally attractive and ‘beautiful’ Emily Girouette, Scythrop’s own sexuality has clearly already been confirmed as awakened and active by this point. In addition, even the minor character Listless, a lackadaisical teen who finds stirring from the sofa too much of an exertion, is entranced by the seductive Marionetta and ends the novel in sexual union with her. In the narrative description of all four of *Nightmare Abbey*’s teen characters then, Peacock portrays an active sexuality as the defining characteristic of the early nineteenth-century teen.

Erotic Potential and the Reader as Textual Construction

Although critical commentary on Peacock has historically focused on his political satire, the sexualisation of his young characters has not gone entirely unnoticed. Joukovsky draws attention to the intense eroticism, for example, in the scene in which Scythrop suggests to Marionetta that they

⁵⁰ ‘[Scythrop found he] had a greater capacity of love than the *image* of Marionetta had filled. The *form* of Stella took possession of every vacant corner of the cavity, and by degrees displaced that of Marionetta from many of the outworks of the citadel; though the latter still held possession of the keep.’ *Nightmare Abbey*, p. 67, emphasis mine.

do ‘as Rosalia does with Carlos’, an indirect reference to Carl Grosse’s gothic novel *Der Genius* (1795). Grosse’s tale of a sensuous Spanish romance was translated into English the following year as the exceedingly popular *Horrid Mysteries* (1796), one of only seven novels named as ‘horrid’ enough to truly delight Catherine Morland, Isabella Thorpe and the ‘sweet’ innocent Miss Andrews in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1817). Like his fellow fictional teens in Austen’s novel, Scythrop is depicted as a representative of the small army of real teen readers across the country who delighted in the wildly popular *Horrid Mysteries* almost as much as critics and moralists deplored it.⁵¹ The narrator suggests that it is the lurid voyeurism of the novel’s many sex and rape scenes that stimulates Scythrop’s enjoyment of such literature by emphasising the fact that he sleeps with the novel under his pillow; Thomas Laqueur notes that references to books hidden in beds in this way were often associated at the time with an indulgence in masturbatory response, or an allusion to those ‘dangerous’ types of book that Rousseau stated could ‘be read only with one hand.’⁵² The particular scene of *Horrid Mysteries* that Scythrop attempts to replicate with Marionetta involves a passionate rendezvous which culminates in the two characters drinking each other’s blood, and in which Rosalia, as Joukovsky points out, ‘satisf[ies] Carlos’ desires fully and repeatedly, in what was probably the most voluptuous love scene in any novel of the period.⁵³ Peacock, Joukovsky comments, in contrast to Shelley’s rather more explicit response to this scene in *Alastor: or, the Spirit of Solitude* (1816), instead emphasises in *Nightmare Abbey* the erotic significance of the characters’ participation in such ‘vivid sexual fantas[ies].’⁵⁴ Although Joukovsky is right to identify the sexual significance of Scythrop’s suggestion, his choice to emphasise the eroticism of this scene in particular strikes me as an odd selection, considering it is one of the few, rare occasions in *Nightmare Abbey* in which Marionetta

⁵¹ The popularity of *Horrid Mysteries* occurred after two separate English translations of Grosse’s German original novel appeared within the same year (one of them from the hugely successful Minerva Press), and was all the more striking for its transience. Despite the existence of a plethora of contemporary reviews and reactions to the novel, Allen Grove has speculated that the novel would ‘likely be almost entirely lost to [modern] contemporary readers’ if it wasn’t for references to it in Austen’s and Peacock’s more canonical texts. See Grove’s 2016 Introduction to Carl Grosse, *Horrid Mysteries*, ed. Allen Grove (Richmond, VA.: Valancourt Books, 2016).

⁵² Literally ‘les livres dangereux... qu’on ne peut les lire que d’une main.’ See Rousseau, ‘Les Confessions’, I, p. 66; *The Confessions*, I, p. 44; Kathleen Lubey, *Excitable Imaginations: Eroticism and Reading in Britain, 1660-1760* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012), pp. 11, 22-3 and Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone, 2004).

⁵³ Joukovsky, p. cv. His words borrow from Michael Sadleir, the collector of Gothic Fiction whose literary feats, among others, included proving the existence and obtaining original copies of all seven ‘horrid novels’ mentioned by Jane Austen, many of which had been thought not to exist. Of these seven, Sadleir stated that ‘*Horrid Mysteries* went as near as any to the limit allowed to an English translator. The love scenes are luscious and detailed beyond even the aspiration of “Monk” Lewis himself, and I am aware of no Gothistic novel issued in English during the period which can rival it for frank carnality.’ See ‘“All Horrid”: Jane Austen and the Gothic Romance’, *Things Past* (London: Constable, 1944), 167-200 (p. 193).

⁵⁴ Joukovsky suggests that it is this exchange that inspires the consummation scene of the poet and the veiled maid in *Alastor*. See P. B. Shelley, *Alastor: or, the Spirit of Solitude, and other Poems* (London, 1816), pp. 11-14 and Joukovsky, p. cv.

actually rejects Scythrop's sexual advances instead of encouraging them. Indeed, like most critics, Joukovsky shies away from offering comment on numerous other scenes in the novel which I will shortly demonstrate to suggest in the most explicit terms that the teens *do* engage in erotic activity, if not full sexual intercourse. Far from enacting Joukovsky's theory of erotic potential or sexual 'fantasy' merely, teens to Peacock were actors, agents and participants in a post-pubescent arena that represented very real erotic exchange.

The vehicle for Peacock's depictions of these erotic exchanges is none other than the reader themselves. The textual representation of the implied reader figure is a rhetorical device used in many of Peacock's novels to generate comic or ribald humour. This is achieved by conspiratorial narrators who frequently interrupt the narrative to address the scripted reader directly, thereby transmitting extra information which invests otherwise neutral statements with comedic or euphemistic meaning. At the beginning of *Maid Marian* for instance, Robert Earl of Locksley (Robin Hood) is described by brother Michael (Friar Tuck) as 'worth any fourteen earls on this side Trent, and any seven on the other.' To bring the scripted reader into the joke, the narrator quickly adds, '(The reader will please to remember that Rubygill Abbey was *north* of Trent)'. The explanation provided to the reader thus highlights the fact that brother Michael is being self-deprecating for comic effect, whilst incidentally also presumably flattering an implied audience in the capital.⁵⁵ *Nightmare Abbey*, like Peacock's other novels, frequently enlists the reader for the same functions, opening for example by inviting the scripted reader to call the abbey's ruined, owl-infested tower the 'Aviary'; its base, full of weeds and ivy, 'the garden terrace,' and so on.⁵⁶ By operating as the vehicle for the narrator's jokes, Peacock's 'reader' is typically a careful textual formation, drafted into collusion with a larger, narratorial comedic agenda.

As Garrett Stewart observes, the practice of 'conscripting' the reader in this manner bespeaks a common pattern of 'relentless micromanagement of [readerly] response' in nineteenth-century narratives. Stewart draws on a long history of reader-response theory to suggest that the manner in which a textually constructed reader is used can signal the presence of a wider authorial agenda, typically through the modelling of an ideal type of reader response.⁵⁷ In Peacock's fiction, this is seen particularly clearly in the instances where the scripted reader is courted not merely for general comic

⁵⁵ See too the narrator's mocking description of brother Michael's alcoholism: '[If the scripted] reader... desires to know more' about the theology behind the Friar's worship of Saint 'Bottle' [a bowdlerization of Saint 'Botolph'], they are accordingly referred by the narrator to the works of 'the said doctor Alcofribas Nasier' – an anagram for Francois Rabelais. See Thomas Love Peacock, *Maid Marian*, ed. Richard Garnett (London: J.M. Dent, 1891), pp. 25, 157.

⁵⁶ *Nightmare Abbey*, p. 9.

⁵⁷ Garrett Stewart, *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 21.

use, but specifically for their role as an accomplice to the narrators' voyeurism and tolerant sexual ethics. In such instances, the comedy typically arises when the narrator presents a series of apparently innocent but innuendo-prone statements while also insisting that the addressed reader will not interpret them sexually, which therefore deliberately draws further attention to the scene's potential for erotic interpretation. Perhaps Peacock's most explicit narratorial discussion of the apparent 'innocence' of the implied voyeuristic reader in this way is the Reverend Folliott's conversation with Mr. Crotchet in *Crotchet Castle* (1831) in their debate on the appropriateness of readers encountering erotic art or literature. Prompted by Mr. Crotchet's collection of naked sculptures in various illicit poses, the supposedly pious Reverend hopes that the ideal "'reader'" and consumer of such art would represent those bastions of critical taste who 'read Plato' and could be relied on to generate 'poetical and philosophical ideas' in response to suggestive art. Referencing two particularly striking female statues, Folliott says that 'to "the reader" aforesaid... I would very willingly show these figures; ...but, to the multitude, the gross, carnal multitude, they are but two beautiful women, one half undressed, and the other quite so.' Mr. Crotchet responds with affected innocence: 'Then, sir, let the multitude look upon them, and learn modesty.'⁵⁸ In this exchange, the narrator directly affirms that the reading 'multitude' is indeed quite capable of generating 'carnal' interpretations from erotic art forms – exactly such art forms as the actual reader is encountering at that very moment in their reading. By doing this, it is coyly confirmed that a very different kind of pleasure *can* be derived from reading *Crotchet Castle* from that involving Platonic theory or 'poetic and philosophical ideas.' At the same time however, Mr. Crotchet models the most ideal form of Peacock's implied 'reader' as one who can innocently play along with the narrator's affected guise of pious 'modesty' whilst also deriving sexual or voyeuristic pleasure from such art.

The voyeurism of the constructed reader is employed in this way throughout almost the entirety of *Nightmare Abbey* in reference to teen sexuality. For instance, the narrator's description of the first appearance of the adolescent Celinda is accompanied by imagery and quotations from Coleridge's poem *Christabel* (1816), in which Geraldine suddenly appears to the startled Christabel in dazzling, eroticised beauty. The 'terrifying' eroticism of Coleridge's scene is then compared to Celinda's appearance to Scythrop, and prompts Peacock's faux-innocent narrator to theorize that the only possible reaction of a solitary young man to an 'exceedingly beautiful' girl coyly revealing herself to him in his private chamber must also be that of pious terror - and not any other response of a more lewd nature. The narrator then mischievously elaborates that

⁵⁸ Thomas Love Peacock, *Crotchet Castle* [1831], eds. Freya Johnston & Matthew Bevis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 149-158, esp. p. 155.

If the logical consecutiveness of this conclusion be not manifest to my readers, I am sorry for their dulness, and must refer them, for more ample elucidation, to a treatise which Mr Flosky intends to write, on the Categories of Relation, which comprehend Substance and Accident, Cause and Effect, Action and Re-action. (pp. 63-4)

By enacting an affected chiding of the conscripted reader for imagining Scythrop's reaction to Celinda to be not one of pious innocence but of eroticism, the narrator playfully confirms how easily the scene could be construed in an explicitly sexual manner. The suggestive humour is extended by the narrator's ironic accusation that it could only be a 'dulness' in the reader that could lead to a more erotic interpretation, when in reality only the dullest of readers would miss the euphemistic suggestiveness of the scene and require consequent 'elucidation'. Confirmation of the perceived eroticism of the implied reader's fantasy is given by another instance of the novel's use of what had by this time become a common allusion to sexual intercourse – Voltaire's ironic references to '*leçon[s] de physique expérimentale*' and the sciences of 'Cause and Effect,' first popularised as a sexual euphemism in *Candide* (1759).⁵⁹ There is further narratorial playfulness in the narrator's circular referral back to Coleridge himself (i.e. through the reference to Mr Flosky), the supposed author of the erotic treatise, as well as in the narrator's refusal to detail what actually happened in the conclusion of Celinda's scene. Slyly declining to comment on whether Celinda's reception was met with either lust or terror, the narrator discloses only that 'Scythrop, therefore, either was, *or ought to have been*, frightened,'⁶⁰ a final provocation of the readerly suspicion that Scythrop's reaction to Celinda was indeed inherently lustful. Thus, although nothing sexual is explicitly described to have happened in this scene, the interaction between the narrator and the voyeuristic implied reader generates collusive readings that are therefore both comic and implicitly erotic.

Erotic Metaphor and 'Electric Acts': The Sex Scenes of Nightmare Abbey

In *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century*, Karen Harvey draws a series of illuminating comparisons between explicit and metaphorical representations of sexual intercourse in literary works of the

⁵⁹ 'One day... [Cunegund] espied doctor Pangloss giving a lecture of experimental philosophy on her mother's chambermaid, a little brown wench, very pretty, and very docil. As miss Cunegund had a great disposition for the sciences, she observed with utmost attention the experiments repeated before her eyes; she clearly perceived the force of the doctor's reasons, the causes, and effects; she turned back greatly flurried, quite pensive, and filled with the desire of knowledge; imagining that she might be a *sufficient reason* for young Candid, and he for her.' ('Un jour, Cunégonde, en se promenant auprès du château, dans le petit bois qu'on appelait parc, vit entre des broussailles le docteur Pangloss qui donnait une leçon de physique expérimentale à la femme de chambre de sa mère, petite brune très-jolie et très-docile. Comme Mlle Cunégonde avait beaucoup de disposition pour les sciences, elle observa, sans souffler, les expériences réitérées dont elle fut témoin ; elle vit clairement la raison suffisante du docteur, les effets et les causes, et s'en retourna... toute remplie du désir d'être savante, songeant... du jeune Candidé, qui pouvait aussi être la sienne.') Voltaire, 'Candide, ou l'Optimisme', *Les Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire*, 146 vols., ed. René Pomeau (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1980), XLVIII, p. 120, and *Candid: or, All for the Best*, trans. anon. (London: J. Nourse, 1759), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁰ *Nightmare Abbey*, pp. 64, emphasis mine.

period. Erotic metaphors typically function through the direct transferability of shared semiotic significance, whereby one set of signifying subjects or analogies – for example, that of shipping, with ship masts, or warfare, with battering rams – are utilised in direct representation of the signified (i.e, sex and the phallus respectively). It is because of this semiotic exchange between the signified and a new, metaphorical signifier that using erotic metaphor as an act of codification can succeed. According to Harvey, it was precisely the presence or absence of this metaphoric code (and its consequent mitigation of the explicit) that influenced a work's generic association with either a pornographic or merely amatory form during this period.⁶¹

Peacock's erotic metaphors on the other hand do not utilise this typical function of direct semiotic exchange. Rather, the sex scenes of *Nightmare Abbey* employ an alternative metaphorical effect resembling more of what might be termed interpretative significance rather than semiotic. In *The Metaphorical Process*, Paul Ricoeur sets out his understanding of metaphor as not an objective signifier but as a cognitive process, indebted to the semantic role of imagination and feeling. Ricoeur's self-styled 'psychological' theory of metaphor is significant because it acknowledges the semiotic function of the Kantian notion of 'productive imagination' in the creation of meaning.⁶² In the same way, *Nightmare Abbey* does not use a coded system of signifiers whereby certain words correspond with specific signified phallic/sexual objects that necessitate readerly decoding. Instead, Peacock utilises an alternative system that Ricoeur might interpret as 'imaginative' metaphorical signification, whereby insistent claims of the *absence* of such signifiers necessitates a similar decodifying function. In a novel in which Romantic thinkers and poets are satirized for using too many words and metaphors, Peacock's teen characters function in direct antithesis to such verbose figures of ridicule. Accordingly, a semiotic analogy is drawn between youthful sexual activity/intercourse and the precise *opposite* of using too many words – namely, a state of being without them; of enacting the implications of wordlessness. Peacock's narrator thus sets out the theory that the *lack* of spoken word actually functions as the clearest and most 'applicable' signifier for sex:

There are, indeed, some learned casuists, who maintain that love has no language, and that all the misunderstandings and dissensions of lovers arise from the fatal habit of employing words on a subject to which words are inapplicable; that love... tends through a regular gradation of signs and symbols of affection, to that consummation which is most devoutly to be wished; and that it neither is necessary that there should be, nor probable that there would be, a single word spoken

⁶¹ Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶² See Kant's first *Critique*, in which he argues that while productive imagination links experiences to concepts, such imagination could also itself be 'freed' from concepts. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Riga, 1781) and Paul Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling,' *Critical Inquiry*, 5.1, (Autumn, 1978), 143-159 (pp. 143, 147).

from first to last between two sympathetic spirits, were it not that the arbitrary institutions of society have raised, at every step of this very simple process, so many complicated impediments and barriers in the shape of settlements and ceremonies, parents and guardians, lawyers, Jew-brokers, and parsons...⁶³

Having successfully conjoined the signifier (a state of wordlessness) to the signified (sex, or behaviour that is 'unspeakable'), Peacock subsequently demonstrates their symbiosis through his narration of the erotic relations between the teens of *Nightmare Abbey* themselves. For instance, after Scythrop's initial advances to Marionetta force her and the Hilarys to consider leaving Nightmare Abbey for the sake of propriety, his leave-taking of the resentful Marionetta causes 'electric' charges of eroticism between them:

[her] last few words, and the burst of tears that accompanied them, acted like electricity on the tender-hearted youth; and, in another instant, a complete reconciliation was accomplished without the intervention of words. (p. 60)

It is my belief that Peacock intends his implied readers to deduce that something of an erotic nature occurs between the two teens here. The passage directly precedes the one examining the redundancy of words explored above. The erotic euphemism is thus directly accompanied by an interpretive guide, its exposition immediate: the libidinally-attuned reader is able to deduce that the reason words are *not* used is that the things they are doing are quite literally unspeakable. The metaphorical significance of this wordlessness thus becomes twofold. First, it functions as a narratorial signification that the most authentic romantic communication occurs without actual words; it confirms that (to use the language of the accompanying explanation) a 'consummation' is occurring that constitutes a kind of communication that is other than verbal language. But crucially, there is also a second effect. Because the specific metaphor used is itself an absence of words, the narratorial voice too is freed from the delicate task of putting *into* words the diegetic events that are occurring. By making the claim that the task of diegetic narration is temporarily 'unnecessary' and 'inapplicable' (because no verbal, spoken words are passing between the characters), the narrator is thus able to maintain both innocence and deniability. As it is a diegetic moment in which nothing is technically said, by either the narrator or (more crucially) the two teen characters, nothing illicit can definitively *be said* therefore to have happened. In this way, Peacock includes depiction of an erotic act that would bypass those prudish audiences that Kathleen Lubey describes as 'morally attuned' but simultaneously stimulate those who were 'libidinally rivetted.'⁶⁴

⁶³ Note that it is crucial to Peacock's atheistic agenda that Christianity, with its 'parsons' and 'ceremonies', is alluded to as a specific example of such a barrier. *Nightmare Abbey*, pp. 97-8.

