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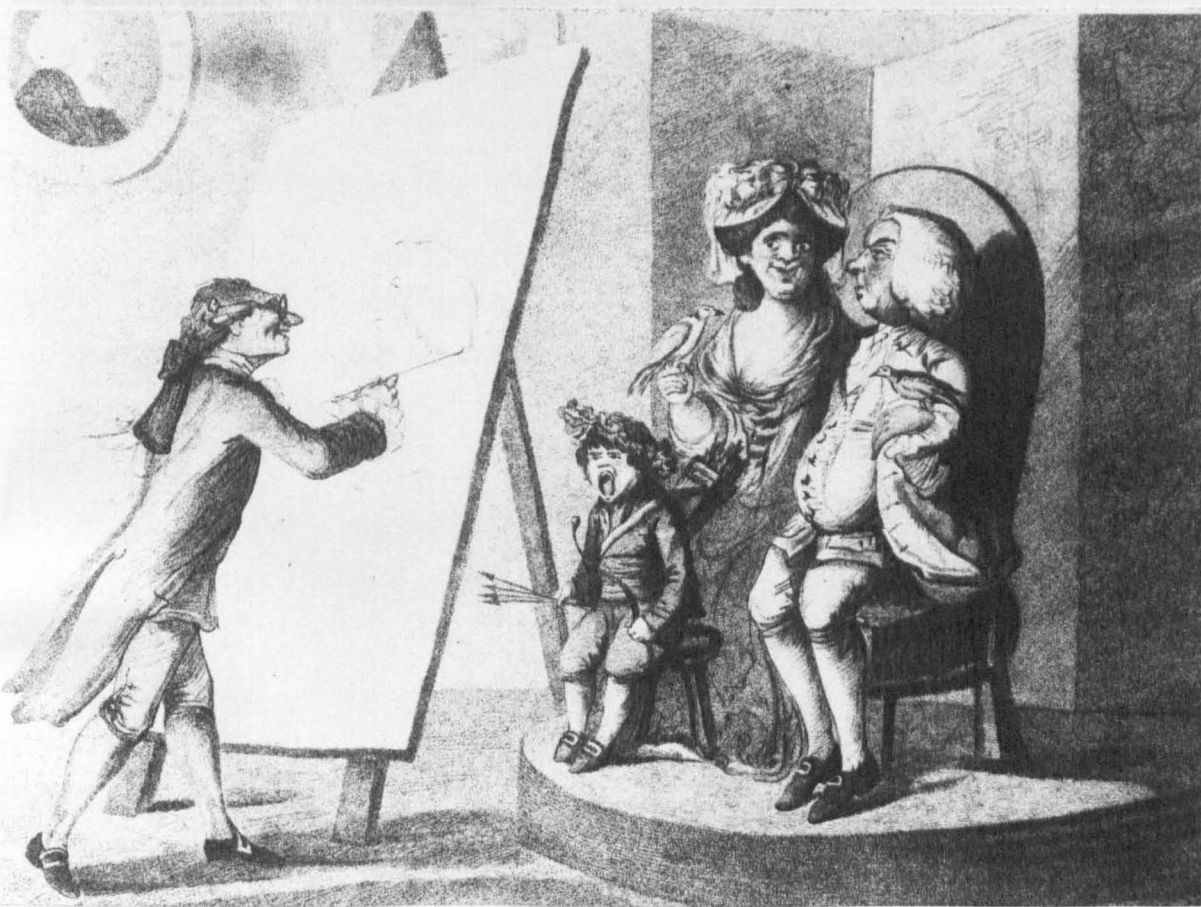
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FAMILY AND FAMILIARITY:

THE DOMESTIC SPHERE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH VISUAL CULTURE

In Two Volumes

Volume I: Text



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Department of History of Art, June 2000

**VOLUME 2 RESTRICTED
UNDER INSTRUCTION
FROM UNIVERSITY**

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fig.154 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Henry Loftus, Earl of Ely with his second Wife, Anne Bonfoy*, oil on canvas, 1775, Bearsted Collection, Upton House, 236.2 x 152.1 (93 x 59 $\frac{1}{8}$)

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DECLARATION

Some of the material from chapters one and two appeared in my MA dissertation entitled '*Concordia Discors: Conjugal Discourses of the Eighteenth Century*', submitted at the University of Warwick, History of Art Department in 1996. I declare, however, that none of the material in this thesis has been previously published in any form. This dissertation is all my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other University.

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses eighteenth-century portraiture within the context of 'norms' propagated in contemporary prescriptive and fictional literature, 'norms' which overlay a heterogeneous reality. The aspirant portraitist had to accord with the desire of sitters to be depicted in a manner that would receive approbation. Thus, disparate relationships were pictorially subsumed within affectionate ideals that burgeoned in the mid eighteenth century, stimulated by the cult of sensibility and disseminated through an expanding body of literature to an expanding readership. However, these did not displace more 'traditional' concerns, but appeared alongside continuing pictorial emphases on patriarchy, hierarchy and dynastic continuity.

The introduction outlines the historiography and methodology and provides a detailed summary of each chapter. Chapter one examines the emergence of the companionate marital portrait, together with pictorial condemnations of arranged and romantic unions. Chapter two argues that this new emphasis on affection did not displace patriarchy. Pendants continued to demarcate masculine and feminine domains whilst double portraits emphasised those domains as complementary, but unequal. Chapter three discusses the pictorial and literary sentimentalisation of motherhood and argues that condemnations of female display were acknowledged in portraits of engrossed and self-effacing mothers. Chapter four counters that the sentimentalisation of the patriarch was limited by a continuing preoccupation with his pre-eminence and that later images of playful children maintained earlier concerns with age and gender hierarchies and 'futuraity'. Chapter five argues that both an emphasis on heirs and anxiety over the implications of high infant mortality for dynastic succession remained constant. The contextualisation of portraits within the home also reveals an emphasis on unbroken lineage. Chapter six examines satires of transgressions of ideal familial relations by members of a supposedly debauched aristocracy. However, these aristocrats sometimes countered such attacks with portraits emphasising status and domestic virtue. The conclusion summarises the arguments and discusses their implications for debates over class.

INTRODUCTION

FAMILY AND FAMILIARITY: THE DOMESTIC SPHERE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH VISUAL CULTURE

Pictorial representations of the family in eighteenth-century England were both numerous and varied, ranging from the small-scale provincial conversation piece to the grandiose society portrait. However, despite their divergences, these images reveal clear stylistic, compositional and narrative transitions in the mid decades of the 1700s. Whilst direct comparison is always wrought with difficulties, the contrast between Bartholomew Dandridge's portrait of the d'Albiac family in Hungerford Park (fig.1) and Johann Zoffany's *John, 3rd Duke of Atholl and his Family* of 1767 (fig.2) highlights the main features of this change. From stiffly posed, doll-like characters, the figures become more fluid in their actions. The sense of narrative is much greater, the family members united in a variety of activities to the exclusion of the viewer, belying the sense of the sitting in favour of an impression of privacy. Whilst in the former, the father stands apart from the family, merely gesticulating towards his wife and offspring for the benefit of the spectator, the Duke of Atholl is more involved, educating his eldest son in the art of fishing. The physical proximity of the matriarch to her children in this later image reveals a new pictorial intimacy and emphasis on the mother-child bond that is typical of this period. Those children are no longer represented as diminutive adults but are now distinguished from their elders in terms of physiognomy, dress and, most importantly, behaviour. Whilst the daughter on the end of the line in Dandridge's portrait solemnly returns the gesture of her father, the offspring of the Duke of Atholl fish, climb trees and pick flowers.

Such pictures have been almost completely neglected in the historiography of the family, an historiography that is characterised by conflicting methodologies and theses. As we shall see, developmental models that propose the contemporary Western family to be the end point of a process of modernisation that has stretched over some two centuries have been countered by claims that nothing has changed very much since the Middle Ages. Notions that twentieth-century values of affection, intimacy, privacy and the rights of the individual were born in the 1700s conflict with views that such precepts are inherent within our socio-cultural heritage. Whilst more recent scholars have attempted to break the resultant impasse (providing more rigorous studies, swelling the body of empirical evidence and emphasising heterogeneity), the subject has ground to something of a standstill. Focussing on marital and parental relationships, this dissertation will consider whether pictorial representations of the family can contribute to these debates. Whilst the transition outlined above may seem to support claims of change, the possibility of underlying continuities cannot be ignored. In order to execute this study, it will be necessary to theorise the relationship of the visual to more commonly utilised sources, whether those relating to individual lives, such as diaries or letters, or the prescriptive and fictional literature that attempted to dictate the way in which those lives should be conducted. Thus, it will be considered whether pictorial changes or continuities reflect sitters' actual experiences, ideological 'norms', entirely aesthetic realities or some mid point between these polarities.

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Whilst I will deal with each aspect of the historiography of the family in depth in the relevant chapters, this section will provide a brief survey of it as a basis for a methodological discussion. Literature on the subject is highly complex and convoluted, characterised by numerous schisms in the criteria for selection of data and, most importantly, in the interpretation of those data. In 1980, Michael Anderson usefully elucidated the four main approaches to the subject current at that time: psychohistory (which he immediately discarded), demography, the sentiments approach and the path of household economics. Of these, he regarded those who followed the route of analysing sentiments, of assessing degrees of affection, individualism and equality within the family, as the most controversial.¹ The most influential of these historians was Lawrence Stone. Whilst his seminal text, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, is now largely vilified, Stone broke completely new ground and amassed an incredible amount of varied evidence relating to the family over three centuries.² Drawing heavily on the work of the French *mentalités* school in general and the writings of Phillipe Ariès in particular, he traced the history of the family back to an 'Open Lineage' system in which marriage was uncommunicative and often brutal, children were largely ignored and relations "were not much closer than those with neighbours, with relatives, or with 'friends.'" This was supplanted in the sixteenth century by a new domesticity, creating the 'Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family.' Although affective bonds were now stronger, church and

¹ M. Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914* (London, 1980), chapter 3

² For criticisms of Stone, see J.W. Scott, 'The History of the Family as an Affective Unit', *Social History* 4, 3 (1979), pp.509-16; E.P. Thompson, 'Happy Families: Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*', *New Society* 41 (8 September 1977), pp.499-501;

state reinforced the power of the head of the household and thus created “a legalised petty tyrant within the home.” However, supervening these two domestic environments, Stone then proposed the modern ‘Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family,’ materialising out of the patriarchal gloom in the later seventeenth century. Children were now treasured and had time, love, energy and money lavished upon them, economic concerns in marriage were supplanted by a desire for “well-trying personal affection” and the dominance of the patriarch was mitigated by a new awareness of individual rights.³ This developmental model was reflected in the work of many of Stone’s contemporaries, although each proffered a different time scale and focussed on a different class as the vanguard of change. Randolph Trumbach similarly emphasised the eighteenth century as the key period of transition but proposed the aristocracy as at the forefront whilst Edward Shorter favoured the lower classes. He claimed that plebeians were the first to experience ‘modern’ values of privacy, intimacy and sensuality in the early nineteenth century as a direct result of the industrial revolution.⁴

Such models have been variously and heavily attacked. Revisionists have condemned such whiggish theses as simplistic, as reducing the complexities and vagaries of domestic life into a series of diametrically opposed principles. They have

A. Macfarlane, ‘*The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* by Lawrence Stone’, *History and Theory* 18 (1979a), pp.103-126

³ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), chapter 3, ‘The Open Lineage Family 1450-1630’; chapter 4, ‘The Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family 1550-1700’ and, for the ‘Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family’ see chapter 7, ‘Mating Arrangements’, chapter 8, ‘The Companionate Marriage’, and chapter 9, ‘Parent-Child Relations’. Quoting pp.5, 7, 272. P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (1960), transl. R. Baldick (Harmondsworth, 1962)

⁴ R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, San Francisco and London, 1978); E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1976)

criticised the perception of families as either formal or affectionate, marriages as either based on pecuniary motives or on true love and children as either virtually abused or carefully nurtured.⁵ These scholars have also objected to the ‘present-centredness’ of the traditional model of change.⁶ Both John W. Scott and E.P. Thompson have criticised Stone’s *The Family, Sex and Marriage* in these terms, the latter suggesting that “the prospective purchaser is supposed to squeal excitedly: ‘Darling, look, the history of *us!*’”⁷ The quest for ‘modern’ notions of familial affection can easily result in a picture of their absence in the pre-modern period and, therefore, in a linear model that focuses on their origin, development and culmination. However, perhaps most problematic of all is the value judgement inherent in the placing of antipathetic values at either end of a time continuum, suggesting that the pre-modern family is ‘nicer’ or, more commonly, ‘nastier’ than that of the twentieth century.⁸ Shorter, for example, referred to the family’s “journey into the modern world” and, having outlined the formal and formulaic world of the French peasant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sighed, “what a sad little world from our modern perspective, in which *calcul* dominates *la vie intime*, and sentiment counts for nothing in the vital decisions of life.”⁹

⁵ K. Wrightson, ‘The Family in Early Modern England: Continuity and Change,’ in R. Connors, C. Jones and S. Taylor, eds., *Hanoverian England and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp.12-13

⁶ For example, see A. Wilson, ‘The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès’, *History and Theory* 19 (1980), pp.132-53

⁷ Scott, ‘The History of the Family’, pp.509-16, especially pp. 509, 514; Thompson, ‘Happy Families’, pp.499-501, quoting p.499

⁸ M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1996), p.7

⁹ Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family*, pp.3, 148

In reaction against the idea that the family had followed a clear process of development and improvement, culminating in the twentieth century, many historians went to the other extreme and advocated almost complete continuity. Alan Macfarlane was the most notable of these, claiming that “the English now have roughly the same family system as they had in about 1250.”¹⁰ He argued that reasonably egalitarian, affectionate and personally determined marriages could be traced back to (at least) the thirteenth century and denied “any basic shift in...deep affection for children.”¹¹ In particular, he focussed on Ralph Josselin, a seventeenth-century clergyman, whose personal diary reveals a caring and reciprocal relationship between father and offspring at a date when, according to Stone, the authoritarian *pater familias* was supposed to be crushing the last vestiges of infantile behaviour out of his children.¹²

However, efforts to smooth out all transitions over centuries of family life are even more problematic than attempts to assert a linear progression. Whilst the use of macro-developments such as industrialisation and urbanisation to explain neatly the modernisation of the household is questionable, so too is claiming that the family unit was immune to all such historical change. Equally, the criticisms of ‘present-centredness’ that have been levelled at Shorter and Stone are just as applicable to the work of Macfarlane. He privileged the modern to the same degree as his forebears by refusing to believe that things could have ever been any different. Similarly, both

¹⁰ A. Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978), p.198

¹¹ A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840* (Oxford, 1986), chapters 4 and 8, quoting p.53

¹² A. Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a seventeenth-century clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1970); Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*, e.g. p.216

schools have refused to acknowledge the inevitable slippages between historical sources and their meanings, either finding evidence for 'modern' conceptions of family life in the past or commenting on its absence. Finally, whilst Stone, Shorter and Trumbach suggested a variety of reasons for their posited shift in domestic life in the eighteenth century, no satisfactory reason has been given to explain the supposed resilience of the family to all external social, cultural and economic forces.¹³

More recently, therefore, historians have warned about over-subscribing to either of these polarised models of continuity or change. R.B. Outhwaite has rightly warned that "we should resist the temptation to substitute one extreme stereotype for another" and Tamara K. Hareven has advised a methodological compromise between the two in her recommendation of the life-course approach to family history. Whilst she objects to the "linearity" of models of change and to "generalisations for the entire society based on the experience of one class, usually the middle class," she has also argued that over-emphasis of continuity has "sometimes obscured important historical differences between past and present family patterns."¹⁴ Many, as a result, have opted for analysing a few specific sources in depth in order to emphasise individual agency and variation. However, this approach raises problems of its own. Whilst it implies a greater investigative honesty, allowing examples to stand on their own merits rather than forcing them into broad schemata, it is not difficult to exploit the individual study's air of authority to attack the macro-history. Any wide thesis can be seemingly undermined by the elucidation of one or two exceptions, accused of gross

¹³ Wrightson, 'The Family in Early Modern England', p.15

¹⁴ R.B. Outhwaite, 'Introduction: Problems and Perspectives in the History of Marriage', in R.B. Outhwaite, ed., *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981), p.7; T.K. Hareven, 'The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change', *American Historical Review* 96 (1991), pp. 104, 124

oversimplification and, thus, seemingly debunked. Second, as well as the possibility of descending into mere biography or retrospective cultural anthropology, such cases are largely rootless without a general theoretical framework such as that established by Lawrence Stone.¹⁵ Without a wider context, or at least the cross-referencing of a number of examples, it is difficult to address the issue of change in a study of this sort. Third, if the biographical or anthropological charge is unfounded, then surely this is because the writer is inferring that the case study is typical, at least of the class, gender or profession in question, once again raising the issue of generalisation.¹⁶ In short, the use of macro- and micro-studies and the construction of their relationship is riddled with difficulties. As Judith Lewis asked in a review article;

How can we uncover intimate details in the lives and attitudes of ordinary, even anonymous, people? How can we adequately study such large groups without sacrificing the accuracy of detail? Can we then study smaller groups and still make a case for women, or for the working classes as a whole?¹⁷

¹⁵ Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus in their 'Introduction' to H. Barker and E. Chalus, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London and New York, 1997), p.7 discuss the problem of empirical investigation as a critical component of much recent work by gender historians. Whilst one camp calls for research into the lives of 'real' women, the other supports the model of patriarchy as "without the structure provided by a unifying theoretical model such as patriarchy, women's history would 'founder in a welter of dissociated and contradictory facts.'"

¹⁶ J.S. Lewis, 'Separate Spheres: Threat or Promise?', *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), pp.107-8 attacked M. Jeanne Peterson's *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, a study of the Paget family, as, whilst the writer "cautiously and wisely avoids calling the Paget nexus a sample...it nevertheless functions similarly since the group is taken to 'typify' or help explain issues larger than itself."

¹⁷ Lewis, 'Separate Spheres', p.106

Keith Wrightson has been one of the most successful of those to explore variation and diversity in a wider context, marrying an attention to the details of individual cases with a broader historical view. He has proposed a wide range of familial situations at any one given historical point, a range which itself developed and shifted over the centuries. He has criticised Stone's temporally specific location of determined and pragmatically motivated wedlock succeeded by free choice founded on emotion and affection and has instead argued that these factors ran side by side, varying in their relative import according to individual circumstances.¹⁸ In this, he echoed Martin Ingram's work on courtship and marriage in Wiltshire in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. From a detailed examination of church court records, Ingram concluded that the ideal in that period was a balance of love and lucre in selecting a marriage partner together with the 'multilateral' consent of the couple, their family and their 'friends.'¹⁹

Much of the above discussion has focussed on the debate over degrees of affection between husbands and wives and between parents and children in past centuries. However, Stone's concept of the birth of affective *individualism* in the eighteenth century leads us to a second much-mooted aspect of the historiography of the family, an aspect which will similarly be dealt with in more depth later in this dissertation. The idea that a decline in patriarchal authority in the period allowed husbands to see their wives as equals has been greatly criticised.²⁰ Macfarlane, for example, claimed such equality to be a continuous feature of a marriage system that had

¹⁸ K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1993), pp.72-87

¹⁹ M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), chapter 4

²⁰ Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 318

dominated domestic life in England since at least the Renaissance.²¹ On the other hand, gender historians argued until recently that the lives of women within the family actually became *more* restrictive, looking to various periods from the late seventeenth through to the mid nineteenth centuries for the birth of 'separate spheres'. They claimed that women's opportunities in the world of paid work became increasingly limited and that men were increasingly divorced from domestic and familial responsibilities. Contemporary adulation of the value of wives and mothers was a mere rhetorical device to assist in this restriction and delineation of roles and activities.²²

However, the doctrine of 'separate spheres' has, in its turn, been much criticised. First, its connection with the rise of feminist theory in the 1960s has led to criticism of its political agenda, seeking to trace a progression from the subordination of women in a patriarchal past to the greater equality of the late twentieth century, a 'whiggishness' that renders it open to the same accusation of 'present-centredness' as

²¹ Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, p.35

²² Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), pp.333, 338. For the application of the model to the eighteenth century, see G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992); K. Shevelov, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London and New York, 1989); V. Jones, ed., *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London and New York, 1990). Also, see J.S. Lewis, *In the Family Way: Childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1986) p.67; R. Bloch, 'Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4, 2 (1978), p.250; M. George, 'From Good Wife to Mistress: The Transformation of the Female in Bourgeois Culture', *Science and Society* 37 (1973), pp.152-77 and, for an early formulation of the argument of decline in working women's opportunities, A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919), (London, 1982)

the work of the early family historians.²³ The descent of the respected female economic actor and help-meet into the decorative, private paragon of domesticity, entirely concerned with the affairs of the family and the house, has similarly been contested by scholars such as Judith Bennett who have argued that women's work was consistently low-skill, poorly paid and undervalued throughout the centuries and that there was no 'golden age' before the advent of capitalism.²⁴ Similarly, others have either countered that male participation in family life was always more limited than that of women or that men continued to be more involved than has been admitted.²⁵ Finally, and most importantly, the notion of spheres has been condemned as over-prescriptive and thus limiting as a critical tool.²⁶

The notion of an insidious patriarchy as a feature of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century family, on the masking of male privilege through the elevation and

²³ Barker and Chalus, 'Introduction', p.4. Linda K. Kerber in 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *The Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988-March 1989), pp.9-39 has examined the emergence and evolution of the doctrine of 'separate spheres', beginning as a tool to help explain and examine women's oppression in past centuries, and later employed to identify the provenance of a sense of 'sisterhood' amongst women. As a direct result of the construction of female qualities and activities as a separate domain, it was contended that women bonded together and began the journey towards feminism coalesced by a common sense of identity.

²⁴ J. Bennett, 'History that stands still: women's work in the European past', *Feminist Studies* 14, 2 (1988), pp.269-83. See also O. Hufton, 'Women in History: Early Modern Europe', *Past and Present* 101 (1983) pp.125-41. More recently, as pointed out by R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London and New York, 1998), p.147, a cyclical approach to the issue has been advocated, women's opportunities increasing at some historical points and declining at others.

²⁵ L.A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.103, 261; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.128; A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London, 1998), pp.3-4

²⁶ For example, see Barker and Chalus, 'Introduction', p.2. For the definitive critique of the model, see A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal* 36, 2 (1993), pp.383-414

idealisation of a specifically female domain, has not only been attacked by gender historians. Scholars of the family have also doubted that a new patriarchy was invented as a crafted ideological tool and have rather posited that the reality was a unified and, to a large degree, unproblematic blend of patriarchy and mutuality. Whilst the argument that patriarchy was embedded within the companionate ideal suggests that claims of a new equality in the eighteenth century are unfounded, it does not automatically cancel out of the possibility of reciprocity.²⁷ As Eileen Spring asserted in her refutation of the legal basis for the Stone hypothesis: "It is not love that is incompatible with patriarchy, it is equality and freedom that are incompatible with patriarchy."²⁸ Wrightson, in particular, has emphasised an ideal in which the wife was indeed supposed to honour and obey unquestioningly, resigning herself to the authority of her husband, but in which the husband had reciprocal duties, rewarding his wife's fulfilment of her role with affection and kindness. This translated into a reality in which elements of patriarchy and companionship could be found in any marriage, the degree of either varying according to individual circumstances.²⁹

The realisation that the concept of 'separate spheres' was essentially located in

²⁷ See, for example, S.M. Okin, 'Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2, 1 (1982), pp.65-88. See also S.M. Okin, 'Patriarchy and Married Women's Property in England: Questions on Some Current Views', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2 (Winter 1983/4), pp.121-38; S.M. Okin, 'Gender, the Public and the Private', in D. Held, ed., *Political Theory Today* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.67-90

²⁸ E. Spring, 'Law and the Theory of the Affective Family', *Albion* 16 (1984), p.17. Also see M. Hunt, 'Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-Century London', *Gender and History* 4, 1 (Spring 1992), p.16; N. Tadmor, 'Dimensions of Inequality among Siblings in Eighteenth-Century English Novels: The Cases of *Clarissa* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*', *Continuity and Change* 7, 1 (1992), pp.310-1; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.60

²⁹ Wrightson, *English Society*, pp.72-87, 90-1, quoting p.104

prescriptive models rather than in reality points up one of the many problems of verification entailed in investigating the historical family and the gender relations within it through the ‘sentiments’ approach. It has revealed that sources have often been conflated and that inadequate attention has been paid to the differences between sentiments expressed in personal writings and those propounded in prescriptive and fictional literature. Those who have resisted the urge to merge such texts have either focussed on one or the other or have advised attention to the reader’s inevitably partial response. As Stella Tillyard has suggested, this was likely to be “gestural rather than significant, a matter of taking what they wanted and discarding the rest.”³⁰ Others have warned historians to be wary of reading qualitative evidence selectively, seeking choice quotes in order to substantiate preconceived theses and viewing sources selectively through “a prism.”³¹ However, the systematic analysis of such texts is far from a straightforward alternative. It is extremely hard to “assess” evidence of this nature and attempts such as that of Stone have been criticised for using “words and phrases” as “hard ‘data’”, to be taken “at face value and, in effect, add[ed]...up.”³² His efforts to study such sources over three centuries are equally problematic. Not only does the quantity and sophistication of both published and unpublished writing vary tremendously over such a broad period, but the spectrum of society that produced and read such texts was extremely limited.

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³⁰ S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1994), p.101

³¹ Kerber, ‘Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place’, p.17

³² Scott, ‘The History of the Family’, pp.514-5

If the sources employed in the sentiments approach to the history of the family are riddled with issues of conceptualisation and verification, then pictorial evidence is even more problematic. This, together with its unsatisfactory and much criticised use by the 1960s and '70s historians, may explain why it has been so neglected in the debates outlined above. Lawrence Stone argued that representations of the 'Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family' replaced the stiffness and formality of earlier familial imagery with scenes of intimacy, play and a new emphasis on the role of the child.³³ In this, he was closely following Phillipe Ariès's model of an artistic development from the depiction of children as miniature adults in the Middle Ages to a new awareness of their particularities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁴ This model has been widely criticised. To give just one example, Anthony Burton has attacked the extent of the visual material employed by Ariès, his lack of rigour in researching that material and his assumption that no concept of childhood existed in the Middle Ages simply because it was not depicted. Rather, he has countered, the absence of such representations should be viewed in the context of the many absences in medieval art, an art almost entirely devoted to the religious.³⁵

It is thus not surprising that later historians have been more than circumspect in their use of the pictorial, often regarding it in much the same light as the fictional, as providing "soft' or 'flexible' facts," as essentially "impressionistic".³⁶ Some have

³³ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p.259

³⁴ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, Part I: 'The Idea of Childhood'. Also, see J.H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present* 67 (May 1975), pp.64-95

³⁵ A. Burton, 'Looking forward from Ariès? Pictorial and Material Evidence for the History of Childhood and Family Life', *Continuity and Change* 4, 2 (1989), pp.203-229. Also, see Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood', pp.140, 145, 146

³⁶ N. Tadmor, 'Family' and 'Friend' in *Pamela: A Case-Study in the History of the Family in Eighteenth-Century England*, *Social History* 14 (1989), p.289

included illustrations as glossy appendages to their books, either failing to discuss them at all in the text or using them to emphasise and substantiate their points visually, a practice referred to by Michael Baxandall as “philistine.”³⁷ Others have rejected the validity of the pictorial altogether. Adrian Wilson attacked the idea that “art presents us with a simple and unambiguous record, whether of reality or of perceptions,” and criticised Ariès’s notion of paintings, “as unconstrained reproductions, as objective documentation instead of the subjective and determinate artefacts which in fact they are.” Linda Pollock similarly dismissed the possibility that the utility of the visual could approach that of the literary and demographic. She questioned, “how far do paintings represent reality? - there is no reason why there should be any connection between the representation and that which is represented.” She, together with Wilson, thus suggested that changes in the artistic depiction of childhood were more likely to be related to technical improvements and evolutions within art as a self-enclosed discipline than to changes in the common perception of infancy.³⁸

In their turn, art historians have, since the 1970s at least, rarely examined pictorial imagery without some reference to its contemporary context, taking up T.J.Clark’s demand for a discipline that accommodates the social world in which the visual is produced.³⁹ For example, Michael Baxandall investigated the art of fifteenth-

³⁷ M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford, 1988), p.152

³⁸ Wilson, ‘The Infancy of the History of Childhood’, pp.140, 145, 146; Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p.46

³⁹ See A.L. Rees and F. Borzello, ‘Introduction’, in A.L. Rees and F. Borzello, eds., *The New Art History* (London, 1986), p.3. Early art historical texts to reveal this move away from purely formal analysis include Frederick Antal, *Florentine Painting and its Social Background* (London, 1948), which examines Florentine painting from the perspective of its economic, political and social location. See also Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*

century Italy through such documents as letters and contracts, using them to argue that visual equipment developed in everyday society, from the perception of colours and shapes to the value placed upon skills such as evaluating ratios and volumes, influenced the creation of artistic forms. As a result, he concluded that “(used properly)...pictures become documents as valid as any charter or parish roll.”⁴⁰

Such arguments constituted a much needed emendatory to what used to seem a dominant formalist art historiography; demystifying paintings, breaking through their seemingly innocent autonomy and going some way to ridding the discipline of remnants of the nineteenth-century romantic view of the artist as a super-social genius. However, the implicit danger of such an approach is an overly straightforward transformation of the aesthetic into the epistemological. Naomi Tadmor’s complaint that “literary scholars can create great monolithic blocks, and produce them as ‘background’ explaining the ‘reality’ in which works and genres were created” is equally applicable to art historians.⁴¹ Such dangers have been comprehended in recent work. Scholars such as Marcia Pointon have underlined the intrinsically “systematic and ideological” nature of representation, the constraints and agendas that render art far from a direct reflection of real life.⁴² Others such as A.L. Rees and F. Borzello have pointed out that ‘New Art History’, in emphasising “the social aspect” of the

(London, San Francisco, Hagerstown and New York, 1972) and Erwin Panofsky, ‘Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art’, in E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Harmondsworth, 1970), p.49: “*Intrinsic meaning or content* [of a picture]...is apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – qualifies by one personality and condensed into one work.”

⁴⁰ Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, p.152

⁴¹ Tadmor, ‘Family’ and ‘Friend’ in *Pamela*, p.291

⁴² M. Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800* (Oxford, 1997), p.2. Also, see M. Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993)

visual, can “ignore(s) the qualities which make it art rather than something else.”⁴³ Ludmilla Jordanova has similarly re-emphasised the peculiarities of the pictorial as a source material. Pointing out that “we can never take for granted the independent ‘reality’ of whatever it is that a painting depicts,” she emphasises the problems of establishing a clear relationship between signifier and signified, asserting the complexity of processes that produce artistic change:

These involve, at the very least, the role of ‘style’, shifting artistic conventions, the market, patronage, and ‘taste’, not to speak of the more mundane material considerations that play a large role in the nature of the end product such as the division of labour and customary working practices within a workshop...the size of the picture...the number of sittings available, and so on.⁴⁴

* * * * *

The debate over the relationship between the pictorial and the supposedly ‘real’ has resulted in a variety of approaches by the few art historians who have tackled the imagery of the family as a distinct subject, as a body of evidence for a particular socio-historical phenomenon rather than, as is more common, in the context of catalogued collections and artists *oeuvres*. Desmond Shawe-Taylor’s *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* was very much in the school

⁴³ Rees and Borzello, ‘Introduction’, p.8

⁴⁴ L. Jordanova, ‘New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century: Problems of Historical Interpretation’, *History of the Human Sciences* 3, 1 (Feb 1990), pp.75-6

of the 1970s historians, arguing for a decisive shift in the nature and conditions of the family. He enumerated the disparities between works such as Thomas Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews* of 1748/9 (fig.3) and his *The Morning Walk: Mr and Mrs Hallett* of 1785 (fig.4) to evidence the displacement of a domestic ideal in which the wife was subordinate, merely one aspect of her husband's property, by the 'companionate marriage' with its emphasis on love and affection. He demonstrated a similar development in a comparison of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke with her Son, George, Lord Herbert* of 1764/5 (fig.5) and his *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons* of 1773 (fig.6). Whilst Lady Pembroke is moving aside to let the eldest son and heir take the stage, subordinating herself to concerns of primogeniture, Lady Cockburn represents a new ideal of affectionate motherhood and a new appreciation of the distinctive characteristics of childhood. However, the parallels between his developmental model and that of historians such as Stone seem to be entirely implicit. Whilst Robin Simon praised his "brilliant insights into the culture from which these images emerged," Shawe-Taylor actually only cited three secondary historical texts in his bibliography, none of them a major work on the period.⁴⁵

Shawe-Taylor's view of a transition in marital portraiture and his time scale for change was echoed by Shelley M. Bennett in her analysis of *Thomas and Isabel Crathorne* by Francis Cotes (1767, Huntington Art Gallery): "Beginning in about 1760, double marriage portraits display a new focus on affectionate spousal

⁴⁵ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, pp.128-33, 186-8; R. Simon, 'Reconstructing Art History: Disappearing Facts and the Growth of Factionalism', *Apollo* 134 (December 1991), p.373. Shawe-Taylor cites D. Jarrett, *Britain, 1688-1815* (London, 1965), D. Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth* (London, 1974) and B. Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century Background* (1940) (London and New York, 1986)

relationships, in contrast to the stiff, impersonal informality of earlier double portraits.”⁴⁶ Similarly, both J.C. Steward and Alistair Smart have reinforced the idea that images of offspring became less formal as the century progressed.⁴⁷ Steward additionally repeated the idea of a shift away from patriarchal rigidity to a newly companionate family. He claimed that images such as William Hogarth’s *The Cholmondeley Family* of 1732 (fig.7) demonstrate a new desire to undermine hierarchical structures. A young boy is about to step onto a pile of precariously balanced books whilst his brother rushes towards him, possibly in an attempt to prevent the imminent disaster. This vigour is in striking contrast to the formality of the rest of the family and thus the children can be seen as sabotaging their elders’ ceremoniousness. Steward then argued that such juvenile disruption was brought within the remit of the larger family group in later portraits such as Sir Joshua Reynolds’s *The Marlborough Family* of 1777/9 (fig.8) in which playful and boisterous infants subtly undermine the authority communicated by their father, further subverted by the dominance and central location of his wife.⁴⁸

Marcia Pointon, on the other hand, whilst also noting developments and transitions in portraiture over the eighteenth century, followed a similar methodological path to gender historians such as Okin. Rather than the new companionate ethos proposed by Shawe-Taylor and Steward, she posited an underlying, continuous tradition of patriarchy. She argued that women and children

⁴⁶ S.M. Bennett, ‘A Muse of Art in the Huntington Collection’, in G. Sutherland, ed., *British Art 1740-1820: Essays in Honor of Robert R. Wark* (San Marino, California, 1992), pp.73-4

⁴⁷ J.C. Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood 1730-1830* (Berkeley, 1995), especially pp.11, 16-21; A. Smart, *Allan Ramsay 1713-1784* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp.18-9

⁴⁸ Steward, *The New Child*, pp.19-23, 104-5

form a sub-genre in art, in which they are locked within an infantilised state, never the commissioners of portraits as having no property of their own, but always loaded with the ideals and fantasies of the patriarch. Thus, images of families are subsumed within universalist discourses of gender and age so that power structures are created: maturity privileged over youth, masculinity over femininity.⁴⁹ It is interesting to compare her analysis of Johann Zoffany's *Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons* of 1764 (fig.9) with that of Steward. The latter claims: "It is significant that the King, the actual source of power, is not depicted, allowing the viewer to focus on the family unit without reference to the monarch's authority as is appropriate to a fundamentally private form of painting."⁵⁰ Pointon, however, argues that the father is by no means missing in terms of the dynamics of the image and uses the analogy of the will as a document in which the source of power is absent, but dictates privileges and succession. The painting, and the objects and people depicted therein, are reliant on the power and property of the omnipotent head of the household. Thus, she elucidates discourses of inheritance and succession instead of discourses of affectiveness and intimacy.⁵¹

Shearer West has also expressed doubts about the advent of a private and domestic ethos in the eighteenth-century portrait, emphasising the power and display implicit in such representations. She has denied that the early conversation piece substantiates Ariès's theory that a public and essentially sociable and communal world gave way to inward-looking domesticity, outlining the various ways in which the family was still regarded as a public institution in the early eighteenth century. Rather,

⁴⁹ Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, chapters 6 and 7

⁵⁰ Steward, *The New Child*, p.23

⁵¹ Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, pp.162-8

she sees the genre as preoccupied with affirming familial continuity in a period of demographic crisis (which argument will be more thoroughly explored in chapter five).⁵² However, she concludes with a brief survey of developments in the later eighteenth century. As the crisis in birth rates subsided, portraiture came to concentrate on the glorification of the maternal relationship, providing entertainment and luxury for its viewers rather than laying claim to tenuous genealogical successions.⁵³

* * * * *

In this study, I wish firstly to argue that it is only in a few cases that an elision of the relationships as represented in a family portrait and those as lived by the sitters can even be attempted. The artist would usually only have been able to attain limited understanding and even knowledge of such realities in the few sittings necessary to paint a portrait.⁵⁴ Indeed, the subjects of a family portrait would often not be painted at the same time, but would rather be added to the canvas in separate sittings, depending on when they were available.⁵⁵ It is only in the case of portraitists such as

⁵² Chapter 5, pp.228-32

⁵³ S. West, 'The Public Nature of Private Life: The Conversation Piece and the Fragmented Family', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18, 2 (Autumn 1995), pp.152-171

⁵⁴ Indeed, many portraitists only painted the heads of sitters and employed wig painters, specialists in drapery and landscape artists to complete their paintings. See D. Mannings, 'At the Portrait Painter's: How the Painters of the Eighteenth Century Conducted their Studios and Sittings', *History Today* 27 (May 1977), p.280; D. Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London, 1990), p.11

⁵⁵ For example, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and her daughter sat to Reynolds for their portrait, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1786, in only one mutual sitting (fig.10). His sitters book for 1784 (copy in the Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery) records appointments for the Duchess

Gainsborough, not only moving in distinguished social circles and thus personally acquainted with many of his patrons, but also bold enough to express sitters' characteristics and even idiosyncrasies in their portraits, that such a comparison can even be attempted.⁵⁶ The gap between the depicted and the lived is further suggested by the remarkable homogeneity of the large body of family portraits from this period, a homogeneity that will become increasingly apparent throughout this dissertation. To suggest that all those represented similarly conducted themselves similarly would be problematic to say the least. As noted by such historians as Keith Wrightson, written evidence as to everyday thoughts and behaviour rather presents a wealth of individual situations and particularities.⁵⁷

It is therefore fallacious to assume that an increase in portrayed affection in the family is indicative of an increase in felt affection. In the same way that it is a mistake to seek 'modern' expressions of love and sentiment in eighteenth-century diaries and letters, so it is misleading to seek the representation of such expressions in portraits of the period. Due to an inevitable discrepancy between cultural codes, there is an unavoidable disparity between the contemporary viewer's comprehension and that which the eighteenth-century artist and patron thought they were communicating. Of course, such breakdown is a recurrent problem in any form of historical inquiry, but it is particularly pertinent with regard to a phenomenon such as the family which, to

on the 3rd, 5th, 6th and 8th July and for her daughter on the 8th, 13th and 31st of July and on the 3rd of August.

⁵⁶ See his portrait of Miss Ford of 1760 (Cincinnati Art Gallery), discussed chapter 2, p.116. M. Rosenthal, 'Thomas Gainsborough's *Ann Ford*', *Art Bulletin* 80, 4 (December 1998), pp.649-65; M. Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough: 'A Little Business for the Eye'* (New Haven and London, 1999), pp.162, 167-81

⁵⁷ Wrightson, *English Society*, for example pp.72-87

some degree, is trans-historical. Merely because the behaviour that we associate with the affective family is not depicted before the mid eighteenth century is not to say that it did not exist before the mid eighteenth century.

The question therefore is why the desire arose to *express* affection, intimacy and privacy openly in eighteenth-century portraits of the family, elevating such qualities to become the main subjects of the picture. The answer lies in wider cultural developments outside the institution of the family, which were critical for transitions in its representation and idealisation. It is to be found in the large body of prescriptive and fictional texts - novels, advice literature, sermons, poems, plays and conduct books - texts that reveal a largely homogeneous body of ideals parallel to that apparent in domestic portraiture.⁵⁸ The majority of scholars who have dealt specifically with such texts have echoed historians such as Stone and Trumbach in proposing a shift in power relations and affect in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The much discussed and debated 'rise of the novel' has been held to have played a key part in the dissemination of new familial values, authors such as Samuel Richardson creating idealised paragons of feminine domestic rectitude.⁵⁹ Similarly, Nancy Armstrong focussed on the 1690s as witnessing the origins of a distinctive advice literature that contributed to the elevation of domestic virtues and the creation of a newly sentimental ideal of womanhood. She argued that the twin paradigms of the efficient housewife and the humble and honest unmarried woman were united by

⁵⁸ Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, p.75 emphasises the homogeneity of writers such as Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, the Marquess of Halifax, the Reverend Fordyce, John Gregory and Hannah More.

⁵⁹ I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London, 1987). See also M. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 1987) and J. Raven,

1740.⁶⁰ Finally, Kathryn Shevelow has argued for a parallel development in the dictates and recommendations of periodicals, steadily enclosing women within an increasingly eulogised domestic sphere. However, she is careful to note that there were other fictional models available to women, particularly in the form of the novel. From Lord Rochester's view of women as frail and yet vicious to the contemptible social butterflies that feature in the poems of Pope, alternatives to mainstream ideology could be found.⁶¹

As Alan Macfarlane has challenged Stone's model of actual change, so that of theoretical change has similarly been contested. Kathleen M. Davies, for example, has traced a literary tradition expounding the virtues of mutuality in the marital relationship back to the fourteenth century and has claimed that the period after the Reformation did not witness an unprecedented Puritan promotion of domestic virtues.⁶² However, whilst it does appear that prescriptive edicts on love, intimacy and the domestic unit were not inventions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, new emphases and different formulations of the old ideals certainly became apparent at this time. As Fenella Ann Childs has definitively argued and Amanda Vickery has confirmed, a fresh wave of sentimentality towards women and the family appeared in

Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England 1750-1800 (Oxford, 1992)

⁶⁰ N. Armstrong, 'The Rise of the Domestic Woman', in N. Armstrong and L. Tennenhouse, eds., *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality* (New York and London, 1987), pp.96-141; N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York and Oxford, 1987), chapter 2

⁶¹ Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture*, especially chapter 1 and p.16. See also Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp.6-7

⁶² K.M. Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', in Outhwaite, ed., *Marriage and Society*, pp.58-80. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, p.182 also claimed that

the early 1700s.⁶³ A newly secular construction of the domestic female idealised her as the moral guardian of the home, the prime educator of her children and as a soothing companion to her husband. The period also witnessed an increased attention to the private virtues of men, emphasising their behaviour in the domestic sphere as the prototype and justification for that in the public domain. Such ideas were encouraged by societies for the reformation of manners, popular with urban middle-class males in the early decades of the eighteenth century. These emphasised values such as civility, humanity and politeness and rejected homosocial environments such as the tavern in favour of the civilised world of the home.⁶⁴

However, the most important cultural development in terms of this broadly conceived transition in prescriptive and fictional literature was the cult of sensibility. Dominant in fictional texts published between the 1740s and 1770s, this stressed values such as sympathy and empathy, placing a new accent upon feeling and emotion over and above reason and intellect. Men, as a result, were supposed to evince kindness, protection and a loving attitude towards wives, children and helpless and needy members of society in general. Women were praised for specifically feminine

new attitudes to marriage did not arise at the Reformation and that conduct books written prior to 1660 contain the same messages.

⁶³ F.A. Childs, 'Prescriptions for Manners in English Courtesy Literature, 1690-1760, and their Social Implications' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Oxford, 1984), chapter 5, especially pp.283-7; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp.6, 93, 286. However, both note that this glorification was not unprecedented. Rather, conceptions of femininity had oscillated between the idealised and the vilified for centuries. See M. LeGates, 'The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10, 1 (Fall 1976), pp.21-39

⁶⁴ Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, chapter 4; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, chapter 2. K. Rogers in 'The Feminism of Daniel Defoe', in P. Fritz and R. Morton, eds., *Women in the Eighteenth Century and Other Essays* (Toronto and Sarasota, 1976), p.21 similarly emphasised the early eighteenth-century reformation of manners as formative in the development of more sentimental attitudes to women, love and marriage.

virtues such as gentleness, tenderness and emotionality. Fragility permeated their physical beings and nervous systems, expressed through frequent faintings, tears and blushes. Whilst such qualities were seen to suit women ideally to the duties of wifehood and motherhood, it was feared that this lack of rationality could stimulate an unbalanced disposition. This, it was advised, could be counteracted by the tempering influence of manly *gravitas*, provided by husbands within the confines of the ideal companionate marriage.⁶⁵ Painting proffered a peculiarly suitable vehicle for expressing such new-found sensibility. Portraits could demonstrate a family's affectionate unity and domestic virtue, simultaneously denying the problematics of public display through the sitters' apparent unawareness of the presence of the spectator. That spectator, in turn, could appreciate his or her reaction to the emotive image, feeling secure in the resultant evidence of a suitably sentient character.

Such developments were thus critical in promoting the newly companionate portraiture of the later eighteenth century. Sitters wished to be depicted in line with new ideals in order to receive approbation from their audience. As Marcia Pointon (amongst others) has shown, portraiture was intrinsically public despite its often seemingly private nature.⁶⁶ Portraits were frequently on display in exhibitions such as those held annually at the Royal Academy, accessible to the London elite and all those whose ability to find the necessary shilling for entrance granted them potential critical

⁶⁵ For sensibility, see Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, passim.; J. Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York, 1986); R.F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London and Basingstoke, 1974); P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989), chapter 10; J. Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1988)

⁶⁶ Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, p.164; R. Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London, 1991), pp.10-11; West, 'The Public Nature of Private Life', pp.152-171

authority. Even if a portrait immediately vanished into the home after completion, it was far from being entirely private. Quite apart from the stream of family, friends and acquaintances who would have seen it in the normal course of familial and sociable life, country house viewing became a highly popular pastime during the century.⁶⁷ Equally, many portraits were translated into prints, sometimes to be circulated amongst a select group and sometimes to be disseminated more widely through print shops.⁶⁸ Such domestic images were also intrinsically public on a more conceptual level. They established relationships and evidence of continuous lineage for commemorative purposes, providing durable material evidence of the family's virtue as well as its admirable genealogy.⁶⁹

The public nature of portraiture meant that patrons did not want to reveal the vagaries and peculiarities of their own family situations. They sought rather to display relationships that would stimulate the admiration of the viewer, conditioned by prescriptive and fictional literature into a notion of what was laudable. And artists, working in an increasingly competitive market place, had to oblige.⁷⁰ Portraiture was thus inevitably flattering, "clouded by the desire to impress, to embody the superior intellectual and personal qualities of the subject, and to project a sense of confidence

⁶⁷ L. Stone and J.C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), pp.11, 69 and Part III; S. West, 'Patronage and Power: The Role of the Portrait in Eighteenth-Century England', in J. Black and J. Gregory, eds., *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester and New York, 1991), p.135; J.H. Plumb, E.J. Nygren and N.L. Pressly, *The Pursuit of Happiness: A View of Life in Georgian England* (New Haven, 1977), p.10

⁶⁸ T. Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802* (New Haven and London, 1997)

⁶⁹ West, 'The Public Nature of Private Life', *passim*.

⁷⁰ L. Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond* (New Haven and London, 1983), p.73. Shearer West in 'Patronage and Power', p.131 notes that Horace Walpole claimed that, in 1759, there were no less than 2,000 portraitists practising in London. See also M. Pointon, 'Portrait Painting as a Business Enterprise in London in the 1780s', *Art History* 7 (1984), pp.187-205

about the longevity of the subject's family."⁷¹ The need to appeal to a sitter's ego prompted a variety of responses from contemporaries. Gérard de Lairesse happily recommended that the portraitist obscure his sitter's defects, claiming flattery to be "not only allowable, but commendable," whilst, at the other end of the scale, Horace Walpole recorded Hogarth's inherent dislike for such vanity and self-love.⁷² Jonathan Richardson was a little more cautious, warning that improvements should be discreet: "I will allow a poem but not a romance."⁷³ The process behind such posturing has been ably summarised by Richard Brilliant:

Portraits exist at the interface between art and social life and the pressure to conform to social norms enters into their composition because both the artist and the subject are enmeshed in the value system of their society. This may explain, in part, the prevalent formality of private portraits as a code of right behaviour, reflecting the constraints imposed by the conventions that govern one's appearance in public and before strangers. Adding to their force is the conscious or unconscious wish to 'put one's best foot forward' ...⁷⁴

To 'put one's best foot forward' was to display lauded modes of marriage and parenthood. It was to appeal to a recognised and approved lexicon of domestic virtue

⁷¹ West, 'Patronage and Power', p.132

⁷² Gérard de Lairesse, *The Art of Painting, in all its Branches* (1738) (London, 2nd edition, 1778), p.268 (the first Dutch edition of this text was published in 1709); H. Walpole *Anecdotes of Painting in England; with some Account of the Principal Artists* 4 Vols (Strawberry Hill, 1762-71), 4, p.75

⁷³ J. Richardson, 'An Essay on the Theory of Painting' (1715), in *The Works of Mr. Jonathan Richardson* (London, 1773), p.44

⁷⁴ Brilliant, *Portraiture*, p.11

in order to earn respect within the public gaze. And it was to evince values distilled from cultural movements such as the cult of sensibility, locating oneself within exemplary prototypes.

This process, by which self presentation is governed by social ideals and the preconceived notions of an audience, was discussed in detail by Erving Goffman. The individual, whether consciously or automatically, constructs an appearance, a manner and a setting that will locate her or himself within a favourable stereotype. The actor can confidently exploit socially defined norms and categories in order to elicit a predictable and propitious response, obliging the audience to view her or himself accordingly. Thus, self-fashioning is deferential to the expectations of others and relies on collusion, co-operation and consensus.⁷⁵ D.R. Smith utilised this approach to good effect in his analysis of seventeenth-century Dutch marital portraiture, significantly entitled *Masks of Wedlock*. He emphasised convention over and above biographical insight and promoted a view of representation as “not novelistic, but theatrical.” He explained the homogeneity of the group of portraits under study as produced by the need to limit the particularity of the individual for the sake of the understanding of the viewer. Rather than revealing individual identities, images portray “social masks that...express ideas and values shared within a larger social order.”⁷⁶

Eighteenth-century family portraits thus communicated ‘norms’, drawn from a body of literature that espoused the companionate ideal. Therefore, together with such

⁷⁵ E. Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959), (Harmondsworth, 1975), especially pp.13-25, 28, 32-37, 44-45, quoting p.45; Brilliant, *Portraiture*, pp.89-90

⁷⁶ D.R. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marital Portraiture* (Epping, 1982), p.11, quoting p.165

texts, they can aid the study of “widely accepted roles and standards of what (was) considered to be expected and ‘desirable’ behaviour,” rather than the realities of individual lives.⁷⁷ It was not even so much that such standards were entirely new or that real behaviour was entirely divergent. Rather, the cult of sensibility highlighted certain familial values and elevated them to a plane where their expression through pictorial form became extremely desirable. Indeed, the speed of the development of a newly affectionate and intimate ethos in family portraiture is only explicable in the context of the sudden and dramatic cultural impact of newly sentimental ideals, expressed through an ever increasing and diversifying body of literature to an ever increasing readership. In reality, change within an institution such as the family must always be hesitant; traditional ideas persisting long after new values have been proffered as alternatives. Above all, the perpetuation of roles and ideals through the childrearing process, whether through direct instruction of offspring or through the infant’s awareness of parental characteristics and duties, must have proved the household resistant to new ideas.⁷⁸ This schism between the prescribed and the practised is extremely important in terms of debates over continuity and change. If Stone’s model has been dismissed as subjecting the real to the ideal, then a study of that ideal may well follow his pattern of change. And, if ‘separate spheres’ has been

⁷⁷ Childs, ‘Prescriptions for Manners’, pp.3-4

⁷⁸ L.J. Nicholson in *Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family* (New York, 1986), pp.26-35 outlines the radical feminist theory of the family as the key purveyor and sustainer of the cultural constituents of masculinity and femininity. Radical feminists argued that the problem lay within the household where lessons were learned and children regarded their parents’ behaviour. They thus sought to promote changes in consciousness rather than in legal institutions. Also see N. Chodorow, ‘Being and Doing: A Cross-Cultural Examination of the Socialization of Males and Females’, in V. Gornick and B.K. Moran, eds., *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness* (New York, 1971), pp.173-97; N. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, 1978)

rejected as a concept drawn largely from fictional and prescriptive texts, then it could well remain a potential model for examining an art form that followed a parallel developmental process to those texts.

In 1975, Jay Mechling attacked the contemporary social historian's use of the interview technique in order to determine values, claiming that the result of such a practice was inevitably a fusion of the interviewee's values with those that the authority (that is, the interviewer) would be pleased by.⁷⁹ This is, in many ways, analogous to what I am proposing occurred in eighteenth-century portraiture. The reaction of the authority, in this case the viewer of the painting, can be indicated to some extent through an examination of the critical response to portraits on display in exhibitions. Reviews in later eighteenth-century newspapers close the cycle of discourse, judging portraits defined by mainstream contemporary ideology according to that same ideology. Writers thus praised sitters for displaying husbandly tenderness, filial obedience, paternal kindness or, as was most common, maternal prowess. For example, one critic in *The London Chronicle* in 1784 wrote approvingly of a Reynolds portrait; "the maternal feelings of the Lady towards the object of her pride and tenderness are touched with the most sensible delicacy."⁸⁰ However, not only were sitters praised according to these values, but so too were artists. Another review of an exhibited painting by Reynolds not only commented on "the amiable subjects of infant innocence" but also on the sympathetic way in which they had been painted. This

⁷⁹ J. Mechling, 'Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers', *Journal of Social History* 9 (1975), p.54

⁸⁰ *The London Chronicle*, 29 April - 1 May 1784

suggested “to the mind the agreeable persuasion, that his heart is as much entitled to esteem as his genius is to admiration.”⁸¹

However, having established that a new sentimental and idealised ethos became apparent in the later eighteenth-century portrait, this is not to say that traditional concerns were or could be entirely superseded. Real issues such as high infant mortality rates rendered preoccupation with familial dynasty and succession unavoidable. Children were certainly increasingly appreciated as playful, infantile and nurtured, but their importance to the family and, indeed, to society as a whole, was an inescapable fact. The heightened values of intimacy and affection may have come to dominate compositions and narratives, but patriarchy still underlay the household and hierarchical structures of age and gender remained apparent throughout the century. Thus, as Naomi Tadmor has shown, the hierarchical and genealogical on the one hand and the companionate and affective on the other were neither incompatible nor temporally progressive. Rather, as her analysis of novels reveals, former concerns necessarily persisted alongside a burgeoning interest in the latter.⁸²

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This dissertation will take various aspects of familial relations and their pictorial representation in turn in order to shed light on these broader issues. Chapters one and two analyse eighteenth-century portraits of husbands and wives in the context

⁸¹ Courtauld Institute Press Cuttings, Vol.I (1731-1811), p.38. The name of the newspaper is unidentified and the date only given as May 1783.

⁸² N. Tadmor, ‘Concepts of the Family in five Eighteenth-Century Texts’ (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1992), chapters 6 and 7; Tadmor, ‘Dimensions of Inequality among Siblings’, especially pp. 304-18; Tadmor, ‘Family’ and ‘Friend’ in *Pamela*, p.305

of developments in the vast body of prescriptive and fictional literature that dealt with the ideal marital union, with its instigators, its motivations and its inherent qualities. The first chapter examines the emergence of the companionate marriage portrait and assesses the forms and narratives that developed and came to characterise the genre in the mid decades of the eighteenth century. In order to demarcate this ideal more clearly, representations of the antithetically constructed and condemned alternatives of the arranged, commercial marriage and the union based on lust and romantic love are also discussed. The second chapter develops the analysis of the companionate marriage in terms of debates over whether it represented a new equality between husbands and wives or whether it constituted a new version of an abiding patriarchy. It argues that, through the pictorial demarcation of masculine and feminine domains, domains which are complementary and mutually reliant but always inherently unequal, the dominance of the husband and the ultimate authority of his masculine and rational character remained constant.

Chapters three and four focus on representations of parents and children, again seeking to evidence the coupling of a new affective ideal with persistent and more traditional values. Chapter three examines transitions in the depicted relationship between mothers and their children, resulting in increasingly sentimentalised and intimate portraits as the century progressed. Again, it is shown that this process of glorification mirrored developments in mainstream contemporary discourse, lauding a newly idealised mother, sensitive to her maternal instinct and capable of educating her children. It is also argued that this new pictorial ethos had the additional benefit of helping to negate the inherent act of display in female portraiture. Women came to be shown as entirely absorbed in their children, obscuring their own features and uninterested in the gaze of the viewer. Mitigating this developmental argument,

chapter four shows that, whilst portraits increasingly showed the father as similarly engaged and involved with the larger family group, he retained his role as the supervisory head of the household. It also seeks to temper claims that children came to be “loved for themselves as much as for the contributions they could make to the family’s power and influence.”⁸³ Rather, it demonstrates that offspring were consistently demarcated according to age and gender and that a concern with their future contribution to the family as mature members was a persistent theme.

Extending the theme of chapter four, chapter five considers claims that ‘traditional’ concerns of lineage and familial continuity were supplanted by a new affective individualism. First, it shows that a pictorial emphasis on the eldest son, on whom the direct transmission of name, wealth and property depended, persisted throughout the century, despite the increasing intimacy of the family group. Second, family portraits are examined in the context of the demographic crisis of the early 1700s and, more generally, concerns with the fragility of children. These persisted well into the later decades of the century and reveal an abiding preoccupation with genealogical continuation. The chapter finally considers such images within the wider context of the country house, demonstrating that the hanging and cross-referencing of images within this context of power and display contained explicit messages of lineage.

The final chapter examines visual attacks on individuals who transgressed the bounds of these established ideals, attacks that classified them as aberrant and thereby helped to define the norm. This analysis is particularly apt in light of claims that promulgations of the private domestic female, solely concerned with the home and

⁸³ Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p.58

children, were a reaction to increasing fluidity in gender roles and relations, “a cry from an embattled status quo, rather than the leading edge of change.”⁸⁴ It focuses on a number of case-studies of members of the *bon ton* who were not only pictorially criticised for their immoral behaviour, but who proceeded to turn models of the ideal and counter models of the perverted full circle. They re-asserted their social probity through the medium of portraiture, countering such satire with displays of status and virtue on the walls of the Royal Academy. Criminal conversation cases and the numerous pamphlets and engravings they spawned were thus followed by formal and grandiose society family portraits to reaffirm the domestic virtue of those in whom it had been questioned. Women accused of neglecting offspring in favour of unsuitably public activities similarly exploited the genre to reaffirm their maternal devotion. The dissertation concludes with a summary of the issues and arguments and develops a theme which is implicit throughout: that of the implication of such a discussion for issues of class in the eighteenth century.

⁸⁴ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.7. See also L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.250

CHAPTER ONE

THE EMERGENCE OF THE COMPANIONATE IDEAL

Marital portraiture underwent a clear transition during the mid decades of the eighteenth century. To rehearse Desmond Shawe-Taylor's examples, the figures of Mr and Mrs Andrews as painted by Thomas Gainsborough in the late 1740s (fig.3) demonstrate minimal physical and inferred psychological intimacy. They are stiffly posed for the benefit of the viewer and any narrative has occurred prior to the sitting, the dog, gun and partially painted pheasant indicating a successful shooting expedition. This theme indicates the painting's celebration of property ownership as only wealthier men, possessing land worth more than £100 a year if owned with freehold, or £150 if with leasehold, were permitted to hunt game.¹ The emphasis on material assets is reinforced by the cultivated land that occupies almost half the pictorial space and the rigid lines of corn that reveal Mr Andrews to be a progressive farmer in proud possession of a seed drill. In contrast, Mr and Mrs Hallett, painted by the same artist nearly forty years later (fig.4), have an entirely different relationship with the surrounding countryside. Instead of rigid poses directed towards the perceived viewer, they are engaged with the landscape, both through the narrative of a morning stroll and the aesthetic unity of coloration and pictorial form. The background is diminished in scale in order to allow the viewer to concentrate on the relationship of the sitters who, in turn, seem unaware of an outside presence. Instead, Mr Hallett gestures with his hat towards some unseen point of interest whilst his wife,

¹ S. Deuchar, *Sporting Art in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social and Political History* (New Haven and London, 1988), p.5

hand tucked through his arm in a companionate pose, looks interestedly in the same direction.²

Such comparisons insinuate a transition in the ideal conception of the proper relationship between a husband and wife in the mid decades of the eighteenth century. This chapter will firstly expand on that part of the historiography of marriage which deals with issues of power and motivation, addressing the questions of who primarily instigated a union and what qualities were sought in a suitable partner. It will then analyse pictorial representations of popularly condemned stereotypes of marriages. On the one hand, satirists lampooned unions promoted entirely by parents for material and social advancement. On the other, they condemned hasty and clandestine elopements motivated by masculine lust and feminine romantic dillusion. Finally, it will examine the companionate ideal and its emergence in the 1750s, focussing on William Hogarth's *David Garrick and his Wife, Eva Maria* of 1757 (fig.11) as one of the earliest examples of this pictorial type.

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In 1949, H.J. Habbakuk argued that the eighteenth century witnessed “an increasing subordination of marriage to the increase of landed wealth, at the expense of other motives,” reflected by a dramatic rise in dowries.³ This postulation was

² See D. Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London, 1990), pp.128-33; M. Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough: 'A Little Business for the Eye'* (New Haven and London, 1999), pp.238-9

³ H.J. Habakkuk, 'Marriage Settlements in the Eighteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 32 (1949), pp.15-30. He examined the change in the relation between the amount given in dowry and the amount specified for jointure. Whilst in the early sixteenth century, the

contested in the writings of later historians such as Lawrence Stone. He proposed two parallel sliding scales, one quantifying the importance of materialistic concerns in marriage as opposed to affection, and the other, the degree of parental involvement as opposed to that of the children. He concluded that marriages from the fifteenth through to the seventeenth centuries were arranged by parents and kin, principally concerned with the economic, social and political welfare of the family unit. The couple themselves would rarely even be consulted, let alone involved in the selection process. However, by the later seventeenth century, the pendulums of decision-making and motivation had swung in favour of the personal happiness of offspring. Parental involvement was limited to right of veto, leaving children largely at liberty to elect their own spouses. Once given free rein, they sought affection and companionship, considering personal qualities and compatibility to be more valuable than title or wealth. Romantic love and lust, however, were roundly condemned.⁴

Randolph Trumbach was Stone's most notable supporter, presenting the 1720-50 generation as the first in which loving marriages "became truly prestigious." He focussed on the upper classes rather than the middling, suggesting that the eventual passing of Lord Hardwicke's 1753 Marriage Act in the Commons, a bill that attempted to restrict the increasing numbers of clandestine unions, was thanks to the support of younger sons of noble families.⁵ These young aristocrats, dominating the

proportion was £100 of jointure for every £620 of dowry, it had risen to £100 of jointure for every £1000 of dowry in the 1700s.