⁶⁴ Lubey, *Excitable Imaginations*, p. 20.

Freya Johnston has recently re-emphasised the significance of Peacock's tendency to embed intertextual quotations into his works, which can range from obscure classical allusions to popular topical references.⁶⁵ Just so, in addition to further recurring references to sex using the same Voltairean terms of the 'science of Cause and Effect', two further hints at the eroticism of this scene can be seen in Peacock's use of other popular topical euphemisms. Passionate 'reconciliation' was another commonly known allusion to sex at the turn of the nineteenth century and was used as a particular favourite in the memoirs of the famous courtesan Harriette Wilson (for instance, 'Our reconciliation was completed, in the usual way, and on the spot.')⁶⁶ The same erotic connotations were attached to electricity. Since the term's early circulation in popular literature from the mid-seventeenth century, electricity was often rudimentarily understood as merely a static 'state produced in substances by rubbing.'⁶⁷ Humorous misapplications of this rubbing, as well as various other associated concepts such as that of 'attraction' and 'magnetism', had inevitably garnered a series of overtly sexual connotations by the end of the eighteenth century.⁶⁸ These evidently euphemistic references to Scythrop and Marionetta's 'complete reconciliation' using 'act[s] like electricity' would have therefore clearly signalled to Peacock's carefully-constructed, voyeuristic reader that something intensely erotic was occurring within this moment of narratorial withdrawal.

Similar signals to the reader also appear in the reaction of Scythrop's father to this scene. While the teens are in the middle of their 'electric' transmissions, Mr Glowry walks in on them and becomes an unintended witness of their erotic interchange. True to the previous exposition of the import of wordlessness, the narrator refuses to comment what the 'it' is that Glowry witnesses them doing; only that 'it' necessitates him to immediately urge them to marry - which, in turn, produces even more 'electric' repercussions:

[Glowry:] 'I see how it is; and, as we are all sure to be miserable do what we may, there is no need of taking pains to make one another more so; therefore, with God's blessing and mine, there'—joining their hands as he spoke.

Scythrop was not exactly prepared for this decisive step; but he could only stammer out, 'Really, sir, you are too good;' and Mr Glowry departed to bring Mr Hilary to ratify the act.

⁶⁵ Freya Johnston, 'General Editor's Preface', *Nightmare Abbey*, pp. xi-xvii.

⁶⁶ *Harriette Wilson's Memoirs* [1825], ed. Lesley Blanch (London: Phoenix Press, 2003), p. 85.

⁶⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed. (June 2018), s.v. 'electricity.' The first quotation in the *OED* dates from 1646.

⁶⁸ See for example William Watson, *Experiments and Observations tending to Illustrate the Nature and Properties of Electricity* (London: Jacob Ilive, 1745), p. 6,11; Paddy Strong-Cock [pseud.], *Teague-Root Display'd: Being Some Useful and Important Discoveries tending to Illustrate the Doctrine of Electricity, in a letter from Paddy Strong-Cock, Fellow of Drury Lane, and Professor of Natural Philosophy in M. King's College, Covent Garden, to W M W N, F. R. S. Author of a late Pamphlet on the Subject* (London: Webb, 1746), p. 17, and Silvanus Phillips Thompson, *Elementary Lessons in Electricity & Magnetism* (London: 1881).

Now, whatever truth there may be in the theory of love and language, of which we have so recently spoken, certain it is, that during Mr Glowry's absence, which lasted half an hour, not a single word was said by either Scythrop or Marionetta.⁶⁹

Peacock's lengthening of the time of this scene, extending the lusty teens' period of wordlessness to a whole thirty minutes, further confirms the implication that it is intercourse – of the wordless kind – that the two youths are engaging in. Just as in the previous 'reconciliation' scene, the deliberate withholding of any supplementary information with which to interpret such a scene constitutes a specific narratorial act – or, more accurately, a negative narratorial act, a narration of negation. The limitation of all but a few narrative details reduces and controls the hermeneutic possibilities available to the constructed reader. Thus, the deliberate provision of only three bare facts – that the two teens are left alone, that they speak no words in this time, and that the things they do *without* words occur for half an hour – anticipates a readerly cognition that is at least able, if not also willing, to fully and imaginatively indulge in the erotic suggestiveness of the scene.

To Kathleen Lubey, the depiction of sex in this way reflected a formal pressure on public works of fiction containing erotic content to be at their 'most literary' – i.e. to more fully utilise metaphorical or creative devices to encode works with hidden meaning and sexual symbolism.⁷⁰ Ideally, such scenes would portray sex in so stylized a manner that it would remain unnoticed or inoffensive to readers of a more prudish disposition, yet simultaneously invite other kinds of readers to indulge in a more imaginatively sensuous (or even masturbatory) response. Consequently,

the unspeakability of sex acts and sex parts within polite culture demanded great invention on the part of authors who undertook to narrate erotic experience, and correspondingly great imagination and sensitivity on the part of readers, who had to decode erotic allusion, feel its sensual effects, and understand its significance within a given text. (p. 5)

According to Lubey, the presence of coded stylisation in such texts meant that the recognition of the depiction of sex in one's reading required active readerly interpretation, as modelled by both Peacock's narrator and constructed reader. Recognising and receiving stimulation from such coded stylisation required real readers, according to Lubey, to constantly 'develop their skills at virtual impropriety, following authors' instructions to employ licentious images as means to greater ends' (p. 25). Building on Lubey's theory of readerly agency, I am thus suggesting that encountering a narrator and implied reader so actively disposed to generate erotic interpretations enabled within Peacock's real readers hermeneutic engagement with the text's erotic potential.

⁶⁹ *Nightmare Abbey*, p. 98.

⁷⁰ Lubey, *Excitable Imaginations*, pp. 5, 14.

In order to make it certain that these readers do not miss the sexualised hermeneutic potential of these narrative moments, further scenes of wordless eroticism are addressed specifically to the voyeuristic, scripted 'reader' throughout the rest of the novel. For instance, in one chapter, Marionetta bodily throws herself onto Scythrop, and 'a very tender scene ensued, which the sympathetic susceptibilities of the soft-hearted reader can more accurately imagine than we can delineate', (NA, p. 24). Readdressing the 'susceptible' conscripted reader, the narrator conspiratorially invites them to 'imagine' what the repercussions of this involved bodily contact might be. Real readers who follow the example of the scripted reader are then vicariously rewarded for their compliance, as the narrator's flattering affirmation of the 'sympathetic' disposition of the scripted reader would also by extension apply to them. In another chapter, Scythrop invites Stella to take possession of a series of secret chambers next to his bedroom. Although he is aware that propriety demanded a more suitable scene of accommodation for his guest, the things they end up doing in these apartments (the exact nature of which acts are again teasingly avoided by the narrator) provide such enjoyment and distraction that 'from day to day he postponed his intention, and by degrees forgot it'. The coy 'young beauty', confident in her power over him, originally teases him by 'reminding him of it from day to day - till she also forgot it' (p. 66). In yet another scene, lost in a sexual fantasy in which he punishes the gasping Marionetta in an erotic day dream, Scythrop rips open his undergown and 'discover[s] himself' to 'the real Marionetta' - who responds with transfixed 'astonishment' (p. 19). Similarly, in *Headlong Hall*, when the youthful Escot saves Cephalis' over-protective father from drowning, the 'beautiful Cephalis', already flirtatious, now 'freed from [her father's] *surveillance*, was enabled, during the course of the evening, to develop to his preserver the *full* extent of her gratitude.' (The reader is assured in the next chapter that their night was 'sleepless').⁷¹ In all these examples, it is the *absence* of words, as well as that of clothes, coverings, sleep and surveillance, that is used as an imaginative metaphor. By the conclusion of the narratives, Peacock expects the implied reader to be so proficient at projecting eroticism into a text that they can, as Lubey might perhaps concede, 'read orgasmically': they acquiesce to the most subtle narratorial prompts and imagine sexual encounters even in the absence of any explicit narration claiming such acts have occurred.⁷²

'Young men will have their way' – Tolerance as an Imperative

Peacock's erotic narrative teasing in this way is playful, but, as with the narration of Francis Place, it also emphasises in a more serious way Peacock's opinion on the importance of acknowledging teen sexuality, and the implied futility of attempting to repress or control it. Not only are the teens of

⁷¹ Thomas Love Peacock, *Headlong Hall* (1818), from *Headlong Hall and Gryll Grange*, ed. Michael Slater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 51. Emphasis mine.

⁷² Lubey, p. 32.

Nightmare Abbey fully sexualised individual subjects, they are also liberally tolerated by the adult characters of the novel and celebrated by the 'susceptible' scripted reader. This is particularly important because *Nightmare Abbey* is not otherwise a novel that is kind to its characters. Its adult characters, especially those caricatures of real individuals such as Coleridge or Byron, are subjected to merciless satire in which they (as representatives of Romantic values as a whole) are depicted as hypocritical, over-affected, over-philosophical, and obsessively melancholic. The four teens, and especially young Listless, do not wholly escape their share of this satire themselves; they too are mocked, albeit much more gently, as changeable, whimsical, melodramatic, and unmanageable. This only makes it more significant, however, that their expression of sexuality remains *uncriticised*. Far from causing disapprobation, the sexual romps of the concupiscent teens pass, as we have seen, quite literally without comment from the narrator. The tolerant permissiveness of *Nightmare Abbey* thus represents Peacock's broader criticism of the repressiveness of conservative and/or religious orthodoxy. According to Marilyn Butler, both Peacock and Shelley saw the social taboos surrounding sex in particular as the ultimate example of an over-reaching, institutionalised Christianity. Sex was a crucial matter to their anti-orthodox agenda because it spoke to the experience and desires of the normal, everyday youth in particular: Butler states that 'the growing insistence, in all the young English writers, on the repressiveness of Christianity, [focused] symptomatically [on the] church's teaching [most] familiarly felt by the young: its ruling that sexuality is guilty.'⁷³ To Butler, a radicalised youth following the 'liberal' ideologies of Peacock and Shelley was merely an oppositional by-product of a societal shift from liberal Enlightenment ideologies to new, more conservative ones of Christian Evangelicalism.⁷⁴

Nor did Peacock and Shelley perceive themselves to be alone in these views. The playful stylistics of Peacock's narratorial voice belies his clear expectation that its tolerance of teen sexuality would be shared by at least some of his readers. Indeed, the tone of conspiratorial voyeurism with which the narrator depicts the erotic romps of the teens assumes a prurience not just on behalf of the implied reader but also the other characters. These characters endorse the sexuality of their fellow other characters by repeating originally narratorial expressions of tolerance in their own words, thus affirming and contributing to a voyeurism that they share with the implied reader. For instance, upon the discovery of Scythrop and Celinda's 'secret intrigues' (the same euphemism, recall, that Place used for penetrative sex), Scythrop is half-chided but also half-congratulated for his achievement of

⁷³ Marilyn Butler, *Peacock Displayed*, pp. 108-9. For more on Shelley and his stance towards sex and sexuality, see Ulmer's comprehensive study *Shelleyan Eros* and the other studies recommended in n. 17.

⁷⁴ 'For liberals... as the religious revival swelled and flourished, and as church institutions all over Europe were closely identified with restored monarchies and the new, traditionalist status quo, another enemy appeared in addition to secular tyranny – established, orthodox religion.' Butler, *Peacock Displayed*, p. 108.

maintaining his sexual duplicity with such secrecy: 'You are a fox, Scythrop; you are an exceedingly cunning fox, with that demure visage of yours' (p. 88). The avowed reasoning behind Mr. Glowry's tolerance also shows a remarkable resemblance to Place in its reference to the chronological gap between generations: 'Young men will have their way: I had my way when I was a young man,' he acknowledges by way of explanation (p. 89). As the drama of the scene escalates, the rest of the characters gradually assemble in the room and Stella is soon identified as the runaway Celinda, the daughter of Mr. Toobad already intended for Scythrop. The results of this revelation make it clear, however, that Scythrop's crime is not his sexual relationship with Celinda, but rather his attempts to maintain such a relationship with both her and Marionetta at the same time. While the characters react in shock to the revelation, the more knowing implied reader is instead invited to respond to the comedy of situation. The comic effect increases with the conclusion of the novel, as Scythrop's appeals to his former bedfellows fall on deaf ears, and Marionetta and Celinda begin new sexual relationships with young Listless and Flosky respectively.

Conclusion

Despite all the comic mishaps in *Nightmare Abbey* then, the expression of teen sexuality remains free and unchecked all the way to the novel's conclusion. Although Scythrop is subjected to comic retribution for his inability to choose between his paramours, both Celinda and Marionetta, having expressed their assertive sexuality throughout the novel, emerge not only uncriticised for their behaviour but are triumphantly rewarded by equally successful marriages. By responding with amused sympathy to the plight of Scythrop, and with humour to the sexual machinations of Celinda and Marionetta, the scripted reader thus becomes complicit in the same type of reaction as Mr. Glowry's response to the expression of teen sexuality – they 'ratify the act'. Reading and being amused by a work like *Nightmare Abbey* is therefore a political readerly act, an act that places the implied reader in direct opposition to those contemporary moralists who thought sex was a serious topic and not to be treated with humour. Colluding with the ending of the novel and its 'ratification' of the lusty Marionetta and Celinda, the scripted reader joins the characters and narrators of *Nightmare Abbey* in therefore finishing the narrative in the same way that Francis Place begun his – they 'applaud the conduct' of the concupiscent teen, denying that there was any major 'impropriety' to the sexual activity described.