⁴ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), chapter 3, 'The Open Lineage Family 1450-1630'; chapter 4, 'The Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family 1550-1700' and, for the 'Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family' see chapter 7, 'Mating Arrangements' and chapter 8, 'The Companionate Marriage'

⁵ For Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, see Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p.35 and R.B. Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage in England 1500-1850* (London and Rio Grande, 1995), chapter 4

Lower House, were no longer keen to elope with heiresses, thereby rectifying the disadvantages of their position, and were thus prepared to curtail the thriving trade in illicit marriages. Whilst this was partly because their situation had improved and the need for lucre no longer so urgent, it was mainly because it had, by this date, become distasteful to marry for financial gain. Not only was money “no longer a principal object in marriages,” but children were allowed virtually free choice to choose or reject prospective partners.⁶

This developmental model was, as previously noted, criticised by Alan Macfarlane. He dated freedom of choice in the election of marital partners as far back as Anglo-Saxon law and argued that such principles were inherent within the very words of the marriage service. He did acknowledge that both parents and kin would probably be consulted, often possessing right of veto, and that the degree of their input would vary according to the degree of money and status at stake, together with the age, sex and seniority of the child. However, he denied any fundamental transition in the status quo, claiming the possession of ultimate decision-making authority by the couple to be an historical constant. He similarly proposed continuity in motivation, arguing that, whilst practical considerations had always been crucial, principles of companionship and affection had an almost unlimited historical lineage. He traced these back through writers such as Locke, Milton and Shakespeare to Bartholomaeus Anglicus who wrote in c.1230; “he plighteth his troth to lead his life with his wife without departing, and to pay her his debt, and to keep her and love her afore all

⁶ R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, San Francisco and London, 1978), pp.71, 112, 291

others...” Indeed, Macfarlane even suggested that such sentiments could be found in the traditions of the Germanic tribes as they had been described by Tacitus.⁷

More recently, scholars such as Keith Wrightson and Amanda Vickery have emphasised the diversity of reality, rejecting “the artificial dichotomy of cold-blooded arrangement versus idyllic freedom” as making “a mockery of the whole wide spectrum of courtship practices.”⁸ Wrightson was more careful than his predecessors in distinguishing between the dictates of advice literature on the one hand and emotions recorded in personal documents on the other, analysing the history of marital relations under the dual headings, ‘The Ideal’ and ‘The Reality.’ Thus, whilst parental instigation of courtship may have been the seventeenth-century ideal, the aim in everyday life was more simply the general good will of all those concerned. Similarly, whilst prescriptive writers may have instructed their readers to seek parity of age, rank, wealth, reputation, religious affiliation and personal attractiveness, the weight attached to any of these factors by their readers varied greatly according to their individual circumstances. Whilst love was approved of, it was hoped that one would love prudently.⁹

A key issue in these debates has concerned the role of marriage in the much-discussed fluidity of class relations in eighteenth-century English society. The concept of an upper class that retained its position through flexibility, accepting the most wealthy and successful from the middling orders into its ranks, has considerable

⁷ A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840* (Oxford, 1986), chapters 7 and 8, quoting p.159

⁸ Quoting A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London, 1998), p.40

⁹ K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1993), pp.71-4, 80, 83, 90, 92

implications for debates over commercial and romantic marriages.¹⁰ Many have considered the possibility that marital unions between the upper and middle classes were essentially ‘trade-offs;’ that the wealthy bourgeoisie married their daughters to noblemen in order to gain social status whilst the aristocrat thereby gained a considerable sum of money. For example, G.E. Mingay has argued that: “Landowners who through extravagance or mishap were in straitened circumstances were prepared to revive their fortunes by marriage with the daughters or widows of merchants, conferring in return for a substantial dowry the lustre of a title and the envied entree to polite society.”¹¹ Others maintain that it was otherwise. For example, Habakkuk warned that, whilst the desire to attract titled suitors could have contributed to the increase in the dowries of middle-class girls, the limited number of such cross-class unions meant that it could only have been a secondary factor.¹² Similarly, Keith Wrightson has emphasised the power of endogamy, arguing that like tended to marry like and, thus, that marriage tended to perpetuate the established social order.¹³

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Whilst money and status on the one hand and romantic love and lust on the other certainly played a part in many eighteenth-century marriages, prescriptive and fictional literature warned against such motivations. Conduct writings, novels, poems,

¹⁰ See H. Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society* (1969), (London and New York, 1991); L. Stone and J.C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984)

¹¹ G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London and Toronto, 1993), p.28

¹² Habakkuk, ‘Marriage Settlements’, p.23

¹³ Wrightson, *English Society*, p.88

plays and sermons alike strongly denounced the materialistic marriage throughout the period. From Bishop Fleetwood in 1705, who declared that parents who married their sons and daughters without the prospect of love made “them of all Creatures the most miserable; and ... irredeemably so,” to Thomas Gisborne at the end of the century who asserted that “such marriages, however they may answer the purposes of interest or ambition...terminate in wretchedness,” the message was constant.¹⁴ The chief variation lay in the multiplicity of cited consequences. The pseudonymous ‘Philogamus’ presaged “the Ruin of the best Families, introducing eternal Feuds and Animosities besides Law-Suits, Divorces, bastardising our Posterity, with infinite other Consequences” whilst a writer in 1750 specified “at best a cold, flat, and insipid intercourse” and more normally “contempt and disdain” between the unfortunate spouses.¹⁵ Daniel Defoe had been similarly vitriolic on the subject. Drawing analogies with the acts of prostitution and rape, he strongly and repeatedly condemned those who “join Hands and not Hearts, unite Interests, unite Sexes, unite Families and Relatives, and yet never unite Hearts.”¹⁶ The message of the conduct writers was

¹⁴ W. Fleetwood, *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants* (1705) (London, 3rd edition, 1722), p.35; T. Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797) (London, 9th edition, 1810), p.249

¹⁵ ‘Philogamus,’ *The Present State of Matrimony: or, The Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages in a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1739), p.30; B. Franklin, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage: in Two Letters to a Friend* (1750) (London, 1759), p.9

¹⁶ D. Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness; or, Matrimonial Whoredom* (London, 1727), pp. 29, 32, 166, 258. However, such writers did not conversely advocate complete freedom of choice based entirely on love and affection. It was commonly believed that parents should possess ultimate right of veto, enabling them to prevent unsuitable matches. Thus, Defoe’s censure was mitigated by his tentative claim of parents on such occasions: “The negative, I think, is theirs, especially with a Daughter; but, I think, the Positive is the Childrens” (quoting p.170). Similarly, such writers did not recommend that all practical considerations of wealth and status should be entirely disregarded. For example, Benjamin Franklin in *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, p.10 tempered statements that it should not

taken up in other genres. In *Tom Jones*, Henry Fielding continually reiterated the point through the character of Squire Allworthy who disagrees “with the opinions of those parents, who think it as immaterial to consult the inclinations of their children in the affair of marriage, as to solicit the good pleasure of their servants when they intend to take a journey.” The conflict of love and practicalities, of free will and parental control is epitomised in Sophia Western, torn between her father who tries to force her into profitable wedlock with Blifil, and Tom, for whom she has true affection.¹⁷ Samuel Richardson later tackled the topic more sombrely in the story of Clarissa, a heroine who resorts to fleeing into the arms of an aristocratic rake to escape her family who are trying to force her into marriage with the odious Mr Solmes. She bitterly and ironically explains that their “darling view” is that of “raising a family.”¹⁸

Periodicals added their voice to the general disapprobation. *The Tatler* condemned the parent who forces his child unwillingly into marriage as ‘barbarous’ whilst *The Spectator* in 1711 outlined the ‘insipid’ marital state:

Two People of no Genius or Taste for themselves meet together, upon such a Settlement as has been thought reasonable by Parents and Conveyancers from an exact Valuation of the Land and Cash of both Parties...These make up the Crowd or Vulgar of the rich, and fill up the Lumber of humane Race,

constitute the main reason for wedlock with qualifiers such as, “it must not be inferred from the foregoing, that prudence and discretion, with regard to fortune, are to be banished from our consideration.”

¹⁷ H. Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), ed. R.P.C. Mutter (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.761

¹⁸ S. Richardson, *Clarissa; or, The History of a young Lady* (1747/8), ed. A. Ross (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.77. For an exemplary analysis of this text, see T. Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1982)

without Beneficence towards those below them, or Respect towards those above them; and lead a despicable, independent and useless Life, without Sense of the Laws of Kindness, Good-nature, mutual Offices, and the elegant Satisfactions which flow from Reason and Virtue.¹⁹

Many eighteenth-century dramatic heroes and heroines are threatened with such forced marriages. Bevil Junior and Lucinda in *The Conscious Lovers* succeed in evading their coerced union, enabling both to wed the true objects of their affections.²⁰ Similarly, in *The Clandestine Marriage* of 1766, Mr Sterling, a merchant who values money above all else “but the idea of acquiring nobility,” seeks to marry his daughter to the nephew of one Lord Ogleby who looks down on “that vulgar fellow Sterling” but sees his wealthy family as one “very well to marry in.”²¹

The preface of *The Clandestine Marriage* credited a satire by William Hogarth as the inspiration for its representation of an arranged and commercial marriage: “Where titles deign with cits to have and hold/ And change rich blood for more substantial gold!/ And honoured trade from interest turns aside,/ to hazard happiness for titled pride.”²² Hogarth’s *Marriage A-La-Mode* was a series of six prints published

¹⁹ *The Tatler* no.185 (15 June 1709), in *The Tatler* (1709-1710), ed. D.F. Bond, 3 Vols. (Oxford, 1987), III, p.8; *The Spectator* no.149 (21 August 1711), in *The Spectator* (1711-1712, 1714), ed. D.F. Bond, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1965), II, p.87

²⁰ R. Steele, ‘The Conscious Lovers, a Comedy’ (1722), in *The Dramatick Works of the Late Sir Richard Steele* (London, 1732), pp.1-76

²¹ D. Garrick and G. Colman, ‘The Clandestine Marriage, a Comedy’ (1766), in H.W. Pedicord and F.L. Bergman, eds., *The Plays of David Garrick Vol.I: Garrick’s Own Plays 1740-1766* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1980), pp.263, 275, 276

²² Garrick and Colman, ‘The Clandestine Marriage’, p.256

in 1745 after the artist's paintings (The National Gallery, London).²³ The first scene (fig.12) depicts a marriage contract being drawn up between an Alderman and an Earl with the assistance of two lawyers. It is clearly an arranged marriage of the type so debated by historians, trading the fortune of the one for the title of the other. Earl Squanderfield points down to his family tree, springing from the belly of William the Conqueror, and coronets adorn almost every available surface in the room. Even the two dogs, chained together to symbolise the forced nature of this union, have coronets imprinted on their haunches.²⁴ The representation of the Earl fulfils many aristocratic stereotypes. The gout with which his foot is diseased was, according to Nicolas Venette, caused by "the caressing of women," reinforcing preconceptions of upper-class licentiousness.²⁵ The merchant's money is symbolised by the redeemed mortgage of the Earl, the promissory notes and the gold proffered to the nobleman by one of the lawyers.

The couple whom this contract most involves are significantly to one side of the picture, neither interacting with the events taking place in the central space, nor

²³ For detailed discussions of the series, see R.L.S. Cowley, *Marriage A-La-Mode: A Re-View of Hogarth's Narrative Art* (Manchester, 1983); L. Bertelsen, 'The Interior Structures of Hogarth's 'Marriage A-La-Mode'', *Art History* 6, 2 (June 1983), pp.131-142; R. Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works* 2 Vols. (New Haven and London, 1965), I, pp.268-75; R. Paulson, *Hogarth*, 3 Vols. (New Brunswick and London, 1991-2), II, chapter 9. Other satirists joined in this condemnation. In 1784, Carrington Bowles published *The First Interview; or, Happiness Sacrificed to Riches* (The British Museum, London) by Robert Dighton in which two fathers again attempt to unite their offspring in the name of financial profit. The young lady clearly rejects her proposed suitor, averting her face and moving her hands protectively between them. In the same way that conduct writers persisted in their diatribes throughout the century, so too did satirists.

²⁴ As suggested by Michael Rosenthal, this emblem is probably derived from Paolo Veronese's *The Marriage at Cana* (1563, The Louvre)

²⁵ N. Venette, *Conjugal Love; or, The Pleasures of the Marriage Bed Considered in Several Lectures on Human Generation* (1703, first Dutch edition 1687) (London, 20th edition, 1750), p.146

with each other. The Earl's son is more engrossed in the contents of his snuffbox and his reflection in the mirror, whilst his intended plays idly with her wedding ring and listens to the flirtations of Lawyer Silvertongue. The succeeding narrative of adultery is thus set in motion in the first plate and the entire series is structured around the consequential display of cause and effect, highlighted by the temporal progression of the images. The unhappiness of the marriage, the diseased and crippled nature of the child who is the only eventual reminder of the union and the adultery of the couple, leading ultimately to both their deaths, are all caused by this initial contract. The inexorable nature of the story was emphasised in a poem published some time after the series, providing an explanation of the prints. The first canto, the literary equivalent to the first plate, concludes: "This is the Prelude of a Life,/ To Marriage doom'd, replete with Strife;/ And what the Consequence will be,/ You'll in the foll'wing Canto's see." The author proceeds to outline the events in great detail, until Canto VI which declares: "Such is the Fate false love succeeds,/ And such the ills forc'd Marriage breeds."²⁶

The structural parallels between Hogarth's series and this poem, together with the connection between Garrick and Colman's denunciation of arranged marriages and the artist's pictorial equivalent, demonstrates the necessity of viewing *Marriage A-La-Mode* in a wide discursive and ideological context. The ill effects it depicts serve to reinforce the varied but uniformly negative consequences of the mercantile marriage as cited by conduct book writers such as Fleetwood and Gisborne. This consequential pattern, by which Hogarth positions himself as part of a discursive trend, underscores his clearly moralising intent, on a par with the emendatory objectives of these authors.

²⁶ *Marriage A-La-Mode: An Humorous Tale in Six Canto's, in Hudibrastic Verse; being an Explanation of the Six Prints lately Published by the Ingenious Mr. Hogarth* (London, 1746), pp.9, 10

Horace Walpole claimed of the artist in his *Anecdotes of Painting*; “(he) observes the true end of comedy, reformation; there is always a moral to his pictures” and, indeed, Hogarth himself wrote; “subject(s) of most consequence are those that most entertain and Improve the mind and are of public utility...”²⁷

The nature of Hogarth’s satire as one component of a wider prescriptive trend can be perceived in other elements of the series. The artist often evokes the absent other, recalling the dichotomous nature of advice literature in which the loveless, mercantile union is presented as diametrically opposed to the affectionate, companionate marriage and parental dictation is seen as the antithesis to free election of marriage partners based on personal qualities. In the second plate of *Marriage A-La-Mode* (fig.13), depicting the early adverse consequences of the marriage contract, the language of the conversation piece is evoked through the contravening of its conventions and its positive representation of domestic life is intimated in the negative depiction of unhappiness, profligacy and inconstancy. Judy Egerton has drawn a comparison between this scene and Arthur Devis’s *Robert Dashwood and his Wife, Anne, of Stamford Park, Nottinghamshire* of 1750 (fig.14) in order to highlight Hogarth’s parody of the decorum of the genre.²⁸ Both depict small-scale figures, placed well back in an intricately described room that evidences their wealth through the display of costly ornaments and furniture. However, whilst Mr and Mrs Dashwood’s capital is mediated through their apparent taste, Hogarth lampoons the newly married Squanderfields’ lack of such refinement. Instead of an Italianate

²⁷ H. Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England; with some Account of the Principal Artists* 4 Vols. (Strawberry Hill, 1762-71), IV, p.69. Hogarth quoted in E.D.H. Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene from Hogarth to Sickert* (London, 1986), p.22

²⁸ J. Egerton, ‘William Hogarth’s *Marriage A-La-Mode*’ (paper given at Chiswick Town Hall, London, 7 October 1994)

landscape over the fireplace, Cupid is depicted amongst ruins, neglecting his bow in order to play the bagpipes, a traditional emblem of crude sexuality.²⁹ Instead of the vista through to the landscape garden that reinforces the display of the Dashwoods' taste, the front room in Plate II merely opens onto another room in which the candles in the chandelier are 'burnt out,' a picture is deemed so lewd it has to be covered by a curtain and the remains of a card game lie scattered about. Instead of the well-chosen busts on wall-brackets either side of the fireplace, the 'antique' bust on the mantelpiece in the Squanderfields' abode has a broken nose held on with glue and its eighteenth-century wig clearly denotes it to be a fake.

These features demonstrate the moral value attached to sophisticated consumerism at this time. Eighteenth-century England was becoming one of the foremost economic powers in the world and commerce was becoming an indelible fact of modern life. However, this same economic boom meant that previously unknown sums of money were being enjoyed by those who had never before experienced such disposable income and who were supposedly lavishing it on newly available consumer goods.³⁰ Whilst writers such as Bernard de Mandeville welcomed such materialism whole-heartedly as stimulating trade and commerce, others were more reserved.³¹ Francis Hutcheson's critique of Mandeville in the 1720s proffered a less extreme justification and rationale for the expenditure of money through this very

²⁹ See J. Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (1974) (London, 1991), pp.38-9

³⁰ See A. Bermingham and J. Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London and New York, 1995); J. Brewer and R. Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York, 1993); L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London and New York, 1988)

³¹ B. Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714), ed. P. Harth (Harmondsworth, 1970)

principle of taste.³² Thus, Mr and Mrs Dashwood display their wealth through their carefully selected possessions and through their apparent knowledge of such civilised arts as landscape painting. Mrs Dashwood is simultaneously demonstrated to be fulfilling her role as a wise and tasteful spender of her husband's money, distributing it to create a beneficent domestic environment rather than spending it on personal display.³³ The Squanderfields, in stark contrast, are employing no such careful filter of taste. The uncoordinated and undiscerning interior, together with the clearly extravagant lifestyle of the Viscountess, presents the couple as the antithesis to the ideals displayed in the Devis portrait and reinforces the criticism of such materialistic marriages.

The figures themselves are occupied in disparate activities and are depicted in significantly contrasting poses. Mr and Mrs Dashwood are placidly seated, she having just left the useful and properly domestic task of needlework to pose for the painting, he demonstrating his learning and education through the book that he holds to one side. The Squanderfields, meanwhile, are far from being 'politely' engaged. The Viscount has clearly come in from a night's revelries. His wife's lap dog sniffs at a woman's cap in his pocket and his sword lies discarded on the floor, suggestively broken and, furthermore, not withdrawn from its scabbard. The Viscountess sprawls in her chair and eyes her husband lasciviously, dressed in *deshabillé*, the very antithesis to the proper, modest and demure figure of Mrs Dashwood. She has been involved in playing cards and in a music lesson, although the overturned chair and the

³² See D. Solkin, *Painting for Money: Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), chapter 3

³³ N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford and New York, 1987), p.59

fact that the instrument is not even out of its case suggests the music master's role to have been rather more amorous than pedagogical.

However, this polemic against arranged and commercial wedlock did not by antithesis promote unadulterated free choice founded on personal attraction. Writers and satirists joined forces in an equally fervent condemnation of romantic liaisons, often discussing the two stereotypes together as equivalent social and personal evils. 'Philogamus', for example, warned "either of these Extreems are generally attended with very unhappy consequences, to the great Detriment of Peace and Content, not only in private Families, but sometimes of Civil Society."³⁴ Squire Allworthy's 'sermon' on the companionate ideal of marriage in *Tom Jones* similarly warned of the ill effects of such motives, opening with the statement; "surely we may call it a profanation, to convert this most sacred institution into a wicked sacrifice to lust or avarice." He then goes on to deal with matches founded on "the consideration of a beautiful person" and on "a great fortune" in turn.³⁵ Editors of periodicals added their voices. *The Matrimonial Magazine*, a journal entirely dedicated to the establishment of the companionate ideal, similarly cautioned that when "interest or passion join the hands," the marriage formed is "productive of the most real evils."³⁶

These persistent warnings were specifically aimed at a female audience. It was often claimed that women, typically emotional, impressionable and irrational, could easily be influenced by amorous novels. Fictional romances would fill their heads

³⁴ Philogamus, *The Present State of Matrimony*, p.47

³⁵ Fielding, *Tom Jones*, pp.82-4

³⁶ 'Thoughts on Marriage' in *The Matrimonial Magazine; or, Monthly Anecdotes of love and Marriage for the Court, the City and the Country*, January 1775. Similarly, Benjamin Franklin in *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, pp.7, 11 entitled the opening section of his first letter: "Many

with quixotic thoughts and misconceptions of love, rendering them susceptible to exploitation and seduction by Rakes and fortune hunters. John Gregory and Maria Edgeworth alike, despite writing some twenty years apart, compared the modern novel to poison, describing it as a medium which “warms the imagination, which engages and softens the heart, and raises the taste above the level of common life,” creating “false ideas of life and of the human heart.”³⁷ The ill effects of such “extravagant fictions” on the female character were embodied in various eighteenth-century heroines.³⁸ In Richard Steele’s *The Tender Husband*, Bidy Tipkin is a young girl who has lived isolated from the real world, constructing her own reality out of romances to the extent that Captain Clerimont calls her: “A perfect Quixot in Petticoats!”³⁹ This analogy was developed further in Charlotte Lennox’s highly successful novel, *The Female Quixote*, in which the heroine, similarly a young girl sequestered from the world with only romances for entertainment, is a social embarrassment at best and a danger to herself at worst. Her bizarrely extravagant and romantic notions are so extreme that her cousin declares he cannot marry her until she is divested of this foible.⁴⁰ However, perhaps the most thorough disquisition on the subject came in the personification of George Coleman’s Polly Honeycombe, a character who again attempts to fashion her life into a novel, leaving her prey to the

unhappy matches are occasioned by mercenary views in one or both of the parties” and the second: “Unhappy Marriages are often occasioned from the Headstrong Motives of Ungoverned Passion.”

³⁷ J. Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (London, 1774), p.117; M. Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), ed. C. Connolly (London, 1993), p.25

³⁸ E. Haywood, *The Female Spectator* (1744-1746), ed. G.M. Firmager (London, 1993), p.131

³⁹ R. Steele, ‘The Tender Husband; or, The Accomplish’d Fools’ (1731), in *The Dramatick Works of the Late Sir. Richard Steele*, p.37

⁴⁰ C. Lennox, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752), ed. M. Dalziel (Oxford, 1989), pp.339-40

opportunist and writer of excessive love letters, Mr Scribble. Her father concludes the play with the exasperated statement; “a man might as well turn his daughter loose in Covent-Garden as trust the cultivation of her mind to A CIRCULATING LIBRARY.”⁴¹

The serious and real dangers of such “ridiculous passion which has no being but in play-books and romances” was also a constant theme in advice literature.⁴² One of the many maxims extrapolated from the novels of Samuel Richardson was that women who devoured romances often fell victims to “fops and flatterers” whilst Thomas Gisborne similarly claimed that they could be easily led “into a sudden attachments to persons unworthy of their affection,” not to mention “other possible effects.”⁴³ Having cautioned their young female readers, many writers then set themselves the task of suggesting ways in which one could distinguish between the genuine, honourable suitor and the opportunist. John Gregory cited “the most genuine effects of a honourable passion” for his daughter’s benefit, consisting of a timid, respectful attitude and a desire to conceal one’s ardour from the object of affection.⁴⁴ Such restrained behaviour was opposed to that described in novels in which “all is

⁴¹ G. Coleman, ‘Polly Honeycombe’, in *A Collection of the Most Esteemed Farces and Entertainments Performed on the British Stage* 6 Vols. (Edinburgh, 1786), III, pp.169-94, quoting p.194. Also, see the character of Lydia Languish in R.B. Sheridan, ‘The Rivals’ (1773), in E.S. Rump, ed., *Richard Brinsley Sheridan: The School for Scandal and Other Plays* (Harmondsworth, 1988), pp.31-124

⁴² J. Swift, ‘A Letter to a Very Young Lady on her Marriage’ (1727), in Franklin, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, p.61

⁴³ S. Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and Reflections Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1755), p.262; Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, p.230

⁴⁴ Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy*, pp.85-6

dotage, or despair; or else ranting swelled into burlesque.”⁴⁵ Exuberant courtship was not only false, but distinctly un-English. For example, Wetenhall Wilkes contrasted the “native elegance” of genuine expressions of affection with the ridiculousness of the suitor who “flies into Raptures, calls you an Angel or a Goddess, vows to stab himself like a Hero, or to die at your Feet like a Slave”, “no more than dissembl(ing).”⁴⁶

Warnings against suitors who bandied romantic blandishments and against hasty marriages based on passion were, in part, attempts to discourage clandestine unions. In the early decades of the century, these covert liaisons were centred in the area around the Fleet prison, stimulating thriving businesses for ‘parsons’ and for the proprietors of alehouses and taverns.⁴⁷ Criticism was widespread and became increasingly fervid. In 1750, Henry Gally was prompted to write *Some Considerations Upon Clandestine Marriages*, a tract that claimed the numbers of such unions to be rising in a manner so “detrimental to the Peace and Good Order of a Nation” and such a disgrace to a civilised country, that an Act of Parliament should be passed to put an

⁴⁵ J. Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) 2 Vols. (Dublin, 4th edition, 1766), I, p.107

⁴⁶ W. Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1744) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1751), p.121. He is here paraphrasing Addison and Steele in *The Spectator* no.525 (1 November 1712), in *The Spectator*, IV, p.371: “Friendship, Tenderness and Constancy, drest in a Simplicity of Expression recommend themselves by a more native Elegance, than passionate Raptures, extravagant Encomiums, and slavish Adoration.”

⁴⁷ For clandestine marriages, see R.L. Brown, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Fleet Marriages’, in R.B. Outhwaite, ed., *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981), pp.117-36; Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, passim. Also, *Cuttings on the Fleet Prison*, a scrapbook in the British Library (pressmark: 11633.h.2), contains accounts of priests being arrested in the area around the Fleet, of false clergymen, bigamous marriages and heiresses being rushed to London to be married to fortune hunters.

end to them.⁴⁸ However, when that act came in 1753, it chiefly served to displace the centre of the trade to Gretna Green in Scotland.

Writers and satirists warned that these marriages would inevitably pall and the passion on which they were founded would collapse, leaving no solid affection and companionship in its place. In 1790, *The Road to Hymen* published an account by a landlady of an inn situated on the way to Gretna Green. The moral of her tale is clear as she recounts how agreeable the couples appear as they make their way up to “the land of promise,” and how equally disagreeable they have become by the time they make the journey home. She attributes this rapid disintegration to mercantile motives on the part of the suitors and concludes; “marriages in which there is interest on the one side; and disobedience on the other, are not likely to promise a long harvest of delights.”⁴⁹ This was a common theme of such literature, truisms and platitudes proliferating throughout the century: “Those that marry in haste, repent at leisure”; “The violent Passion of Love is short-liv’d: It dies upon the Alteration of a Face, or by being too familiar with it”; “Violent Love is a fervor, like all other fervors, that lasts but a little while”.⁵⁰ Such ardour was most frequently compared to a flame that would blaze brightly for a short time, but that would eventually burn itself out.⁵¹ Early in the century, Daniel Defoe created a particularly vivid and detailed image of a couple “after the fire is out, and the combustible Matter that kindled it is consumed;”

⁴⁸ H. Gally, *Some Considerations upon Clandestine Marriages* (London, 1750), pp.2, 3, 29

⁴⁹ *The Road to Hymen made Plain, Easy and Delightful; in a New Collection of Familiar Letters, Pleasing Dialogues and Verses* (London, 1790), pp.69-72

⁵⁰ *Road to Hymen*, p.29; *Characters and Observations: An Eighteenth-Century Manuscript with a Foreword by Lord Gorell* (London, 1930), p.187; Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, p.152

⁵¹ Franklin, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, p.13: “It is a fire that is soon extinguished; and where there is no solid esteem and well-cemented friendship to blow it up, it rarely lights again.”

the Fondness of the Honey-Moon hangs about them a great while, on some more, on some less. This I call the Pageantry of Matrimony, and the Cavalcade of Love. But the Strife breaks out insensibly; the Contention, the Contradiction, and all the little Thwartings and Waspishness, which lay the Foundation of eternal Discord, these all, like Weeds, grow and spread under the decaying Plant called Love, till at last they check and smother it entirely, and leave the Family a kind of Hell in Miniature.⁵²

Once again, satirists and artists expressed views on this topos parallel to those articulated in prescriptive and fictional literature. In 1777, Carrington Bowles published a pair of anonymous prints entitled *The Honey-Moon* (fig.15) and *Six Weeks after Marriage* (fig.16). Like Hogarth's *Marriage A-La-Mode*, these engravings follow a temporal progression in order to emphasise the effects of the ill-advised union and the process of disintegration. In the first, the couple smile at each other across the tea table, the husband's arm lying across his wife's shoulders and his leg protruding across her skirt in a display of physical affection and intimacy. The second, however, shows the initial romance replaced by discord and even violence as the bride clenches her fist whilst her husband raises a hand as if in self-defence. The motifs employed to emphasise this disharmony are clearly derived from Hogarth's prints, demonstrating the enduring and dominating influence of his work. For example, the device of the dog leaping up at the husband's sword recalls the lap dog of the Viscountess in Plate II of *Marriage A-La-Mode*. Similarly, the broken tea-table with

⁵² Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness*, pp.103, 106

its smashed equipage lying on the floor is a clear reference to the ruse of Moll Hackabout in Plate II of *The Harlot's Progress* (1732, The British Museum, London) to distract her keeper from the surreptitious exit of her lover. Another satire of 1777, published by Sayer and Bennett and entitled *The Return from Scotland; or, Three Weeks after Marriage* (fig.17), made a similar rhetorical point, clearly denoting the breakdown in communication between the couple to be the fruits of a clandestine and hasty union in Gretna Green. Finally, in 1798, an anonymous satirist reiterated the notion that romantic marriages were founded on transient and insubstantial lust when he depicted a young soldier assisting his bride-to-be from the window of her boarding school, a servant loading their luggage onto a coach in preparation for the flight (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). His lascivious motives are indicated by his clear view up the young lady's skirts as she steps onto his shoulders.⁵³

However, perhaps the most apt equivalent to Hogarth's denunciation of the arranged, commercial union, was John Collett's series, entitled *Modern Love*. *The Public Advertiser* of 15 May 1765 announced that these paintings could be viewed in Maiden Lane and advised the reader that subscriptions were being taken for prints from the series. However, these were not completed until 1782.⁵⁴ The first of the four plates depicts the courtship, clearly of the insincere and romantic style so decried by Wilkes (fig.18). As in the 1798 satire, the young suitor is significantly garbed in

⁵³ See also *Six Weeks after Marriage* and *The Honey Moon* published in 1790 by William Holland, now in the Lewis Walpole Library (many thanks to Natasha Eaton for drawing these to my attention). The theme was to continue into the nineteenth century with satires such as James Gillray's *Harmony before Matrimony* and *Matrimonial Harmonics* (1803, The British Museum) in which the musical duet of the lovers is replaced by the husband attempting to ignore his wife's caterwauling at the piano as he reads the *Sporting Calendar*.

⁵⁴ T. Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802* (New Haven and London, 1997), p.198

military uniform, reflecting the popular belief that the head of a susceptible female could be easily turned by “a passion for a scarlet coat.”⁵⁵ The gentleman is prostrate at his mistress’s feet, kissing her hand in a manner ironically echoed by her dog. Music has clearly been employed to assist in the wooing process as a flute lies on the ground, a symbol of present harmony, and a music book lies open to reveal the words: “Affettusoso/ Each Art he tried the fair One’s Heart to move/ He sigh’d, and kist, and swore eternal love.” The sentiment of these lyrics reinforces the extravagant style of the suitor’s lovemaking and, as the work of one ‘Signor Pianissimo,’ is decidedly foreign. To the right of the image is a statue of Venus accompanied by Cupid who directs his arrow towards the figures of the lovers whilst trampling a crown underfoot, disregarding all practical considerations of fortune or rank in his aim.

The fruits of the suitor’s romantic endeavours are demonstrated in the next scene in which Collett depicts the young couple eloping (fig.19). He assists ‘Miss Fanny Falsestep’ over a fence whilst a post-chaise and pair wait ‘ready,’ as the motto inscribed on the side proclaims, to take them up ‘the great Northern Road’ to Gretna Green. As in *The Elopement from Boarding School*, a servant lifts luggage onto the coach as another checks the priming of his pistol in case of disapproving relatives giving chase. The initial period of their successfully achieved union is harmonious as depicted in the subsequent image, entitled *The Honey-Moon* (fig.20). However, as promised by conduct writers and fictional authors alike, the couple’s happiness is

⁵⁵ J. Swift, ‘The Furniture of a Woman’s Mind’, in *Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems*, ed. P. Rogers (Harmondsworth, 1983), p.327. Similarly, the novelette *The Dangerous Effects of a Wrong Education; or, The Fatal Contest in Novelettes Selected for the Use of Young Ladies and Gentlemen; in Two Volumes Written by Mrs Griffith, Dr. Goldsmith, and C.* (Dublin, 1784), p.171 declared: “A tolerable figure in a red coat, though it were but in a common soldier, is more apt to captivate an uneducated female mind, than a handsomer person dressed in black, brown or blue.”

short lived and they descend into *Discordant Matrimony* (fig.21). The once gallant suitor has lost interest in his wife and instead eyes a pretty servant girl who ushers their children into the room, a paper inscribed 'the willing maid' hanging from her pocket. In an ironic parody of the first plate, the dog once again licks his mistress's hand whilst her expression conveys none of the enthusiasm of that initial scene. The numerous devices the engraving employs to emphasise the final result of this clandestine marriage are remarkably similar to those utilised by Hogarth in Plate II of *Marriage A-La-Mode*, again revealing his persistent influence. The couple are similarly spatially and, by inference, emotionally divided, seated at tables either side of a fireplace. The wife casts a sidelong glance towards her adulterous husband whose attention is directed elsewhere. The motif of the chained dogs reappears, their front paws resting upon a book entitled 'On the Legality of Divorces' as one barks at the other. The prolific use of script, justified by its location on paper and books, is again a device typical of the work of Hogarth. Cupid reappears in a painting over the fireplace without his usual weapon, featured so prominently in the first plate, and the smashed guitar lying abandoned on the floor implies disharmony. The employment of the same pictorial vocabulary to depict the effects of both the romantic and the materialistic marriage echoes the literary pairing of the two as extremes to be avoided, only capable of resulting in unhappiness.

* * * * *

The homogeneity and persistence of the dictums described above should not be taken as indicative of reality. Whilst prescriptive and fictional writers throughout the eighteenth century repeated warnings about the evils of lust and criticisms of

parents only concerned with money, there was a clear disjunctive between their ideals and the realities of betrothal. A wealthy or noble family could not ignore the social and economic implications of marriage, however many writers condemned such considerations.⁵⁶ And, it is equally empirically unfounded to assert that romantic love and lust were always transient, resulting in marriages that were doomed to failure. Rather, such dictates represent a paradigm that appealed to readers, but a paradigm necessarily tempered in accordance with the realities of their own situations.

Such stereotypes do not, therefore, allow for the complexities of actual lives. They ignore the possibility that money and status might have been sexually alluring to a prospective spouse or that parents might have directed offspring to suitors that they thought personally suitable rather than economically viable.⁵⁷ Indeed, the rationale of prescriptive literature would have been nullified if rejection of money or lust as reasons for tying the conjugal knot had been the norm. If all marriages had been based on liking and compatibility, then such diatribes would have been short-lived as not pertinent. For example, the effectiveness of the jibes and barbs in Hogarth's *Marriage A-La-Mode* is contingent upon the cognisance of the viewer, on a shared cultural code. Whilst the number of such unions between the up-and-coming bourgeoisie and impoverished members of the aristocracy may have been statistically few, it was their popularity as a stereotype and as a point of discussion that was important in terms of visual representation.

⁵⁶ Mingay, *English Landed Society*, pp.28-36 and passim.

⁵⁷ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.44

Stella Tillyard's warning that responses to this literature were "gestural rather than significant," can be demonstrated by a brief consideration of two case studies.⁵⁸ Henry Fox, 1st Lord Holland wrote of his sister-in-law's prospective husband, Thomas Bunbury: "Not rich enough, but 'tis a match of her own making, and happiness don't depend on riches."⁵⁹ Whilst this 'soundbite' suggests clear disapprobation of materialistic marriages, the situation was actually more complex. For one thing, Fox had eloped with his own wife, resulting in her temporary banishment from her family, and had fervently opposed Lord Hardwicke's bill as a consequence, perceiving it as a personal attack.⁶⁰ These particulars both suggest that he was inevitably distrustful of money as a foundation for contentment and that his own relationship hardly fell within the boundaries of the prescriptive ideal. Equally, it cannot be inferred from his statement that money was deemed of little consequence in the union of Sarah Lennox and Mr Bunbury. Negotiations were complex and protracted and Bunbury's father certainly considered their family's lack of lucre serious enough to write to Fox that he hoped to give his future daughter-in-law, "as little reason as possible[,] or her Family for Her[,] to resent of her new alliance."⁶¹ In such unions between families of considerable social standing and wealth, money was inevitably a consideration.

Similar examples can be found with regard to romantic unions. In a letter to the Reverend William Freind, the young Elizabeth Robinson wrote that "vanity is apt

⁵⁸ S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1994), p.101

⁵⁹ Henry Fox, 1st Lord Holland, 'Memoir on the Events Attending the Death of George II, and the Accession of George III', in *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, eds. the Countess of Ilchester and Lord Stavordale, 2 Vols. (London, 1901), I, p.67

⁶⁰ Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, pp.20-9, 88

⁶¹ BL Add MSS 51425, f.92, Mr W. Bunbury to Henry Fox, 1st Lord Holland, 11 March 1762

to seek the admirer, rather than the friend, not considering that the passion of love may, but the effect of esteem can never, degenerate into dislike.”⁶² Decontextualised, this quote might again effectively be employed as an example of a parallel sentiment to those so predominant in published literature and satirical engravings. However, her own relationship with her future husband, Edward Montagu, was clearly based on more than esteem and respect. She wrote to him in August 1743: “MY DEAREST, The happiest moments I have spent since I parted from you, were those I employed in reading your letter: accept the sincerest thanks a grateful and tender heart can make to the most kind and generous love...”⁶³ Whilst it is as equally dangerous to accept the statement of the second letter as it is to trust the first, this example demonstrates that, whilst prescriptive writings did influence individual lives, that influence was more ambiguous and partial than suggested by writers such as Stone. Historical actors could be platitudinous when it suited them, but might form relationships that were far from accordant with prescribed ideals when it did not.

* * * * *

The preferred ideal to the commercial union or that based on romance or lust was the companionate marriage. Throughout the period, writers recommended that wedlock be founded upon the partialities of the couple, preferably seconded by parental approval, and that selection should be inspired by mutual affection and good-

⁶² *Elizabeth Montagu, The Queen of the Blue-Stockings: Her Correspondence from 1720-1761*, ed. E.J. Climensson, 2 Vols. (London, 1906), I, p. 109

⁶³ *Elizabeth Montagu*, I, p.159

liking. Daniel Defoe, deeming marriage without such attachment to be unlawful, irrational and prohibitive of happiness, expressed these principles repeatedly;

it is...absolutely necessary to the Happiness of a married Life, that the Persons marrying should have not only an Acquaintance with one another before Marriage, but that they should be engaged to each other by a solid and durable Affection...choosing and being the real choice of each other: This is not a small and trifling thing, it is the chief Article of Matrimony...⁶⁴

Such “solid and durable affection,” integral to the successful marriage, was far removed from the romantic passion to be found in novels and in the declarations of Rakes. Texts were rather peppered with nouns such as “Friendship” and “Esteem” and it was thought to be liking and respect that would sustain the relationship between husband and wife.⁶⁵ Whilst lust and ardour, stimulated by youth and beauty, would evaporate once desire had been satiated, love, stimulated by a person of exemplary morals and propitious characteristics, would blossom and develop as time passed. As the author of *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage* argued; “love, considered merely

⁶⁴ Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness*, pp.28, 59. He similarly argued pp.98, 100-9 that free choice should be allowed, marriage being “a state of Life in which so much of humane Felicity is really placed, and in which Men may be so compleatly happy or miserable.” Without such mutual affection, “the essential part of the contract”, the union would constitute matrimonial whoredom and be doomed to misery, an affront to God who had been lied to in the ceremony and resultant of “Family Confusions, violent Contentions, unsufferable Passions, raging at one another in vile Language, Quarrels, Feuds, Fightings, or at least Insultings of one another.”

⁶⁵ See Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, pp.158, 326: “Marriage is the highest state of friendship” and “Marriage is the highest state of Friendship that mortals can know”; Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p.251: “Esteem and gratitude are the proper motives to love.”

as a passion, will naturally have but a short duration; like all other passions it is changeable, transient, and accidental. But friendship and esteem are derived from principles of reason and thought.”⁶⁶ Thus, in many novels, it is not of passion and attraction of which heroes speak when they eventually express their feelings to heroines. In *Evelina*, Lord Orville finally drops on one knee after pages of misunderstandings and a painfully slowly developing relationship to exclaim: “I revere you! I esteem and I admire you above all human beings! - you are the friend to whom my soul is attached as to its better half!”, which profession causes the heroine to fall into a faint.⁶⁷

As the century progressed, an increasing number of writers did allow passion some place in the conjugal process. However, they warned and informed readers that the initial ardour of courtship would (and should be allowed to) mellow naturally into the almost platonic emotions to be found in marriage. In 1777, Hester Chapone promised a ‘new-married lady’ that, as “the delirium of passion” subsides, “a milder and more serene happiness succeeds.” Her advice, therefore, was to cultivate one’s husband’s friendship before the early emotion palled in order to create a bond to take its place.⁶⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, an ardent opponent of James Fordyce in most respects, expressed remarkably similar views to the cleric on this issue. Whilst he had

⁶⁶ Franklin, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, p.23. D. Hume in ‘Of Polygamy and Divorces’, in D. Hume *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (1741-2), (London, 1963), p.193 similarly segregated the two in familiar terms, describing love with such adjectives as “restless”, “impatient”, and as “full of caprices and variations: arising in a moment from a feature, from an air, from nothing, and suddenly extinguishing after the same manner.” Friendship on the other hand, the true basis for wedlock, is described as “a calm and sedate affection, conducted by reason and cemented by habit; springing from long acquaintance and mutual obligations.”

⁶⁷ F. Burney, *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* (1778), ed. E.A. Bloom (Oxford, 1982), pp.351-2

⁶⁸ H. Chapone, *A Letter to a New-Married Lady* (London, 1777), pp.13-4

preached that true love “has less emotion; it has more solidity: it is less earthly; it is more divine. It is love mellowed into friendship,” Wollstonecraft recommended, “calmly let passion subside into friendship.” However, in the context of *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, the emphasis on friendship between husband and wife served to reinforce the author’s polemic in favour of improvements in women’s education. Wollstonecraft claimed that contemporary provision for the instruction of young girls created wives who were either alluring in their infantile characters or despots, ruling their husbands through cunning rather than superiority. Only when women were allowed to exercise their capacities for reason and intellectual thought could they achieve the friendship with their husbands that so many writers advocated. She bitterly complained that, as things stood, not only did men have nobody at home to whom they might impart ideas and sentiments, but they were likely to be driven into “more agreeable, may I be allowed to use a significant French word, *piquant* society.”⁶⁹

Wollstonecraft was not unprecedented in her view that women needed better education in order to provide companionship for husbands, thereby retaining their spouse’s affections and sustaining the marriage. Much earlier, *The Tatler* had expressed a desire that women should fill their leisure hours with profitable and instructive activities to “furnish them with Reflections and Sentiments proper for the Companions of reasonable Men” and Eliza Haywood had promised husbands that they would benefit most from women’s “Amendment.” A wife, far from being a mere housekeeper, should be “the repository of his dearest Secrets, the Moderator of his fiercer Passions, the Softener of his most anxious Cares, and the constantly cheerful

⁶⁹ Fordyce, *Sermons*, II, p.76; M. Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’ (1792), in J. Todd, ed. *Mary Wollstonecraft: Political Writings* (Oxford, 1994), pp.137, 162, 195

and entertaining Companion of his more unbended Moments.” Of course, there were limits. Haywood was careful to warn that she was not advising that women should “go into the Pulpit, nor harangue at the Bar.”⁷⁰ Similarly, Mr Wilson in Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews*, having denied that he had ever found a man “capable of making juster observations on life or of delivering them more agreeably” than his wife, refutes Parson Adams’s imputation that his wife is a learned woman who considers herself above household affairs. She is, he is quick to qualify, “a notable housewife, and few gentlemen’s housekeepers understand cookery or confectionery better.”⁷¹

The ability of husband and wife to enjoy mutual activities was thus integral to the companionate ideal. It required a certain compatibility and many writers recommended equality of temper, fortune, age, property, religion and even constitution as prerequisites to a successful marriage.⁷² Without such reciprocal understanding, the marriage would flounder and the incompatible individuals would be forced to go their separate ways. Jonathan Swift described the disintegration of a relationship between an old divine and his young, noble born wife in his poem, *The Progress of Marriage*. As “no common ligament...binds/ The various textures of their minds,/ Their thoughts, and actions, hopes, and fears,/ less corresponding than their years,” the conclusion is inevitable.⁷³ The antithesis to such perversion was

⁷⁰ *The Tatler* no.248 (9 November 1710), in *The Tatler*, III, p.267; Haywood, *The Female Spectator*, pp.101-3

⁷¹ H. Fielding, ‘The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews’ (1742), in A. Humphreys, ed. *Henry Fielding: Joseph Andrews and Shamela* (London, 1993), p.253. This imputation draws on the stock figure of fun of the learned lady. See, for example, A. Brown *The Eighteenth-Century Feminist Mind* (Brighton, 1987), pp.41-2, 117

⁷² See Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness*, pp.218, 225-7; ‘Philogamus’, *The Present State of Matrimony*, pp.31-2

⁷³ J. Swift, ‘The Progress of Marriage’ in *Jonathan Swift*, p.243

personified and consolidated at the end of the century in the form of the exemplary Lord and Lady Percival in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*. The "union of interests, occupations, taste, and affection" that exists between Lady Anne and her husband, includes her provision of entertaining and capable companionship.⁷⁴

It is thus apparent that compatibility, companionship and affection founded upon liking were constant features of prescriptive dictums on wedlock. Writers had long decried money as a sole reason for marriage and, whilst the threat of clandestine unions based on sexual attraction had been heightened by the advent and proliferation of the novel, libidinous desires had never been seen as an adventitious basis for matrimony. What changed most dramatically, consolidating the companionate marriage, was its idealisation and elevation through the rise of sensibility. The new emphasis on emotion and on empathy between individuals brought the standard features of the ideal marriage onto a new and important plane of discourse. Language became more effusive, concepts were elaborated and, above all, as the family assumed a newly critical importance, so too did the role of women within it. In earlier conduct literature, strident assertions of man's God-given right to rule had proliferated. As Kathleen M. Davies has argued, "the overwhelming preoccupation of the seventeenth-century writers was with the relationship which subordinated the wife." William Gouge, for example, argued the husband to be both as "a priest unto his wife", and "as a King in his own house".⁷⁵ In contrast, writers such as Gregory in the eighteenth century proudly asserted to women: "I have considered your sex; not as domestic

⁷⁴ M. Edgeworth, *Belinda* (1801), ed. E. Ni Chuilleanain (London, 1994), pp.203-4

⁷⁵ K.M. Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', in Outhwaite, ed. *Marriage and Society*, p.63

drudges, or the slaves of our pleasures, but as our companions and equals.”⁷⁶ Many presented this new ‘equality’ in the nuptial relationship as a progression from a less enlightened past. A spokesman for Maria Edgeworth’s views in *Literary Ladies* claimed that the new companionate relationship had replaced an older, more courtly notion of gallantry between the sexes. From being “the champions and masters of the fair sex,” men were “now become their friends and companions,” from romance had emerged “the real permanent pleasures of domestic life” and from adulation had arisen friendship.⁷⁷ However, a more common formulation of this advancement was to emphasise the civilised nature of contemporary society by comparing its treatment of women to that in savage, barbarous or primitive communities. In the latter, according to Lord Kames, women are “considered as objects of animal love” and the relationship between the sexes is that of master and slave. He then contrasts this with the refined and cultivated British view of wives as “faithful friends and agreeable companions,” as “bosom friends,” and of marriage as “two persons equal in rank.”⁷⁸

Indeed, not only was parity claimed in the relationship between spouses, but many of these writers asserted that females had dominion over men. This was an

⁷⁶ Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy*, p.6

⁷⁷ Edgeworth, *Literary Ladies*, p.29

⁷⁸ H. Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* 4 Vols. (1778) (Edinburgh and London, 2nd edition, 1788), II, pp.41-2, 90. However, Lord Kames’s view of marriage as a union of ‘two persons equal in rank’ was not as egalitarian as may first appear. Although he states p.20 that husband and wife “govern and are governed reciprocally,” the means by which they reign are very different: “The man bears rule over his wife’s person and conduct, she bears rule over his Inclination: he governs by law: she by persuasion.” Thomas Gisborne in his *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, p.17 agreed with the idea of equality in marriage as a mark of civilisation: “When nations begin to emerge from gross barbarism, every new step which they take towards refinement is commonly marked by a gentler treatment, and a more reasonable estimation of women. And every improvement in their opinions and conduct respecting the female sex prepares the way for additional progress on civilisation.”

important development as writers of the previous century had dictated female obedience, condemning wifely assertion as transgressive. One of the earliest works to indicate a shift in tone was the much quoted *The Lady's New Year's Gift; or, Advice to a Daughter* by the Marquess of Halifax, first published in 1688 and reprinted many times throughout the eighteenth century. He instructed his offspring that, due to their superior rationality, men have natural authority in marriage, a governance that may seem "a little uncourtly." However, this authority could easily be overthrown:

You have it in your power not only to free yourselves but to subdue your masters, and without violence throw both their natural and legal authority at your feet...You have more strength in your looks than we have in our laws, and more power by your tears than we have by our arguments.⁷⁹

Numerous writers throughout the following century echoed Halifax's ideas. In a paraphrase of the Marquess, Wetenhall Wilkes recommended that a woman whose husband is 'Irregular' should combat his deficiencies with a meek, soft, obliging and complacent temper as "her looks have more Power than his Laws, and a few sweet Words from her can soften all his fury."⁸⁰ The softening and beneficent influence of wives, capable of tempering masculine sternness and austerity, was thus central in the elevation of women into the moral guardians of the home. For example, Fordyce's

⁷⁹ George Savile, Marquess of Halifax, 'The Lady's New Year's Gift; or, Advice to a Daughter' (1688), in J.P. Kenyon, ed., *Halifax: Complete Works* (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp.277-8

⁸⁰ Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice*, p.120. Bishop Fleetwood in *Relative Duties*, pp.224-5 recommended similar behaviour towards a troublesome husband: "All Men love Power and Superiority, and a meek and quiet Spirit seems to yield it to them, even when it takes it from them, and disarms them."

first sermon entitled, “On the Importance of the Female Sex, especially the Younger Part” remarked on the propitious influence of women’s “soft persuasion” and went on to praise the virtuous female’s maintenance of her family’s “honour and peace.”⁸¹

The sentimentalisation and elevation of marriage and parenthood was also critical in creating new models of masculinity. It was no longer merely necessary for a man to be active and successful in the public world, he also needed to be recognised as a kind and affectionate husband and father. *The Tatler*, for example, eulogised over the loving husband as having “a Simplicity of behaviour, and a certain Evenness of Desire” that was entirely laudatory.⁸² Such a character, far from suggesting a weakening of masculine authority, could actually be used to justify public responsibility. As argued by the Reverend Fordyce in 1776, tender treatment and loving behaviour towards wives and offspring marked a civilised society, whilst indifference and a mocking attitude to women signified a degenerate age: “It is certain, that savages, and those who are but little removed from their condition, have seldom behaved to women with much respect or tenderness. On the other hand, it is known, that in civilised nations they have ever been objects of both.” Whilst he emphasised women’s natural subordination and advised that submissiveness and dependency should characterise both their behaviour and their condition, he asked his fellow men: “Is it noble in us, is it generous, is it *manly*, to look upon them with a supercilious eye, or, because they are in our power, to exult in their debility?”⁸³

81 Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, I, pp.3-28

82 *The Tatler* no.49 (2 August 1709), in *The Tatler*, I, p.349

83 J. Fordyce, *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women. A Discourse in Three Parts, Delivered in Monkwell-Street Chapel, January 1, 1776* (London, 1776), pp. 6, 8, 40-41. My italics

The Tatler had rendered the association between a virtuous masculine public persona and private probity explicit in its characterisation of the exemplary man as having “Industry and Frugality in his private Affairs and Integrity and Address in Publick.”⁸⁴ *The Spectator* went further in overtly founding male authority in the public domain upon fulfilment of domestic duties. It questioned whether there could

be anything more base...than...treating a helpless creature with unkindness, who has had so good an opinion of him as to believe what he said relating to one of the greatest Concerns of life, by delivering her Happiness in this World to his Cares and Protection? Must not that man be abandoned even to all Manner of humanity...Is anything more unlike a gentleman...? *Ought such a one to be trusted in his public affairs?*⁸⁵

Such writers thus employed the traditional model of the family as a microcosm of the state, of the rectitude of the domestic sphere as critical to that of the nation, of the good father, the good son and the good husband as the good citizen. Rather than opposing the public and the private, they saw lines of influence as flowing from the family to the state, founding ability to govern the latter wisely and competently on ability to govern the former likewise.⁸⁶ The connection was particularly explicit in the poem, *Hymen*, published at the end of the century:

⁸⁴ *The Tatler* no.175 (23 May 1710), in *The Tatler*, II, p.457

⁸⁵ *The Spectator* no.236 (30 November 1711), in *The Spectator*, II, p.417. My italics

⁸⁶ L. Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1995), p.250

O! would our leaders trace the virtuous plan,
 Shun the mean purpose, and assume the man;
 Detest the Harlot's prostituted kiss,
 And flee the Brothel, for domestic bliss;
 Then might we hope to see firm Patriots rise,
 Bound to their country by the strongest ties.

In such a utopia, the statesman proclaimed to the public at large to bear the name of "rank adulterer" would falter in his influence, guilty of "every vice, that can / Destroy his country, and disgrace the man."⁸⁷

Not only did literature come to express such sentiments, but an ever-increasing readership was exposed to its dictates. James Raven has proposed that, whilst a mere 45 new prose fiction titles were issued in Britain between 1700 and 1709, the successive decades witnessed an eruption of such writing. He has identified the years between the mid 1730s and mid 1740s as the period of most significant increase, production escalating from 95 new titles published between 1730 and 1739 to 210 between 1740 and 1749.⁸⁸ This expansion was aided by a boom in the number of publishers, both in London and in the provinces, able to utilise increasingly effective networks of sale and distribution and the availability of new marketing tools such as advertising space.⁸⁹ Similarly, the number of newspapers rapidly increased, the first dailies emerging at this time, whilst the popular periodical grew to be an increasingly

⁸⁷ *Hymen: A Poem* (London, 1794), pp.27-8

⁸⁸ J. Raven, *British Fiction 1750-1770: A Chronological Check-List of Prose Fiction Printed in Britain and Ireland* (London, Toronto and Newark, 1987), pp.3, 9-10

⁸⁹ Raven, *British Fiction*, pp. 3, 9-10, 25

powerful cultural force, more available, more varied and more popular from the 1690s onwards.⁹⁰

This increase both responded to and, as convincingly argued by Kathryn Shevelow, helped to promote a wide reading public. By providing society with accessible, affordable and entertaining material, literary forms such as the periodical helped to popularise the activity of reading and thus created and consolidated their own audiences. This development was assisted by a sharp increase in the extent of the lettered population in the later seventeenth century.⁹¹ G.J. Barker-Benfield has proposed that Britain was at the forefront of increasing standards of literacy, assisted by improvements in and the wider availability of education. Whilst a mere 30% of men and 11% of women were literate in the mid seventeenth century, these figures had risen to 60% of men and 40% of women by 1750. Even those with limited funds were brought into the market by phenomena such as circulating libraries (spreading rapidly post 1740), the serialisation of novels such as *Clarissa* and the burgeoning availability of second-hand books, remainders and cheap piracies.⁹² For those in the more affluent sectors of society, increasing prosperity both freed more money for the purchase of such consumer goods and created more leisure time in which to enjoy them. Thus, as Margaret Hunt has explained, the nation became, “in a new way, a nation of books - thousands upon thousands of them, on almost every conceivable

⁹⁰ M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996), p.180; K. Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London and New York, 1989), chapter 2, especially p.24

⁹¹ Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture*, pp.28-35

⁹² G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992), pp.162-5

topic, pored over, swapped, stolen, and cherished by people at every level of society from members of parliament to plowmen.”⁹³

* * * * *

These new ideals and their increasing dissemination can be closely related to that mid eighteenth-century transition in marital portraiture briefly described in the comparison between *Mr and Mrs Andrews* and *Mr and Mrs Hallett*. One of the first paintings to demonstrate this shift was William Hogarth’s *David Garrick and his Wife, Eva Maria* of 1757 (fig.11). The actor and impresario is portrayed in the act of artistic endeavour (composing a prologue to Samuel Foote’s play, *Taste*) whilst his wife steals up behind him, seemingly with the intention of purloining his pen. Roses blossom in his jacket pocket in a romantic gesture whilst his portrait on her bracelet returns the compliment.⁹⁴ Dr. Hoadly observed this narrative element and commented upon it; “it is not so much fancy as to be affected or ridiculous and yet enough to raise it from the formal inanity of a mere portrait.”⁹⁵ This clearly acknowledged the inventive nature of the image and its design as a break with tradition.

⁹³ Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, p.178; Similarly, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have noted in *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), pp.155-6 that reading held an increasingly important place in middle-class lives during this period, a development assisted by enhanced educational opportunities and evidenced by an increase in the numbers of advice manuals, newspapers and magazines available as well as an explosion of booksellers, printers and libraries.

⁹⁴ As Eileen Ribeiro has noted in *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1984), p.153, such jewelled miniatures became increasingly popular as the century progressed and sentimentality took hold.

⁹⁵ Quoted in W.T. Whitley, *Artists and their Friends in England 1700-1799* 2 Vols. (London, 1928), I, pp.155-6

The light-hearted and affectionate ethos of Hogarth's portrait was in sharp contrast to the formality of earlier images such as *William Atherton and his Wife, Lucy* by Arthur Devis of 1743/4 (fig.22). The interior in Hogarth's portrait is minimal; the focus is on the sitters and the relationship between them. In contrast, the Athertons are stiffly posed in a starkly described room, the sharply receding floorboards emphasising the box perspective and enhancing the picture's sense of formality. Whilst the Garricks are united in a narrative that suggests a certain playfulness in their relationship, Devis's sitters are engaged in distinct and separate activities. She has seemingly just laid aside her needlework for the benefit of the sitting whilst her husband's standing position, framed against the light rectangle of the open door, implies that he has recently entered from the outside world. Indeed, not only are the actions of the Garricks more closely integrated, but Hogarth has conveyed the impression that the actor's literary efforts are prompted by his wife. The way in which she leans over her husband's shoulder whilst he is in the act of creative exertion suggests, by appeal to a lengthy iconographic tradition, that she is his muse, the stimulation and inspiration for his activity.⁹⁶ Mrs Atherton, meanwhile, is distinctly peripheral to her husband.

The strong mutual narrative and sense of physical contact that binds the Garricks serve to exclude the spectator. This effect is not only engendered by the sense of intimacy and privacy that dominates the picture, but also by the simple fact that neither David Garrick nor his wife meet the spectatorial gaze. Most early eighteenth-century conversation pieces depict the sitters engaged in a variety of

⁹⁶ D. Mannings, 'Reynolds, Garrick and the Choice of Hercules', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17, 3 (Spring 1984), pp.266-7; D. Shawe-Taylor, *Genial Company: The Theme of Genius in*

domestic activities, but almost all look up from their occupations and are thus shown to be aware of the external gaze.⁹⁷ Inevitably, this enhances an impression of formality and emphasises the act of posing. In contrast, Mr and Mrs Garrick are enclosed in a domestic sphere, ignoring the inquiring gaze. This negation and denial of external presence creates what H. Berger has termed, “the fiction of candour.” The physiognomic myth is reliant on the appearance of the sitter as ignorant of the audience. If the sitter appears aware of the viewer’s presence, then they can be supposed to have constructed their expression and activity for that viewer’s benefit and the intentionality of the pose lessens the suggestion of the physical appearance as the index to the mind. If, on the other hand, the sitter is absorbed or occupied, inattentive to the fact that they are on display, the artist is able to create an impression of unselfconscious spontaneity and the viewer is either convinced of his or her non-existence or of the sitter’s unawareness of that existence. “The absorption that neutralizes the presence of the observer must therefore be construed as *posing so as to appear not to be posing*.”⁹⁸

However, having pinpointed Hogarth’s *Mr and Mrs Garrick* as signifying the emergence of a new marital ideal, it is important to qualify this argument and to mitigate any impression of such a transition as uncomplicated and linear. Social and

Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture (Nottingham and Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 23-4 and E. Einberg, *Hogarth, the Painter* (London, 1997), p.51 all note the reference to the theme of the muse.

⁹⁷ For examples, see Arthur Devis, *Mr and Mrs Hill* (1750/1, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art), Francis Hayman, *Margaret Tyers and her Husband, George Rogers* (1750/2, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art) and Thomas Gainsborough, *A Portrait of Lady and a Gentleman* (1750s, The Dulwich Picture Gallery, London)

⁹⁸ H. Berger, ‘Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture’, *Representations* 46 (Spring 1994), pp. 98, 102. Also see E. Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959), (Harmondsworth, 1975), pp.18-9

cultural developments are rarely neatly consecutive, but rather enacted in a state of flux, different members of a society being affected in different ways and at different rates. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the Garricks were amongst the first to be represented in the new idiom of the sentimentalised companionate marriage. They were members of the progressive London bourgeoisie, mixing with the most elevated artistic and literary circles of the day. Additionally, Garrick was an extremely able self-publicist, singularly cognisant of the power of imagery as a means of self-advertisement. From Hogarth's seminal and sizeable portrait of the actor as Richard III, waking from his dream on the battlefield, "his visage was a nearly permanent feature in the print shops and exhibition halls."⁹⁹ Thus, he would have been keen to exploit new modes of representation and new ideological fads. The clients of Arthur Devis, in contrast, were members of the provincial bourgeoisie. Mr Atherton was a respected pillar of the Preston community; a wealthy woollen draper, a member of the town council, an Alderman and one time Mayor. Whilst the couple actually lived in a house in the Market Square, Devis has suggested the locale of a country seat, the window at the back of the painting overlooking a cultivated landscape garden.¹⁰⁰ His portrait thus emphasises gentility and status, reinforcing and emphasising the sitters' comfortably dominant position in a provincial community.

⁹⁹ L. Bertelsen, 'David Garrick and English Painting', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 11, 1 (Spring 1978), p.310. However, it should be noted that, for reasons unknown, the Garricks do not seem to have been pleased with the portrait. It was still in Hogarth's studio and unpaid for by the time of the artist's death. His widow then gave it to Mrs Garrick. See R. Wendorf, *The Elements of Life: Biography and Portrait Painting in Stuart and Georgian England* (Oxford, 1990), pp.185, 186 and O. Millar, 'Garrick and his Wife' by William Hogarth', *Burlington Magazine* 104 (1962), pp.347-8

¹⁰⁰ C. Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration: Design and the Domestic Interior in England* (London, 1993), p.164

A comparison of Hogarth's portrait with another painting by Arthur Devis, that of *Sir George and Lady Elizabeth Strickland* painted in 1751 (fig.23), once again serves to emphasise the unequal pace of change. The catalogue to an exhibition of paintings by Devis in 1983-4 referred to Lady Strickland's presentation of a sprig of honeysuckle to her husband as nothing less than "proto-romantic."¹⁰¹ However, this image actually reinforces the argument that such members of the rural gentry were more concerned with emphasising status and position than with representing feeling between family members at this time. As Ellen G. D'Oench has elucidated, the seeming gesture of endearment is as formulaic as Lord Strickland's civilised, cross-legged pose. His wife's gift is bestowed according to contemporary codes of polite and graceful behaviour, as comparison with engravings from conduct manuals such as François Nivelon's *Rudiments of Genteel Behaviour* of 1737 demonstrates.¹⁰²

Thus, whilst predating Hogarth's painting by only a few years and anticipating it to some degree in the relative sense of contact between the sitters, *Lord and Lady Strickland* retains much in common with older traditions from the early decades of the century. An examination of Sir Godfrey Kneller's *Charles, 2nd Duke of Richmond and his Wife, Sarah* of the early 1720s (fig.24) discovers a very similar ethos. The Duke's status is emphasised by his armour and by the collar of the garter that hangs round his neck. His wife, meanwhile, plucks a flower between thumb and forefinger whilst looking back at her husband in a manner that very much anticipates the pose of Lady Strickland. Both paintings are formulations of a more courtly affection than the

¹⁰¹ J. Hayes and S.V. Sartin, *Polite Society by Arthur Devis 1712-1787* (Preston and London, 1983/4), pp.53-4

¹⁰² E.G. d'Oench, *The Conversation Piece: Arthur Devis and his Contemporaries* (New Haven, 1980), pp.15-6

increasingly naturalistic style heralded by Hogarth's picture. They are images in a ceremonious and contrived vein, describing the emotional quality of the relationship but in a mediated and contrived fashion, placing greater emphasis on manners and etiquette.

The shift from the portraiture of an artist such as Kneller to the companionate imagery as discussed in *Mr and Mrs Garrick* does not relate to a shift in the quality of lived marital relationships. There is certainly ample evidence to suggest the emotional intensity of the Garricks' marriage. For example, the actor wrote to Sir James Caldwell in 1776 to decline an invitation to Castle Caldwell in Ireland, "as I have not left Mrs Garrick one day since we were Married, Near 28 years, I cannot now leave her, and she is so sick and distress'd by the sea, that I have not had the resolution to follow my inclinations on account of her fears."¹⁰³ Eva Maria was very much involved in both her husband's public and social life and letters from his friends and acquaintances are peppered with concerns for her well being and expressions of affection. Hannah More, for one, wrote in 1777 that "no one better knows her value, or more truly loves or honours her, I mean except yourself."¹⁰⁴ However, whatever Kneller's portrait of them suggests, relations between the Duke of Richmond and his

¹⁰³ F.48.F.6: Forster Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Garrick Letters Miscellaneous 1774-1777' p.48, David Garrick to Sir James Caldwell, 14 May 1776

¹⁰⁴ F.48.F.5: Forster Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Garrick Letters 1776-1779 and undated' p.8, Hannah More to David Garrick, 21 December 1777. The affectionate and intimate nature of their relationship appears to have been a publicly acknowledged fact. Lady Sarah Lennox wrote of her sympathy for Eva Maria after Garrick had died. *Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, I, p.293, Lady Sarah Lennox to Lady Susan o'Brien, from Goodwood, 9 March 1779: "In the first place, I believe that if it is possible to give the name of love to an attachment at the end of about thirty years, she was in love with her husband, but this I am sure of, he was the whole and sole occupation and business of her life. To nurse him when he was sick, and admire him when well, has been her employment so long, that she must now feel the most forlorn and helpless of all creatures."

wife were far from formal or courtly. Whilst their marriage was initially contrived by their parents to pay off his fathers' gambling debts and to secure the extant friendship between the families, the Richmonds appear to have been a very affectionate couple. Stella Tillyard quotes a letter written by the Duchess in 1740 after the pair had quarrelled, claiming: "Of all the time that I have loved you, I never felt more love and tenderness for you than I did yesterday..."¹⁰⁵ Thus, to posit the development in pictorial language as reflecting the development of the companionate marriage in actual domestic life would be misleading.

Equally, the transition between these portraits should not be perceived as from a complete absence of expressed affection to an entirely original pictorial concern with emotional bonds. It is too simplistic to suggest that no pictures before 1750 demonstrate sentiment. Whilst the conversation pieces of an artist such as Devis do appear stiff and formulaic to the modern eye, affection is not absent, but is rather encoded in a lexicon of gestures and postures. Conventions of gentility and politeness assume dominance over expressions of intimacy, but in themselves codify those expressions. As Christopher Flint remarks of Devis's *John Bacon and his Family* of 1742/3 (fig.87): "Typically, a prop coupled with a simple gesture...serves to establish emotional relationships in the picture. In the postures the figures adopt, formal attitude rather than expression conveys the intimacies of family life."¹⁰⁶ Affection is present, but it is mediated, superseded by the desire to translate relationships through the filter of correct and genteel poses and gestures. The early conversation piece should not be presented as antithetical to later paintings by artists such as Reynolds, but rather as a

¹⁰⁵ Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, pp.10-11

¹⁰⁶ C. Flint, "The Family Piece": Oliver Goldsmith and the Politics of the Everyday in Eighteenth-Century Domestic Portraiture', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1995/6), p.138

stage in the development towards such sentimental images. The very presentation of domestic life in the genre, the portrayal of figures in private residences, accompanied by family and friends, was a new development in the early 1700s and one that evidenced an unfamiliar interest in the depiction of familial and domestic life. It was not until the mid century that the conversation piece began to convey that life through focus on the relationships therein, but the very creation of the genre was a necessary antecedent to such images.