It is crucial, of course, that these depictions of sex occur between characters that are specifically teens. By necessity, the fact that the implied reader derives amusement and stimulation in the comedic ribaldry of *Nightmare Abbey* thus means they are condoning sex not only in general terms but also specifically its enactment during the state of teenhood. Peacock's narratorial addresses

invite the implied reader to find the comic antics of the concupiscent Marionetta, Celinda and their hapless victim Scythrop a variety of things: humorous, pitiable, tragic, arousing, even ridiculous; but not, crucially, either sinful or unusual. *Nightmare Abbey* thus bespeaks not only an acknowledgment of inherent teen sexuality, but also a toleration of it. Mr Glowry, who finds the fact that the teens in his house are all engaging in sex to be mere 'sport', thus becomes representative of a wider societal view – the same, I have argued, as that described at this time by Francis Place. This is also reflected in the critical reception of these two works by their contemporary readers. It is telling, for instance, that by the time Place's autobiography was finished in the 1830s, it was then deemed unsuitable for publication in the very capital that forty years previous sold sex manuals like *Aristotle's Masterpiece* 'on every stall' and corner. By contrast, published to great success in the 1810s, contemporary reviews of *Nightmare Abbey* were universally indifferent to the novel's latent sexuality - indeed, the only known contemporary review which treated the work negatively and which accused it of 'impropriety' objected solely to its unflattering caricature of Byron.⁷⁵ Its other reviews however positively revelled in the novel's ribald humour, and even instructed readers how to do the same: 'To derive entertainment from this performance, the reader should himself possess a strong turn for satire, a quick perception for the ridiculous; good sense to smile at folly... and good nature not to be offended,' stated its earliest reviewer.⁷⁶ The novel's contemporary readers and reviewers can thus be said to adopt the same methodology as the novel's narrator, reacting to the portrayal of the sexual behaviour of teens with the same knowing amusement (and faux-innocence) as seen in Mr Crotchet. As my thesis has argued, in real life, as in the fictional diegetic world, teenhood and teen sexuality had for a short window of time become accepted in many corners of society as something normal and to be tolerated without comment. To Peacock, Place, and the society they depicted, sexual experimentation was simply another example of teens being 'teenish.'

⁷⁵ With only one exception, every single (known) example of *Nightmare Abbey's* contemporary published reviews were positive (for an excellent summation of these reviews, see Joukovsky, lxxxi-lxxxviii). The one exception was from an anonymous Byron fan who opined that Peacock's caricature of their hero displayed 'bad and vitiated taste,' and asserted the rather incredible view that the life events of figures like Byron 'should never form an incident in the page of literature.' *European Magazine*, 75 (March 1819), pp. 254-5.

⁷⁶ *The Morning Post*, (14 November 1818), n.p.

Chapter Five:

Atheists and Anglicans: Pride, Prejudice and Prurience

Introduction: Jane Austen, Peacock and Place

If Francis Place's narrative describes the active teen sexuality of the artisanal and labouring classes, novelists such as Austen and Peacock give the same focus to teens of the middling and higher classes, those whose families saw themselves as 'respectable'. Placing these texts next to each other demonstrates that discussions concerning the tendency of teen behaviour toward sexual expression were influenced by wider social concerns that impacted on the labouring and 'polite' classes alike. Needless to say, the inevitable class dynamics that affected attitudes towards teen sexuality were also influenced by a complex series of gendered and religious moral codes. I have turned to Jane Austen to confront these factors because as a female author often associated with a conservative, Christian philosophy of politeness and restraint – all features often placed in direct antithesis to tolerance, permissiveness and eroticism – her narratives provide an ideal comparison point to those of Peacock or Place. At first glance, Austen's young heroines bear little resemblance to those of Peacock. Austen's teen protagonists are flawed but chaste (and, implicitly, Christian); Peacock's are secular, individualistic and sexually experimental. As a result, some scholars have contrasted the two; Marilyn Butler, for instance, sees Peacock's young characters as emblematic of their author's radical atheism, but contrastingly views Austen's young characters as literary models of conservative restraint.¹ In my last chapter I therefore use Austen's supposedly more restrained plotlines/characters to anticipate a challenge to my analysis of Peacock and Place's more liberal and permissive portrayals of the same society. If late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century society was as tolerant of teen sexuality as has so far been suggested, then what is it, one could ask, that accounts for the (supposed) differences between the behaviour of Austen and Peacock's characters, of the same age, the same social class, and written in the same generic form? In a society that overtly encouraged women to sacrifice their own will to the male prerogative, is it possible that Place's and Peacock's (male) ideas about young

¹ Broadly speaking, these are, in summary, the conclusions of Marilyn Butler's *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in his Context* (London: Routledge, 1979) and *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) respectively. Within the critical tradition, the characters of Austen and Peacock have been similarly contrasted since the early commentary of W. H. Helm, who opined that 'Peacock allows his satirical hobby-horse to run wild over the bramble-covered desert of British prejudice, while Jane Austen never leaves go of the rein. The result is that while he frequently makes us laugh at the absurdities of his Scythrops and Chainmails, whose performances we know to be burlesque, she makes us chuckle by her silver-shod satire of the class which she had studied from childhood... Jane Austen's people, in spite of the humour with which the atmosphere is charged, are always possible.' See W.H. Helm, *Jane Austen and her Country-House Comedy* (London: Clay & Sons, 1909), pp. 94-5.

female sexuality merely represented inaccurate portrayals (or even fantasies) of real teen girls at the time? And finally, how are we to react to literary portrayals of the societal acceptance of teen sexuality in a country that remained nominally Christian (and indeed, was gradually beginning to witness the commencement of an Evangelical revival)?

Although these important questions should not be dismissed, it is vital that the apparent discrepancy that is implied between authors like Austen and Peacock is contextualised within the range of generic forms that they employ, and the varied conventions of contemporary gendered and religious codes of expectation that were typically associated with such forms. The liberties allowed to male authors like Place and Peacock, both respected intellectuals whose literary content comprised political and metaphysical discussions, differed vastly to those allowed to Austen, an (initially) anonymous female author of romance novels. Since the mid-twentieth century, numerous scholars have now identified Austen's fiction as equally political as that of her peers.² However, the particularities of her religious and political affiliations can be ambiguous and remain contested, with some scholars (such as Claudia Johnson and Clara Tuite) contending that Austen is liberal, radical or feminist, while others (such as Alistair Duckworth and Mary Poovey) have instead emphasised her traditionalism or conservatism.³ Thus, while Marilyn Butler might use Austen's conservatism to emphasise her difference to Peacock, other readers - such as Virginia Woolf - have by contrast commented on the similarity between the two authors, and the shared radicalism of their societal critique.⁴

² Some of the most notable works on the subject of Austen's fiction's engagement with politics, slavery and/or the Napoleonic wars include Brian Southam, *Jane Austen and the Navy* (London: Hambledon & London, 2000) and Jocelyn Harris, *Satire, Celebrity and Politics in Jane Austen* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2017), as well as the landmark works of Edward Neill, *The Politics of Jane Austen* (London: Macmillan, 1999) and Warren Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).

³ The former group typically argue that the diegetic themes of Austen's fiction – its censure of gendered double standards, its condemnatory portrayal of the aristocracy and the Church, its satiric critiques of British capitalist society, and so on – are often far from conservative. The latter group have responded by claiming that the conclusions of the novels do more to affirm, not challenge, the patriarchal values of Regency polite society. Nancy Armstrong's sardonic summation of this debate distinguishes those who claim that 'Austen was an ardent little Tory who sought to make fiction justify a traditional notion of rank and status' from those who contrastingly view her as a 'proto-feminist rebel who thrashed against the constraints that bound an author of her sex unwillingly to convention.' Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 156. See too Poovey, *The Proper Lady*; Alistair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971); Clara Tuite, *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

⁴ 'Austen and Peacock stooped from their heights to laugh at the absurdity of convention and drove it, at any rate, to take refuge underground... Here is... Jane Austen picking out the roses on her tea-cups to match the wit of her dialogue; while Peacock bends over Heaven and earth one fantastic distorting mirror, in which the tea-cup may be Vesuvius or Vesuvius a tea-cup.' Virginia Woolf, 'Robinson Crusoe', *The Common Reader*, 2 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974), II, p. 53.

Regarding Austen's treatment of sexuality specifically, my own stance seeks to resist the historic categorisation of Austen as either a liberal radical or a conservative traditionalist, for two main reasons. First, it seems clear to me that Austen's fiction is much less interested in discussing the religious or moral implications of sex itself than it is in depicting the various societal responses and reactions *caused* by sex. Metaphorically speaking, I believe Austen's concern seems to lie more, as it were, with the pre-existing prejudices of the judge and jury than with the supposed guilt of the accused. But secondly, I also resist a dichotomy between a liberal, radical Austen and a conservative traditionalist Austen because, as my thesis has already demonstrated, there is considerable evidence for the existence of a third or alternative position that lies between these two stances. As seen in Chapter Three, it was not only possible but also quite common for otherwise conservative Christian writers such as Hannah More, Jane West and the Ongar Taylors to simultaneously assert apparently incongruous stances on certain individual matters like teen (mis)conduct and women's equality. Therefore, with a similar methodology to that used with the Taylors, I propose in this last chapter that Austen exhibits a 'liberal' or 'permissive' tolerance towards 'fallen' or actively sexual teens *because* of, rather than despite, her evident Christianity. I do not concur with those critics who seek to downplay or trivialise the influence of Austen's religion because it seems clear to me that it is only through the promptings of her faith that her fictional accounts become the site of so many intersections between Christianity and sexuality. The primary intention of my analysis of this intersectionality is to emphasise its double nature, its insistence that forgiveness is as important a Christian value as purity.

For these reasons, my readings of Austen's fiction have two clear objectives. First, I argue that Austen's narratives join those of Peacock and Place in portraying a society which both participated in, and was often largely tolerant of, the practice of extra-marital sex. From her earliest novel project (*Lady Susan* [begun c. 1794]) to her last (*Sanditon* [begun c. 1817]), I demonstrate that despite Austen's ideological differences from her atheist contemporaries, all three writers depicted the tolerant societal reactions to matters of both adult and teen sexuality in similar ways. Secondly, and very much relatedly, I demonstrate that Austen's novels not only depict a societal tolerance towards adolescence in a third-hand or detached manner, but also themselves often actively exhibit and encourage a tolerance of their own, energetically affirming what has been called Austen's dynamic 'engagement in political debates about sexual regulation.'⁵ By interrogating different categories of responses to sexuality in Austen's novels and offering close readings of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) in particular, I analyse a series of authorial intrusions which criticise those characters who punished and

⁵ Fiona Brideoake, 'Sexuality,' *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia Johnson & Clara Tuite (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp. 456-66 (p. 464).

ostracised 'fallen' teens and praised those who treat them with Christian forgiveness. Thus, as demonstrated with Francis Place, I argue that Austen's novels constitute a condemnation of the 'ruin[ation]' and consequent misery of such teens, and, as demonstrated with Peacock, argue that 'there is no need of taking pains' to punish them further. Rather than either condemn or condone such behaviour, Austen's novels, I argue, seek a middle ground between the two, one characterised by forgiveness and tolerance. Although Austen at no point directly excuses sexual expression in extra-marital contexts, her novels reserve their strongest disapproval for those adult characters who abandoned, ostracised and condemned to misery those 'fallen' teens who were most in need of the Christian exercise of forgiveness.

The Presence (or Absence) of Sex in Jane Austen

Austen's fiction is full of desiring teens. The narrative climaxes of the novels typically revolve around characters Anne Mellor describes as 'primarily motivated by sexual desire,'⁶ and universally conclude with marriage, the only setting in which the Church would sanctify sexual union. However, the specific theme of how extra-marital expressions of sexuality are tolerated by other characters in Jane Austen's fiction is particularly complex. Narrated reactions and responses to expressions of sexuality vary according to the accused's gender, class status, age, and – to borrow language from Place – the extent to which their conduct was 'otherwise respectable.'⁷ To further compound this complexity, all these factors severally affect and influence not just the character(s) being judged but also the ones passing judgment. Accordingly, the protagonists themselves variously either conform to or depart from the ethical mores of the wider society that they inhabit when confronting sexual dissidence. For instance, while Elizabeth Bennet is unwilling to forgive Wickham for his conduct to her sister Lydia, Jane Bennet and Elinor Dashwood are by contrast each readily able to both forgive and empathise with the seducers of their respective sisters. Meanwhile, Wickham is welcomed into the Bennet family and Willoughby retains his position within society regardless.

A further layer of complexity involves the style and amount of description given to narrated sexual incidence. The cases of Wickham and Willoughby are (arguably) the most memorable examples of actively sexual youths in the Austen oeuvre because they both directly influence the plot trajectory of the heroines, and thus attract significant narratological focus. However, many of the other instances of sexual indiscretions (either real or supposed) in the novels do not directly affect the protagonist or comprise a narrative climax, and so often occur almost without notice. For instance, because the plot

⁶ Anne Mellor, 'Review of "Jill Heydt-Stevenson, Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions—Subversive Language, Embodied History,' *Romantic Circles* (March 2007).

⁷ See Place, *Autobiography*, p. 75, and Chapter Four, p. 121-2.

of *Pride and Prejudice* is unconcerned with the tradesmen's families of Meryton, Wickham's numerous sexual 'intrigues' and 'seductions' of their daughters elicits only a single line of the narrator's attention.⁸ In *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), many characters believe Colonel Brandon to have committed certain sexual indiscretions and to have illegitimate children, yet he is not criticised for it, and so, as with Wickham and the Meryton girls, it is not dwelt upon by either the narrator or the characters who believe it to be true. This is partly because of the permissive allowance that such perceived behaviour occurred when he was a youth, but also simply, as Place would attest, because Brandon is otherwise genteel and respectable. Similarly, Penelope Clay's decision to become a kept mistress in *Persuasion* (1818) elicits only minimal comment from either the Elliots or the narrator. It is this range of depicted societal reactions to matters of sexuality that makes a comparison of Austen to Place and Peacock so effective. Despite their ideological and social differences and their generic/formal diversity, these three writers all depict the same spectrum of societal attitudes towards teen sexuality, and all – as this chapter will finally demonstrate – respond to them in similar ways.

Despite the large range of societal reactions to sexual indiscretions in her fiction, to many readers Jane Austen is nevertheless rarely associated with the erotic. 'How utterly familiar to us all is the assumption that because there was no sex in Austen's life, there is no sex in her books,' one theorist laments; '[or, the] more sophisticated critical version, that Austen was a rationalist who did not like sex.'⁹ Nor is this assumption a recent one. Charlotte Brontë opined as early as 1850 that Austen's conservatism prevented any true transmission of passion: '[she] ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound: the Passions are perfectly unknown to her.'¹⁰ Eve Sedgwick, in her influential 1991 article 'The Masturbating Girl', affirmed that the repressive hypothesis had remained particularly live within the Austen critical tradition, and that the redundancy of the 'interminable' mandate to de-eroticize her work had not yet been sufficiently realised.¹¹ This is important because the school of thinking that Sedgwick references thus constitutes something of a counter-hypothesis to my own, and must be addressed if my argument is to proceed. Austen's novels cannot be said to examine societal reactions to sexuality if the presence of sexuality in her fiction itself remains contested.

Perhaps the most well-known study within this critical movement is Susan Morgan's 1987 article 'Why There's No Sex in Jane Austen'. Morgan's essay became particularly influential because it

⁸ 'His intrigues, all honoured with the title of seduction, had been extended into every tradesman's family.' Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* [1813], ed. Pat Rogers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 325.

⁹ Susan Morgan, 'Why There's No Sex in Jane Austen', *Studies in the Novel*, 19.3 (1987), 346-56 (p. 350).

¹⁰ *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 383.

¹¹ Eve Sedgwick, 'Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl', *Critical Inquiry*, 17.4 (Summer 1991), 818-37 (p. 834).

challenged the common assumption that the more sexualised Austen's fiction is found to be, the more liberal her politics must also have been as a consequence. By contrast, Morgan interprets the supposed lack of sex in Austen's fiction as the clearest indication of her liberal and feminist radicalism:

What did female sexuality mean in British fiction before Austen? It meant male sexual power... Consider then what banishing that defining sexuality might mean... Austen's heroines are not allowed to define themselves sexually because, in contrast to the limited and powerless heroines of the previous century, they are required to define themselves. (pp. 353, 355)

Morgan's identification of a radicalism in Austen's 'banishment' of male, sexualised definitions of feminine identity is compelling. However, her argument has since been challenged for its uneasy negotiation of certain other features of Austen's fiction, which often seem incompatible with Morgan's hypothesis of the absence of eroticism – namely, what she herself finds to be the undeniability of its presence. Morgan's language ranges between the confident and the uncertain, simultaneously defending the thesis that Austen 'banishes' sex from her fiction, while also having to acknowledge that the concept of sex is complex in the novels and that the relationships between the heroes and heroines must be admitted to 'unite a range of emotions including those we call the sexual' (p. 351).