The development should thus not be seen as “a liberation from convention, but the need to formulate new conventions.”¹⁰⁷ As the desire to emphasise *politesse* ebbed, so the wish to demonstrate worthy domestic relationships burgeoned. M. Curtin has convincingly demonstrated the rejection of formal modes of behaviour through an examination of conduct literature. Whilst earlier aristocratic courtesy books had united the issues of manners and morals, these concerns became segregated as the eighteenth century progressed. He argues that manners were increasingly dismissed as trivial and that writers began to demonstrate a new Christian emphasis on the inner life, an enhanced pride in the English character as straightforwardly honest in comparison to the contrived and artificial demeanour of the French, a burgeoning Romanticism and a predilection for the countryside over the urban environment. The focus of such texts thus shifted to inner moral virtue whilst manners were relegated to the separate genre of the etiquette book.¹⁰⁸

David Solkin has translated this decline of manners as a means of social

¹⁰⁷ D.R. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marital Portraiture* (Epping, 1982), p.11

¹⁰⁸ M. Curtin, ‘A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy’, *Journal of Modern History* 57 (September 1985), pp.395-423

communication and self-identification into pictorial terms. He describes the early decades of the eighteenth century as a period of straightforward and unambiguous pictorial codes, a period in which the outward display of good breeding and politeness was confidently accepted as signifying social worth. He then argues that this system of representation broke down in the 1750s due to ease of emulation. With books such as Nivelon's text on genteel behaviour and the increase of wealth amongst the middling ranks, such signifiers of gentility could easily be brought, learned and acquired.¹⁰⁹ In light of such arguments, portraits such as *Mr and Mrs Garrick* can be interpreted as attempts to deny the artificiality of self-fashioning through emphasis on a supposedly particular and uncontrived relationship. Narrative devices such as the sitters' seeming ignorance of the presence of the viewer, creating an impression of privacy and intimacy, help to suggest that their virtues are genuine and not merely assumed.

* * * * *

The focus, therefore, should not be on ascertaining a lack of affection in the early conversation piece followed by burgeoning of sentiment from the 1750s onwards, but rather on the development of the expression of that sentiment. What happened in mid eighteenth century was not so much the birth of depicted displays of affection, but changes in the way in which they were displayed and the ideal of wedlock to which they referred, dictated by fashion. That ideal was increasingly sentimental, lauding the companionate marriage as it condemned both materialistic and lustful relationships. However, as this chapter has emphasised, the development

¹⁰⁹ D. Solkin, 'Great Pictures or Great Men? Reynolds, Male Portraiture, and the Power of Art', *Oxford Art Journal* 9, 2 (1986), pp.42-3

was not entirely linear and was greatly affected by factors such as class, provincialism and socio-cultural milieu. Thus, Arthur Devis was still depicting sitters ranged in rigid poses across backgrounds of intricately described interiors whilst contemporaries such as William Hogarth in London were representing couples united by narrative conceits and absorbed in one another to the exclusion of the viewer to foster an impression of privacy. However, thanks to the inexorable process of change, Devis was increasingly falling out of fashion and into relative obscurity throughout the 1750s and 1760s, being “content to work in a style which bore increasingly little relation to the artistic currency of the time.”¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, pioneers such as Reynolds came to command previously uncomprehended prices for their portraits. By the time of the third Discourse, delivered in 1770, Reynolds was able to refer to formal gestures and poses as the “ill-understood methods, which have been practised to disguise nature, among our dancing-masters, hair-dressers, and tailors, in their various schools of deformity.”¹¹¹ Indeed, Reynolds himself was hailed by *The Public Advertiser* in 1775 for being the one to displace such formalistic language of affection: “It was he who had the courage and ingenuity to step out of that stiff, formal track which our modern painters had got into, of drawing every lady with a rose between her forefinger and her thumb, and every gentleman with his hat under his arm.”¹¹²

110 Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration*, p.126

111 Discourse III, in Sir J. Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (1769-1790), ed. R.R. Wark (1966) (London, 4th edition, 1969), p.49

112 *The Public Advertiser* 25 March 1775

CHAPTER TWO

CONJUGAL DISCOURSES AND *CONCORDIA DISCORDS*

As we have seen, the prescriptive ideal of marriage was founded on mutual liking and compatibility. Whilst writers had long emphasised affection and free choice of spousal partner as critical for the successful union, the eighteenth century witnessed a new sentimental idealisation of the relationship between husband and wife. Masculine domestic virtues were elevated to such a degree that the capacity to fulfil a public role increasingly became perceived as reliant on virtue in the domestic sphere, on kind and loving treatment of familial dependants. Simultaneously, the role of women as wives, household managers and mothers became venerated in newly cloying terms. Supplanting blatant assertions of female inferiority, the critical nature of women's domestic duties became a subject for much discussion. Writers declared that wives should be seen as their husbands' companions, thus requiring education to render them capable of fulfilling this role.¹

This chapter will consider claims that the eighteenth-century companionate marriage was characterised by a new parity. First, it will expand on the historiography outlined in the introduction, surveying the debate between historians who have argued that the relationship between husband and wife became increasingly equal in the 1700s and feminist scholars who have claimed that the sentimental elevation of women constituted a new formulation of an abiding patriarchy.² Then, marital portraits will be considered in light of such arguments. As in previous periods, eighteenth-century pendant portraits segregated male and female sitters into distinct

¹ See chapter 1, pp.61-71

² Introduction, pp.9-12

pictorial spaces. These became increasingly particularised throughout the period as a specific and often professional masculine identity was paired with a more generic, domestic and sentimental femininity. The chapter will then go on to discuss how such pictorial divisions came to be justified through the inherently compatible and, indeed, mutually dependent nature of these roles. The view that the respective capacities and duties of husband and wife should be matched to create a perfect *concordia discors* will be found to be evident in the double portrait tradition of the later eighteenth century. Finally, it will be emphasised that such delineation of congenial ‘separate spheres’ was not directly reflective of reality. Pictorial conventions appealed to popular stereotypes of gendered roles within the home whilst lived enactment of those roles frequently transgressed such boundaries.

* * * * *

Lawrence Stone emphasised the principle of equality as fundamental to the newly companionate family of the eighteenth century, accepting contemporaries’ assertions of parity between spouses. First, he contended that a new awareness of individual rights effected “a greater autonomy” for wives and children as the rigid control of the patriarchal household head declined in the late seventeenth century. Parents became increasingly willing to allow children freedom in election of marital partners, enabling love and compatibility to supersede money and property as the chief motivations for wedlock. Once husbands and wives were bonded by mutual respect and affection, “equalising relationships between husband and wife” became

predominant.³ This thesis was seconded and elaborated by Randolph Trumbach in his book (significantly) entitled, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*. Trumbach argued that, once all forms of human slavery had been rejected, the way was paved to a new equivalence between the various members of the household. As a result, the possibility was raised “of true and equal friendship between husband and wife.”⁴

Such uncritical acceptance of contemporary assertions of parity between husbands and wives has been strongly criticised. Alan Macfarlane countered that such equivalence was an historical constant. He claimed that the liberty of English women and the loving treatment that they received from their spouses was a source of astonishment to foreign travellers from the sixteenth century, if not before.⁵ Conversely, feminist historians came to argue that promulgations of the domestic woman were reformulations of patriarchal discourse, securing women within the family and household and thereby excluding them from involvement in public and political spheres of action. The concept of ‘separate spheres’ was most notably defined and developed in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s *Family Fortunes*, published in 1987. The authors argued that the concept, promoted by the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism, was a critical tool in the formation of the self-image of the middling ranks in the Victorian period.⁶ However, since then, many historians have sought the origins of such doctrines in the late seventeenth and

³ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp.8, 325

⁴ R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, San Francisco and London, 1978), p.3

⁵ A. Macfarlane, ‘*The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* by Lawrence Stone’, *History and Theory* 18 (1979a), p.114

⁶ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987)

eighteenth centuries. Some have claimed that the liberalism propounded in the work of political theorists such as Hobbes and Locke, in destroying hierarchical models of humanity and proposing all mankind to be equal, necessitated new rationale for female subjection to be sought in the concept of the sexes as equal but different.⁷ Such theories have been supported by the work of medical historians who have argued that the instability of the traditional theory of sex as a sliding scale necessitated a new doctrine of gender opposites in order to create an unbridgeable divide between men and women. Beginning with works such as Thomas Bartholin's *Anatomy* of 1668 and Thomas Gibson's *The Anatomy of Human Bodies Epitomised* of 1682, astrological and humoral formulations of masculinity and femininity were rejected in favour of incommensurable sexes, divided by the tool of nerve theory.⁸

In particular, Susan Moller Okin has elaborated three characteristic features of the companionate family that reveal its foundation in patriarchal discourse. Eighteenth-century writers presented the female sphere as more firmly segregated from the male than before, advising that feminine influence should be restricted to the home and family. Simultaneously, they characterised women as creatures of sentiment, as essentially emotional and irrational and thus as lacking the intellectual

⁷ S.M. Okin, 'Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2, 1 (1982), pp.65-88. See also J.B. Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Oxford, 1981), chapter 3, 'Politics Sanctified and Subdued: Patriarchalism and the Liberal Tradition' for an interesting discussion of the development of patriarchal thought through the writings of Filmer, Hobbes and Locke.

⁸ A. Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven and London, 1995) passim., especially pp.xvi, 33-4, 41, 287, 292, 396. Fletcher's views were developed from those of Thomas Laqueur as elucidated in 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', in C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur, eds., *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1987), pp.1-41. See also the

and reasoning capacities necessary to perform roles of civic import. Finally, they presented the interests of the sentimental family as harmonious to the extent that the patriarch could be entrusted to express and safeguard the interests of other family members. Such developments effectively denied women admission to public spheres, claiming that they lacked the intellectual and rational abilities requisite for such access, and rendered the patriarchal head of the household the sole purveyor of power.⁹ Thus, as Janet Todd has observed of writers such as Richard Steele and Joseph Addison; “they wanted a sentimental version of the patriarchal order, not its abolition...they urged the gentle feeling lady, entirely familial and entirely subordinate, while domesticity was elevated to the female equivalent of a male profession.”¹⁰

However, as was indicated in the introduction, the concept of ‘separate spheres’ has come under increasing attack.¹¹ Most notably, Amanda Vickery has questioned the idea that it was born and developed in either the eighteenth or the nineteenth centuries and has pointed out that basic segregation of masculine and

following essay, L. Schiebinger, ‘Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy,’ pp.42-82

⁹ Okin, ‘Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family’, p.74. See also S.M. Okin, ‘Patriarchy and Married Women’s Property in England: Questions on Some Current Views’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2 (Winter 1983/4), pp. 121-38; S.M. Okin, ‘Gender, the Public and the Private’, in D. Held, ed., *Political Theory Today* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.67-90

¹⁰ J. Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York, 1986), p.20. Many writers have accorded with this view of the exultation of women as a tool of oppression. See, for example, T. Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1982), pp.15-16; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.391; K. Shevelov, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London and New York, 1989), pp.10, 92, 96. The school of thought was summarised by Amanda Vickery in ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *Historical Journal* 36, 2 (1993), p.384: “In this way, the glorification of domestic womanhood became associated with the deterioration of women’s public power...”

¹¹ Introduction, pp.10-12

feminine responsibilities can be found in almost any century. She, amongst others, has also shown that the concept of 'separate spheres' had an essentially discursive status.¹² Reality was much more diverse and the rigid boundaries established by theorists were routinely broken and negotiated in the course of daily life. Revisionists have thus argued that, "the foundation of the 'separate spheres' framework was established through a particular reading of didactic and complaint literature...confidently built on the sands of prescription," that "the degree to which *in practice* families actually adhered to separate spheres' ideology remains the subject of much debate."¹³ Recent scholars have thus recommended that, rather than taking idealised models from published sources and forcing the details of personal existence into them, historians should show an awareness that "conventional definition of roles and the actual performance of them in everyday life can be quite different things."¹⁴

As a result, many have rejected the concept of 'separate spheres' as of no use to the historian, as a tool that has for too long clouded historical research. Vickery has proposed that such "orthodox categories" should be "jettisoned," and that the way forward is through detailed research and case studies.¹⁵ However, the utility of the notional model has not entirely run its course. Accepting the point that strict models are antithetical to the multiplicity of social reality, the concept remains useful for examining the area to which it is applicable; prescriptive and fictional writings and,

¹² Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?' pp.383-414; A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London, 1998), especially pp.3-11

¹³ Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', pp.385-6; M. Hunt, 'Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-Century London', *Gender and History* 4, 1 (Spring 1992), p.27

¹⁴ K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580 - 1680* (London, 1993), p.92

¹⁵ Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', pp.413-4

according to my argument, pictorial imagery. ‘Separate spheres’ were clearly elucidated throughout eighteenth-century prescriptive and fictional literature. And, as portraiture ran a parallel course to prescription, gendered domains were similarly apparent in conventional pictorial forms and narrative devices. Thus, this chapter will suggest that both literary and visual evidence reveals the doctrine to have been dominant in such ideological realms before the Victorian period focussed on by Davidoff and Hall. Similarly, through examination of portraits ranging from depictions of middling-class couples from Derbyshire to King George III and Queen Charlotte, it will imply that ‘separate spheres’ had prescriptive purchase for a broader spectrum of society than just the middling sorts. However, this latter argument will be chiefly elucidated in the conclusion.¹⁶

* * * * *

As we have seen, the eighteenth century witnessed an elevation of the roles of wife and mother and “the generally low opinion of women inherited from seventeenth-century religious works was reversed into an idealisation of women as superior to men in virtue.”¹⁷ However, this discourse did not supplant patriarchal prescription; rather it proffered a moderated version of abiding precepts. First, writers of this period built on and developed the traditional precept of mutuality, thereby tempering the rule of masculine superiority and authority by emphasising reciprocal duties. For example, whilst the supposedly female author of *The Hardships of the*

¹⁶ See conclusion, pp.324-33

¹⁷ F.A. Childs, ‘Prescriptions for Manners in English Courtesy Literature, 1690-1760, and their Social Implications’, (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Oxford, 1984), abstract; chapter 1, pp.66-9

English Laws in Relation to Wives promoted masculine authority and stated that the law of God had endowed man with ultimate command, she desired that his legal supremacy should be tempered by conscience. She argued that a husband owes his wife protection in return for the trust she puts in him, for her respect and for her deference.¹⁸ Such a reciprocal relationship, if taken to its logical conclusion, implied that a husband who failed in fulfilling his side of the bargain should accept the exemption of his wife from the fulfilment of hers. For example, the eponymous heroine of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* argues that, if a husband “is ignorant of the regard he ought to have for his wife, or forgets to put it in practice, he can expect neither affection nor obedience.” Thus, when Mr Munden is finally discovered to be having an affair with Madame de Roquelair, Betsy is completely absolved from her duties and begins her ‘Dear John’ letter to him thus; “you cannot but be sensible, that the mutual engagements between us have been strictly adhered to on my part, and almost in every particular falsified on yours”.¹⁹ However, for some, this was an extension of mutuality to an uncomfortable degree. Samuel Richardson, for example, warned, “the Husband’s breach of duty cannot warrant a failure in that of the Wife.”²⁰

¹⁸ *The Hardships of the English Laws in Relation to Wives* (London and Dublin, 1735), pp. 3, 14, 15, 18. Similarly, but much later in the century, Thomas Gisborne in *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797) (London, 9th edition, 1810), pp.242, 245 cited “faithful and willing obedience” as a wife’s duty but “mildness,” “conciliating forbearance” and “lively and never-failing tenderness of affection” as that of a husband.

¹⁹ E. Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), ed. B. Fowkes Tobin (Oxford, 1997), pp.450, 530

²⁰ S. Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and Reflections Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1755), p.43

As well as perpetuating earlier themes of mutuality, eighteenth-century writers softened patriarchal statements by ceasing to assert male dominance unequivocally. Such authors as William Gouge in 1622 had discussed patriarchy in unquestioned and unquestionable terms.²¹ Later writers, in contrast, espoused new programmes of rationalisation, proffering such dictums via ‘logical’ arguments. In 1705, Bishop Fleetwood followed Gouge in structuring his treatise on the model of *Ephesians*, delineating mutual duties between husbands and wives, parents and children and servants and masters. However, he differed from his predecessor in providing justifications for masculine superiority in these relationships. He reasoned that all partnerships require a superior partner for purposes of workability and proceeded to aver that this must inevitably be the man due to his greater strength and abilities, the tenets of custom and the doctrine of Christianity as elucidated in St.Paul’s gospel.²²

Thus, “older-style patriarchy with its emphasis on paternal prerogative, hierarchy and the exercise of force had gradually yielded to new-style patriarchy with its appeal to reason, co-operation between the sexes and the non-coercive exercise of authority.”²³ However, most importantly, the persistence of male domination in the eighteenth century can be seen in the fact that the cult of femininity enforced the traditional separateness of the genders, by barring women from masculine rights and privileges. Writers of the period may have asserted a new parity between men and women, but they did not claim that parity to lie in equivalent characteristics. Rather,

²¹ W. Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622) (London, 3rd edition, 1634), p.273

²² W. Fleetwood, *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants* (1705) (London, 3rd edition, 1722), pp.132-9, 236-67. Repeated in R. Steele, *The Ladies Library* 3 Vols. (London, 1714), I, pp.59-63

²³ B. Kowaleski-Wallace, ‘Home Economics: Domestic Ideology in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*’, *The Eighteenth Century* 29, 3 (1988), pp.242-3

masculine rational, intellectual and physical superiority was matched by feminine excellence in the fields of feeling and imagination. The quintessential evocation of this division of gendered characteristics was that of *The Tatler* on 16 May 1710: “I am sure, I do not mean it an Injury to Women, when I say there is a Sort of Sex in Souls...the Soul of a Man and that of a Woman are made very unlike, according to the Employments for which they are designed.”²⁴ This notion of “Sex in Souls” was reiterated both by the Reverend Fordyce who spoke of “a sex in Minds,” and by Francis Douglas who examined this “perfect contrast in their exterior and interior endowments” in some depth. He argued that men possess “a strong and robust constitution, equal to the greatest fatigue” as opposed to women who are “more delicate” and have “persons elegant, graceful and lovely.” He then reinforced these physical disparities by detailing psychological divergences. Whilst masculine minds have a certain vigour, women are “susceptible of the most tender impressions.”²⁵ There were, of course, alternative messages available, particularly and increasingly from those who were dissatisfied with the contemporary state of female education. Some, such as Vicesimus Knox in 1781, even dared suggest that women might be entitled to a similar education to that provided for men, incorporating classical subjects such as Latin and Greek.²⁶ However, such progressives were in something of a minority.

²⁴ *The Tatler* no.172 (16 May 1710), in *The Tatler* (1709-1711), ed. D.F. Bond, 3 Vols. (Oxford, 1987), II, p.444

²⁵ J. Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* 2 Vols. (1766) (Dublin, 4th edition, 1766), II, p.154; F. Douglas, *Reflections on Celibacy and Marriage; in Four Letters to a Friend; In which the ADVANTAGES and DISADVANTAGES of the two STATES are compared* (London, 1771), p.10

²⁶ V. Knox, *Liberal Education; or, A Practical Treatise on the Methods of Acquiring Useful and Polite Knowledge* (London, 1781), pp.235-6. Knox, however, was not unequivocal on this issue. He

Similarly, a limited number of writers disputed the inherent nature of gender distinctions. Eliza Haywood boldly stated in *The Female Spectator* in 1744 that; “there is, undoubtedly, no sex in souls.”²⁷ More famously, Mary Wollstonecraft later contended that such segregation was a tool of male tyranny, declaiming: “I here throw down my gauntlet, and deny the existence of sexual virtues, not excepting modesty. For men and women, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same.”²⁸ However, as G.J. Barker-Benfield has pointed out, her views prompted considerable outrage. The barrage of criticism that followed the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was concerned to reinforce the principle of gendered characters.²⁹ In particular, Hannah More decried such feminist “petty cavils and contentions for equality,” recommending “co-operation and not competition.” Asserting that strength of body and mind was as natural to man as the fin to the fish and the wing to the bird, she warned that to deny women’s inherent qualities was to negate their advantages of softness and refinement.³⁰

These sexually contrasted and defined capacities and talents in turn authorised disparate activities. As mainstream discourse constantly repeated, masculine robustness of mind and body were the essential qualifiers for public duty. François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon developed this argument in his highly popular treatise

did not want women to be taught such subjects “without exception”, but only if they possessed a particular talent (p.233).

²⁷ E. Haywood, *The Female Spectator* (1744-1746), ed. G.M. Firmager (London, 1993), p.101

²⁸ M. Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’ (1792), in J. Todd, ed., *Mary Wollstonecraft: Political Writings* (Oxford, 1994), p.119

²⁹ G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992), p.364

³⁰ H. More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, with a view of the Principles and Conduct prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune* 2 Vols. (London, 1799), II, pp.14, 22, 24-

on the education of daughters, first translated into English in 1707 and reprinted throughout the century. He began by asserting that women were weaker but more inquisitive than men, concluding that such traits logically prescribed female duties to “be of a quiet and sober turn.” Feminine discrimination, “natural assiduity and authority at home...carefulness, attention to particulars, industry, and...(a) soft persuasive manner” enabled women to fulfil domestic and familial responsibilities which, he claimed, “cannot be deemed of less importance to society than those of the male.”³¹ Fordyce later took up the message when he specified that the “hardy and rough” mental and physical constitution of men enabled them to perform tasks from which women were excluded by virtue of their “decorum,” their “softness” and their “fear.” However, whilst barring them from war, commerce and politics, he consoled his female audience with the thought that they had an empire of their own; “that which has the heart for its object, and which is secured by meekness and modesty, by soft attraction, and virtuous love.”³²

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³¹ F. de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, *Fénelon's Treatise on the Education of Daughters: Translated from the French, and adapted to English Readers, with an Original Chapter 'On Religious Studies'* (1707, first French edition 1688) (Cheltenham, 1805), pp.3, 6, 7

³² Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, I, pp.122, 198. Such ideas persisted throughout the century, as revealed in writings such as Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, pp.19-21. In similar terms to Fordyce, he begins by elucidating the physical strength and robustness of men, enabling them to farm, to build and to fight, activities from which women are excluded due to their “smaller mould” and “looser texture.” He then extends this physical divergence to corresponding mental characteristics, men having “powers of close and comprehensive reasoning, and of intense and continued application” unknown to women.

Such division of masculine and feminine characteristics and consequent roles is nowhere more explicit in pictorial representation than in pendant portraits. In this tradition, husband and wife are depicted on separate canvases, often linked by equivalent size, identical frames and certain compositional, narrative and formal parallels. Eighteenth-century pendants continued earlier traditions by commonly inscribing each sitter within conventional and contrasting gender roles. However, as the social standing of those commissioning portraiture became ever more diverse, so depicted male roles became increasingly varied and particularised. Men were portrayed as landed gentlemen, as connoisseurs, politicians, soldiers, agriculturists or industrialists. Women, meanwhile, lacked such professional identities. Any paid employment in which those below the rank of gentry might have been engaged tended to be unrecorded and unemphasised, seemingly as the leisured middling-class woman denoted a successful husband and family status.³³ Thus, they continued to be inscribed within the same universal and unifying fields of the home and familial relations that they had been in the past, identified according to the generic, ahistorical categories of actual or potential wife or mother. However, the delineation of those categories in the eighteenth century reveals the new sentimentalism of the period as women came to be depicted as emotionally involved with and constitutionally suited to such domains. The specificity of masculine representation as opposed to the depiction of universal femininity has been noted by Shearer West: "Generally speaking, when they [women] were single or newly married, they became objects of display and even of fantasy:

³³ M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkley, Los Angeles and London, 1996), chapter 5

when mothers they became the machinery by which the family name was maintained.”³⁴

Many eighteenth-century theorists certainly conceived of portraiture in this way, restricting the symbols of individual identity and status to male sitters. Early in the century, Jonathan Richardson advised the budding artist that, “every part of the portrait, and all about it must be expressive of the *man*, and have a resemblance as well as features of the face.” He proceeded to discuss the various attributes that could be exploited to provide information about a sitter’s personal history, citing official robes, books and ships as examples.³⁵ The gendered nature of his discussion was echoed in Sir Joshua Reynolds’s fourth Discourse, delivered at the Royal Academy in 1771: “Those expressions alone should be given to the figures which their respective situations generally produce. Nor is this enough; each person should also have that expression which *men of his rank* generally exhibit.”³⁶ As Gillian Perry has pointed out, this quote reveals that status in Reynolds’s view, be it professional, political, or social, was similarly restricted to men.³⁷

The contrast between historical masculine individuality and ahistorical generalised femininity was frequently discussed in contemporary prescriptive and fictional texts. Thomas Gisborne began his *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*

³⁴ S. West, ‘Patronage and Power: The Role of the Portrait in Eighteenth-Century England’, in J. Black and J. Gregory, eds., *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester and New York, 1991), p.139

³⁵ J. Richardson, ‘An Essay on the Theory of Painting’ (1715), in *The Works of Mr. Jonathan Richardson* (London, 1773), pp.54-5. My italics

³⁶ Discourse IV, in Sir J. Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (1769-1790), ed. R.R. Wark (1966) (London, 4th edition, 1969), p.58. My italics

³⁷ G. Perry, ‘Women in Disguise: Likeness, the Grand Style and the Conventions of ‘Feminine’ Portraiture in the Work of Sir Joshua Reynolds’, in G. Perry and M. Rossington, eds., *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth Century Art and Culture* (Manchester and New York, 1994), p.21

by arguing that, whilst men have a wide variety of roles and professions in life and thus many and disparate trials to endure, women are scarcely distinguishable within the united domestic sphere, not even in terms of class. He concluded from this that he could address his prescriptions to women as a single and united body of readers.³⁸ Wollstonecraft damned such attitudes in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She complained that, whilst conduct writers allowed a virtuous man to “have a choleric or a sanguine constitution, be gay or grave,” they ‘levelled’ women “into one character of yielding softness and gentle compliance.” Later in the treatise, she extended her complaint to prescribed gender roles. Whilst men can follow various paths to various goals of fame and power, women are so united in their aims of domestic and wifely achievement that “they are all rivals.”³⁹

The segregation of such gendered spheres appears in pendant portraits in a variety of ways. Men are often defined through their ownership of land and the power with which it endows them. In 1769, Joseph Wright of Derby painted Mr and Mrs Hesketh from Derbyshire (figs.25 and 26). The images of husband and wife are independent but formally linked through the leaning tree that balances each figure against an expanse of sky. However, their actions and poses reveal fundamental differences. Frances Hesketh holds her place in a book as she looks to one side, seemingly contemplating what she has been reading and revealing herself to be an educated lady, a suitable companion for her husband. The balustrade and urn in the background establish her location as within the environs of the cultivated grounds around the house. In contrast, Fleetwood assertively meets the viewer’s gaze and has been engaged in a hunting expedition, suggested by the powder horn tucked into the

³⁸ Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, pp.2-3

³⁹ Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication’, pp.169, 275

pocket of his coat and the gun propped next to him. As discussed in respect of *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, this narrative reveals the extent of the sitter's wealth and property, entitling him to participation in such an elite pastime.⁴⁰

Other male pendants focus upon public role or profession whilst their partners remain within much the same visual limits. Perhaps the most notable and certainly the most socially elevated example of this is to be found in Benjamin West's portraits of *George III* and *Queen Charlotte* of 1779 (figs.27 and 28).⁴¹ Both figures face inwards and rest one hand on the thigh, posed against a backdrop of pillars and drapes, traditional conventions of patrician portraiture. Contrastingly, the King grasps plans for repelling the French fleet off the coast of England whilst the Queen rests one hand on the shelf which bears her crown, emphasising the regal position that is dependent on her husband. The real contradistinction, however, is to be found in the distant background scene in each image. Through an arch behind the figure of George, West has described a scene of soldiers, horses and canons, emphasising the monarch's role as a military commander. The equivalent prospect in Charlotte's portrait is of her substantial brood, a vista of domesticity that links her with universalised categories of femininity. However, as the Queen of England, her assembled offspring assume a particular significance. Whilst the King's public responsibilities constitute his debt to the nation, hers is the progeny that ensures the continuation of the royal line.

A third aspect of male identity may be dealt with here, that of the domain of connoisseurship and the Grand Tour. When Reynolds painted Jane Hamilton, Lady Cathcart, with her daughter in 1755 (fig.29), he employed the knowledge accumulated

⁴⁰ See chapter 1, p.36

⁴¹ Noted and discussed by Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.268

on his recent Italian Tour to portray her in a Madonna and child format, typical of the Italian Renaissance. The naked child is seated on her lap, one hand raised as if in blessing, whilst her supporting pose, broad lap and covered head reinforce the association. However, Reynolds employed his Italian training in the pendant of her husband in a very different manner (fig.30). Recalling numerous images of English aristocrats in Rome by Pompeo Batoni, this portrait includes a vista through swathes of drapes (once again recalling seventeenth-century conventions of aristocratic portrayal) to a view of classical architectural structures. The reference to the Grand Tour is complimented by pictorial references to Cathcart's military career in the form of his uniform and his patch, concealing a scar acquired in the Wars of the Austrian Succession.

* * * * *

Whilst pendants were fundamentally and traditionally divisive, double marital portraits, in which husband and wife occupy the same pictorial space, increasingly came to emphasise a communal narrative in the mid and later decades of the eighteenth century. Inevitably, the usual locale for this mutual activity or conversation was within the home or its environs. As contemporary writers elevated the domestic duties of women, so they were conversely critical of women who moved in public spaces. They accused them of indulging in personal display, neglecting familial responsibilities and of potentially misusing money that should be rather be disbursed wisely and frugally for the benefit of the household. At the same time, as it became increasingly important for a man to be shown as virtuous in his private life, so the domestic environment also became a suitable location for male representation.

The mutual quality of the narrative in the double portrait tradition often relied upon the gesture of the husband to some location or object, holding forth for his wife's instruction and edification. A good example of this is Joseph Wright of Derby's painting of *Mr and Mrs Coltman* of 1771/2 (fig.31), depicted outside their house in Lincolnshire and imminently to set out for a horse ride. As he waits for the groom to arrive with his mount, Mr Coltman points in the direction of their intended excursion, a directive his wife follows with an indication of her whip. However, the most repeated version of this theme was that in which the couple stroll in their landscape garden, the husband motioning to some feature of interest. This clearly proprietary gesture, emphasising the ownership and cultivation of land, reappears repeatedly throughout the latter half of the century in the genres of both major and minor artists and in depictions of sitters from the middle classes, gentry and aristocracy. From Gainsborough's famous *Mr and Mrs Hallett; or, The Morning Walk* of 1785 (fig.4) to John Russell's unknown portrait of *Admiral Hon. John Leveson Gower and his Wife, née Boscawen* of c.1787 (fig.32), and from the intimate depiction of the Garricks in the grounds of their home at Hampton by Johann Zoffany of 1762 (fig.33) to Reynolds's grandiose and regal portrait of *The Earl and Countess of Mexborough* (fig.34), the motif was extremely popular. Its sources are disputed and difficult to trace. Contemporaries certainly seem to have viewed *The Morning Walk* as something of an innovation. An article in *The Morning Herald* in 1786 by Henry Bate-Dudley informed the paper's readership that: "The portraits of Mr and Mrs *Hallett* which were painted a few months since by Mr *Gainsborough*, arm-in-arm, in a nouvelle stile appears to have *promenaded* from his gallery, as they are no longer to be observed

there!”⁴² However, recent art historians have suggested that the device was less innovative than Gainsborough’s friend would have liked to suggest. John Hayes has claimed that the “motif of the promenade with the figures linked by joint concentration on the distant prospect” can be traced back to the work of Albrecht Dürer.⁴³ Certainly, drawings such as *Young Couple* (1493/4, Kunsthalle, Hamburg) or engravings such as *The Walk* of 1498 (fig.35) bear distinct compositional similarities to images such as *The Morning Walk*. However, the utility of such comparisons is limited as neither image is a portrait and the latter is allegorical.

As suggested by D.R. Smith, a more likely source for the strolling, conversing couple can be found in seventeenth-century Dutch marital portraits. Claiming that the double portrait “has long been counted among the characteristic artefacts of middle-class civilisation in the Netherlands,” Smith has indicated paintings such as Sir Peter Paul Rubens’s *Self-Portrait with Helene Fourment* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and Bartholomeus van der Helst’s *Portrait of a Promenading Couple* of 1661 (fig.36) as typifying the theme of the lover’s promenade.⁴⁴ A painting on display in Welbeck Abbey provides another interesting example of this tradition. Executed in the later seventeenth century, *William, 1st Earl of Portland and his first Wife, Anne Villiers* has been variously ascribed to Caspar Netscher, Nicolas Maes and Jan Mytens (fig.37). Whoever the artist, the portrait evidences the main features of this recurrent narrative. The couple stroll across a terrace in the grounds of their house, the husband

⁴² *The Morning Herald* 30 March 1786. The catalogue, *The Portrait in British Art* (London, 1991), no.41, attributes this passage to Gainsborough’s friend.