While I believe a softened version of Morgan's hypothesis might retain much of its usefulness,¹² an alternative theory has been more successfully advanced by Alice Chandler's landmark essay "'A Pair of Fine Eyes": Jane Austen's Treatment of Sex', which to this day remains the most authoritative study of sexuality in Austen's fiction since its original publication in 1975.¹³ Chandler's historicist emphasis on the intertextuality of Austen's novels reveals a series of overtly sexual contextual references, such as the riddle Mr. Woodhouse discusses with Emma (which in its full form is about sex, virginity, and venereal disease) or the coded words that Willoughby whispers to Marianne about riding 'Queen Mab', the horse he has given her (a Shakespeare allusion: 'the hag, when maids lie on their backs | that presses them and learns them first to bear...', pp. 90-1). Through a further series of close readings and an analysis of certain metaphors, Chandler concludes that Austen's 'use of allusions, puns, riddles, and sex symbols points to a specific knowledge about the manifestations of

¹² For example, Morgan is correct in pointing out that Austen's novels are less overtly erotic than (certain of) their eighteenth-century predecessors, and several scholars have found it fruitful to speculate whether her notion of self-definition does indeed symbolize a rejection of the male gaze. My own thesis finds Morgan more useful however in her identification of the kind of feminine agency that can enact or withhold its own sexual potential, and the inevitable importance of this agency to Austen's portrayal of the developmental process. This, properly described, is an adolescent developmental theory of the formation of sexual maturity. As Morgan explains, 'Sex is not something distinct that can be broken off from other feelings like a leg from a torso... Austen's heroines usually do lose their innocence, and the point is that they should. For the premise of the novels is that experience is good.' Morgan, pp. 351-2.

¹³ Alice Chandler, "'A Pair of Fine Eyes": Jane Austen's Treatment of Sex,' *Studies in the Novel*, 7.1 (Spring 1975), 88-103.

sexuality', and that critical surprise at the consistency of such erotic allusions should be reserved 'only... at her sophisticated devices for indicating them' (p. 102). The publication of 'A Pair of Fine Eyes' has subsequently changed the critical landscape of Austen scholarship, and has had lasting impact on the way that theorists have since interpreted the actively sexualised systems of romantic feeling in Austen's work. Since 1975, myriad more recent studies have affirmed, updated and added to Chandler's identifications of sexuality in Austen's novels, including, most authoritatively, Jill Heydt-Stevenson's *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Language, Embodied History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).¹⁴ For Heydt-Stevenson, for instance, the eroticism in Austen's fiction is equally present in its 'sexually risqué humour,' and 'unabashed[d] apprais[al of] sexual and physical appeal.'¹⁵ For Nicholas Preus, Julian Wynne, and Jonathon Poletti, the eroticism is easiest situated in riddles, puns and wordplay, or symbolically embedded in everyday items or objects, such as scissor sheaths, pens, or dresses with a slit in.¹⁶ For George Haggerty and Eve Sedgwick, it is found in the portrayal of mental or melancholic states that contemporary readers would have associated with sexual hysteria or auto-eroticism.¹⁷ And for Howard Jacobson, it is most noticeable in narrated moments of physical exchange, such as the undefined part of Anne Elliot's body which, when grasped by Wentworth's hands and grip, causes an immediate 'burning' and an accompanying blush.¹⁸

Although the conclusions of this chapter are very much in concurrence with this affirmation of sexuality in Austen's work, my own focus on societal *reactions* to teen eroticism provides a new explanation of Austen's treatment of sexuality that constitutes something of an intersection between

¹⁴ Jill Heydt-Stevenson's *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Language, Embodied History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See too Deidre Shauna Lynch, 'Jane Austen and the Sex-Positive Novel', *Studies in the Novel*, 51.1 (Spring 2019), 33-5; Brideoake, 'Sexuality'; Stephanie Oppenheim and Nora Nachumi, 'Sex, Love, and Austen: Was It Good for You?' *Persuasions*, 38.1 (Winter 2017), n.p.; Claudia L. Johnson, 'What Became of Jane Austen? *Mansfield Park*,' *Persuasions*, 17 (1995), 59-70; Jan S. Fergus, 'Sex and Social Life in Jane Austen's Novels,' *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, ed. David Monaghan (Totowa, NJ.: Barnes and Noble, 1981), pp. 66-85; Robert M. Polhemus, 'Jane Austen's Comedy,' *The Jane Austen Companion*, ed. J. David Grey, et al. (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 60-71; Mary Ann O'Farrell, *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), and Alison G. Sulloway, *Jane Austen and the Province of Womanhood* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

¹⁵ For instance, Stevenson draws attention to remarks such as Penelope Clay's ('I have *known* a good deal of the [navy]; and besides their liberality, they are so neat and careful in all their ways!') and Mr Darcy's in response to the flirtatious Caroline: "'I am afraid you do not like your pen. Let me mend it for you. I mend pens remarkably well..." "Thank you - but I always mend my own.'" Heydt-Stevenson, *Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 70, and "'Slipping into the Ha-Ha": Bawdy Humor and Body Politics in Jane Austen's Novels,' *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 55.3 (Dec., 2000), 309-339 (pp. 309-310).

¹⁶ See Jonathan Poletti, 'Jane Austen's Sexual Kinks,' *Queer Theory* (Autumn 2020); Nicholas Preus, 'Sexuality in Emma: A Case History,' *Studies in the Novel*, 23.2 (Summer 1991), 196-216 and Julian Wilmot Wynne, *Jane Austen and Sigmund Freud: an Interpretation* (London: Plume, 1998).

¹⁷ See Sedgwick, *Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl* and George Haggerty, "The Sacrifice of Privacy in Sense and Sensibility," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 7.2 (1988), 221-37.

¹⁸ Howard Jacobson, 'If you think there's no sex in Jane Austen, you're wrong about love, sex and Austen,' *The Independent* (20 July 2012).

the historic positions of both Morgan and Chandler. This is because focusing on representations of not the sex act itself but societal reactions to the sex act has the effect of simultaneously affirming Chandler's legacy of defending the presence of sex in Austen's novels, yet also justifying Morgan's account of its supposed absence or indirectness. Moreover, while it seems certain that Austen is (mostly) reluctant to use direct narration to depict the sex act itself, her novels show a clear fascination with its vicarious role as a social stimulant. Sex is a constant source of excitement and conversation for characters of all ages inhabiting Austen's diegetic worlds. It is the favourite topic of 'the spiteful old ladies in Meryton', and the reason that Mary Crawford and Frank Churchill's innuendos of 'rears', 'vices', and suchlike are interpreted as 'puns' by other characters. It even remains a source of speculation in its hypothetical absence: as Nancy Armstrong has pointed out, even actions as mundane as the delivery of a musical instrument in Austen's novels can 'generate scandalous narratives implying that [the recipient] has given in to seduction.'¹⁹

Far from being intentionally malicious, the narrative function of this voyeuristic gossip is now thought to depict the cultivation of social connection. Consciously decoupling gossip from associations of malign intent, recent scholarship on the nineteenth century has sought to restore the positive and affirmatory value of the concept of 'Gossip as a social practice.'²⁰ The universal interest of sex in particular often had the unique power of uniting otherwise disparate parties. It is certain, for instance, that depictions of the social connection and shared voyeuristic delight that Austen's characters take in conjectures of sexual or amatory matters far outweigh descriptions of them offering moral condemnation of it. It is for this reason that although the inhabitants of Meryton continue in their 'good-natured wishes for [Lydia's] well-doing', the narrator acknowledges that despite this, it

would have been more for the advantage of conversation had *Miss Lydia Bennet* [i.e. not Mrs Lydia Wickham] come upon the town; or, as the happiest alternative, been secluded from the world, in some distant farmhouse. But there *was* much to be talked of in marrying her...

(*P&P*, pp. 341-2; emphasis mine.)

Likewise, Austen's novels are full of examples of society at large responding with moral indifference and voyeuristic amusement to sexual matters that only characters with atypical or extreme moral sensibility treat with seriousness or concern. Thus, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is filled with

¹⁹ Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 95.

²⁰ Ferdinand Schoeman, *Privacy and Social Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 149, and David Vincent, *I Hope I Don't Intrude: Privacy and its Dilemmas in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 166-8. See too Melanie Tebbutt, *Women's Talk? A Social History of 'Gossip' in Working-class Neighbourhoods, 1880-1960* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997). For discussions of the function of gossip in the work of Jane Austen specifically, see Jan Gordon, *Gossip and Subversion in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 58-96, and Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1985).

embarrassment upon re-receiving her sixteen-year-old sister Lydia after her salacious cohabitation with Wickham, but Lydia herself is 'unabashed', and her mother oblivious to any dishonour to the family apart from an insufficiency of the finery of her wedding clothes and a lack of equipage. Similarly, in *Mansfield Park* (1814), it is clear that to many of the characters, the fault of Maria Rushworth's adulterous affair with Henry Crawford lay not in the sex itself, but the indiscretion with which it was conducted – its 'want of common discretion, of caution.'²¹ To Mary Crawford, it was 'the detection, not the offence,' that was the true crime, and Edmund confirms that the easy tolerance of sexuality was simply what society 'did':

no harsher name than folly given!—So voluntarily, so freely, so coolly to canvas it!—No reluctance, no horror, no feminine—what shall I say—no modest loathings! This is what the world does.”
(p. 526)

Likewise in *Persuasion*, Walter and Elizabeth Elliot are both deeply disappointed in Penelope Clay's decision to become the kept mistress of William Elliot - but only because of 'the loss of [her] compan[y]' and her 'flattery'; both of which are quickly forgotten and replaced by that of others.²² And in *Sense and Sensibility*, although as females the two Elizas are roundly condemned and punished for the sexual indiscretions of their teenhood (an example that I come back to), their male seducers of the same age escape both punishment and loss of status. Likewise, the perceived sexual misconduct of the hero Colonel Brandon is explicitly stated to 'not signify' anything and can therefore be 'forgot[ten]', and even the judgmental and morally impregnable Elinor 'forgave', 'pitied' and 'wished [Willoughby] well—was even interested in his happiness,' despite her knowledge of his recent advances to at least two young women other than her sister (*S&S*, p. 376).

As was suggested with Lubey in Chapter Four, the very discussion of such suggestive topics in a literary mode as public as the novel relied on a readership that was as hermeneutically receptive to covert semiotic systems of eroticism as they were to more overt alternatives. Austen's success in coding sexual nuance was both a talent and a necessity; as a female author writing in a period where the respectability of women writers was scrutinised much more rigorously than that of males, the stakes of decorum were particularly high.²³ Despite the universality of Austen's sexualised teen subjects, their innate erotic desire is thus typically narrated in an altogether more cautious way than the explicitly sexual metaphors of her male literary contemporaries like Peacock and Place. As Deirdre

²¹ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* [1814], ed. Janet Todd and Linda Bree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 526. Emphasis mine.

²² Jane Austen, *Persuasion* [1818], eds. Janet Todd & Antje Blank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 273.

²³ See Lucy Morrison's *Conduct Unbecoming* for a particularly effective discussion of the factors involved in the disproportionate gendered scrutiny of women writers.

Lynch has stressed, the positive reaction of Austen's contemporaries to her novels is supreme testament to her careful 'verbal dexterity' and ability 'to speak in polite company about the topics that female writers were supposed to avoid, and all the while retain a kind of plausible deniability.'²⁴ Despite this, contemporary readers already trained in Lubey's notion of 'orgasmic reading' would have recognised her fiction's erotic hermeneutic potential, and would also, according to Robert Morrison, be familiar with a further series of 'code words' used to 'denote but not explicitly name sexual desire.' Examples of veiled language that Morrison finds specific to Regency novels and associated particularly with 'young' women and men include words such as "swelling," "swooning," "panting," "blooming," "blushing," "burning", "glowing," "pouting," "throbbing," and "heaving."²⁵ Just so, Austen relies heavily on this coded system of sexuality in descriptions throughout her novels, from Darcy's observation of the 'brilliancy' of Elizabeth's 'glowing' features after exercise ('your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking... I can admire you much better as I sit by the fire') to Edmund and Thomas Bertram's admiration of the 'blooming' body of Fanny:

Your complexion is so improved!—and you have gained so much countenance!—and your figure—nay, Fanny, do not turn away about it... You must really begin to harden yourself to the idea of being worth looking at. You must try not to mind growing up into a pretty woman.²⁶

Like that within Peacock's fiction, the narration of these incidents, nearly always regarding young, adolescent characters, indicate Austen's insistence that teen characters of both genders possessed a subjectivity that was definitively eroticised. Regardless of the characters' varying successes in either enacting or repressing their sexual impulses, the impulses themselves are almost universally represented as present. Properly understood then, Austen's teens are necessarily desiring beings. (Perhaps the only exception, in all six novels, is Mary Bennet; even the thirteen-year-old Margaret Dashwood is described as having her head full of 'romance'; S&S, p. 8). As in the examples above, the sexualised teen subject in Austen's novels is a phenomenon that society recognised, tolerated, and in many instances forgave. Its expression was tolerated as a 'folly' rather than a 'wickedness'; not particularly different from any other of those follies attributed to immaturity. Even if Austen herself would not have condoned teens having sex, the society which she both inhabited and reproduced in her novels often evidenced a demonstrably more permissive stance.

"Who is perfect?": Austen's Depictions of a Sex-Tolerant Society

²⁴ Lynch, 'Jane Austen and the Sex-Positive Novel', p. 34.

²⁵ Robert Morrison, *The Regency Revolution: Jane Austen, Napoleon, Lord Byron and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2020), p. 129.

²⁶ *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 62; *Mansfield Park*, p. 231.

Before turning to Austen's own responses to teen sexuality specifically, it is first important to present more sustained evidence for the claim that the society Austen depicted reacted to sexual (mis)conduct in as tolerant a manner to that specifically seen in Peacock and Place. I have chosen *Lady Susan* and the unfinished *Sanditon* for this purpose because both novels have been identified as Austen's most forthright and transparent depictions of the society she lived in.²⁷ However, *Lady Susan*, likely written around 1794, and *Sanditon*, begun in 1817, also (probably) comprise the first and last examples of Austen's projects to write full-length novels. As such, they offer one of the largest available chronological ranges within which to converse with the accounts of Peacock and Place, spanning both the 1790s (the decade which Place begun as and Peacock ended as a teen) right through to the 1810s, when Peacock had already begun publishing and Place was shortly about to. Austen is one of only a handful of authors writing novels throughout each decade of this period, and her descriptions of its changing society give important insight into the way issues of sexuality were changing and progressing.

In both *Lady Susan* and *Sanditon*, Austen depicts her contemporary society in ways that Deidre Lynch has described as 'sex-positive'.²⁸ In *Lady Susan* for instance, possessing a reputation of active sexuality is valued as an accomplishment by many of the characters. The captivating Susan Vernon is urged to London by her friend Mrs. Johnson every time the latter's husband is absent, on which occasions the two women 'chuse [thei]r own society' of men with whom 'to have *true* enjoyment' – of the kind only possible when one's husband was away.²⁹ Their marked unrepentance for such behaviour, and their avowed cravings for fresh 'dissipation,' results in Susan describing the time they spend without such debauchery with the ironic use of the religious term 'penance'. Their libertine lifestyle and acts with other men are euphemistically described as 'so gross and notorious that no one could be ignorant of them' (pp. 21-22, 58). Despite this, these qualities rather elevate their status than denigrate it. De Courcy's description of the world's view of Susan deliberately pairs negative terms of moral censure with positive adjectives that cancel out their condemnatory power and transform them into features of admirability: she is 'the most accomplished coquette in England'; flaunts 'dangerous abilities' of 'delicious gratification,' and 'possesses a degree of captivating deceit which it must be

²⁷ For instance, in identifying *Lady Susan* to be the most unrestrained of Austen's novels, with all the uncensored bawdiness of a 'Restoration drama,' Nancy Armstrong has pointed out that the deliberate style alterations and embellishments Austen saw necessary to turn her next novel *Northanger Abbey* into a 'novel in the polite sense of the term' represent a symbolic transition from romance to realism. Similarly, Clara Tuite has singled out *Sanditon* from Austen's other novels on a similar principle, describing the unfinished novel as a 'clear... interrupti[on of...] the nicely packeagable Austen oeuvre of the almost parodically formulaic heterosexual romance.' Tuite, *Romantic Austen*, pp. 156-7.

²⁸ Lynch, 'Austen and the Sex-Positive Novel.'

²⁹ Jane Austen, 'Lady Susan,' *Later Manuscripts* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen), ed. Janet Todd and Linda Bree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 60. Emphasis mine.

pleasing to witness' (pp. 8-9, 16). Far from being a subject of condemnation or avoidance, she is perceived by men who know her only by reputation as a kind of hallowed celebrity: 'What a woman she must be! I long to see her,' Reginald enthuses excitedly (p. 8). By the end of the novel, Austen's most acute criticism is reserved not for Susan's suggested promiscuity but the hypocrisy of the double standard perpetuated by the patriarchal society she inhabits. As a result, Reginald's admiration for Susan's coquettish sexual energy from afar is all-too-quickly transformed into self-righteous rage upon the discovery that he himself is one of at least three of her current lovers, and that she has been receiving daily visits from other men in her chambers during their engagement.