⁴³ J. Hayes, *Thomas Gainsborough* (London, 1980), p.110

⁴⁴ D.R. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marital Portraiture* (Epping, 1982), pp.2, 85, 156, 163

gesturing out over the territory towards which he and his wife are headed.⁴⁵ The influence of such images may have been direct or, more probably, filtered through the *fête galantes* of French artists such as Antoine Watteau and Jean Honoré Fragonard.

Through the mutual dynamic of the double marital portrait, artists visually illustrated the harmonious nature of distinct masculine and feminine domains. It was claimed that men and women were designed to come together in matrimony, each to supplement the virtues lacked by the other, to temper the more extreme qualities of the opposite sex with their own characteristics. The Marquess of Halifax was one of the earliest to elucidate the notion in the sentimentalised form that came to be characteristic of the eighteenth century in his declaration: "We are made of differing tempers, that our defects may the better be mutually supplied."⁴⁶ When *The Spectator* reiterated his view, arguing that masculine gravity was necessary to save women from the evils of coquetry and that women's vivacity was needed to prevent men from becoming cynical, it entitled the article *Concordia Discors*. Thus, the Pythagorean notion of the universe as an amalgam of discordant elements, balancing each other out in the greater scheme of things and so creating perfect harmony, was exploited:

Men and Women were made as Counterparts to one another, that the Pains and Anxieties of the Husband might be relieved by the Sprightliness and good humour of the Wife. When these are rightly tempered, Care and

⁴⁵ Many thanks to Derek Adlam and Alison Parente at Welbeck Abbey for this information.

⁴⁶ George Savile, Marquess of Halifax, 'The Lady's New Year's Gift; or, Advice to a Daughter' (1688), in J.P. Kenyon, ed., *Halifax: Complete Works* (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp.277-8

Chearfulness go hand in hand: and the Family, like a Ship that is duly trimmed, wants neither sail nor ballast.⁴⁷

This loaded image of the ideal family as balanced between the solidity of the patriarch and the lighter qualities of the matriarch was developed throughout the century. In the *Vicar of Wakefield*, Oliver Goldsmith imaged the married couple as spies, “furnished with different abilities, adapted for mutual inspection,” whilst Lord Kames in the 1770s argued masculine and feminine characteristics to be “different but concordant, so as to produce together delicious harmony.”⁴⁸

The main contribution of the wife to the harmonious marital union was her softening and ameliorating influence, capable of tempering the naturally and necessarily more severe disposition of her husband. Again, it was a repetitively persistent precept. Halifax advised his daughter that men “wanteth your gentleness to soften and to entertain us” and Lord Kames made the same point almost a century later; “the gentle and insinuating manners of the female sex, tend to soften the roughness of the other sex.”⁴⁹ Indeed, according to a male writer in *The Matrimonial Magazine*, the absence of such feminine “delicacy” and “sweetness” could cause men to “contend, destroy, and triumph over one another; fraud and force would divide the world between them.” He continued:

⁴⁷ *The Spectator* no.128 (27 July 1711), in *The Spectator* (1711-12, 1714), ed. D.F. Bond, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1965), II, p.9. For an interesting discussion of *Concordia Discors*, see D. Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction* (London, 1982), pp.68-9

⁴⁸ O. Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), ed. C. Coote, (Harmondsworth, 1986), p.69: H. Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* 4 Vols. (1778) (Edinburgh and London, 2nd edition, 1788), II, p.2

⁴⁹ Halifax, ‘The Lady’s New Year’s Gift’, pp.277-8; Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, pp.3-4

It is the conversation of women that gives a proper bias to our inclinations, and, by abating the ferocity of our passions, engages us to that gentleness of deportment, which we stile Humanity. The tenderness we have for them softens the ruggedness of our own nature, and the virtues we put on to make the better figure in their eyes, keeps us in humour with ourselves.⁵⁰

Possibly the most prominent proponent of the civilising effects of female company was the Reverend James Fordyce. He laid particular emphasis on women's capacity to stimulate masculine civility and courtesy, so that "habits of undissembled courtesy are formed; a certain flowing urbanity is acquired; violent passions, rash oaths, coarse jests, indelicate language of every kind, are precluded and derelished."⁵¹

Others, however, attributed more momentous import to the female role. Not only could a wife acculturate an uncultivated husband, but she could watch over his virtue, deemed at risk from the rigours of the world and public life. As a consequence, writers advised that women should create and maintain a domestic haven that would tempt husbands away from the lure of the city and its vices. They focussed on various elements of the companionate ideal that would encourage men to reject homosocial

⁵⁰ *The Matrimonial Magazine; or, Monthly Anecdotes of love and Marriage for the Court, the City and the Country* January 1775, p.31

⁵¹ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, I, pp.16-7. The cleric was more specific on the refining quality of the female character in his later, significantly titled, sermon, *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women. A Discourse in Three Parts, Delivered in Monkwell-Street Chapel, January 1, 1776* (London, 1776), pp.92-3. Having emphasised the importance of feminine influence, whether exercised for the good or not, he specified that, "the conceit of youth might be taught modesty; the pedantry of the college exchanged for the ease of the entertaining companion, and the urbanity of the accomplished gentleman; the stiffness and acrimony of the disputant tempered and moulded into a pleasing deference."

culture for family life. Fordyce believed that love would render a man always “glad to shake off the interrupting world” and to return to his loyal spouse “with new delight.”⁵² A young gentleman in *The Court Letter Writer* emphasised the need for a wife to be amiable, advising that his sister “be not peevish” at her husband “going abroad” as he will then “return with heightened relish for your conversation.”⁵³ And Maria Edgeworth promoted the need for female education, creating women who would be able to tempt men away from all-male clubs with intelligent and stimulating companionship.⁵⁴

The successful lure of a husband to a pleasing domestic environment is pictorially represented in Arthur Devis’s *Sir Peter and Lady Leicester* of 1743/5 (fig.38). Lady Leicester is depicted running out of Tabley House in Cheshire, arms held out to greet her husband. As she hurries towards him, he raises one hand towards the groom who leads his horses away, turning away from the homosocial sport of

⁵² Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, II, p.76

⁵³ *The Court Letter Writer; or, The Complete English Secretary for Town and Country* (London, 1773), p.181

⁵⁴ M. Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), ed. C. Connolly (London, 1993), pp.36-7. The reformatory influence of women combined with their softening effect upon men resulted in continual recommendations by writers that, in the case of an errant husband, soft persuasion and example should be deployed, rather than harsh recrimination. Halifax in ‘The Lady’s New Years Gift’, pp.279-85 advised women to be blind to their husband’s faults, but proceeded to outline the best way to handle a drunken, a choleric, a covetous and a weak husband in turn. Characters such as Lady Bellamont in Henry Fielding, *The Modern Husband* (London, 1732), Lady Easy in Colley Cibber, *The Careless Husband* (London, 1777) and the Princess in Daniel Defoe’s *Roxana* (1724), ed. J. Mullan (Oxford and New York, 1996) personify this ideal, discreet and ultimately emendatory behaviour towards erring and adulterous husbands. However, perhaps the most supreme fictional exemplar of all was that described in *The Road to Hymen made Plain, Easy and Delightful; in a New Collection of Familiar Letters, Pleasing Dialogues and Verses* (London, 1790), pp.63-5, a character so virtuous that she provides her husband’s lower-class mistress with the provisions necessary to entertain her lover in the manner to which he is accustomed. He eventually discovers her actions and is instantly reformed.

hunting to return to his wife who is dutifully within the domestic sphere. Sir Peter's public identity as a landowner (evidenced by the grounds, the house, the horses and the servants) is thereby qualified and reinforced by his private and domestic virtues as a loving and faithful husband. The image reinforces contemporary prescriptive ideals such as that extrapolated by Richardson from *Sir Charles Grandison* for his *Collection of...Moral and Instructive Sentiments*: "It is a transporting thing for an affectionate Wife to receive a worthy Husband returning to her after a long absence, or an escaped danger."⁵⁵

The emphasis on the country house in Devis's portrait was conventional and is evident in many of the paintings under discussion. Obviously, the estate was a key indicator of wealth, privilege, status and familial continuity.⁵⁶ However, rural locations were also critical in constructing the wife's role as both softening and morally improving. First, the *penchant* for all things Roman in the eighteenth century led to a great enthusiasm for the model of virtuous rural retirement as defined by such poets as Virgil and Homer. The concept of *beatus ille*, connecting the country house, retreat from pernicious urban life and moral rejuvenation, was probably a key source for the eighteenth-century construction of the ideal wifely role.⁵⁷ Second, Nature had become symbolic of an uncorrupted world, of an Eden or Arcadia that had existed before man's complex social and urban networks. Fashionable authors such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau fed into burgeoning Romanticism with statements such as: "God

⁵⁵ Richardson, *Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, p.294

⁵⁶ L. Stone and J.C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), pp.11, 69 and Part III: Houses; West, 'Patronage and Power', p.135

⁵⁷ M.S. Røstvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphosis of a Classical Ideal* 2 Vols. (Oslo, 1854); M. Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the later Poetry of Pope 1731-1743* (Toronto and London, 1969)

makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil.”⁵⁸ Thus, to associate the domestic sphere with the countryside was to endow it with connotations of purity, simplicity and virtue. Finally, the cult of sensibility repeatedly emphasised empathy with flora and fauna as characteristic of the sensitive soul in general, and of the feminine soul in particular.⁵⁹ However, it was not just that the inherently emotional and empathetic character of woman, together with her exemplary morality, formed an innate connection between femininity and the natural world. That world also prevented corruption by the temptations of urban life, disabling women from “contracting an habit of excessive fondness of amusements” and removing them from the allurements of public entertainments, prolific visiting and political intrigue.⁶⁰

As a result, the form of the female sitter and the surrounding landscape were often pictorially affiliated in the later eighteenth century. The best example of this is Gainsborough’s *The Morning Walk*, as elucidated by Desmond Shawe-Taylor.⁶¹ Mr Hallett demonstrates cultural virtues of civility and gentility, striding forward and gesturing with his politely removed hat. The figure of his wife, in contrast, is identified with the natural surroundings. Through various artistic devices such as scumbling and subtle coloration, her physical form is blended into the landscape. Her left side merges into the shadows of the trees whilst her right dissolves into the light that illuminates the other side of the painting. Her white dress echoes both the light

⁵⁸ J.J. Rousseau, *Emile* (1762), ed. P.D. Jimack (London and Melbourne, 1974), p.5

⁵⁹ For sensibility and nature, see Todd, *Sensibility*, pp.23, 24, 29, 52, 55-7, 59

⁶⁰ Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, pp.215, 327, 329 specified these activities as particularly detrimental.

⁶¹ D. Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London, 1990), pp.131-3. Also see M. Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough: ‘A Little Business for the Eye’* (New Haven and London, 1999), pp.238-9

colouring of the distant sky and the coat of the dog who gazes up at her, the green ribbons recall the tone of the leaves and the blue-grey hue of her hair and lace echo the distant trees. This translucent material on her bodice and cuffs allows the landscape behind to be seen through her garb, a device which further blends figure and surroundings. Form as well as hue assist in the integration. The mass of her hair and the plumes that adorn her hat echo both the tail of the dog and the framing foliage.

The softening and morally improving influence of the 'natural' woman is particularly apparent in images such as George Romney's *Sir Christopher and Lady Elizabeth Sykes* of 1786 (fig.39).⁶² The nobleman's portrait is painted in severe profile; his glasses and the paper he holds suggesting, as noted by *The World*, that he has recently been engaged in matters of business: "The whole lengths of *SIR FRANCIS AND LADY SYKES* are for their new villa at Basildon. Her ladyship is well - the Baronet looks as if he was paying his builder's bill - and that; says *Menage*, is *the most melancholy moment in a man's life.*"⁶³ His wife, on the other hand, her form pictorially and ideologically united with the landscape through similar devices to those employed in *The Morning Walk*, is leading him away from such cares and tribulations to the haven of morally rejuvenating relaxation to be found within the garden, reversing the directory gesture of the husband in her encouragingly outstretched hand. Mrs Dibdin similarly tempts her spouse from such joyless masculine duties in a portrait attributed to John Thomas Seton of c.1790 (fig.40).⁶⁴ Her husband, the famous musician and composer, is seated at his desk, engaged in the

⁶² Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, pp.130-1

⁶³ *The World* 29 August 1787

⁶⁴ Attributed to Seton by Charles Saumarez-Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration: Design and the Domestic Interior in England* (London, 1993), p.341

act of creative endeavour, as his wife and daughter enter from the right. His backward glance towards these figures and his hat (which Mrs Dibdin holds in one hand) suggests that she too is tempting her husband away from public duties to a gentler and essentially feminine world.

The husband's contribution to the *concordia discors* is implied in the directory gesture so frequently employed. Whilst the wife's softening, tender disposition and inherent connection with sensibility and nature serves to sweeten and to calm her husband, her emotional character means that she, in turn, is in need of manly 'ballast.' As Janet Todd has noted, whilst feminine ability to express emotion sincerely and spontaneously was key in the cult of womanhood, the adverse effect was to render women potentially unbalanced.⁶⁵ Some formulated feminine lack of reason, intellectual capacity and knowledge in ancient humoral terms. Nicholas Venette, for example, argued that a woman's mediocre heat meant that she could "*only suffer(s) the impressions a man makes upon her.*"⁶⁶ By the mid eighteenth century however, relatively few were explicitly employing such ancient ideas. Most used other arguments, whether secular or religious, to support the popular view of women's irrationality. The Reverend Fordyce claimed that, "nature appears to have formed the faculties of your sex for the most part with less vigour than those of ours," whilst Hannah More later blamed "the defining finger of the Creator" for women's emotionality.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Todd, *Sensibility*, p.19

⁶⁶ N. Venette, *Conjugal Love; or, The Pleasures of the Marriage Bed Considered in Several Lectures on Human Generation* (1703, first Dutch edition 1687) (London, 20th edition, 1750), pp.79-80, 119

⁶⁷ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* I, p.197; More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* II, p.30

As we saw in the previous chapter, it was frequently hoped that an improved female education would help to counter such inadequacies and thereby create suitable companions for men of sense.⁶⁸ Reading and other educative activities could help to stimulate rationality and provide enough knowledge for adequate conversation between spouses. However, a clear distinction was drawn between this need for feminine improvement and the creation of the much dreaded 'learned lady.' Women were not to be overly assertive or to employ their knowledge simply to contradict or to debate their husband's ideas. The companionship depicted in these portraits is a proactive ideal on the part of the husband and a responsive one on that of the wife. It reflects the principle expressed in Squire Allworthy's approving comments on Sophia Western:

No dictatorial sentiments, no judicial opinions, no profound criticisms. Whenever I have seen her in the company of men, she hath been all attention, with the modesty of a learner, not the forwardness of a teacher...Indeed, she always shewed the highest deference to the understandings of men; a quality absolutely essential to the making a good wife.⁶⁹

Thus, whilst sitters such as Mrs Hallett have sufficient sense to be suitable wifely companions, they remain deferential to their husband's knowledge. The men expound, the women listen and react.

⁶⁸ See chapter 1, pp.64-5

⁶⁹ H. Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), ed. R.P.C. Mutter (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.784

Not only do these paintings indicate the wife's respect for her husband's superior understanding, but they also evidence his contribution to her education. Francis Douglas, having damned the 'learned lady' by comparing her conversation to "the barking of a lap-dog" or "the chatter of parrot," still wanted women to be improved through masculine conversation. This could "correct and strengthen the judgement, enlarge the faculties of the mind, and raise the soul to a free and generous way of thinking," thereby enabling a man to secure "an agreeable and entertaining Companion."⁷⁰ Hannah More later contended that, not only could the instructive conversation of a husband "call into exercise the powers of mind which women actually possess," but it could "even awaken energies which they do not know they possess."⁷¹ However, the best analogy with the ethos of such paintings is to be found in an earlier narrative passage from *The Spectator*. Laetitia has "Sense enough" to be a suitable wife for Erastus who "has a general Taste in most Parts of Polite Learning." However, she still requires his instruction:

When they take the Air together, *Erastus* is continually improving her Thoughts, and, with a turn of Wit and Spirit which is peculiar to him, giving her an Insight into things she had no Notions of before. *Laetitia* is

⁷⁰ Douglas, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, p.20. Similarly, *The Road to Hymen*, p.6 later promised the wife of a man of understanding and education, "his conversation will improve your mind, refine your taste, and better your judgement." For the learned lady, see chapter 1, p.65.

⁷¹ More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, II, pp.44, 45. Also, Roxana in Defoe's novel, p.101 accompanies her lover, the Prince, to Italy where he shows her things and tells her their history. She remarks: "Had I been a Daughter, or a Wife, of whom it might be said, that he had a just Concern in their Instruction, or Improvement, it had been an admirable Step; but all this to a Whore!" and Wetenhall Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1744) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1751) p.127 praised husbands who divert their wives by means of conversation, amusements and diversions.

transported at having a new World thus opened to her, and hangs upon the Man that gives her such agreeable Informations.⁷²

The dialogue between masculine rationality and feminine frivolity is apparent in other recurrent narrative devices in later eighteenth-century double portraits. Some represent the husband indicating a painting or drawing for his wife's inspection and education, recommending her attention to the original and inviting a comparison between the two. For example, Sir Rowland Winn, in a portrait attributed to Thomas Bardwell and dated to 1770 (fig.41), supports a drawing of a female classical bust in profile as he gestures to the original on a pedestal, conferring with his wife on the quality of the resemblance.⁷³ The couple are located in their library, facing the windows and posed against the expensive Chippendale desk that is still to be seen in the room. The only alteration the artist has made in describing their location is to double the architectural motif of the pediment supported on four pilasters, thus suggesting the library to be much bigger than it actually is. The room had recently

⁷² *The Spectator* no.506 (10 October 1712), in *The Spectator*, IV, p.297. Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.133 notes an equally analogous passage in James Thomson's *Spring*, first published in 1728, lines 936-49: "Perhaps thy loved Lucinda shares thy walk,/ With soul to thine attuned. Then Nature all/ Wears to the lover's eye a look of love;/ And all the tumult of a guilty world,/ Tossed by ungenerous passions, sinks away./ The tender heart is animated peace;/ And, as it pours its copious treasures forth/ In varied converse, softening every theme,/ You, frequent pausing turn, and from her eyes,/ Where meekened sense and amiable grace/ And lively sweetness dwell, enraptured drink/ That nameless spirit of ethereal joy,/ Inimitable happiness! Which love/ Alone bestows, and on a favoured few."

⁷³ Attributed to Bardwell by Saumarez-Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration*, p.270

been redesigned by Robert Adam and the bust that they contemplate is presumably one of those that were commissioned to surmount the bookcases.⁷⁴

As is suggested by Sabine Louise d'Hervet's implied involvement in the redecoration of Nostell Priory, this second group of paintings similarly indicates the wife's ameliorating and inspirational nature. In 1780, Wright of Derby painted the Reverend d'Ewes Coke with one arm around his wife's shoulders in a companionate pose similar to that of the Winns (fig.42). With his other, he gestures towards the landscape that is presumably depicted in the sketch supported by his cousin. As in Hogarth's portrait of *David Garrick and his Wife, Eva Maria* (fig.11), the figure of the female located slightly behind that of the male suggests the iconographical theme of the muse, the inspirational female.⁷⁵ And, as in *Mr and Mrs Hallett*, the artist has emphasised a pictorial affiliation between the figure of Hannah d'Ewes Coke and the surrounding landscape. She is garbed in a green dress, shaded with yellow where the sun catches the fabric, and is thus integrated into nature both colouristically and through the unity of the lighting.

A third group of portraits in which the male profitably utilises his leisure time in order to educate his wife shows him reading to his spouse within the beneficent environs of the landscape garden. For example, the Royal Academy exhibition of 1773 included a portrait by Reynolds of David and Eva Maria Garrick seated on a bench (fig.43). Garrick holds an open book and gazes at his wife, awaiting her response on the passage he has just read aloud. She is clearly pondering the issues

⁷⁴ See the National Trust guide to the property, *Nostell Priory* (London, 1997), pp.11-14 and M.W. Brockwell, *Catalogue of the Pictures and other Works of Art in the Collection of Lord St. Oswald at Nostell Priory* (London, 1915), pp.144-5

⁷⁵ See chapter 1, p.74

raised, resting one cheek on her hand in a familiar contemplative gesture. Hester Chapone recommended that such activities could profitably fill empty hours in one's husband's company when conversation had ground to a halt.⁷⁶ Translating the ideal into fiction, the infatuated Evelina describes her activities with Lord Orville to her guardian, the Reverend Mr Villars. When they walk, "he condescends to be my companion, and keeps by my side all the way." At other times, he assists in her education through books: "When we read, he marks the passages most worthy to be noticed, draws out my sentiments, and favours me with his own."⁷⁷ His role in their relationship recalls that of the reformed Mr B. During a lengthy disquisition on her future activities as a wife, Pamela informs her fiancé that she will read in her leisure time, as "will not books help to polish my mind, and make me worthier of your company and conversation? And when I am at a loss to understand any thing I read, what a delightful instructor shall I have, if you will permit me to have recourse to you?"⁷⁸

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⁷⁶ H. Chapone, *A Letter to a New-Married Lady* (London, 1777), pp.16-7: "If you can prevail upon him to read with you, to practise music with you, or to teach you a language or a science, you will them find amusement for every hour; and nothing is more endearing than such communications. The improvements and accomplishments you gain from him will be doubly valuable in his esteem; and certainly you can never acquire them so agreeably as from his lips."

⁷⁷ F. Burney, *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), ed. E.A. Bloom (Oxford, 1982), p.296

⁷⁸ S. Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), ed. M.A. Doody (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.300

At this point, however, it is important to note that whilst the conventions outlined above predominated, some artists did venture beyond the boundaries of separate but mutually complementary spheres of qualities and activities. In particular, Francis Cotes executed a number of marital portraits in the late 1760s that are highly unusual in their narrative and compositional devices. A fragment of one of these is now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (fig.44). Dating from 1769, it depicts a lady, her head resting on one hand in a distinctly male cogitative pose, grasping a scroll and meditating over a small statuette based on Étienne-Maurice Falconet's *L'Amour Menaçant*. This artwork was originally supported by the accompanying figure of her husband, seated to the right of the painting and in a distinctly subordinate and less assertive stance. The romantic nature of his gesture, defined by the presentation of a sculpture of Cupid, in part explains the reversal of typical gender roles as a compliment to the lady and to her husband's affection. However, her emphatic outward gaze towards the viewer, together with her dominant pose and gesture, is highly unconventional. Cotes's depiction of *Mr William Earle Welby and his first Wife, Penelope*, also executed in that year and exhibited at the Royal Academy, is again highly unusual (fig.45). The couple are shown engaged in a game of chess and, whilst Mrs Welby is seated and both figures meet the viewer's gaze, she indicates her white piece that is about to win the game whilst her husband gestures despairingly towards the board.⁷⁹ Indeed, as Karen Stanworth has noted,

⁷⁹ See E.M. Johnson, *Francis Cotes: Complete Edition with a Critical Essay and a Catalogue* (Oxford, 1976), pp.98-100

“contemporary literature often portrayed the game of chess as a battle of individual will, employing militaristic metaphors”.⁸⁰

Similarly, some of Thomas Gainsborough’s female portraits break with conventions of gender, as exemplified in his 1760 depiction of Miss Ford, cogitatively posed, legs crossed as she grasps her guitar (Cincinnati Art Gallery). The lady was an accomplished musician who developed her talents beyond mere accomplishment and created scandal by attempting to give public performances. Mrs Delany’s comment, prompted by this image, is by now well known: “I should be very sorry to have any one I loved set forth in such a manner.”⁸¹ This unusual painting is remarkable enough, but Gainsborough’s independence is even more exceptional when witnessed in a portrait such as *Penelope, Viscountess Ligonier*, painted in 1770 as a pendant to that of her husband and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1771 (fig.46). Once again in a male cogitative posture, she grasps a pencil and appears about to copy a variety of artworks, including a female statuette and casts of an elderly male head and a putto. Her husband, in contrast, is surprisingly depicted in commune with the natural world, leaning on his horse as he gazes off to one side (fig.47). The unusual reversal of gendered characteristics in these pendants was noted at the time by R. Baker. Whilst he described Lady Ligonier as having “a remarkably piercing eye, and sensible and polite countenance,” he noted the prominence of the horse in *Edward, 2nd Viscount Ligonier*:

⁸⁰ K. Stanworth, ‘Historical Relations: Representing Collective Identities. Small Group Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England, British India, and America’, (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Manchester, 1994), p.93

⁸¹ *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany, with interesting Reminiscences of King George III and Queen Charlotte*, ed. Lady Llanover, 3 Vols. (London, 1861-2),

The horse, being represented as near to the spectator as the gentleman, and being a large object, and of light colour, attracts the eye as much as the gentleman does. The eye is equally divided between them: and it is to be feared that such people as effect to be witty, will say the horse is as good a man as his master.⁸²

The reason for this apparent inversion of masculine and feminine roles would seem to be a slippage of the divide between ‘reality’ and discourse. Whilst these images were being executed, Lady Ligonier was engaged in adulterous affairs, firstly with her husband’s head groom and then with Count Vittorio Alfieri, the Italian dramatist. These events culminated in an infamous divorce trial in 1771, concurrent with the display of Gainsborough’s portraits at the Royal Academy.⁸³ Whilst Ronald Paulson’s suggestion that the artist may have had information concerning these affairs and thus conveyed his knowledge of the relationship in the portraits seems unlikely, a certain acquaintance with his subjects does seem to have infiltrated his work.⁸⁴ It is well known that Gainsborough was more assertive in his dealings with his sitters than his rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and he often imprinted his own views on commissions. He also spent some time at the Ligonier’s residence in order to paint the couple and

II, p.605. See M. Rosenthal, ‘Thomas Gainsborough’s *Ann Ford*’, *Art Bulletin* 80, 4 (December 1998), pp.649-65; Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough*, pp.167-81

⁸² R. Baker, *Observations on the Pictures now in Exhibition at the Royal Academy, Spring Gardens, and Mr Christie’s* (London, 1771), p.17

⁸³ See R.R. Wark, *Meet the Ladies: Personalities in Huntington Portraits* (San Marino, California, 1972), pp.1-22; Rosenthal, ‘Thomas Gainsborough’s *Ann Ford*’, pp.657-8

⁸⁴ R. Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1975), pp.213-4

thus would have become more acquainted with them than was normal, the artist usually meeting his subjects during a few brief sittings in a studio.⁸⁵

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Finally, it is necessary to re-emphasise that the conventional pictorial construction of gendered characters and roles did not reflect the actual lives of sitters. It is only in a few instances, such as that of Gainsborough's portraits of Lord and Lady Ligonier, that an elision between the two is appropriate. Whilst the assessment of relationships from diaries and letters is highly problematic and evaluations can only be tentative, this section will attempt to compare a few highly standard portraits with the highly individual relationships lived by their sitters. For example, when Reynolds painted the Earl and Countess of Kildare in pendant portraits in 1753 (figs.48 and 49), he rigidly demarcated their respective masculine and feminine territories. The Countess is posed in an interior, her head resting on one hand and her finger marking her place in a book in a manner that recalls Wright of Derby's portrait of *Mrs Frances Hesketh* (fig.26). Meanwhile, her husband gazes assertively outwards and gestures to what amounts to a display of his property as he directs the viewer's gaze towards Carton House. Stella Tillyard has formulated the contrast presented in these images as between an outdoors man of action and a domestic woman, arguing that this division reflected the sitters' actual temperaments. Whilst she cautions that the Countess had a

⁸⁵ *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, ed. M. Woodall (London, 1963), p.167: Thomas Gainsborough wrote to James Unwin from Bath on 10 July 1770: "I went by appointment only to spend two or three Days at Mr George Pitts's Country House, by way of taking leave of him, as a staunch Friend of mine before his going to Spain, & behold he had got two whole length canvasses, & his son and daughter, *Lord & Lady Ligonier*, in readiness to take me prisoner for a month's work."

strong influence on her husband, she notes that the Earl was actively engaged in politics and with the care and management of his estates whilst his wife's duties were essentially domestic.⁸⁶

The conventional demarcation of the Kildares' respective roles was certainly echoed in pendants painted by Allan Ramsay more than a decade later (figs.50 and 51). Emily's husband is again posed in a landscape, suggestive of his property and of his consequent wealth and political power. She, once more, is shown in an interior reading a book, this time with her arms folded so that each hand grasps the opposite wrist, a pose made famous and popularised by Ramsay in the 1760s.⁸⁷ By the decade of this commission, Ramsay was a serious competitor in the portrait market and, according to the Earl at least, was rivalling Reynolds in terms of fashionability:

I have sat once to Mr. Ramsay for the Holland House gallery; and of all the painters I have ever seen in London I like him the best, for when I went there he had not a picture of anyone I ever saw but I knew, as for Mr Reynolds, I call'd there a few days before, and did not know anybody.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1994), p.70

⁸⁷ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.105. He reproduces Allan Ramsay's portrait of Lady Susan Fox-Strangways (1761), a friend of the Lennox family, as an example of this linked arm pose. It may even have been this painting that encouraged the Countess to be depicted in this posture.

⁸⁸ *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster 1731-1814 Vol.I: Letters of Emily, Duchess of Leinster; James, First Duke of Leinster; Caroline Fox, Lady Holland*, ed. B. Fitzgerald (Dublin, 1949), p.133, Earl of Kildare to the Countess of Kildare, 18 May 1762 (hereafter *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*). James Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare became 1st Duke of Leinster in 1766.

Discussions of the Ramsay portraits in family correspondence reveal gendered priorities and opinions as to what constituted a good likeness. The artist's depiction of the Earl was deemed by its recipient, Caroline Fox, "a charming picture... a most pleasing likeness;" and his wife requested that he procure her a copy for Carton, having heard that it "is so good a one and so like you."⁸⁹ For this copy, she asked that he be painted in his Master General's coat. This, she admitted, would not be as flattering as the red garb of his Major General's uniform, but she had decided on the blue, "as character rather than beauty is what should be consulted in your picture; and your being Master General has been more a mark'd part of yours than the Major General."⁹⁰ Whilst her husband's representation was thus reliant on his public role, her own portrait, commissioned as its companion, was discussed in very different terms. Caroline Fox wrote repeatedly to the Countess between 1762 and 1766 as her sister was prevaricating over the picture.⁹¹ As encouragement, and to counteract her fears that such a portrait would not be "so young and blooming as it once would have been," she reposted; "that makes very little difference in a picture, except quite old people and children. Painters make their other portraits I think look much the same age. You'll be handsome enough this twenty years to make the best picture in our

⁸⁹ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.336, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 8 August 1762; pp.141-2, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 25 November 1762

⁹⁰ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.153, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 10 December 1762; p.158, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 17 December 1762

⁹¹ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.336, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 8 August 1762; p.339, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 5 September 1762; p.388, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 11 September 1763; p.388-9, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 21 September 1763; p.413, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 20 September 1764; p.444, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 25 April 1766. Finally, p.452, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of

room, if the painter does you justice.”⁹² Whilst the Earl’s pictorial identity was reliant upon his public role, the main point of concern in the portrait of his wife was thus her (waning) physical attractions.

However, to argue that these gendered demarcations of the sitters’ roles and characters reflected their actual relationship is to smooth over the many ways in which such boundaries were transgressed and negotiated in the course of their daily lives. As Tillyard herself notes, the Countess was shrewd and played a very real and useful part in her husband’s life.⁹³ She begged him, “I long to hear how things go on” and referred to “our affairs” and to “our own friends” in discussions of politics.⁹⁴ He answered her requests to “write me all the politics you can” for which she expressed herself “extremely obliged... as I cannot but be extremely anxious about politics at this time.”⁹⁵ Her letters switch from discussions of household affairs to matters of state in a couple of sentences: “So much for linen. Now as to politics.”⁹⁶ However, as political opinion was supposedly a masculine domain, she sometimes humoured her husband by playing down her proactive role. Thus, whilst she wrote in one letter, “I am glad to hear you say our affairs look well. I hope you mean by that that the heads of our party

Kildare, 9 June 1766: “How could I go on so far without telling you your sweet face is come home and put up in my gallery?”

⁹² *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.339, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland to the Countess of Kildare, 5 September 1762

⁹³ Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, p.70

⁹⁴ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.17, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 15 May 1755; p.7, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 3 May 1755; p.20, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 17 May 1755

⁹⁵ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.136, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 15 November 1762; p.144, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 2 December, 1762

⁹⁶ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.154, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, December 14 1762

are likely to be reasonable,” she concluded, “my dear Jemmy has always used me to talk to him upon this subject and tell my mind freely so I hope he don’t think I have said too much.”⁹⁷ Such women were clearly not weak and feeble creatures, locked within the home, but their construction as such in the prescriptive realm does seem to have had some impact. Men could feel uncomfortable if their wives appeared too assertive, fearing the emasculation implied in clear trespass into their public domain.