In the unfinished *Sanditon*, the narrator uses the same vocabulary of 'dangerous abilities' to describe the young Sir Edward Denham. To the concupiscent Edward, employing the same 'dangerous' qualities for the purposes of sexual seduction is not only permitted by contemporary society but also ironically portrayed as a noble calling or moral duty:

Sir Edward's great object in life was to be seductive. With such personal advantages as he knew himself to possess, and such talents as he did also give himself credit for, he regarded it as his duty. He felt that he was formed to be a dangerous man, quite in the line of the Lovelaces...³⁰

Like those of Lady Susan, Edward's intrigues are systematic and deliberate, and comically described as conducted with 'duty' and 'necessity':

to make fine speeches to every pretty girl, was but the *inferior* part of the character he had to play... [Clara's] seduction was quite determined on. Her situation in every way called for it... he had very early seen the necessity of the case.

The open and undisguised attempts on Clara's virginity neither surprise nor disturb her; she acknowledges her status as a sexually desirable object with calm indifference and sees no reason to repel his advances: 'Clara saw through him and had not the least intention of being seduced; but she bore with him patiently enough to confirm the sort of attachment which her personal charms had raised' (p. 184). Acknowledging her current indifference and predicting that the process of successfully 'undermin[ing] her principles' would clearly take too long, Edward thus determines on a quicker course of action:

If she could not be won by affection, he must carry her off. He knew his business. Already had he had many musings on the subject. If he were constrained so to act, he must naturally wish to strike out something new, to exceed those who had gone before him... But the expense, alas! of measures in that masterly style was ill-suited to his purse; and prudence obliged him

³⁰ Jane Austen, 'Sanditon', *Later Manuscripts* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen), ed. Janet Todd and Linda Bree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 183-4.

to prefer the quietest sort of ruin and disgrace for the object of his affections to the more renowned. (pp. 184-5)

The musings of Edward Denham here are the most explicit examples of free indirect narration of a sexually active youth in the entire Austen oeuvre. The narratorial entry into the mind of the libertine offers readers direct access to the point of view of the sexually desiring subject. Functioning as a narrative platform by which he becomes the personification of desire, Edward himself acts as the narratological embodiment of the sexual impulse. However, instead of uncovering a target for moral censure, the narratorial window into Edward's stream of consciousness rather reveals the complexity of his erotic subjectivity and its paradoxical nature. The mindset of the circles that Sir Edward and Lady Susan inhabit are shown to simultaneously narrate sex to be the 'great[est] object in life' that they are verily 'formed' to fulfil, while also constituting a mere social pantomime to indicate their supposed desirability, 'a part of the character [they have] to play.' Sexuality is at once elevated as the locus within which the libertine subject is engaged in a sort of youthful crisis of identity, while the sex act itself is simultaneously trivialised into a harmless kind of fun confessed to be not even worth the bother of much exertion. On the one hand, sex to young Edward is merely a matter of 'business,' which is only worth a certain measure of 'expense,' and an even smaller amount of effort or 'constrain[t]'. Yet paradoxically, it must also at the same time exceed all 'those who had gone before,' if it was to bestow purpose or an 'object' to his life.

Austen's use of free indirect discourse thus comedically characterises the outwardly-confident sexualised subject by fluctuating inner self-worth. Granting access to the young Edward's thought processes confirms him to be selfish and shallow, but also inherently insecure and a source of bathos (one cannot help but call to mind the winsome haplessness of Scythrop). Unlike earlier literary personifications of sex, such as Bunyan's Love-Lust or Live-Loose, Edward and Susan (and, indeed, Scythrop) are thus portrayed as emotionally complex psychological subjects who inspire readerly sympathy or even likeability.³¹ The same is true of Austen's other philandering or actively sexual characters, such as the Crawfords, Willoughby and Wickham.³² Austen clearly neither condones nor

³¹ For example, Teerlink's reading of Lady Susan as a Restoration Rake finds her 'reprehensible' yet 'likeable', and Thompson describes Edward Denham as the 'culmination' of the 'charming' and 'the risible'. See James Thompson, *Jane Austen and Modernization: Sociological Readings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 165, and Amanda Teerlink, *The Wicked Widow: Reading Jane Austen's Lady Susan as a Restoration Rake* (diss.), (Provo, UH: Brigham Young University, 2016). The importance (or absence of) of charm for the rake is taken up in Erin Skye Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: the Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009) and Deborah Lutz, *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2006).

³² As has already been stated, perhaps the most notable instances of Willoughby and Wickham attracting sympathy come from Elinor Dashwood and Jane Bennet, who forgive them their indiscretion and 'wish [them] happiness.' *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 376.

approves of the uninhibited sexuality of these characters, but her light-hearted, comedic responses to it undermines its status as a necessarily serious or solemn topic of genuine and serious moral concern. Indeed, for the characters who practise it, it can even seem a sense-making behaviour which generates meaning, signifies value and grants a sense of belonging and identity within a like-minded social group. Within Edward and Susan's Corinthian circles, instead of being a matter of moral censure, the more 'masterfully' one conducted their sexual affairs, the 'more renowned' and revered they are presented to become. By affixing the sexual act a social value (how masterfully or with how much 'discretion' or 'caution' it is judged to be done) or an economic one (how much 'expense' or 'constraint' it is worth), the so-called 'respectable' classes are thus depicted to exchange the purported moral currency of sex to alternative, socio-economic systems of meaning.³³

It is from this position that Edward's point of view can sardonically (and comically) dismiss the notion of the supposed 'ruin' and 'disgrace' of sexual impurity. Further elaborating on this formulation, Edward describes those who defend values of chastity and virtue as affected, 'hyper-critical' sophists voicing empty 'pseudo-philosophy', as Charlotte learns when raising the famed promiscuity of the poet Robert Burns:

"poor Burns's known irregularities greatly interrupt my enjoyment of his lines. I have difficulty in depending on the truth of his feelings as a lover." [...]

"Oh! no, no," exclaimed Sir Edward in an ecstasy. "He was all ardour and truth! His genius and his susceptibilities might lead him into some aberrations, but who is perfect? It were hyper-criticism, it were pseudo-philosophy to expect from the soul of high-toned genius the grovellings of a common mind. The coruscations of talent, elicited by impassioned feeling in the breast of man, are perhaps incompatible with some of the prosaic decencies of life; nor can you, loveliest Miss Heywood," speaking with an air of deep sentiment, "nor can any woman be a fair judge of what a man may be propelled to say, write or do by the sovereign impulses of illimitable ardour."

This was very fine, but if Charlotte understood it at all, not very moral. (p. 176)

To characters like Edward and Lady Susan, efforts to affix a moral value to sex are empty, 'prosaic', and are presumed to come from 'the grovellings of a common mind'. Charlotte's reaction is similarly telling, given her ability to deduce that that which was 'very fine', common or acceptable in society was by no means the same as what was 'moral'. If the unfinished *Sanditon* would have followed similar formulas to Austen's other novels, it is unlikely that young Edward would have been truly punished for his libertine values; perhaps, at worst, he may have been subjected to a suitably unexciting marriage to a rich but otherwise objectionable wife as Willoughby was before him. *Lady Susan*, however, although concluding with its titular heroine in a marriage of exactly this nature, does not

³³ For further discussion of the socio-economic implications of teen sexuality, see Chapter Four, pp. 123-5.

carry the air of punishment; she returns to dissipation and debauchery with a new husband too stupid to be able to limit her 'true enjoyment' of it (*LS*, p. 60). Like Willoughby, her financial fortune is secured, her social standing remains intact, and she is free to indulge in pursuits of pleasure as she pleases. She retains her position in the wider society because it is at once capable and willing to overlook her sexual misconduct. In this way, Austen's earliest depictions of the 'sex-positive' society of Lady Susan in the 1790s retain remarkable similarity to Place's recollections of the same decade; likewise, her later representations such as *Sanditon* echo the same attitudes seen in Peacock's *Marionetta*, *Celinda* and *Scythrop* in the 1810s. Collectively, all these accounts strengthen the suggestion of a sex-tolerant society throughout this period, which was able to overlook and suspend notions of moral judgment regarding the sexuality of both teens and adults. Such accounts suggest both a wider society, as well as a literate readership, that was fully able and often willing to tolerate the concept - if not also the reality - of the sexually active teen.

Austen, Anglicanism and Tolerance in Regency Society

In the second half of this chapter, I turn my focus towards not the mere represented societal toleration of teen sexuality, but towards my second objective of examining Austen's own authorial and personal participation in these discussions. As a parson's daughter estimated to have said the absolution within the Lord's Prayer over 30,000 times over her lifetime, I interpret Austen's views on tolerance and forgiveness to be indubitably informed by her religion.³⁴ Her fiction in particular has been associated with Christianity since its original publication. Archbishop Whately opined as early as 1821 that Austen was 'evidently a Christian writer,'³⁵ and Austen's nephews and relations defensively insisted - perhaps a little too much - that she was 'thoroughly religious and devout' in their memoirs.³⁶ Invocations of her Christian piety were continued by a thriving critical tradition which culminated in the work of Duckworth and other scholars of the 1970s, who interpreted the moral systems of Austen's fiction as having roots in a specifically Christian literary inheritance.³⁷ More recently, two of

³⁴ Laura Mooneyham White, *Jane Austen's Anglicanism* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2011), p. 5.

³⁵ Brian Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 95.

³⁶ The defensiveness of Jane Austen's relations regarding her supposed piety is particularly telling, and consists of numerous different strategies. On the one hand, the heated insistence of her older brother Henry (himself a clergyman) that 'her opinions accorded strictly with those of our Established Church,' belies her own sarcastic references to her own local clergymen in her letters ('Mr Lyford says he will cure me, & if he fails I shall [...] lay it before the Dean & Chapter, & have no doubt of redress from that most Pious, Learned and disinterested Body.') Her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, however, pursues a different method, claiming that his aunt's Christianity was indeed genuine, but that the reason it seemed absent from her fiction was because modesty and reserve prevented her from talking or writing of it: 'she herself was more inclined to *think* and *act* than to *talk*, and I shall imitate her reserve.' Henry Thomas Austen, 'Biographical Notice of the Author', in *Northanger Abbey: and Persuasion* (London: John Murray, 1818), p. viii; Letter from Jane to James, 27 May 1817, *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, p. 342, and James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen* [1871], ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 79-80.

³⁷ Duckworth, *Improvement of the Estate*.

the most authoritative studies to date on Austen and matters of faith (Michael Giffin's *Jane Austen and Religion* and Laura M. White's *Jane Austen's Anglicanism*) have also aligned themselves within the same parameters of much of this 'Austen as Christian' critical tradition.³⁸

At the same time however, alternative twentieth-century criticism has produced a counter-tradition running parallel to these ideas, which began to question the scale or influence of Christianity in Austen's literary work. These more secular interpretations of Austen have been most consistently advanced since the 1940 publication of D.W. Harding's landmark essay 'Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen'.³⁹ Harding's position, which identified a subversive and at times misanthropic tendency in Austen's fiction, undermined the assumption of a benevolence in her fiction's moral and ethical codes. This in turn led to the publication of a series of readings by other twentieth-century theorists interpreting Austen as only nominally Christian, and exhibiting in her fiction a worldview closer to secularism or even humanism. F.R. Leavis, for example, found religion to be barely manifest in Austen's fiction at all, and Joseph Duffy, although acknowledging Austen's nominal affiliation with the Church of England, describes her faith as a 'barren, artificial thing of rationalist Anglicanism' at most.⁴⁰ Since then, similar views have been advanced by a large number of some of the most influential Austen critics, including David Nokes, Clara Tuite, D. A. Miller, and William Galperin.⁴¹ Perhaps the strongest rejection of the notion of Austen as a pious Christian in this manner has come from Claudia Johnson, who makes 'no claims to neutrality' and declares 'I cast my lot with the queer Austen.'⁴²

The difference in these interpretations of Austen's faith has been caused partially by the ambiguous and at times seemingly contradictory comments on the subject of religion in Austen's own writings. For instance, while the earnest tone and language of her (contested)⁴³ written prayers have prompted certain scholars to interpret Austen as a conservative Christian, her responses to Evangelical texts and other comments in her private letters suggest by contrast that her position on conservative and/or Evangelical Christianity was ambivalent at best, and critical at worst ('I do not like the

³⁸ Michael Giffin, *Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) and White, *Austen's Anglicanism*.

³⁹ D.W. Harding, 'Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen', *Scrutiny*, 8 (1940), 346-62.

⁴⁰ F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), p. 10; Joseph Duffy, 'Moral Integrity and Moral Anarchy in *Mansfield Park*', *ELH*, 23 (1956), 71-91 (p. 86).

⁴¹ See David Nokes, *Jane Austen: A Life* (New York: Farrar, 1997); Clara Tuite, *Romantic Austen*; D.A. Miller, *Jane Austen: or the Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) and William Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

⁴² Claudia Johnson, 'The Divine Miss Jane: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies', *Boundary 2*, 23.3 (Autumn, 1996), 143-63 (p. 146).

⁴³ There are three written prayers that have been attributed to Austen, but Todd and Bree have concluded that it cannot be definitively stated that any of them were truly composed by her. *Later Manuscripts*, pp. cxviii-cxxvi.

Evangelicals.')⁴⁴ Analysing Austen's specific portrayal of sexualised teens brings clarity to these debates because it gives unique, instructive insight into some of the ways that religious beliefs influenced the presentation of her characters. The benevolent, forgiving way in which her young characters are repeatedly allowed second chances suggests that Austen's narratives are ordered by a compassionate or benign spiritual force, not one demanding immutable divine retribution. Indeed, the wider concept of Austen's benign religiosity has gained particular support by a number of the most authoritative studies of Austen's faith. For instance, despite differing on particularities, several scholars - namely Michael Giffin, Laura Mooneyham White and Paula Hollingsworth - have all recently suggested that Austen's faith, though genuine and influential, was neither conservative nor Evangelical, and more generally representative of the innocuous Anglican church at the time:

[Austen] does not allow any of her characters to achieve an Evangelical conversion – that is, a personal *soteria* by faith in the atoning death of Christ – because her faith is grounded in the catholic and apostolic tradition of mainstream Anglicanism.

The key identifying 'tenor' of this 'mainstream... Georgian Anglicanism,' Giffin continues, 'was one of tolerance rather than retribution.'⁴⁵ He refers to the known association of both the congregations and clergymen of the Church of England in the Regency era with a widespread lassitude, and an anodyne, permissive ethos of liberal pragmatism. Mooneyham White too describes the 'general placidity of the Anglican establishment' at this time, and Hollingsworth affirms that '[t]he eighteenth-century Anglicanism into which Jane was born was a faith that was tolerant and pragmatic.'⁴⁶ In the influential essay *As Jane Austen Saw the Clergy*, Raymond Cook affirms the 'general [religious] disinterest of Anglican people and the careless attitude of the clergy' in Austen's generation, adding that '[a]t hardly any other period in English history was the clergy held in lower esteem... Enthusiasm for religion and

⁴⁴ The religiosity of Austen's fiction too is difficult to fathom; as a much more public forum than her letters or prayers, the novels rarely explicitly discuss religious or theological doctrines ('Religion to her was a private matter: to discuss it in a novel would have been a breach of good taste,' explains Collins). Excepting references to non-family (or 'Christian') names, 'Christianity' is referenced directly on only three occasions in all six novels (twice in *Pride and Prejudice* and once in *Northanger Abbey*; all three are analysed elsewhere within this chapter). Some critics have suggested that features of Christianity and/or Anglicanism were so deeply inscribed into the Regency societal culture that its meaning and influence should be assumed to remain 'powerful' in Austen's life and work despite being 'quiet, untheoretical and rarely openly expressed' (Stovel, p. 201). However, this reading is undermined by those other female writers of the period who included religious and scriptural discussions in their work persistently and assertively, and who did not understand Christianity to be so prevalent in society that its influence would be apparent by only indirect mention only. See Jane Austen to Cassandra, 24 January 1809, *Jane Austen's Letters*, p. 170. See too Irene Collins, *Jane Austen: The Parson's Daughter* (London: Hambledon Press, 1988), p. 236; Bruce Stovel, "'The Sentient Target of Death": Jane Austen's Prayers,' *Jane Austen's Business: Her World and Her Profession*, eds. Juliet McMaster & Bruce Stovel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp. 192-205.

⁴⁵ Giffin, *Jane Austen and Religion*, pp. 25, 28.

⁴⁶ Mooneyham White, *Austen's Anglicanism*, p. 13; Paula Hollingsworth, *The Spirituality of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2017), p. 12.

for the salvation of souls was at its lowest ebb, and the apathy of the clergy... strong.⁴⁷ Clergymen themselves needed little or no genuine faith, and often simply read out sermons instead of writing them. Their selection process was minimal: the ordination examination of Benjamin Lefroy, the husband of Jane Austen's niece, consisted of just two questions – which families his mother and wife were from.⁴⁸ The widespread societal apathy towards religion caused Thomas Secker, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to lament that 'an open and professed disregard of religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age.'⁴⁹ According to Gwyn Williams, the proliferation of atheist 'infidelity' within the working and middling classes was even 'almost as remarkable a phenomenon of the 1820s as the more familiar triumphs of Methodism, Evangelicalism and "vital religion,"' and Epstein confirms the presence of a 'submerged but robust culture of plebeian anticlericalism and irreligion' at this time.⁵⁰ Accordingly, although Austen's proximity to Anglicanism differentiates her from the atheistic Place and Peacock, all three of them portray in their own way the same wider themes of the secularity and general religious indifference that was 'the distinguishing character' of the wider period that they inhabited.

As the supposed moral compass of Regency society, the anodyne attitudes of the Church of England provide helpful context then to the forty-five year window offering a comparative tolerance to the actively sexual teen as portrayed by Peacock, Place and Austen. Crucially, Hollingworth's alignment of Austen's faith with the 'tolerance' and 'pragmatism' of the Christianity of this period reflects not a religious apathy in Austen specifically, but rather (according to Boyd Hilton and several other scholars) an Anglicanism inextricably bound to the liberal values of Enlightenment Britain as a whole.⁵¹ Thus, Henry Tilney's injunction that Catherine Morland must

⁴⁷ Raymond Cook, 'As Jane Austen Saw the Clergy', p. 41.

⁴⁸ A similar attitude was evinced to Walter Scott in 1812 by the poet George Crabbe, who intended two of his sons for the clergy simply 'because I did not know what else to do with them.' See Peter Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and Problems of Reform, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 134, and G.E. Mitton, *Jane Austen and Her Times* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), p. 46.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Mitton, pp. 37-8.

⁵⁰ Gwyn Williams, *Rowland Detrosier: A Working-Class Infidel, 1800-1834* (York: St. Anthony's Press, 1965), p. 3 and James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 118.

⁵¹ The relationship between religion and British empiricist/economic thought is the primary theme of Boyd Hilton's *The Age of Atonement* and Collin's *Jane Austen: The Parson's Daughter*. See too Giffin's discussion of Austen's 'economies of salvation', and Georgian Anglicanism as influenced by 'unregulated capitalism' of Enlightenment Britain. Giffin, *Jane Austen and Religion*, pp. 12-36.

remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you...⁵²

indicates Austen's emphasis on not the personal faith of individual, born-again salvation as emphasised by More and the Ongar Taylors, but the broader Christian values of what Tilney calls 'the age' and the empiricist nation 'country' as a whole, concerned with reason, 'understanding' and 'observation'. Austen's novels manifest their identification with the permissive pragmatism of Enlightenment Christianity by envisaging a world in which reason should balance feeling, understanding and sense temper sensibility, and within which forgiveness was more productive than punishment.

The last of these formulations seems particularly crucial; Austen's novels seem fixatedly preoccupied with the importance of forgiveness and second chances. The significance of Austen's original title of *First Impressions* for *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as the implied criticism of Marianne's initial, emphatic disavowal of second attachments in *Sense and Sensibility*, are just two of many clues that Austen uses to emphasise the importance of trial and error in successful adolescent maturation. Other clues are less subtle; the core purpose of *Persuasion*'s plotline is to demonstrate that a venture that failed on one occasion can ultimately be successful the second time around. In fact, all six of Austen's novels allow their protagonists the right to at least two or more chances, and most heroines only achieve their happy endings by accepting a second or even third choice or suitor after a problematic inclination to an initially desirable first option. Indeed, one of the most reliable ways in which male characters such as Brandon, Darcy, Knightley and Tilney finally prove their own suitability and virtue is by reacting with forgiveness and good spirit to their wives' initial preferences, and showing a willingness to themselves constitute a second chance. Likewise, model female characters are equally forgiving of previous ill-advised courtships of male characters such as Edmund Bertram and Edward Ferrars. Retaining the language of British Enlightenment and empiricism, Giffin calls this pattern of benevolent resolutions in Austen's fiction the 'economy of salvation' effect; Hollingworth terms it more simply as Austen's persistent narratorial 'compassion'.⁵³ Both would agree however that Austen's liberality in adopting Christian notions of forgiveness, tolerance and second chances above other more retributory Christian values distinguishes her in important ways from her conservative, Evangelical peers. Austen's philosophy of youth is thus pragmatic rather than dogmatic. Notions of shame and confession serve little narrative purpose in her fiction other than as transitory

⁵² Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*[1818], eds. Barbara M. Benedict & Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 203.

⁵³ See Giffin, *Jane Austen and Religion*, p. 30 and Hollingworth, *The Spirituality of Austen*, pp. 60-61.

contributions to the process of character development, which is itself, ultimately, more effectively influenced by reason and forgiveness.

Ranges of Reaction: Pride, Prejudice and Prurience

Having identified the notion of benevolence within Austen's Anglicanism, I turn in the remainder of the chapter to a close reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, a text chosen for two reasons. First, I use its clear groupings of characters who react in either tolerant or punitive/vindictive ways to Lydia's sexual cohabitation with Wickham to function as a systematic examination of Austen's treatment of these respective reactions. But secondly, with perhaps the only exception of *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice* is the Austen novel that offers a most direct comparison to Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*. In both novels, the narratives climax around the precarious relationship between two young female characters and their respective love interests. Likewise, in both novels, nearly all teen or youthful characters are in almost constant states of erotic desire.⁵⁴ Unlike in *Nightmare Abbey*, of course, there is only one set of characters (Lydia and Wickham) in *Pride and Prejudice* that pursues extra-marital sexual relations (if, that is, one discounts the fifteen-year-old Georgiana Darcy's attempted elopement, here omitted for the purpose of brevity only). Importantly, during and after Lydia's cohabitation with Wickham, *Pride and Prejudice* models three crucial types of response from the other characters. The first is a reaction of extreme condemnation, and the second one of moral indifference. As we shall see, both of these responses are portrayed by Austen as wrong and flawed respectively. A third response, given implicit narratorial sanction as the most correct of these three, is (unsurprisingly, with Austen) the middle ground between the other two, and involves the treatment of pre-marital sex as a kind of forgivable offence that should be pardoned, but not condoned. Very few characters in the novel manage to actually achieve this third position; even Elizabeth fails to do so, as a result of her titular prejudice. But it is only in this middle reaction that Austen's narratorial tendency towards what Poovey describes as 'decorum and reserve' can be reconciled to her practical sense of reality.⁵⁵ Although Austen's narratives generally lend their support to the codes of etiquette associated with

⁵⁴ As in *Nightmare Abbey*, sexual capability and appeal in *Pride and Prejudice* are most often embedded in coded descriptions of the characters' bodies and physicality. For instance, Darcy's delight in the women 'teas[ing], 'plagu[ing] and punish[ing]' him with exhibitions of their 'figures' is also seen in what both Wiltshire and Maurer interpret as Lydia's coded sexual confidence – "'I am not afraid; for though I *am* the youngest, I'm the tallest.'" Elizabeth is focalised as particularly confident in her sexuality and expresses herself forthrightly ('A young man... like *you*, whose very countenance may vouch for your being amiable'). Her libidinal fantasies seem particularly suggestive – in the night immediately after she dines with him, her mind is 'full of him. She could think of nothing but of Mr. Wickham.' *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 8, 62, 90, 94. See too John Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 130, and Lisa Shawn Maurer 'Lydia Still: Adolescent Wildness in *Pride and Prejudice*,' *The Future of Feminist Eighteenth-Century Scholarship: Beyond Recovery*, ed. Robin Runia (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 31-52.

⁵⁵ Poovey, *Proper Lady*, p. xvii.

Regency society, her overriding pragmatism and subscription to the Christian doctrine of forgiveness lead them to simultaneously constitute an implicit protest against the way that 'fallen' girls like Lydia Bennet, Maria Bertram and the two Elizas could be so quickly and aggressively victimised by the strict mandates of the increasing Evangelicalism of the nineteenth century.

The Ruination of Teens: Austen's Condemnation of Condemnation

The first and most serious way in which *Pride and Prejudice's* characters respond to Lydia's sexual cohabitation is with extreme condemnation. The narrative climax reveals a maliciousness in certain characters who use Lydia's apparent downfall to revel in their own sense of superiority. The most acute manifestation of this phenomenon is Mr. Collins. For the majority of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's portrayal of Collins' sliminess functions as a satiric target of light-hearted comedy only. However, when responding to Lydia's cohabitation with Wickham, the previously merely unctuous Mr Collins undergoes a vilifying transition through which he becomes the spokesperson for much more serious statements of misogyny and religious bigotry. Immediately after receiving the news concerning Lydia, he writes to Mr Bennet to gloat in the avoidance of his own near connection with the family, smugly avowing his 'augmented satisfaction' in escaping their share of 'sorrow and disgrace'. In this letter, Austen replaces her comedic treatment of Collins' earlier obsequiousness by revealing a sinister maliciousness in him: 'the death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison to this,' he taunts. Austen terminates the letter with Collins assuring Mr Bennet of the relieving consolation he would find in 'throw[ing] off your unworthy child from your affection forever, and leav[ing] her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence' (*P&P*, pp. 327-8). Upon later learning that the Bennets refuse his advice and continue to acknowledge Lydia as part of the family, Mr Collins writes again to further voice his censure. '[It would] neglect the duties of my station,' he announces, 'to refrain from declaring my amazement at hearing that you received the young couple into your house.' Doing so was

an encouragement of vice; and had I been the rector of Longbourn, I should very strenuously have opposed it. You ought certainly to forgive them, as a Christian, but never to admit them in your sight, or allow their names to be mentioned in your hearing. (p. 403)

These passages bring a serious moral charge against Mr Collins that was not present regarding his previous comic silliness. In this way, the character of Mr Collins thus functions as a representative of the same shame narratives ascribed to the society of Francis Place's later adulthood, whose ostracizations ensured the 'ruination' of the rejected female (recall 'A [girl] who should *now* misconduct herself in the way mentioned would be abandoned by her companions, and probably by

her parents... consequently, her ruin would be complete.’)⁵⁶ Austen’s shared confirmation of the destructiveness of these shame narratives is demonstrated in *Sense and Sensibility* through the double tragedy of the Elizas, whose deaths are a direct consequence of their rejection by society. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Collins’ suggestion that a similarly brutal end for Lydia would have been more desirable than her continued life, and the hypocrisy of his supposed Christianity that it highlights, is thus castigated as cruel and extremist by both Mr. Bennet and Elizabeth. Crucially, their joint condemnation affixes a specifically *anti-Christian* agenda to Collins’ shame narrative, given italicised emphasis in the original 1813 edition: ‘*That* is his notion of Christian forgiveness!’⁵⁷ Collins’ own avowal of religious superiority (‘...the duties of my station’; ‘...had I been the rector of Longbourn,’; ‘...as a Christian,’ ‘you ought...’) is thus immediately both belittled and transcended by a demonstrably superior, more enlightened kind of Christianity with the same tolerance and rationalism that Giffin and Hollingworth ascribe to Austen’s own.

Given that this more pragmatic version of Christianity prioritised the principle of divine grace over atonement, and redemption over retribution, the Bennets therefore replace Collins’ embodiment of Old Testament propitiation doctrines with more tolerant New Testament ones. By refusing to capitulate to Collins’ demands for Lydia’s retributory atonement, they exemplify the legacy left by Christ’s exoneration of the adulteress caught in fornication (‘let those who are without sin cast the first stone’).⁵⁸ Importantly, as Austen demonstrates in Collins’ previous episode with Fordyce’s *Sermons*, it is not merely the character of Collins himself here but the larger, conservative moralist tradition he represents that is rejected in this narratorial rebuke. Under the morally superior tenets of this more benevolent Christianity, the Bennet family are thus able to reject Mr. Collins’ pernicious spiritual guidance, and Lydia is saved from the same ruinous fate as that of the forsaken Elizas. Placed in adjacency, the tragic and ostensibly preventable deaths of the two Elizas thus function as Austen’s example of what should *not* happen to the fallen teen; indeed, such an outcome is consciously precluded in *Pride and Prejudice* by the intercession of Lydia’s sisters. When Mr Bennet is described

⁵⁶ Place, *Autobiography*, p. 82.

⁵⁷ Much has been written on the competing concepts of the theology of forgiveness versus atonement in the contexts of both Jane Austen’s fiction specifically and the nineteenth century more generally. Particularly of note is Boyd Hilton’s *Age of Atonement*, which devotes its last half to documenting and explaining the period’s ‘growing awareness that the harshness of orthodox [atonement] doctrines was turning [people] away from Christianity altogether, and that [...too] many believers were unable to go on stomaching harsh doctrines’ (p. 272). Although Austen was not put off the Christian faith altogether because of the punitiveness of the evangelicalism that she ‘d[id] not like,’ her condemnation of the cruelty of orthodox punishments derived from traditionalist atonement doctrines clearly places her within the same ideological spectrum. For specific discussions of atonement vs forgiveness in Jane Austen’s fiction, see Gillian Dooley, ‘“A More Gentle, Less Dignified, Forgiveness”: Willoughby’s Apology in the Context of Austen’s Religious Beliefs,’ *Persuasions*, 38.3 (2018), n.p.; Robert Mai, ‘To Forgive Is Divine—and Practical, Too,’ *Persuasions*, 35.1 (2014), n.p. and Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, pp. 272–372.

⁵⁸ John 8:7.

as temporarily considering Collins' advice, the narrator quickly reveals that 'Jane and Elizabeth, for the sake of their sister's feelings and consequence' were able to 'urg[e] him so earnestly, yet so rationally and so mildly... that he was prevailed on to think as they thought, and act as they wished' (p. 346). The compassionate moral judgment of youths here is thus demonstrated to be at once more forgiving and productive than the destructive potential of adults such as Collins or Mr Bennet. As a consequence, Lydia is spared, and is subsequently able to experience those years which Austen elsewhere states 'give such improvement to the understanding, [as] must have opened [her] eyes' (S&S, p. 160). That Austen sees this forgiveness as the best of possible responses to the situation of the fallen teen is further suggested by the fact that it is replicated almost exactly in *Mansfield Park*. In the similar situation of Maria's fall from grace, Sir Thomas Bertram refuses to surrender his role as her guardian and comforter: she remains 'protected by him, and secured in every comfort, and supported by every encouragement to do right' (MP, p. 538). It is only under these conditions that the novel's final sentence can confirm that Maria is spared the fate of the two Elizas and the narrative has finally concluded as it ought to have done. Both Fanny and Maria are complete within the Bertram family, and both are equally secure 'within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park.'⁵⁹

The Rejection of Shame Narratives

Importantly, Austen represents those shame narratives perpetuated by male characters such as Collins as originating just as easily from other females; as Hazel Jones has pointed out, the extremism of Mr Collins' reaction to Lydia's sexual conduct is uncannily similar to that of Fanny Price's in the same aforementioned case of Maria in *Mansfield Park*.⁶⁰ In this instance, just as Mr Collins voices his preference for Lydia's death rather than her reconciliation, Fanny's extremely sensitive moral code prompts her belief that 'the death of all concerned would be preferable to the disgrace of Maria's public exposure.'⁶¹ As in the cases of Mr Bennet and Mr Collins, however, the literary mode used to exhibit this extreme response is again rejected by an authorial intervention which replaces it with a voice showing a superior, more commendable amount of sympathy for Maria's plight than that of Fanny's – this time, the narrator's. Showing pity and compassion for Maria's 'deep[...] punishment' and 'deeper guilt', the narrator models a different response by sympathising with Maria instead of shaming her (p. 535). In one of the most overt narratorial intercessions in all six novels, Austen writes that while 'other pens' - and those in the tradition of Fordyce seem particularly relevant here – might

⁵⁹ It is interesting, however, that, like Mr Bennet, Sir Thomas Bertram does initially question this decision and worries about attracting the 'neighbourhood[']s notice' by physically readmitting the fallen Maria to Mansfield Park (p. 538).