Second, the Countess was very much involved in the running and management of Carton and, to an extent, can be argued to have assumed more responsibility than her husband for decisions in their programme for its improvement. Several of her letters in 1757 discuss plans to hire a new gardener and the selection of new tree varieties for the grounds. This plantation appears to have been her project to the extent that she elicits *his* approval; “for it’s of infinite consequence that *you* shou’d be quite *Au fait* of it all.”⁹⁸ Similarly, she discussed the decoration of the house as taking place under her supervision, complaining at one point, “here my painters are all going away and leave the work half done, half undone. I am plagued to death with them and poisoned into the bargain.”⁹⁹ The employment of the first person possessive reverberates throughout these accounts: “‘tis so much time lost in my work;” “I grow

⁹⁷ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.14, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 12 May 1755

⁹⁸ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.36, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 19 May 1757; p.39, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 31 May 1757; p.42, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, June 1757; p.52, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 21 June 1757; p.53, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 24 June 1757; quoting p.53

⁹⁹ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.83, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 12 May 1759

very impatient to know how my work goes on at Carton” and “I hope to find a great deal done in my absence.”¹⁰⁰

The above suggestion that the routine transgression of gender boundaries was an occasional source of unease for men, conditioned to a certain degree by the prescriptive ideal, is supported by the relationship of Thomas Gainsborough and his wife. He allowed her control over his earnings as a painter but, when she took this liberty too far, he grew uncomfortable and asserted his traditional masculine role. A letter to his sister complained:

I was induced to try how far Jealousy might be cured by giving into her Hands every Farthing of the Money as I earned it, but very soon found that (as a punishment for so unmanly a condescension) instead of convincing, it was a further incouragement to Govern me, and invert the order of Nature in making the Head the foot and the foot the Head, so that now I have taken the staff into my own hands again...¹⁰¹

However, once again, pictorial representation masked such blurring of the spheres. When Gainsborough painted his family c.1748, he employed highly conventional pictorial language (fig.52). The artist himself is assertively posed in fashionable garb and his posture accords with early notions of genteel posture, one hand resting on his hip and his legs crossed. He presents a (now faded) drawing to the viewer to indicate

¹⁰⁰ *Duchess of Leinster, correspondence*, p.61, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 17 April 1759; p.77, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 5 May 1759; p.80, Countess of Kildare to the Earl of Kildare, 10 May 1759

¹⁰¹ *Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, ed. Woodall, p.83

his profession as an ‘up-and-coming’ young painter. His wife, meanwhile, is portrayed in a typically passive stance. Her attention is directed off to one side and she is firmly inscribed within orthodox notions of femininity. The flowers in her lap reinforce the standard association between women and the natural world and the daughter who rests against it indelibly connects her with the role of motherhood.

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In conclusion, the mid decades of the eighteenth century clearly witnessed the emergence of a newly companionate ideal in family portraiture. Husbands and wives became united in mutual narratives, posed formality was supplanted by physical and inferred psychological interaction and a burgeoning sense of privacy negated the existence of the spectator. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the sentimentalisation of the marital relationship was not accompanied by a new equality between husband and wife as has been suggested by historians such as Lawrence Stone and Randolph Trumbach. Rather, an underlying theme of patriarchy can be seen to have endured, redefined within the terms of such new developments as the burgeoning cult of sensibility. The continuing principle of masculine superiority and authority can be most clearly seen in the persistence of ‘separate spheres’ as a means of constructing masculine and feminine identities in portraiture. Whilst revisionist feminist historians have rejected the utility of this model, their argument that rigid gender boundaries were largely prescriptive indicates that it remains an important tool for visual analysis. The plentiful evidence of ‘separate spheres’ in eighteenth-century portraits of sitters ranging from the middling sorts to the uppermost reaches of the aristocracy also serves to cast doubt on Davidoff and Hall’s argument that it was a

tool developed by the Victorian middle classes for the purposes of self-fashioning and self-definition.

Thus, eighteenth-century pendants demarcated husbands and wives into portraits that frequently opposed a particular, historical masculine identity with a generic femininity. Meanwhile, in a new development, later eighteenth-century double portraits brought these respective domains into a mutually beneficial relationship through the principle of *concordia discors*. The wife's moderating and morally exemplary persona, evinced through a visual affiliation with the natural landscape, serves to soften her husband's severity and to provide a source of improving relaxation. In turn, he educates her in the course of depicted conversation, his more rational and knowledgeable character providing a source of intellectual improvement. However, these narrative devices overlay a variety of disparate realities. Women were involved in their husbands' political lives, they supervised the economics of the household and they undertook programmes of improvement of homes and gardens. Rather than reflecting reality, such portraits thus represent "people impersonating what they think they might like to be, believe they ought to be, or wish to be taken by..."¹⁰²

¹⁰² Philip Roth quoted in R. Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London, 1991), p.89

CHAPTER THREE

THE ELEVATION OF THE MORAL MOTHER

As marital portraiture underwent a clear transition in the mid decades of the eighteenth century, so too did the imagery of mothers and children. In 1749, Arthur Devis painted *A Family Group on a Terrace in a Garden* (fig.53). The cultivated grounds (indicating wealth, status and gentility) are populated by stiff, doll-like figures, posing for the benefit of the viewer. To the right of the canvas, a mother sits unyieldingly upright with her youngest child on her knee in a similarly rigid position. The *pater familias* stands to one side, dominating the triangular composition. Another child strains against the restricting grasp of its grandfather, seeking to join the siblings who amuse themselves with a carriage on the other side of the painting. However, whilst this element of play partially demarcates the immature from the mature, the children's clothing and physiognomy provide no points of distinction from the adult world. By the time that Reynolds painted *Mrs Hoare and her Son* in the 1760s (fig.54), much had changed. The focus has shifted to the maternal bond and the sitters are no longer stiffly posed for external inspection. Mrs Hoare bends attentively over her child and is seemingly unaware of any outside gaze. The infant is now characterised by distinctly babyish features such as a rounded face, loose garb, transfixed gaze and relaxed posture. The degree of physical and eye contact between the sitters together with their intertwined forms, linked by colour and texture, defines their relationship in terms of emotional intimacy. Finally, the landscape has receded in deference to the importance of that relationship. Rather than embodying wealth and status, it has come to indicate a sentient connection with untrammelled nature.

This chapter will examine the redefinition of motherhood in the mid eighteenth century, a redefinition that is visually manifest in portraiture. It will firstly expand on the relevant historiography, outlined in the introduction.¹ Whilst some historians have argued that relationships between parents and children were formal, unaffectionate and often harshly disciplinarian until the late seventeenth century, when love and equality blossomed within the family, many have rejected this model. Similarly, some have contended that the role of motherhood was increasingly elevated, endowing women with a newly important position in both the family and society, whilst others have again promoted fundamental continuity. The chapter will then examine the pictorial transition in depth before going on to describe various parallel developments in the prescriptive and fictional ideal. Whilst the bearing and raising of children had always been seen as important, the maternal role of women was transfigured in a newly sentimental light in the mid decades of the century. Finally, it will explore the contribution of this mode of female representation to problems of female display. Portraits of mothers often negated the individual, emphasised the type, idealised the sitter beyond specifics and, above all, enhanced a sense of privacy.

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In 1960, Phillippe Ariès's *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime* was published in Paris with an English translation, *Centuries of Childhood*, appearing two years later. Whilst this survey of childhood over a span of some thousand years had

¹ Introduction, pp.3-12

limited impact at first, it came to dominate the field, contributing substantially to “the old master narrative of family history”.² Ariès’s view of parenthood is, by now, extremely well known. From minimum recognition of the needs and qualities of children in the Middle Ages, a parental urge to ‘coddle’ offspring developed in the seventeenth century, contributing to an enhanced attentiveness to and a new place for children within the domestic unit. This became increasingly privatised, removed from the wider domains of community and kin, and focussed itself around the younger members of the family.³

Stone’s *The Family, Sex and Marriage* merely reinforced what was, by 1977, an established pattern of change. Children in traditional society were at best ignored, exploited by lower-class parents as a labour resource whilst the upper class viewed them solely in terms of their contribution to the family line. At worst, they were maltreated, subjected to gross physical punishment in order to beat the last vestiges of Original Sin from their souls. Many of the features that were to remain standard elements of such histories for some time appeared in support of this “black legend of childhood”.⁴ High infant mortality rates meant that parents were unable to bond emotionally with their children and unwilling to invest time and money in such risky

² For an analysis of the initially muted reception of Ariès’s work and its subsequent success, see R.T. Vann, ‘The Youth of *Centuries of Childhood*’, *History and Theory* 21 (1982), pp.279-97; K. Wrightson, ‘The Family in Early Modern England: Continuity and Change,’ in R. Connors, C. Jones and S. Taylor eds., *Hanoverian England and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Woodbridge, 1998), p.3

³ P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (1960), transl. R. Baldick (Harmondsworth, 1962)

⁴ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp.5-7 and chapter 3, ‘The Open Lineage Family 1450-1630’; K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1993), p.108

enterprises.⁵ The practice of sending new-born babies away to wet-nurses was a sign of neglect, and swaddling, physically and psychologically painful for the child, prevented contact and play.⁶ From Edward Shorter's view of an early modern French society in which mothers rated work above their offspring to the extreme pessimism of writers such as Lloyd de Mause, Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, these factors reappeared again and again.⁷ "Children were at the bottom of the social scale"; "mothers viewed the development and happiness of infants younger than two with indifference"; "Practically all youngsters were thrashed at home, at school, and at work."⁸ By the eighteenth century, however, the family was safely *en route* to the values of modern domesticity and childhood became a joyous time. The rise of individualism and emotional affect replaced older practices with loose and light clothes for juveniles and with caring mothers who breast-fed, tended and nurtured their children.⁹

⁵ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, p.39; Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp.651-2; E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1976), p.200; I. Pinchbeck and M. Hewitt, *Children in English Society* 2 Vols. (Toronto and London, 1969), II, p.7. Some historians have reversed this equation and argued that it was because parents failed to bond emotionally with their children and thus to invest care and attention in them that infant mortality rates were so high. See, for example, E. Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct* (London, 1981), pp.58-61

⁶ For this view of wet-nursing and swaddling, see Shorter, *Making of the Modern Family*, pp.181, 196, 204; Badinter, *Myth of Motherhood*, pp.49-52, 67-9, 97, 112.

⁷ Shorter, *Making of the Modern Family*, passim.; L. de Mause, ed., *The History of Childhood* (New York, 1974); Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, II, passim.

⁸ M.J. Tucker, 'The Child as Beginning and End: Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century English Childhood', in de Mause, ed., *History of Childhood*, p.230; Shorter, *Making of the Modern Family*, p.168; R. Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), p.31

⁹ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp.7-9 and chapter 9, 'Parent-Child Relations'. See also R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in*

It was once again Alan Macfarlane who instigated the critique of this modernisation theory, claiming that joy at childbirth and parental love were evident throughout the early modern period.¹⁰ A revisionist trend quickly established itself. Some, such as Adrian Wilson, participated by thoroughly dissecting and demolishing the work of Ariès. He accused *Centuries of Childhood* of being based on limited, selective and misinterpreted evidence, of being chronologically vague and as essentially 'present-centred.'¹¹ Others set about looking more thoroughly at early modern constructions of childhood. Keith Wrightson, for example, argued that children were wanted and cared for, that their fragility and a sense of parental responsibility over education prompted intense anxiety and that the degree of physical chastisement they endured had been exaggerated. He, like others, broke the causal links that had been postulated between high infant mortality, wet-nursing and swaddling on the one hand and indifference on the other. He pointed out the dangers of drawing conclusions about sentiment from demographic data. Indeed, as more recent scholars such as Amanda Vickery have noted, the extreme vulnerability of offspring to death and disease in past ages was more likely to engender feelings of anxiety, despair and resignation.¹² Wet-nurses were a luxury only affordable by the

Eighteenth-Century England (New York, San Francisco and London, 1978) for a similar developmental thesis.

¹⁰ A. Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a seventeenth-century clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1970); A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840* (Oxford, 1986)

¹¹ A. Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Phillipe Ariès', *History and Theory* 19 (1980), pp.132-53

¹² Wrightson, *English Society*, pp.104-18. See also A. Macfarlane, 'The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 by Lawrence Stone', *History and Theory* 18 (1979a), pp.106-7; P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London, 1989), p.232; Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood', p.181; A. Vickery,

elite. Time and effort went into their selection and they were often the last resort if the mother was unable to feed her own children.¹³ Finally, swaddling could easily be seen as well intentioned, designed to assist in the physical formation of the child and to protect it from cold and from self-inflicted harm.¹⁴ However, Linda Pollock was the most spectacularly rigorous in debunking the myth of a traditional society in which the treatment of children was, or verged on, the abusive. With the aid of nearly 500 diaries and autobiographies, she argued that parental affection, involvement and concern for the well being of offspring were historical constants. Thus, whilst Wrightson was tentative in denying a fundamental shift in the seventeenth century, suggesting general continuity tempered by the caution, “we know too little of family relations in earlier times to judge,” Pollock boldly asserted “no significant change in the quality of parental care given to or the amount of parental affection felt for infants in the period 1500-1900.”¹⁵

Historians have similarly propounded and disputed the existence of a shift in early modern conceptions of motherhood, a debate heavily dominated by the doctrine of ‘separate spheres’. The conventional pattern traced in writings such as that of Ruth Bloch on gender or in Davidoff and Hall’s *Family Fortunes* was of an increasing

The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England (New Haven and London, 1998), pp.121-4. Stella Tillyard in *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1994), p.236 similarly argued that love and anxiety were not incompatible, but were, conversely, closely linked.

¹³ Wrightson, *English Society*, p.108; Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p.108-9; L.A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.216-36; Wilson, ‘The Infancy of the History of Childhood’, pp.195-6; M. Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family* (London, 1980), p.61

¹⁴ Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, pp.51; Wilson, ‘The Infancy of the History of Childhood’, pp.194-5

¹⁵ Wrightson, *English Society*, p.118; Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p.235

emphasis on women's actual or potential maternity.¹⁶ Such models were reinforced by the work of medical historians, including that of Londa Schiebinger who examined the first drawings of the female skeleton in the eighteenth century. These emphasised large pelvises and small brains and thus suggested both the natural affinity of women with childbirth and their limited intellectual capacity.¹⁷ However, once again, such developmental theses have been countered with assertions of continuity. Patricia Crawford has demonstrated the existence of an emphasis on the procreative role of women in the seventeenth century and Robert Shoemaker has argued that, whilst mothers may have assumed more of the day-to-day care of children as the period progressed, they had always been more responsible for childrearing than their husbands.¹⁸

Thus, the twin issues that dominate the historiography of parenthood are the degree of love and attention directed towards offspring and the association of women with motherhood. Once again, confusion seems to stem partly from an elision of source materials. The diaries and letters examined by Linda Pollock do show close

¹⁶ R. Bloch, 'American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815', *Feminist Studies* 4, 2 (June 1978), pp.101-26; L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), pp.335-42. As outlined in Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.91

¹⁷ L. Schiebinger, 'Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy', in C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur, eds., *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1987), pp.42-82. See also A. Callen, 'The Body and Difference: Anatomy Training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the later Nineteenth Century', *Art History* 20, 1 (March 1997), pp.23-60

¹⁸ P. Crawford, 'The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England', in V. Fildes, ed., *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London and New York, 1990), pp.3-38; P. Crawford, 'The Sucking Child': Adult Attitudes to Child Care in the First Year of Life in Seventeenth-Century England', *Continuity and*

parent-child relationships at an early date and the female duties of childbearing and childrearing clearly did receive much attention before the 1700s. However, what changed in the eighteenth century was the literary construction of parenthood in general and maternity in particular. This textual ideology that has often been conflated with reality. Amanda Vickery, whilst emphasising motherhood as an inescapable historical phenomenon, has also pointed to a surge of cloying idealisation in the prescriptive and fictional ideal in this period. Writers glamorised maternal duties which became increasingly fashionable, a romanticisation that sat somewhat uncomfortably with the harsh realities of the fear and pain of motherhood.¹⁹ Others have agreed that maternity came to be elevated, praised, re-constructed as a praised occupation and endowed with a peculiarly moral dimension.²⁰ To quote Ruth Perry: “Writers began to wax sentimental about maternity, to accord it high moral stature, and to construct it as noble, strong, and self-sacrificial...maternal sentiment began to emerge as an emotional force capable of moving a reading public, understood as the

Change 1, 1 (1986), pp.41,44; R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London and New York, 1998), pp.122-8

¹⁹ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp.93-100, 286

²⁰ See, for example, J.S. Lewis, *In the Family Way: Childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1986), p.62; G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992), p.276; R. Bloch, ‘Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4, 2 (1978), pp.249-50. John Tosh in ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood: The Case of Early and Mid-Victorian England’, *Gender and History* 8, 1 (April 1996), p.52 claims the early Victorians “stood at the end of two generations during which the status of mother had steadily risen...” Also see p.59. Susan Staves in ‘Douglas’s Mother’, in J.H. Smith, ed., *Brandeis Essays in Literature* (Waltham, Massachusetts, 1983), p.53 argues that the centrality of the character of Lady Randolph in John Homes’s play, *Douglas* (1756), reflects “an attempt to articulate and dramatize what was in 1756 a relatively new sentiment: elaborated tenderness between mothers and children.” For similar developments in America, see Bloch, ‘American Feminine Ideals in Transition’, pp.101-26

sign of an innately moral and uniquely female sensibility.”²¹ Not only did interest in and the importance attached to maternity boom in the eighteenth century, but the quantity of the published material that expressed such dictums similarly increased. This was partly as a result of the new availability of printed material combined with enhanced rates of literacy, discussed above, but partly as a product of the new importance attached to the subject.²² It is also arguable that this literature was increasingly addressed directly to mothers, moving away from more general audiences and from specialists such as midwives and nurses.²³ It is this ideological transition that is critical for the transition in portraiture but which, once again, overlays a disparate reality.

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The shift in pictorial representations of mothers and children in the mid eighteenth century has been fairly frequently discussed. Scholars of childhood have

²¹ R. Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England’, in J.C. Fout, ed., *Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago and London, 1992), p.117. See also p.108

²² Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast’, p.119. See chapter 1, pp.71-3

²³ A.J. Stewart, D.G. Winter and A.D. Jones in ‘Coding Categories for the Study of Child-Rearing from Historical Sources’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, 4 (Spring 1975), p.701 argue that childrearing literature became increasingly directed at women and moved away from an emphasis on both parents as co-rearers. Valerie A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986), p.116 notes a move in intended audience from midwives, nurses and general readers to mothers themselves. She contends that this promoted a new attention to the benefits of maternal breastfeeding for the health of the mother, appealing to the self-interest of the newly specific audience. John Tosh in ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood’, p.52 places the transition as later, arguing that eighteenth-century literature was largely addressed to fathers whereas nineteenth-century writings focussed much more on the role of the mother.

shown considerably more awareness of and deployed paintings more frequently than those in almost any other branch of historical inquiry. As noted in the introduction, Lawrence Stone echoed Ariès in postulating a shift from formal and posed portrayals of the family in the seventeenth century to a new sense of affect and an enhanced emphasis on the role of offspring in the eighteenth.²⁴ J.H. Plumb later reinforced the idea of a transition:

Up to about 1730 family portraits are formally posed groups; increasingly, however, after 1730 children are shown playing or reading or sketching or fishing or picknicking with their parents...Also, portraits of individual children are far more common in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth century, again arguing both for a change in fashionable attitudes, and also, may be, for a greater emotional investment in children by parents.²⁵

This developmental model has been echoed by many art historians. For example, in the catalogue to an exhibition at Berkeley in 1995, significantly entitled *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood, 1730-1830*, J.C. Steward similarly argued that portraits of parents became more affectionate and spontaneous throughout the eighteenth century. He posited that the child came to be depicted as an

²⁴ See introduction, p.14

²⁵ J.H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present* 67 (1975), p.67. More recently, K. Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood 1600-1900* (Boston, 1992) has provided a detailed examination of the history of childhood through material sources, arguing that successive constellations of juvenile artefacts evidence both the simple physical needs of offspring and contemporary cultural images of childhood. She concludes that, from attempting to force children into adulthood as quickly as possible, parents after 1750 sought to extend and indulge the early stages of development.

individual requiring love and nurture, moving from a peripheral role to a new location at the very centre of the family unit.²⁶

A brief survey of portraits of women accompanied by their offspring in this period certainly reveals a number of broad developments taking place. First, as the century progresses, the mother and child are more frequently isolated from the larger family group and the nearer gaze of the spectator renders the scene more intimate and more direct. In early works such as Charles Phillips's *Sir William Strickland and his Family in a Parkland Setting* of 1731 (fig.55) or Devis's *A Family Group on a Terrace in a Garden*, women are depicted with one child seated on their lap with a larger group of siblings, the *pater familias* and extended kin grouped around. Whilst such populous family portraits continued to be painted by artists such as Johann Zoffany, working later in the century, it is nonetheless noticeable that, alongside the continuing (if fluctuating) popularity of the conversation piece, the mother and child were increasingly singled out for attention.

Second, the encoding of the maternal bond within stiffly posed decorum gave way to a greater intimacy and interaction between sitters. Reviewers discussing the annual exhibitions at the Royal Academy approvingly noted such developments. They began to criticise portraits that continued to utilise stiff poses and to emphasise manners over and above affection. One such writer in the *Middlesex Journal* in 1772, discussing *A Lady and Children* by a little known artist named John Blackburne, wrote: "If there be any fault in this piece, it is that the lady is rather a little too stiff, and looks more like a prim old maid, than the mother of so many children."²⁷ Thus,

²⁶ J.C. Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood 1730-1830* (Berkeley, 1995), especially pp.11, 16-21

²⁷ *The Middlesex Journal* 23-26 April 1772

from the child sitting upright on its equally rigid mother's knee, the more infantile late eighteenth-century offspring leans and lolls against its parent, frequently reaching its arms up to return her embrace, as exemplified in Reynolds's portrait of *The Hon. Mrs Bouverie of Delapré and her Child, Harriet* of 1770 (fig.56). In contrast to an earlier image such as Joseph Highmore's *Mrs Sharpe and her Child* (fig.57), the sitter is absorbed in the object of her maternal concern and affection, her posture and dress envelop the infant and there is a much greater degree of physical contact. 'The fiction of candour' comes into play as the sitters are engrossed in each other and give the viewer the impression of his or her non-existence or of their unawareness of that existence.²⁸ In contrast, Wright of Derby's *Lady Juliana Elizabeth Wilmot and her Son, Robert John* of 1788 (fig.58), whilst similarly demonstrating a new, intimate ethos, has exploited the consciousness of the presence of an external gaze to prompt a transfixed stare from Robert Wilmot. In response to the artist and viewer, he clammers over his mother's lap to seek refuge in her shoulder as she supports and protects him. Thus, the act of display is negated by the retreat into privacy and intimacy.

Another development in these later images is the sense of childish play. Whilst present throughout the century (children as shown by Arthur Devis are frequently engaged with cards, dolls or miniature drums), material games and toys are accompanied or replaced by increasingly compatible physical attitudes. George on his mother's lap in the portrait of the Strickland family may grasp at a chain of flowers attached to the neck of a lamb, gazing fixedly towards the animal, but these signs of infancy are tempered by a desire to accord with contemporary notions of decorum. He

²⁸ For the 'fiction of candour' see chapter 1, p.75 which outlines the argument of H.Berger, 'Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture', *Representations* 46 (Spring 1994), pp.98, 102

is described in terms of adult posture and physiognomy and is firmly situated within structures of power and familial hierarchy as the father directs the viewer's attention towards his eldest son and heir. Similarly, play ceases to be restricted to the children themselves (their mothers and fathers merely providing physical support or gesticulating towards them), and increasingly involves the parents who indulge and participate. Thus, Mrs Hoare, Mrs Bouverie and Lady Wilmot react to and humour the children who pull at their clothes, bury themselves into their shoulders or play with their faces.

The poses employed to emphasise such physical and emotional interaction are frequently drawn from the lexicons of the Renaissance Madonna and Child. The use of such models for contemporary portraiture, "the borrowing (of) a particular thought, an action, attitude or figure" from artists such as Michelangelo and Raphael, was, needless to say, about more than social ideologies of motherhood.²⁹ Reynolds set the tone for elevating the lowly genre of portraiture with such references. The poses, the sculptural folds of draped garments that in no way resemble the fashions of the day and the often sombre and muted colouring that characterise these images supported the pretensions of such artists to a 'liberal' profession. They generalised the portrait into something approaching history, they suggested that it was more than a record of a particular figure from a particular time and they intimated artistic ability to rival the ancients. However, the extensive references to Renaissance Madonnas were far from unappealing for the women who were figured in this way.³⁰ They enabled a wider and

²⁹ Discourse VI, in Sir J. Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (1769-1790), ed. R.R. Wark (1766) (London, 4th edition, 1969), p.96

³⁰ As Steward, *The New Child*, p.117 has pointed out, such conventions ennobled the Georgian mother.

more spiritual frame of reference through association with Mary as Mother, as well as appealing to contemporary preoccupations with the virtues of ancient Roman matrons.

The various sources for such paintings have been frequently elucidated. Benjamin West's portrait of his wife and son, Raphael of 1770 (fig.59) is clearly derived from the *Madonna della Sedia* (fig.60), painted by his son's namesake and seen by the artist during his 1761-2 visit to Florence. Similarly, Edgar Wind related Reynolds's *Mrs Hartley as a Nymph with her Son as the Infant Bacchus* (1773, The Tate Gallery, London) to the *Madonna Domini* by Michelangelo, on display in the Uffizi (1503/6).³¹ However, the majority of these portraits relate to such prototypes in a more general and diffuse way. Shawe-Taylor has noted, with reference to Reynolds's *Lady Delme and her Children* (1777, National Gallery of Art, Washington), that such physically unified groups recall the Renaissance predilection for carving the Holy Family from one block of stone to emphasise their being of the same flesh.³² This technique is also visible in the popular use of similarly coloured fabric to garb mother and child and in the description of drapery that encloses and envelops both figures. Other paintings, such as Nathaniel Hone's *Mrs Ann Gardiner and her son, Kirkman* of 1776 (fig.61), employ the symbols and accoutrements of Madonna and Child imagery. The supporting pose of the mother and the swathed figure of the child are rendered more meaningful by the infant's distant expression, his raised arm and the grapes which he holds to one side. Some, including Reynolds's *Lady St. Asaph and her Son, George* of 1786 (fig.62), employ suggestions of the

³¹ Steward, *The New Child*, p.118; H. von Erffa and A. Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven and London, 1986), p.458; E. Wind, *Hume and the Heroic Portrait: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Imagery* (Oxford, 1986), p.20

³² D. Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London, 1990), p.192

manger, the child lying on its back as a light falls on its naked form. Finally, portraits such as Reynolds's *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons* of 1773 (fig.6) employ the iconography of the extended group of the Madonna with the Christ Child and St. John.

As has often been noted, the portrait of Lady Cockburn contains a hint of breastfeeding in the white swathed bosom of the lady and the pose of the closely held child, relating both to the iconography of the *Virgo Lactans* and to the representation of Charity as a suckling woman which had become standard by the sixteenth century.³³ Such references, apparent in later eighteenth-century imagery, could usually only remain on this level of inference for obvious reasons of decorum, modesty and chastity and explicit portraits of suckling mothers are extremely rare. Jean-Laurent Mosnier's *Mère Allaitant son Enfant*, dated to 1762 and on display in Macon (fig.63), is a highly unusual depiction of what would seem to be an upper-class woman breastfeeding her infant.³⁴ One of the few occasions in Britain that an artist ventured into this territory was when, in 1769, Reynolds painted *Hope nursing Love* (fig.64). This was a subject picture modelled on an actress, Miss Morris, and an entirely imaginary infant. However, this outlet, diffusing the specificity of the portrait into a subject picture, still fails to negate the distinctly *risqué* element.³⁵

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³³ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.188; Steward, *The New Child*, p.119; M. Praz, *Conversation Pieces: A Survey of the Informal Group Portrait in Europe and America* (London, 1971), p.152; E.G. d'Oench, *The Conversation Piece: Arthur Devis and his Contemporaries* (New Haven, 1980), p.76

³⁴ I am grateful to Laurence Brockliss for bringing this painting to my attention.

³⁵ M. Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Subject Pictures* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.36-8

The link between this burgeoning sentimentality in portraiture and the impact of the cult of sensibility on the literary ideal of motherhood was occasionally rendered explicit through the depiction of attributes that leave the viewer in no doubt of the sitter's adherence to popular dictates of childrearing. William Hogarth depicted *The Edwards Hamilton Family* in 1733 (fig.65), at leisure on the terrace of their house in Kensington. Lord Anne holds a flute as he gazes towards his wife whilst his son, Gerard Anne, is engaged in obtaining some water from a fountain. Mary is seated at a table between the two, one hand resting on a copy of *The Spectator*, open at an essay by Joseph Addison that discusses the virtuous rearing of children, and the other gesturing towards her offspring. She is clearly fulfilling her role according to the dictates of such authors, although this display of virtue is more apparently directed towards her husband than the viewer. Similarly, when Allan Ramsay later painted *Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons* between 1764 and 1769 (fig.66), he chose to represent her, not merely as a caring and attentive mother, but as one aware of and accordant with popular strictures on the nature of the parental role. A copy of John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* lies amongst the artefacts on top of the harpsichord and, in the light of standards established by such writers, the Queen is clearly a worthy mother.³⁶ She supports Prince Frederick on her lap as George leans against her knee grasping a bow and arrows, indulging the need for childish play whilst reinforcing gender roles. The critical function of the mother in raising moral, intelligent and healthy sons to contribute to the nation's resources is considerably heightened in an image that represents the future king of that nation.

³⁶ J. Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), eds. J.W. and J.S. Yolton (Oxford, 1989), passim.

At the same time as artists began to paint such intimate and affectionate portraits of mothers with their children, prescriptive and fictional literature increasingly emphasised and discussed the maternal role. It was argued by writers such as Lord Kames in the 1770s that women were suited to motherhood by virtue of their gentleness, sympathy and delicacy; qualities inherent to their sex and ideal for “sedentary occupations; and particularly for nursing children.”³⁷ Similarly, William Buchan advised that women should manage such domestic affairs as “nature has made them less fit for the more active and laborious employments” whilst ‘Philogamus,’ writing much earlier in the century, had been particularly blunt about the connection: “As Women were principally designed for producing the Species, and Men for other greater Ends: we cannot wonder if their Inclinations and Desires tend chiefly that way.”³⁸ It was thus baldly and frequently asserted that the tasks of wives, mothers and household managers were “the province allotted to your sex”, the “End and Business

³⁷ H. Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* 4 Vols. (1778) (Edinburgh and London, 2nd edition, 1788), II, p.2. Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (London, 1798), p.14 reversed this association in her reassurance to her readers that improved education for women would not render the ‘fairer sex’ robust as “their natural inferiority in strength, and the indispositions incident to child-bearing will too often secure the feminine delicacy of their persons and constitutions.”

³⁸ W. Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; or, A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines* (1769) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1774), p.419; ‘Philogamus’, *The Present State of Matrimony: or, The Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages in a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1739), p.12. Philogamus’s belief p.68 that women were “destined to have no other general Employments, but to bear and rear the Species” anticipated that of J.J. Rousseau, expressed in *Emile* (1762), (Harmondsworth, 1991), p.362, that it was women’s “proper purpose” to produce children.

of her Relation as a Wife”, “the proper Province for private Women to shine in” and “all she has to do in this world.”³⁹

The perennial connection between women and childbearing was increasingly glorified as the eighteenth century progressed. Wetenhall Wilkes deemed it “the greatest Commendation by which they [women] can be distinguish’d, to be reckon’d tender Mothers, faithful Wives, kind Mistresses and good Neighbours.”⁴⁰ Samuel Richardson similarly claimed that such duties “dignify a woman” and Fénelon went so far as to assert them to be the “very foundation of human existence.”⁴¹ Historians have debated whether this construction of motherhood did indeed endow women with a new respected status or whether this exaltation was a discreet reformulation of an insistent patriarchal theme. On the one hand, Ruth Perry has proposed the cult of maternity to be a colonisation of women’s bodies for purposes of production and generation.⁴² On the other, writers such as Adrian Wilson have claimed that childbirth was an entirely female experience in both social and physical terms, inverting and

³⁹ George Savile, Marquess of Halifax, ‘The Lady’s New Year’s Gift; or, Advice to a Daughter’ (1688), in J.P. Kenyon, ed., *Halifax: Complete Works* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.288; W. Fleetwood, *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants* (1705) (London, 3rd edition, 1722), p.181; W. Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1744) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1751), p.131; *The Spectator* no.342 (2 April 1712), in *The Spectator* (1711-12, 1724), ed. D.F. Bond, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1965) III, p.272

⁴⁰ Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice*, p.132

⁴¹ S. Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and Reflections Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1755), p.288; F. de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, *Fénelon’s Treatise on the Education of Daughters: Translated from the French, and adapted to English Readers, with an Original Chapter ‘On Religious Studies’* (1707, first French edition, 1688) (Cheltenham, 1805), p.5

⁴² Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast’, p.118-9

subverting the power relations that dominated most other areas of life.⁴³ Others, however, have adopted a position somewhere in between. They have argued that, whilst women's experiences of motherhood were productive of considerable pleasure, gratification, collective female identity and pride, they were enclosed within the structures of patriarchy. Thus, mothers performed and supervised the vast majority of everyday tasks whilst husbands and male medics oversaw the general childrearing process and retained decision-making authority in larger issues.⁴⁴

An aspect of this new literature of particular relevance to the increasing artistic interest in and sentimentalisation of motherhood was the popularity of carefully constructed and described scenes of mothers nursing and caring for their children, textual parallels to the pictorial vistas by artists such as Romney, Reynolds and Wright of Derby described above. These domestic prospects are sometimes constructed from the viewpoint of the author. In *Sermons to Young Ladies*, the Reverend Fordyce imagines himself beholding his young reader "casting...fond maternal regards round and round through the pretty smiling circle" and conceives of his regard as a substitute for the approving gaze of her husband, necessarily absent in his dealings with the public world.⁴⁵ In other books, the prospect is constructed as if viewed directly by the reader him or herself. For example, Hugh Smith invites his audience to "behold" and

⁴³ A. Wilson, 'The Ceremony of Childbirth and its Interpretation', in Fildes, ed., *Women as Mothers*, pp.68-107. Although Wilson is here talking about the seventeenth century, he asserts that, despite male medical intervention in the eighteenth, many of these aspects of the childbirth ritual continued into the 1800s (p.83).