⁶⁰ Hazel Jones, *Jane Austen and Marriage* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2009), pp. 113-4.

⁶¹ Jones' paraphrase of Fanny's opinion here more succinctly summates the unabridged and undiluted version: 'as far as this world alone was concerned, the greatest blessing to every one of kindred with Mrs Rushworth would be instant annihilation.' See Jones, *Jane Austen and Marriage*, p. 105 and *Mansfield Park*, p. 511.

choose to condemn such spirited characters to 'guilt and misery', 'I quit such odious subjects... impatient to restore everybody'.⁶² Partially, this statement functions as the narratological tool that establishes the transition into the novel's conclusion, but its explicit protection of Maria also names and models to readers the most appropriate hermeneutic strategy with which to encounter teen characters who have succumbed to sexual transgression. Consequently, just as the narrator models forgiveness and 'restoration', so the reader receives an implicit exhortation to recognise in a similar way the compassion which the plight of Maria should merit. Whereas the other characters who are guaranteed social security are enumerated and quickly dismissed, Maria is singled out as a special case - as the narrator anxiously explains, there would be 'no second spring of hope or character' for her otherwise. The statement is then adapted into a rhetorical challenge through which the narrator makes a direct appeal to the reader's capacity for Smithean sympathy: 'What c[ould] exceed the misery of such a mind in such a situation?' (p. 537).

Like Fanny Price and her dismissal of Maria, the young Mary Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* similarly reacts to the fallen Lydia with self-righteous condemnation, and views all five sisters as equally implicated by association within the same shame narrative: 'This is a most unfortunate affair,' she says at the dining table with a countenance of 'grave reflection', '...and will probably be much talked of. But we must stem the tide of malice, and pour into the wounded bosoms of each other the balm of sisterly consolation'. Austen's subtle use of irony here ensures that Mary's hypocrisy in this statement mirrors that of Mr Collins; Mary laments that people will talk about the situation, while unintentionally doing the same herself, and also condemns the application of malice – while again unwittingly doing the same herself. She elaborates that

"Unhappy as the event must be for Lydia, we may draw from it this useful lesson: that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable; that one false step involves her in endless ruin; that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful; and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex." Elizabeth lifted up her eyes in amazement, but was too much oppressed to make any reply. Mary, however, continued to console herself with such kind of moral extractions from the evil before them. (p. 319)

Mary, like Mr Collins, by here asserting what she believes to be the correct moral stance, actually exhibits what is seen to be unforgiving – and therefore unchristian - behaviour. The implied criticism of her lack of empathy is further evident by the narrator's emphasis on Mary's hyperbolic description of herself as 'wounded' and her sister as the very embodiment of 'evil'.⁶³ Yet again however, Austen's

⁶² *Mansfield Park*, p. 533. Emphasis mine.

⁶³ Earlier in the novel, this same type of self-righteous morality is described by the narrator as 'threadbare': 'They found Mary, as usual, deep in the study of thorough-bass and human nature; and had some extracts to admire, and some new observations of threadbare morality to listen to' (p. 67).

representation of this shaming discourse occasions a narratorial intervention that clearly condemns Mary's heartlessness. Elizabeth's raised eyes, which function as a sort of pseudo speech-act, demonstrate her clear opposition to the extreme judgmentalism that this mindset could produce in one sister towards another. Elizabeth herself, however, is not exempt herself from perpetuating these shame narratives. She too elsewhere reveals her 'disgust' at Lydia, calling her behaviour 'dreadful' and 'in every way horrible', and is barely even able to remain in the same room as her upon her return to Longbourn – a reaction of seeming disproportionate disquietude that the more forgiving Jane does not share (pp. 305-6, 348).

The role of this shame, as well as Elizabeth's stubbornness and her titular 'strong prejudice', means that even as one of Austen's most popular heroines, Elizabeth thus represents the type of individual in Regency society whose judgmentalism causes her to condemn and belittle others. It is as true of the (mostly) likeable Fanny Price, with her preference for the 'annihilation' of Maria and 'every one of [her] kindred,' as it is of the moralising Mary, or the insufferable Mr Collins. The self-righteous condemnation of all these characters is not portrayed to be an ideal or right response any more than it is to be the true Christian response. Teens, Austen's novels imply, make mistakes, and the narratives solicit sympathy for those young victims unlucky enough to be shamed and condemned by what Place recognised to be the growing extremism of the moral dogmas which would increasingly characterise nineteenth-century society.⁶⁴

Condemnation vs. Moral Indifference: Finding the Middle Ground

Moving from one extreme to the other, a second response to sexual indiscretion in *Pride and Prejudice* is modelled by those who react to Lydia's cohabitation with Wickham not with condemnation but with moral indifference. As with the depicted adult responses to teen sexuality in *Sanditon* and *Lady Susan*, many of the characters in *Pride and Prejudice* react to Lydia's sexual relationship with indifferent attitudes that suggest she is guilty of little or no moral transgression at all. It has already been noted for instance that far from being horrified by the prospect of an illegitimate pregnancy, the inhabitants of Meryton are instead verily disappointed that Lydia is neither expecting or unmarried, because her actual course of action cannot furnish as much local conversation as these more exciting alternatives. Moreover, the older, more conservative exceptions who do

⁶⁴ This is the main topic of Kent Puckett's excellent study *Bad Form: Social Mistakes and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See too Jill Heydt-Stevenson, "'Pleasure is now, and ought to be, your business": Stealing Sexuality in Jane Austen's Juvenilia,' *Historicising Romantic Sexuality*, ed. Richard Sha (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2006), n.p. <<https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/sexuality/heydt/heydt.html>> accessed 12/08/20.

secretly judge Lydia are condemned by the narrator as 'spiteful', and become targets of Austen's characteristically savage humour:

the good-natured wishes for her well-doing which had proceeded before from all the spiteful old ladies in Meryton lost but a little of their spirit in this change of circumstances, because with such an husband her misery was considered certain.⁶⁵

This Austenian barb is telling because not only are those 'spiteful' enough to remain unsympathetic to Lydia condemned as malicious and two-faced in their false avowal of good wishes, but they also confirm a societal climate whereby stress was normally placed on the obligation to support and show forgiving Christian 'spirit' to transgressing neighbours, even if one secretly disapproved of them.⁶⁶ The fact that the ordinary residents of Meryton do not react spitefully as do the old ladies is further suggested by the fact that it is Lydia's own aunt Mrs Phillips who is represented as the main propagator of the gossip about Lydia, a character unlikely to spread such tales if the most common reaction to them was expected to be mean-spirited or injurious to the status of herself and her own family.⁶⁷ Furthermore, her sister Mrs Bennet is exultant at the attention the family is enjoying, and even goes so far as to lament that the matter is not mentioned with more detail in the papers, eagerly inquiring of Bingley if he read of it in *The Times* or *The Courier*. It was indeed common for the newspapers and gossip magazines that broadcasted sexual scandals to publish their resolutions afterwards, assuring readers that all was forgiven, as in the case under the headline FASHIONABLE SCANDAL in a paper in 1791:

One of the most beautiful of our young Ladies of Quality, whose person has been praised in poetry, and represented in painting, more frequently perhaps than any other... is at present the theme of fashionable scandal.

Nothing less than an *elopement* from the house of her mother is imputed to her, and an absence of three weeks, just at the time that her *footman* was also missing!

She returned, however, to her family, about a month since, and is now with them at a watering-place. The error being over-looked by her friends, she holds still her station in the

⁶⁵ *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 342. Of course, there is enough ambiguity in this statement that it is possible to read it without irony – i.e., that even the 'spiteful' old ladies are genuine in their good-natured wishes for Lydia. This would, of course, lend even further evidence of the general societal tolerance of sexual transgression in Austen's novels. However, my own reading interprets it to more likely be a deliberate narratorial jibe, intended to highlight the contrast between the private spitefulness and public good humouredness of such characters.

⁶⁶ Indeed, this argument is the central premise of Mai's 'To Forgive Is Divine,' which concludes that 'Forgiveness in Jane Austen is deliberately used to preserve the reputation and the well-being of families, neighbours and friends.' See Robert Mai, 'To Forgive Is Divine—and Practical, Too' and Dooley, 'A More Gentle, Less Dignified Forgiveness.'

⁶⁷ Indeed, that the tattle of Phillips and the rest of Meryton is well-meaning and non-malicious gains extra confirmation by the very fact that they are distinguished from 'the spiteful old ladies.'

fashionable circle, and will probably, in a short time, find her repentance more remembered than her fault.⁶⁸

Showing a similar spirit, Mrs Bennet, when taking leave of Lydia before her departure for Brighton, actively encourages her daughter not to miss any 'opportunity of enjoying herself as much as possible—advice which there was every reason to believe would be well attended to' (p. 261). She thus becomes the vehicle for Austen's characteristic irony: the normally unmanageable Lydia actually becomes the obedient daughter in dutifully fulfilling her mother's parting injunction. Mrs Bennet however finds little to repent of her daughter's behaviour; the only qualms she shows concerning Lydia's propriety consist of material, not moral, concern. Thus, while she initially frets that Mr Bennet might take upon himself the old-fashioned notion of fighting Wickham for principle's sake, 'her anxiety for his life' and safety is rather comically dismissed by the superseding concern that Lydia will miss the opportunity to search for superior wedding clothes and equipage, given that she will not 'know which are the best warehouses' (pp. 318, 328). The narrator concludes that Mrs Bennet is by consequence

[much] more alive to the disgrace which her want of new clothes must reflect on her daughter's nuptials, than to any sense of shame at her eloping and living with Wickham a fortnight before they took place. (p. 348)

Likewise, Mr Bennet himself, after the marriage is secured and what seemed to be a crisis is averted, soon forgives and receives his daughter's seducer with resigned amusement: 'He is as fine a fellow... as ever I saw. He simpers, smirks, and makes love to us all. I am prodigiously proud of him. I defy even Sir William Lucas himself to produce a more valuable son-in-law' (p. 365). The gentle sarcasm of Mr Bennet (who later states that Wickham is his favourite son-in-law of the three) belies the degree of only partial concern he takes in the sex lives of his daughters throughout the novel. Although he initially laments the effects of his over-passive and permissive parenting style, he remains representative of those wider Regency attitudes depicted in *Peacock and Place* by sardonically assuring his daughters that in reality his regret was not 'overpower[ing]' and 'will pass away soon enough' (pp. 330, 420).

In many instances of these indifferent attitudes and reactions to Lydia's situation, the transience and affectation of their voiced intentions and values carries inherent, though mild, narratorial criticism. Just as Walter and Elizabeth Elliot in *Persuasion* are implicitly criticised for caring more about the loss of Penelope Clay's flattery than her reputation as a kept mistress, so Mrs Bennet is represented as more concerned about her daughter's clothes than her elopement, and Mr Bennet self-avowedly exhibits no lasting concern at all. Neither does the narrator seem overly approving of

⁶⁸ *The Public Advertiser*, London (13 August 1791), quoted in Jones, *Jane Austen and Marriage*, pp. 113-4.

the reaction of Mrs Phillips and the rest of Meryton's inhabitants, who for the benefit of their own gossip are only disappointed in Lydia for not transgressing further. Crucially, however, while the narratorial censure of the first set of characters who respond to Lydia with ostracising condemnation is both explicit, emphatic, and the cause of frequent narratorial intervention, the criticism allotted to this second group of characters is light-handed by comparison and without any serious sense of indictment. It is implied instead of stated, and certainly not emphasised in the same, condemnatory way as that of the former group ('That is his notion of Christian forgiveness!') In this way, the Bennet parents' moral indifference is amusing, but by no means either malicious or socially transgressive; similarly, the Elliots are presented as equally flawed, but only to the extent that their values conform to the superficiality of wider fashionable society. Though Austen does not present this moral indifference as ideal, it is depicted as simply, as Edmund Bertram has already indicated, a matter of what society 'does.'

It is also important to note that the same tolerance and indifference towards youth sexual propriety exhibited by these adult characters of *Pride and Prejudice* is shared by the youths themselves. When Mr Darcy visits Lydia in her chambers with Wickham in London and has his fears confirmed that they are indeed living in a relationship of so-called 'disgrace', Lydia herself finds nothing reprehensible in her conduct and refuses to either leave or change her situation: 'he found Lydia absolutely resolved on remaining where she was. She cared for none of her friends; she wanted no help of his; she would not hear of leaving Wickham' (p. 357). Elizabeth originally hopes that Lydia would only have had sexual relations with Wickham on the expectation of marriage at 'some time or other,' a surmised itself supported by the assumption they are in London.⁶⁹ Elizabeth is wrong, however; the Bennets' uncle, upon finding them in London, confirms the opposite: 'They are not married, nor can I find there was any intention of being so' (p. 333). Aged eighteen, Kitty demonstrates her approval of her sister's conduct by her willingness to act as an accomplice, deliberately and artfully 'conceal[ing] their attachment' and later revealing her complicity with 'a very natural triumph' (p. 320). Unlike in *Sanditon*, the free indirect discourse that reveals the inner motives of Wickham himself comes through the filter of another character; it is only through the narrated consciousness of Elizabeth's mind that readers gain access to his motivations. Despite this, his formulations are so predictable that Elizabeth finds them to be easily legible: his mounting debts meant he needed to leave Brighton quickly; Lydia's person was attractive and had sufficient 'charms', and he was simply 'not the young man to resist an opportunity of having a companion' (the euphemistic terms

⁶⁹ After the Hardwicke Act of 1753 forced couples seeking marriage to wait three weeks for their banns to be read, London was the easiest place an anonymous young couple could live together without restraint for this amount of time without detection.

'companion' and the capacious volume of Lydia's buxom 'charms' are ostensible examples of erotic code words). The young couple's confidence in the acceptability of their actions is further shown in their 'easy assurance' upon returning to Longbourn: Lydia is 'unabashed' and 'fearless... turn[ing] from sister to sister, demanding their congratulations', and Wickham full of 'smiles and... easy address' (pp. 348-9, 351). Indeed, one of the most striking moments of the novel is their actuation of the hierarchical system that results in their *elevated* status at Longbourn. The Regency society's privileging of sexual initiation when within marriage dictated that, despite being the youngest, an actively sexual teen like Lydia possessed higher social rank than her virginal eldest sister: '[she] walk[ed] up to her mother's right hand, and... sa[id] to her eldest sister, "Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman"' (p. 350). Lydia's confidence in both her status as a sexually-initiated woman and the decisive action she took in attempting to gain it, demonstrate a diegetic world in which polite society perceived extramarital sex even from a consenting young female as an entirely reparable offence, and actively sexual teens within marriage as generating higher social currency than their non-sexualised siblings. As with both the Bennets and the Elliots, Austen seems to equate this levity in society with a trivialising shallowness that does not sufficiently comprehend the full moral and religious nuance of Anglican views on marriage. But crucially, it is still, in Austen's overall 'economy of salvation', suggested as a happy ending, and thus far more preferable and practical than the conclusion of tragedy and punishment inflicted upon those such as the unfortunate Elizas in *Sense and Sensibility*.

From the oldest to the youngest then, the Bennet girls themselves demonstrate the application of varying amounts of forgiveness and tolerance. Despite the fact that they are brought up in the same circumstances under the same formative influences, Austen presents the five Bennet girls as exhibiting a fundamentally different set of values, which are all used to model a range of possible responses to teen sexuality to their original readers. Lydia and Kitty provide an ample warning to those teens who are too free with the opposite sex, and Mary and Elizabeth enact in the opposite reaction a caution to readers against shaming or condemning those teens who do. The sister who responds in the most model fashion is therefore, I would conclude, Jane. Unlike her four sisters, the conduct of Jane is praised throughout the novel, both before and after Lydia's egress. Jane is shocked, even horrified, at the sexual impropriety of her sister, but nonetheless forgives her, and is represented as acting with her usual distinguishing characteristic of seeking the best in everyone regardless. As with Elinor Dashwood in the case of Willoughby, Jane Bennet is narrated to exercise pragmatism and reason instead of passion and resentment, and both heroines are consequently able to forgive (and, moreover, charitably 'wish...happiness [for]') the seducers of their sisters. While Mary selfishly 'moralises' on what she herself and her other 'wounded' sisters might suffer by proxy through Lydia's

sexual misconduct, Jane alone evidences the Smithean capacity to be 'wretched in the thought of what her *sister* must endure' (p. 348, emphasis mine). Finally, it is only through the intercession co-led by Jane that Lydia, like Maria Bertram, is treated with true, Christian compassion by her father, and successfully restored to that position within the family whereby both young women can learn from their mistakes. Whereas Mr Collins' religious dogmatism causes him to prefer the ostracization and even 'death' of the erring Lydia in the style of the two Elizas, Jane is the kind of Christian who prioritises the exercise of unconditional forgiveness to all ('Of whom does Jane ever think ill?', p. 313). It is clear which of these two versions of Christian charity that Austen's fiction encourages its readers to emulate.

Conclusion

It is the middle ground between extreme condemnation and extreme moral indifference then that Austen models as the most ideal response to teen expressions of sexuality. Of course, I am not alone in making this observation; the lack of judgmental punitiveness that Austen's novels clearly advocate, and the tolerant pragmatism that I have identified in them, finds support in the work of several other critics.⁷⁰ Claudia Johnson has similarly argued that the conciliatory politics of Austen's novels establish a 'progressive middle ground' between radical Jacobinism and the dogmatism of Anti-Jacobin conservatism;⁷¹ going even further, Sarah Raff has argued that Austen's soothing resolutions and personal, intensely sympathetic narratorial style allows the act of reading her fiction to itself resemble a voyeuristically sexual experience (a 'new, non-pedagogical mode of engaging the reader's erotic life'.)⁷² To Raff, it is only by such drastic authorial 'interven[tion]' in dismissal of the pedagogical 'didactic mode' that 'happy erotic anticipation' can occur in the reading process.⁷³ It is my suggestion, however, that this process in itself *is* still pedagogical; the mere fact that the type of pedagogy in question is one of permissiveness or tolerance does not change its basic aim to educate, or reform. Austen, along with Place and Peacock, sees the punishment and condemnation of teens expressing sexuality as unnecessary and unhealthy. Unlike the atheists Place and Peacock however, the pragmatism of Austen's enlightenment Anglicanism means that the punitive treatment of the sexualised teen takes on a specifically theological dimension, and itself constitutes a contravention of true Christian benevolence. As a result, those un pitying adults described by the narrator as 'spiteful' in Austen's novels are not represented to be merely dogmatic, unfeeling and unforgiving, but are also

⁷⁰ See Dooley, 'A More Gentle, Less Dignified, Forgiveness', and Mai, 'To Forgive Is Divine—and Practical, Too.'

⁷¹ Johnson, *Women, Politics and the Novel*, p. 166.

⁷² Sarah Raff, *Jane Austen's Erotic Advice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

subject to Mr Bennet's much more serious accusation that their intolerance and lack of compassion is fundamentally *unchristian*.

In Part Three of this thesis, I have argued that the stance of many Romantic-era writers on issues of teen sexuality, just like that of teen education and teen (mis)conduct, was one characterised by tolerance and pragmatism. Teen characters in these narratives are normalised as fundamentally sexual individuals, with legitimised physical desires. In Austen's writings, and (to a limited extent) also in Place's, teens are also encouraged to suppress the enactment of these erotic drives until within the bounds of the type of marital union that could be sanctified by the Church. But when this does not happen, neither Austen, Peacock nor Place reject or condemn to ruination those who have not been able to do so. Moreover, in all three of these writers, it is often acknowledged that the topic of sex is both stimulating and tantalising, and can be treated with a knowing humour; Peacock's and Austen's narratives in particular are full of sexual innuendos and witticisms. When it comes to the condemnation of the fallen, however, jokes quickly disappear from the narratives, and light-hearted, comedic characters such as Mr Collins have the potential to become sinister. To Austen, Peacock and Place, as well as to the real teens who suffered as the result of such conservative opinions, this moral extremism was no joke. To all three of these writers, and doubtless many of their readers, the matter of punishing teens for having expressed their sexuality at the very time that they most needed compassion was a very serious matter indeed.

Epilogue

This thesis has argued that among the numerous adult attitudes towards teens seen in British literature between 1780 and 1825, the presence of a permissive, ideological tolerance was amongst the most marked. Its tenets were addressed to audiences of all ages, from children (as in *The Parent's Assistant*) and adults (as in *The Enquirer*) to the teens themselves (as in *Self-Cultivation: Hints to a Youth leaving School*). I have located the presence of this tolerance in genres as wide ranging as courtship novels, pedagogical fiction, autobiographies, children's literature, educational treatises and conduct books. It has been identified in textual representations of teens of both a low socio-economic status (as in Place's autobiography) as well as high (as in teens from the polite, respectable families of Austen). And - perhaps most crucially of all - it has also been shown to have been applied equally to adolescent girls and adolescent boys. Truly, the existence of such a tolerance was remarkable indeed.

In closing the study, I finally draw attention to a phenomenon occurring separately from the British adult tolerance towards adolescents identified in this thesis, but which occurred at the same time and shared many of its ideological goals. Specifically, I refer to those tolerant ideals of youth seen in neighbouring French reformation of family legislation undertaken by the new First Republic. Upon formation of the Republic, the successive revolutionary governments passed a series of new laws between 1789 and 1804 designed to reform the structure of family, including new policies on marriage and divorce. Most pertinently to my own study however, this also included a series of laws that were specifically intended to enfranchise youth members within families, granting them their own legislative power as individual French citizens and protecting them from the potentially tyrannous authority of abusive parents.¹ The tolerant attitudes towards adolescence and youthful liberty in these laws was ground-breaking and raise important questions about their relationship to the tolerant patterns this thesis has identified in British literature of the same period. To what extent might this British tolerance be considered a related or resurrected form of originally French revolutionary ideas or practices?

¹ In compiling the content of this epilogue, I am indebted to the research of Jennifer Ngairé Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Peter McPhee, *Living the Revolution, 1789-1799* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Margaret Darrow, *Revolution in the House: Family, Class and Inheritance in Southern France, 1775-1825* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Jeffrey Merrick, 'Fathers and Kings: Patriarchalism and Absolutism in Eighteenth-Century French Politics,' *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 308 (1993), 281-303; Sarah Hanley, 'Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France,' *French Historical Studies*, 16 (1989), 4-27 and James Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980).

Although the manifestations of this tolerance towards teens differed between the two nations, they seemed to have shared a common ideological foundation. For instance, since the restoration of the British monarchy, both French and English moralists jointly utilised the symbolism of the nation-state as a family, with its citizens as children - an understanding shared by many other European nations of the eighteenth century.² In such a motif, the youth's relationship to their father was often figured as the citizen's relationship to their king. 'To love, to govern, to recompense, and to punish are all duties of both the father and the king,' asserted the French moralist Francois Toussaint, and 'Government, in its very principle, deduces its primary origin from family rule... *states and nations are but families upon a larger scale*,' assented British anti-Jacobin Thomas Dutton.³ Because of these types of associations, intolerant and tyrannous paternal treatment in eighteenth-century Britain and France alike would increasingly become projected onto the figure of the king. British revolutionary propagandists began to criticise George III for the specific crime of being an 'unnatural father' to the nation, and Wollstonecraft would attack 'tyrants of every denomination, from the weak king to the weak father of a family,' challenging the 'divine' right of husbands and fathers in equal measure to the recently exploded 'divine right of kings.'⁴ Similarly, revolutionary deputies frequently described the French king Louis XVI in the specific terms of failed father of the nation: 'Le trop grand pouvoir amène, la tyrannie aigrit, & trop souvent, au lieu d'un père tendre & d'un fils reconnaissant, ne laisse plus appercevoir qu'un maitre barbare & un esclave révolté' ('Excessive power leads to tyranny, tyranny embitters, and too often, instead of a tender father and a grateful son, there is seen only a barbarous master and a slave in revolt').⁵ As hinted in the thesis' introduction, Balzac put the matter more abruptly. 'En coupant la tête de Louis XVI, la République a coupé la tête à tous les pères de famille,' writes Mlle Chaulieu in *Letters of Two Young Brides* ('By cutting off the head of Louis XVI, the Republic cut off the head of all the fathers of families').⁶

While I stop short of claiming this philosophy to be a direct contribution to the tolerance I describe throughout this thesis, I close my study by emphasising the need for more research that investigates the connections between the two. For the theorists who distinguish children from

² According to Lynn Hunt, 'Most European nations of the eighteenth century thought of their nations as families writ large.' *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. xiv.

³ Quotd in Desan, *Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, p. 143 and a 'Brief Sketch of the Character of George III,' *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor*, 11 (1802), p. 186.

⁴ Hunt, *Family Romance*, p. 71 and Wollstonecraft, quotd in Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, p 177.

⁵ Theophile Berlier, *Discours et projet de loi, sur les rapports qui doivent subsister entre les enfans et les auteurs de leurs jours, en remplacement des droits connus sous le titre usurpé de puissance paternelle, par Berlier, député de la Côte-d'Or* (Paris: Convention Nationale, 1793), p. 4.

⁶ Honoré de Balzac, *Memoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées* [1842], quotd in Yvonne Knibiehler, *Les Pères aussi ont une histoire* (Paris: Hachette, 1987), p. 161.

adolescents due to their ability to think for themselves instead of accepting the dictates of their parents, the French Revolution's association between the fall of the father-king and the rejection of parental authority cannot fail to have symbolic resonance. As the influential deputy Cambacérès explained in the National Convention, 'The imperious voice of reason has made itself heard; it says, no more paternal power; it is deceiving nature to establish its rights by compulsion.'⁷ By themselves identifying as children betrayed by the power-abusing dictates of the father-king, the revolutionaries associated the monarchical structure of patriarchal society with parental tyranny and despotism; indeed, one deputy in the Constituent Assembly of 1790 assumed that his audience already took it for granted that 'under the Old Regime the tyranny of parents was as terrible as the despotism' of the *ancien regime*.⁸ Nor was this association reserved for specifically male figures of fathers and kings: mothers were frequently included in revolutionary critiques of parental power ('les pères *et les mères* ...s'exagèrent quelquefois les torts des sujets dont ils ont sollicité la détention; et, si l'on se prêtoit trop facilement à la rigueur dont ils voudroient user, il arriveroit souvent que ce ne seroit plus une correction, mais une véritable peine qu'on infligeroit'),⁹ and Lynn Hunt has insightfully demonstrated that the unpopularity and subsequent execution of Marie-Antoinette was precisely because of her similar reputation, both symbolically and literally, as a supposed 'bad mother'.¹⁰ Having challenged and deconstructed the hierarchical and patriarchal power of the father and mother, the revolutionaries turned their attention to establishing new ideologies of familial structures that mirrored the intended *liberté* and *égalité* of the new Republican State. Responding to vocal and popular appeals for change, their intention was to pass a series of new laws by which adolescent children would be enfranchised as rights-bearing citizens, whose allegiance to the state could trump that to their parents.¹¹ Their advocacy of youthful liberty was clear. 'If we finally accept as an organising principle that the strong will no longer impose laws on the weak in the great family of the State, why would we allow it in our own families?' they demanded.¹²

The effects of this new attitude towards youth were extensive, most especially for daughters, younger sons, and adopted or illegitimate children. They included the drafting of legislation which

⁷ Émile Masson, *La Puissance Paternelle et la Famille sous la Révolution* (Paris: Pedone, 1910), p. 227.

⁸ Deputy Gossin, address dated 5 August 1790, *Archives Parlementaires*, 17 (Paris, 1884), p. 617.

⁹ 'Fathers and mothers alike ...sometimes exaggerate the wrongs of the subjects whose detention they have requested; and, if one lends oneself too easily to the rigor which they would like to use, it would often happen that it would no longer be a correction, but a real penalty that one would inflict.' Frantz Funck-Brentano, *Les Lettres de Cachet à Paris, 1659-1789* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1903), p. xlv, emphasis mine.

¹⁰ Hunt, *Family Romance*, esp. pp. 89-123.

¹¹ Desan, *Family on Trial*, p. 4.

¹² *Remonstrances des mères et filles normandes de l'ordre du tiers*, 1789, quoted in Desan, 'The French Revolution and the Family,' *A Companion to the French Revolution*, ed. Peter McPhee (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), pp. 470-485 (p. 470).

ensured egalitarian inheritance among daughters and sons alike; introduced limits to paternal authority; lowered the age of majority; forbade parental intervention in the choice of marital partners, established fairer adoption policies, and validated and enfranchised children who were illegitimate.¹³ These laws have all been demonstrated by legal and historical scholars to have had a ‘profound impact’ on the relationships and power dynamics between parents and children.¹⁴ Even more liberating were the radical new policies abolishing the parental use of *lettres de cachet* and establishing the *tribunaux de familles*. *Lettres de cachets* were royal arrest warrants which imprisoned supposedly ‘rebellious’ children who disagreed with their parents. Honoré de Mirabeau, himself a former victim of a paternal *lettre de cachet*, inveighed against the power they invested to fathers to ‘not just to disinherit their children, but to sell them.’¹⁵ The establishment of *tribunaux de famille* (‘family courts’ or ‘family tribunals’) were similarly impactful and aimed to make litigation more accessible and affordable to adolescents aged up to twenty in dispute with their parents or families. Just as the king was made answerable to his people and was taken to trial, so too parents were made answerable to their children and could be taken to court. Nor was the establishment of such courts tokenistic or half-hearted in their advocacy of the youth subject; in the district of Caen, for instance, young people won fully 100% of the cases brought to the *tribunaux*.¹⁶ Together with the abolishment of *lettres de cachet* and the success of the *tribunaux*, the new revolutionary legislation of the family thus had enormous impact on the everyday relationships and power dynamics between parents and children. According to Desan, ‘Together with the cultural climate that contested paternal power and deference to tradition, these legal changes encouraged... young men and women to defy their parents’ suggestions more boldly or to have greater confidence in their own judgment,’ and allowed adolescents who ‘chafed against the constraints and hierarchies of families’ to ‘appropriate concepts such as “liberty”, “natural rights” and “equality” [in...] vehement critique of family customs.’¹⁷

It is immediately apparent then why legislation evincing such tolerant attitudes towards youths raises questions about their relationships to those similar attitudes identified in the present thesis. Although these legislative changes occurred in a neighbouring country, they were also the subject of intense scrutiny from a British public who felt themselves immediately affected by Revolutionary policies: ‘If it be asked – What is the French Revolution to us? We answer... *It is much*.

¹³ These effects were primarily enacted by the ‘loi [lit. ‘law’] de 12 brumaire an II’ (2 November 1793), the ‘loi de 22 frimaire an II’, (12 December 1793), the ‘loi de 16 frimaire an III’ (6 December 1794), the abolition of primogeniture in 1791, the inheritance estates law of 1791, 1793 and 1794, the poor relief law of June 1793, and the establishment of the *tribunnaux des familles*.

¹⁴ Desan, *Family on Trial*, p. 142.

¹⁵ Quid in Desan, *Family on Trial*, p. 146. See too Hunt, *Family Romance*, p. 20.

¹⁶ These results were sometimes contested however, or subject to appeal. See Desan, pp. 194, 401-2n.45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 194.

Much to us as men: Much to as Englishmen... the French Revolution concerns us *immediately*,' asserted Thomas Paine.¹⁸ It should also be remembered that although the majority of the British public eventually responded to the Revolution with a condemnatory conservatism, initial reactions to French events in 1789 were widely positive, and showed a marked receptiveness to certain revolutionary ideals.¹⁹ Byron, Shelley, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt and Keats all expressed support for the revolutionary effort to a smaller or larger extent, and Marilyn Butler has pointed out that 'at one time or another most, though not all, of the leading writers of the period in England expressed disapproval of the war with republican France.'²⁰ Given that so many of the writers of my own study specifically acknowledge the influence of French or Rousseauvian thought on their own ideas, it would be foolish to underestimate the effect that French revolutionary ideologies of youth might have had on those that this thesis has identified in the literature of Britain. Precise speculation on the nature of their relationship stretches far beyond the scope of just one short epilogue and constitutes, as I have emphasised, a vital site for future research. Despite this, I draw attention to these symbolic connections in closing to finally demonstrate that the types of adult tolerance of teens identified in my own study were not occurring in isolation. Clearly, the political and cultural debates in both Britain and France surrounding the build-up and effects of the French Revolution held special resonance for the subsequent treatment and tolerance of young people in particular.

¹⁸ Thomas Paine, *Address and Dedication, of the Friends of Universal Peace and Liberty, held at the Thatched House Tavern, St James Street, August 20th 1791* (London, 1791), pp. 2-3.

¹⁹ For instance, Marilyn Butler notes that 'between 1760 and 1790, when political feeling ran less high, it was reformist sentiment that was common and even fashionable among the gentry. Thus, the last decades of the ancient regime are, perhaps ironically, much more 'liberal' in most European cultures than the post-revolutionary period of 1790 to 1820.' *Romantics, Rebels & Romantics: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 15.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 5.

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