⁴⁴ Crawford, 'The Construction and Experience of Maternity', especially pp.5-6, 27-29; P. Brown and L. Jordanova, 'Oppressive Dichotomies: The Nature/Culture Debate' in *Women in Society: Interdisciplinary Essays* (Cambridge, 1981), pp.224-241; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp.329-342; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, pp.122-8

⁴⁵ J. Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* 2 Vols. (1766) (Dublin, 4th edition, 1766) I, p.25

to reflect upon a woman engaged in the virtuous act of breastfeeding.⁴⁶ Most frequently, however, such scenes are envisaged through the eyes of an adoring and proud *pater familias*. Charles Jenner, in *The Placid Man: or, Memoirs of Sir Charles Beville*, describes a woman “sitting in the most engaging of all attitudes playing with her child,” her husband enjoying the “smile of endearment” that reveals the virtue of his spouse’s mind.⁴⁷ More extreme are examples from Samuel Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* and Clara Reeve’s *The Two Mentors* in which male characters are prompted by their wife’s suckling to throw themselves to the floor, the better to proffer adulation.⁴⁸

These literary images are, through their highly optical nature, comparable to the pictorial images under discussion. Indeed, occasionally the two are explicitly related and the painting of the worthy mother is translated into written description. One newspaper in 1775 carried a poem under the heading: “‘To Mr HICKEY, on seeing his Picture of Mr RUSPINI and FAMILY, at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy’ by PATER FAMILIAS.” It follows the standard conventions, describing a mother who “hangs o’er her sleeping charge in soft suspence” with an adoring husband in close attendance. The strong emphasis on the admiring gaze of the father, conveying evidence of “connubial love”, is particularly apparent. PATER FAMILIAS

⁴⁶ H. Smith, *Letters to Married Women on Nursing and the Management of Children* (1767) (London, 6th edition, 1792), p.138

⁴⁷ C. Jenner, *The Placid Man; or Memoirs of Sir Charles Beville* 2 Vols. (London, 1770), II, p.46. Thanks to Michael Rosenthal for this quote.

⁴⁸ S. Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* 7 Vols. (1753) (London, 1765), VII, pp.224-5; C. Reeve, *The Two Mentors: A Modern Story* 2 Vols. (1783) (London, 2nd edition, 1783), I, p.277

describes how “the father’s eyes,/ which long had wander’d[,] fix’d in mute surprize” on the family before him.⁴⁹

Both literary and pictorial vistas of domesticity were designed to provoke a suitable response in the viewer, allying emotive image and stirred reaction in a manner typical of the structures of Sensibility. Both evidenced the sitter-cum-character’s virtue for the approbation of her husband (and, through him, the approbation of the wider audience), as well as the husband’s character as a man of true domestic and private worth. In pictorial terms, this was often achieved by the inclusion of the *pater familias* within the picture space, overlooking and superintending his wife’s care and education of their children as in the picture of the Ruspinis or in John Singleton Copley’s *Sir William Pepperrell and his Family* of 1777 (fig.67). Pepperrell leans on his wife’s chair, casting an approving eye over the baby on her lap and the siblings engaged in a board game. Alternatively, the father’s approving gaze was merely implied by his role as patron and likely viewer of the image. Portraits such as Reynolds’s depiction of Lady Cockburn were commissioned by the sitter’s husband and, indeed, their intimacy is largely acceptable on those terms.

The reaction of the husband as viewer of his wife’s maternal virtues was a means of emphasising the companionate nature of the marriage under description. Children were regarded as essential to the companionate ideal, as the “lasting foundation to...felicity”, as the “fruits of...embraces” or as the “pledges of love.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Courtauld Institute Press Cuttings, Vol.I, 1731-1811, p.24. The newspaper is unidentified but dated to 20 June 1775.

⁵⁰ *The Town and Country Magazine; or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction and Entertainment* March 1769, p.128; H. Fielding, ‘The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews’ (1742), in A. Humphreys, ed., *Henry Fielding: Joseph Andrews and Shamela* (London, 1993), p.253; H. Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), ed. R.P.C. Mutter (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.92.

Indeed, according to Mary Wollstonecraft, they were the only things that could “gently twist the relaxing cord” of spousal affection when the first flush of love had calmed into friendship.⁵¹ However, not only could children unite and bind couples, but many writers regarded them as the *raison d'être* of the marital union. John Locke argued at the end of the seventeenth century that rearing children was “the chief, if not the only reason for...marriage” and Daniel Defoe based many of the strictures of *Conjugal Lewdness* on the principle that any marriage or any activity within marriage that was not aimed at conception was fundamentally immoral.⁵²

Not only did such scenes indicate the companionate and fulfilled nature of the marital union, but the virtuous realisation of the maternal role was deemed to have an improving and tempering effect on a husband, recalling him from erring ways and dangerous distractions. In Maria Edgeworth's *Literary Ladies*, Caroline recommends that her friend and correspondent devote herself to the execution of domestic concerns in order to regain the increasingly absent attention and affection of her spouse: “Do you not think, that when your husband sees his children prosper under your care, his family united under your management - whilst he feels your merit at home, and hears

Conversely, the marital union founded upon ill-advised principles of wealth and alliance, resulting in indifference and aversion between husband and wife, would corrupt and stunt the development and education of their offspring. To quote John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* 2 Vols. (1757) (London, 6th edition, 1757/8), II, pp.56-9: “HERE then we see how fatally this sordid Motive to Marriage affects the rising Generation, and therefore the Duration of the State.” Thanks to Jonathan White for this reference.

⁵¹ M. Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’ (1792), in J. Todd, ed., *Mary Wollstonecraft: Political Writings* (Oxford, 1994), p.234

⁵² Quoted from John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* by S.M. Okin, ‘Women and the Making of the Sentimental Family’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2, 1 (1982), p.69; D. Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness; or, Matrimonial Whoredom* (London, 1727), eg: pp.128, 133-4, 230, 293, 303. Also, see W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* 4 Vols. (1765) (Oxford, 3rd edition, 1768), I, p.455

your praises abroad, do you not think he will himself learn to respect and love you?"⁵³ Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft advised that a husband must be either singularly "cold" in disposition or "rendered unnatural by early debauchery" if he could not feel a greater sense of delight at the sight of his wife breastfeeding his child than from all "the most artful wanton tricks" that she could possibly perform.⁵⁴ Such scenes contained the potential to reclaim wandering husbands, to improve them gently and to unite the family through affection and sympathy.

However, whilst such sentimental concerns dominate these vistas, the opposition that has frequently been formulated between these and more supposedly 'traditional' issues of genealogy and lineage is fallacious. These literary and pictorial scenes not only serve to emphasise the strength of the marital union, to demonstrate its culmination and to reveal the moderating influence of the matriarch, but they also proclaim the successful perpetration of the family line. Smith, for example, in delineating a husband's reaction to his wife engaged in domestic cares, described him as both emotionally stirred and as proud that her suffering in the act of childbirth has enabled genealogical continuation and the reproduction of the self:

When he beholds the object of his soul cherishing and supporting in her arms the propitious reward of wedlock, and fondly traces his own lineaments in the darling boy, it recalls a thousand delicate sensations to a generous mind: perhaps he drops a sympathetic tear in recollecting the painful throes of the mother, which she cheerfully bore, to make him such an inestimable present. His love, tenderness and gratitude being thus engaged - with what raptures

⁵³ M. Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), ed. C. Connolly (London, 1993), p.54

⁵⁴ Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication', p.223

must he behold her, still carefully intent upon the preservation of his own image.⁵⁵

This implication was also taken up in Hugh Downman's poem on *Infancy*. The relevant passage begins by inviting the reader to picture the suckling mother, describing her health, beauty and happiness, her "Grace ineffable" and her "Comeliness." The poet then asks if he may attend her as she presses the baby to her bosom, kissing it and "in each Feature tracing out/ The fancied Likeness of its much-lov'd Sire."⁵⁶

Such sentimental descriptions of the virtuous mother engaged in breastfeeding, echoed in the occasional hint at this maternal duty in later eighteenth-century portraiture, relate to another important development in contemporary literature on parenting. A considerable number of writers began to insist that women should suckle their own offspring. As Valerie Fildes has amply demonstrated, assertions that a mother's milk was the best nourishment for a new-born child were frequent long before the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ Patricia Crawford has similarly identified early texts such as *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* of 1622, in which women are urged to breastfeed their own children, and has pointed out that physicians and preachers throughout the seventeenth century campaigned strenuously against alternatives.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Smith, *Letters to Married Women*, p.78

⁵⁶ H. Downman, *Infancy, a Poem* (London, 1774), pp.11-13. This passage is also interesting in anticipating Mary Wollstonecraft's assertion (quoted this chapter, p.148) that such maternal virtue will be more attractive to a husband than sensual services; "the Night/ Which gave thee to his Arms, gave not a Joy/ To this superior, piercing to the Soul,/ Sincere, and home-felt."

⁵⁷ Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies*, especially pp.98, 111

⁵⁸ Crawford, 'The Construction and Experience of Maternity', p.16; Crawford, "The Sucking Child", pp.29-33

However, the concept was popularised and rendered fashionable in the following century. Appeals became more numerous and were rephrased in language that appealed to the cult of sensibility. Also, as Susan Staves has pointed out, discussions of pain became restricted to the evils of failing to breastfeed whilst sensations of great delight and pleasure were promised for women who performed their duty.⁵⁹

Ruth Perry has illuminated another aspect of the transition in eighteenth-century literature in arguing that the rakish and promiscuous woman of restoration fiction, her breast an object of sexual allure, was marginalised and increasingly dominated by the repressed and de-sexualised heroine of authors such as Samuel Richardson, whose breast was reformulated into a maternal site.⁶⁰ Writers in the seventeenth century had believed that women, governed by an inherent and natural need to bear children, possessed strong sexual desires that should be restricted to and contained within marriage. Indeed, female desire, sexual pleasure and orgasm during intercourse were thought biologically necessary for a woman to conceive.⁶¹ Once such notions had been debunked, the onus shifted from the imperative to contain women's

⁵⁹ Staves, 'Douglas's Mother', p.64. Some have argued that this transition was due to practice coming into accord with propaganda, whilst others have countered that the gradual rejection of wet-nursing was less decisive and that considerable diversity characterised late eighteenth-century feeding practices. Susan Staves, 'Douglas's Mother', p.63 has identified the second half of the eighteenth century as the time when wet-nursing went out of fashion and Valerie Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies*, pp.106, 182 has contended that the climate of favour was turning more towards the prescriptive message by the 1770s. On the other hand, Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp.107-8 has argued for a general decline in wet-nursing but claimed that the trend was not decisive and that no single custom prevailed whilst J.S. Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p.209 has acknowledged there may well have been more breastfeeding generally by the 1780s, but noted considerable diversity in the feeding practices of her sample of fifty noblewomen.

⁶⁰ Perry, 'Colonizing the Breast', passim., especially pp.112-6, 119

⁶¹ Crawford, 'The Construction and Experience of Maternity', pp.6-7

sexuality to the promulgation of the restrained, chaste and sexually demure woman as natural and normal.

However, the subsumation of the sexual woman into the asexual mother was inherently paradoxical. As Davidoff and Hall have pointed out, “idealized womanhood was asexual and chaste, yet the supreme goal for women was marriage and motherhood, conditions which publicly proclaimed sexuality.”⁶² Thus, when Pamela, excruciatingly modest throughout numerous pregnancies, unwillingly attends a masquerade in London in the demure garb of a Quaker, her advanced gestation “shews some intimacies have passed with somebody.”⁶³ Ironically, such a tension may well have contributed to the attraction of eighteenth-century portraits of mothers. For example, the physicality of an image such as *Lady Cockburn*, the suggestion of breastfeeding and the deliberately sensual painterly techniques (the coloration a clear reference to that of the Venetians) are contained within pictorial devices designed to convey the impression of propriety. The sitter’s absorption in her children and seeming ignorance of the viewer’s presence, the implication that the external gaze belongs to her approving husband and her apotheosis into an idealised mother belies the sexual nature of the painting.

The shift in eighteenth-century constructions of maternity has been noted in still other aspects of literary culture. Amanda Vickery has argued that the most fundamental element in the new discourse was “the overlaying of secular hosannahs

⁶² Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.322. Also see S.W. Contratto, ‘Maternal Sexuality and Asexual Motherhood’, in C.R. Stimpson and E.S. Person, eds., *Women: Sex and Sexuality* (Chicago and London, 1980), pp.228, 233

⁶³ S. Richardson, *Pamela: Volume II* (1741), ed. M. Kinkead-Weekes (London and Melbourne, 1984), p.322. See also D. Peters, ‘The Pregnant Pamela: Characterization and Popular Medical Attitudes in the Eighteenth Century’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14 (1980/1), p.446

on the ancient religious solemnizations” and, indeed, whilst the Bible was the basic authority for seventeenth-century edicts on maternity, writers of the eighteenth more frequently appealed to Nature.⁶⁴ This is not to say that such associations were not present in earlier writings. Richard Allestree, for example, stated in 1673 that “a mother is a title of so much tenderness...that nature seems to have secured the love of mothers to their children.”⁶⁵ However, this emphasis increased in the following decades and Nature came to supplant the religious as the ultimate authority. Thus, writers continually evoked the presence of maternal instinct as inherent within the female character. Richard Steele argued that: “*Nature* has sufficiently secur’d the *Love of Mothers* to their *Children*, without the aid of any positive Law” and Downman later asked: “Is there a stronger principle infix’d/ In Human Nature, than the zealous warmth/ a Mother t’ward her Infant feels?”⁶⁶ Evidence for the existence of such instinctive affection was often adduced from the behaviour of animals and even of women in ‘savage’ and ‘uncivilised’ societies.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, pp.93, 286; Crawford, ‘The Construction and Experience of Maternity’, p.8

⁶⁵ Quoted in Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.123. Crawford in ‘The Construction and Experience of Maternity’, p.11 also shows that the biological bond between mother and child was understood to be natural in the seventeenth century.

⁶⁶ R. Steele, *The Ladies Library* 3 Vols. (London, 1714), II, p.185; Downman, *Infancy*, p.16. It was not that naturally decreed instinct was thought to be entirely specific to the mother. Writers such as James Nelson in *An Essay on the Management of Children* (1753) (London, 3rd edition, 1763), p.9 and Blackstone in *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, I, p.447 did discuss parental affection more generally, but the notion of instinct was more frequently associated with and contemplated in relation to women.

⁶⁷ Writers such as Steele in *The Ladies Library*, II, p.159 attempted to embarrass undutiful parents by directing their attention to the “great Care and Tenderness” of “*Savage Beasts*” towards their offspring. William Buchan similarly pronounced in *Domestic Medicine*, p.2: “Every other creature is the nurse of its own young, and they thrive accordingly.” Also see, ‘A Letter from Cleora’ in Eliza Haywood, *The Female Spectator* (1744-6), ed. G.M. Firmager (London, 1993) p.63 which argues thus

Finally, the eighteenth century witnessed an increased preoccupation with and discussion of the socialisation of the child.⁶⁸ This had a particular resonance for discourses of maternity as most accepted that women cared for children during the earliest and most critical period of development, sons being sent to “more publick Places of *Erudition*” at about the age of seven.⁶⁹ The importance of the role of mothers in the formation of character resonated throughout a wide variety of contemporary writing. The Marquess of Halifax, for example, argued that, “the first Part of the Life of *Man* is a good deal subjected to the *Women* in the *Nursery*, where she reigns without Competition, and by that means has the Advantage of giving the

for the naturalness of maternal care: “This the meekest Savages who live without Precept, and are utterly ignorant of all moral Virtues, may inform us; - nay, for Conviction in this Point, we may descend yet lower, and only observe the tender Care which the Beasts of the Field and the Fowls of the Air take of their young Ones.” However, this was not to say that motherhood was not improvable through education and principle. Bishop Fleetwood, *Relative Duties of Parents and Children*, p.4 argued that parental instinct was heightened, in reasonable creatures, by the hopes of the credit, comfort and advantage that children could bring. Similarly, Sir Thomas Mantell wrote in *Short Directions for the Management of Infants* (London, 1787), pp.xix-xx: “Our mothers watch our wants with that unbounded tenderness every animal shews its offspring; and superior to that of the brute creation, as much as our sense, reason, and religion, exalt us above them.”

⁶⁸ Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast’, p.108; Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, pp.116, 120, 123, 140

⁶⁹ Steele, *The Ladies Library*, II, p.196. This seems to have been the case throughout the century. Fénelon in *Fénelon’s Treatise on the Education of Daughters*, p.188 wrote: “She is charged with the education of her children - of the boys, till a certain age - of the girls will they are married” and Fleetwood in *Relative Duties of Parents and Children*, pp.47-8 noted that sons were freed from their mothers at a certain age whilst daughters were kept longer in subjection. At the end of the period, Hannah More wrote in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, with a view of the Principles and Conduct prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune* 2 Vols. (London, 1799), I, p.60: “To your direction the daughters are almost exclusively committed; and to a certain age, to you also is consigned the mighty privilege of forming the hearts and minds of your infant sons” and Thomas Gisborne assumed in *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797) (London, 9th edition, 1810), p.13; “children of each sex being, in general, under maternal tuition during their childhood, and girls until they become women.” See also Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp.340-1; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.123; Crawford, ‘The Construction and Experience of Maternity’, p.12

first Impressions.”⁷⁰ William Buchan continued the theme in his claim that women thus had it in their power to “make men healthy or valetudinary, useful in life, or the pests of society.”⁷¹ Indeed, female influence was seen to begin even before education in any real terms had commenced. Lord Kames, for one, argued that “infants are susceptible of impressions” even “upon the breast.”⁷²

Therefore, Judith Lewis has argued that, in the eighteenth century, “the primary function of motherhood shifted from an emphasis on the biological function of childbearing to an emphasis on the nurturing function of childrearing.” Medics increasingly stressed the responsibilities of maternity that succeeded the biological processes of gestation and birth and the more physical aspects of the role, disguised through euphemism, were replaced by a concern with the rationality and morality required to supervise the child’s upbringing.⁷³ *The Nurse’s Guide* advised that “the Duty of a Mother does not consist in conceiving, or bringing a Child into the World, but in bringing it up, and giving it all the Advantages of Education that can be imagin’d” and Maria Edgeworth believed that “ladies have become ambitious to superintend the education of their children.”⁷⁴ Women were told to control the acquisition of morality, religion, domestic and social skills along with dress, diet,

⁷⁰ Halifax, ‘The Lady’s New Year’s Gift’, p.178. Repeated verbatim in Steele, *The Ladies Library*, II, p.113. Nelson in *Essay on the Management of Children*, p.163 noted Halifax’s view and called it “an undoubted truth” but went on to claim that both parents should be involved in the formation of the child’s manners.

⁷¹ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, p.4

⁷² Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* II, p. 92. See, for example, *The Spectator* no.236 (12 December 1711), in *The Spectator*, II, p.455, concerned with children imbibing “the gross Humours and Qualities” and “the several Passions and depraved Inclinations” of their nurses.

⁷³ Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp.58, 62,71-3

⁷⁴ *The Nurse’s Guide: or, The Right Method of Bringing up Young Children* (London, 1729), p.23; Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, p.20

exercise and instruction, both through example and through the inculcation of principle. Those who handed over this “great object” of their children’s education to servants and nurses were heavily criticised.⁷⁵ Mothers knew their children better than menials and so were better placed to adapt their education accordingly, they would be more concerned with “permanent value” than with immediate results and “no other person c(ould) feel the same interest in the event.”⁷⁶ Equally, it was feared that the influence of lower-class hirelings could be pernicious as a result of “neglect...the prejudices of ignorance, or...the immoderate officiousness of care.”⁷⁷ As the poem *Hymen* described of the neglected child: “The kitchen soon becomes their fav’rite school/ And here their yielding hearts impressions gain,/ Sad marks! which through succeeding life remain.”⁷⁸

The increased pictorial emphasis on and isolation of the mother-child relationship gains additional meaning from this onus on the role of the matriarch in the formation of the infant’s moral character. The woman shown as attentive to her offspring, clearly controlling its formative influences and devoting her time and energies to its development, would attract popular approbation for fulfilment of her newly defined and refined role. Artists thus sometimes pictured the moral mother in the active process of reading to her child or as assisting its own efforts to glean information from a text. In Reynolds’s portrait of *Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke, with her Son, George, Lord Herbert* of 1764/5 (fig.5), Lady Pembroke takes a subordinate role in this process, merely physically supporting her son as he holds his

⁷⁵ More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, I, p.59

⁷⁶ Steele, *The Ladies Library*, II, p.197-9; More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, I, p.92; Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex*, p.39

⁷⁷ Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, p.379

⁷⁸ *Hymen: A Poem* (London, 1794), p.12

place in a book, whilst Romney's slightly later painting of *Mrs Cumberland teaching her Son, Charles* (fig.68) reveals a heightened sense of interaction and absorption as the mother bends her head over the text. This difference may reflect the more elevated social status of the Countess and the importance of her son as heir and progenitor of the Pembroke family, a status requiring greater sobriety and decorum, but it also points to Romney's particular artistic niche. The half-length pose of Mrs Cumberland attentively bending over her child, the predominant use of white and pastel shades and the broad, flat brushstrokes are all typical of this artist's domestic portraiture.⁷⁹

The material evidence of worthy, modern and attentive motherhood in these paintings recalls the emphasis of historians on the employment of artefacts as source material for analysis of past conceptions of childhood.⁸⁰ Such artefacts very possibly functioned, as J.H. Plumb suggested, to emphasise social status and to emulate one's betters through the fruitful dispersion of wealth, but they also conveyed the evidence of abstract attitudes and values in physical form. Attention to contemporary pedagogical ideas, concern with the child's influences, attentiveness to the natural development of the body and awareness of the needs and particularities of infancy could all be demonstrated through the purchase of books, loose dresses, toys and games. And these material traces of praise-worthy parenting could, in turn, be encoded and communicated to the world at large through their inclusion in paintings. Thus,

⁷⁹ For other examples of portraits of women reading to their offspring, teaching them to write or assisting their own attempts at knowledge, see Angelica Kauffman, *Anne, Countess of Galloway with her daughter, Lady Susan Stewart* (date unknown, The Earl of Galloway) and Nathaniel Hone, *Mrs Ann Craster and Daughter* (date unknown, location unknown: photograph in the collection of the Witt Library, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London)

⁸⁰ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, passim; L. Jordanova, 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century: Problems of Historical Interpretation', *History of the Human Sciences* 3, 1

family portraits constituted an intersection between moral and material value, between the pictorial display of wealth and taste and the display of private virtues. They not only demonstrated the virtue of the mother represented spending time with her children, aided by toys and educational aids, but they represented her wise dissemination of family wealth.

* * * * *

Nonetheless, there were inherent problems in female portraiture. Whilst the pictorial demonstration of a woman's exemplary maternal and feminine qualities might display her virtue, the essentially aesthetic nature of pictorial representation conflicted with contemporary prescriptive and fictive emphasis on the importance of a woman's *interior* value, on her moral and spiritual worth as more valuable than her external attributes. This emphasis took one of two forms. First, it was continually recommended that women should concentrate on the cultivation of moral, abstract qualities and on their capacity for such practical tasks as housekeeping, rather than on the adornment of their person with extravagant dress and jewellery. Benjamin Franklin contrasted "the flashy and superficial glare of dress and equipage" with the "solid excellence and substantial worth" of the domestic woman who quietly attends to the duties of the home.⁸¹ Similarly, the very first page of Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* expresses the wish that "some part of that time,

(February 1990), p.74; Plumb, 'The New World of Children', pp.64-7, Calvert, *Children in the House*, passim.

⁸¹ B. Franklin, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage: in Two Letters to a Friend* (1750) (London, 1759), p.53

which is wasted at the toilet, in consulting what dress is most becoming to the face (should be) employed in examining the heart, and what actions are most becoming to the character.”⁸² The argument most commonly employed in support of this opinion was that men would not want to marry the woman who, overly concerned with showy dress and accessories, was prepared to spend large sums in order to obtain them and likely to waste large amounts of time in showing them off.⁸³

The extravagant woman was warned that, as well as risking either spinsterhood or alienating a husband, external display and ornamentation were ephemeral. Bishop Fleetwood went into great depth on this point:

Gold and Pearls, and costly rich Apparel, are all of them perishable things; Things that corrupt, consume, and wear away in time...But the Mind, immaterial and immortal, requires and looks for Ornaments suited and proper to it. Amongst which, one considerable one is a meek and quiet, good and

⁸² E. Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), ed. B. Fowkes Tobin (Oxford and New York, 1997), p.9

⁸³ The Reverend Fordyce in *Sermons to Young Women*, I, pp.78, 101 warned that men would merely be attracted to such women as companions for the hour as none want a dissipated wife and “all of them, to a man, dread a woman of expense.” They would thus look for companions for life elsewhere, amongst women, “reasonable in their wishes, moderate in their expenses, and not devoted to external shew.” Such warnings were continually fictionalised. Miss Groves in Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752), ed. M. Dalziel (Oxford, 1989), p.74 cannot get a husband as a result of her extravagance. Miss Milner in Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* (1791), ed. P. Clemit (Harmondsworth, 1996), pp.134-5 very nearly loses her fiancé when she tries to test his affections with spendthrift ways. Her behaviour conjures in his appalled mind the horrors of “domestic wrangles - a family without subordination - a house without economy,” inevitable with a woman clearly “too frivolous for...substantial happiness.”

gentle Temper; a lowly modest Opinion of themselves, together with a silent, quiet and contented Mind under their Condition.⁸⁴

He then moved to the second conventional argument against the over-valuation of the external charms of women, the equally fugitive quality of beauty. Throughout the eighteenth century, the emphasis on the mind over the face, on the beauties of the character over the attractions of the body surpassed the denigration of external ornamentation. Many echoed Fleetwood's views that these attractions would fade, calling "Beauty...an accidental and transient good" and warning that "youth and beauty vanish" as "time runs on."⁸⁵

Polarisations and antithetical constructions dominated such writing: whilst "external Merit" was thought to attract "Love," "the Merit of the Soul" was able to engender "Esteem"; whilst "beauty" was deemed to catch the "eye," "merit" could

⁸⁴ Fleetwood, *Relative Duties of Parents and Children*, pp.160, 170, 181, 184, 194-5. See also C. Cibber, *The Careless Husband, A Comedy* (London, 1777), p.19

⁸⁵ Fleetwood, *Relative Duties of Parents and Children*, pp.207, 210; Richardson, *Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, p.233; Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, II, p.91. Writers adopted two main stances on this issue. Some argued that the man who selected his spouse on the grounds of her beautiful features or attractive physique was basing his marriage on lust and romantic love, certain to fade when those features aged and lost their charms. The anonymous author of *Characters and Observations: An Eighteenth-Century Manuscript with a Foreword by Lord Gorell* (London, 1930), p.180 promised; "when you marry a Woman purely for Beauty's sake; tell me how long her Beauty will last, and I'll tell you how long you will love her." See also Fielding, *Tom Jones*, pp.252-3. Others saw the decline of affection in marriage as inevitable but believed that the initial bloom of love could give way to friendship so long as the wife had sufficient character to secure such a relationship. Both Samuel Richardson in *Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, p.79 and the Reverend Fordyce in *Sermons to Young Women*, I, p.219 even suggested that the woman selected for "the beauties of her mind" could grow *more* dear to her husband "if she justifies his motive by her prudent conduct," warning that "external allurements are continually losing; internal attractions are continually gaining."

catch and secure the “heart”.⁸⁶ Such principles were taken up by novelists. The transformation of Miss Betsy Thoughtless from an irresponsible and flirtatious girl into a sober and virtuous woman, a suitable wife for Mr Trueworth, is the evolution of a character whose charms lie in her external qualities and whose passions lie in the diversions of the town into one who glories in domestic quiet and realises the importance of the cultivation of her mind, “alone entitl(ing) her to the esteem of the virtuous and the wise.”⁸⁷ Particularly extreme was the tale of Victoria in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1751. Although beautiful and fashionably educated, she is unable to secure a husband and rightly suspects, “my mind failed in performing the promises of my face.” It takes a dose of smallpox and the loss of her complexion to turn her attention to the improvement of her mind which in turn attracts the attention of a suitable suitor.⁸⁸ When creating paragons in their texts, authors ensured that attention would be directed to the qualities that counted: one is apparently drawn to the contemplation of Mrs Villars’s mind rather than her face in *The Exemplary Mother* and when Clarence Hervey first witnesses the pleasing vista of Lady Ann Percival surrounded by her children, he is so taken with the sight that he completely forgets to compare her beauty to that of Lady Delacour.⁸⁹

This disparagement of female display created difficulties for the female portrait, not least because the condemnation of external show and of exposing oneself

⁸⁶ R. Steele, ‘The Conscious Lovers, A Comedy’ (1722), in *The Dramatick Works of the Late Sir Richard Steele* (London, 1732), p.38; O. Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), ed. S. Coote (Harmondsworth, 1986), p.145

⁸⁷ Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, p.499

⁸⁸ *The Gentleman’s Magazine* xxi (1751), pp.225-7

⁸⁹ M.S. Cooper, *The Exemplary Mother: or, Letters between Mrs Villars and her Family* 2 Vols. (London, 1769), I, p.3; Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p.89

for public consumption rendered its exhibition at the Royal Academy somewhat problematic. It translated the woman directly into the aesthetic object that contemporary writers deemed she should not be. Indeed, Marcia Pointon has established a clear analogical relationship between the body of a woman and the material object of her representation, both transferable objects that could be purchased, owned, discarded, lent and given away.⁹⁰ Further, a portrait in the Royal Academy could be gazed at by all with the necessary shilling to gain admittance, exposing the sitter to an even wider spectrum of gazes than that to which the frivolous woman parading herself at balls, promenades or pleasure gardens was susceptible.⁹¹ Finally, the female portrait invited a viewer response that was necessarily predicated on the externals of the individual represented.

Such issues are evident in the case of Reynolds's portrait of Theresa Parker, on display at the Royal Academy in 1773 (Saltram House).⁹² During the exhibition, she wrote to her brother: "I am sorry you have heard that Sir Joshuas picture of me is not like, most people think it is. some abuse it, and some admire it, which everybody must submit to *that suffers themselves to be exhibited.*"⁹³ By allowing Reynolds to hang her

⁹⁰ M. Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800* (Oxford, 1997), p.197

⁹¹ Michael Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough: 'A Little Business for the Eye'* (New Haven and London, 1999) p.277 has argued that staring and parading for the benefit of others was the norm in cultural sites such as Assembly Rooms and the Mall. However, the mark could easily be overstepped and was a source of constant anxiety. See also, J. Brewer, "'The most Polite Age and the most Vicious": Attitudes towards Culture as a Commodity, 1600-1800', in A. Bermingham and J. Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London and New York, 1995), p.348

⁹² A. Laing, *In Trust for the Nation: Paintings from National Trust Houses* (London, 1995), p.30

⁹³ BL Add MSS 48218, Morley Papers Vol.I, ff.133-4, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham, 13 June 1773. My italics

full-length historical portrait for all of London society to see, she had opened herself to being a topic of discussion, to evaluation and, most importantly, to evaluation on the grounds of her physical appearance. Her painting was judged on the accuracy of its reproduction of her physical form, the aspect of her individuality that should properly be of secondary importance.⁹⁴

However, it is arguable that Reynolds attempted to negotiate such issues in his portraiture in ways relevant to the increasing pictorial focus upon the mother and child relationship in the later eighteenth century. First, many female portraits were constructed as vistas onto a private world. This was usually either achieved by the seclusion and isolation of the sitter in the landscape, lost in and at one with nature, or by the delineation of a domestic space, identified not merely by the description of a location within the home or its environs, but through the inclusion of either a husband or children, or both. The sense of intimacy and privacy that characterises many of the portraits under discussion was further enhanced by the sitter's absorption in the well

⁹⁴ This case study is particularly interesting as, after her death on 21 December 1775, it was Reynolds who wrote her obituary, a textual construction of Mrs Parker that is comparable to his pictorial construction of a few years before. BL Add.MSS 28252, Morley Papers Vol.XXXV, f.15, inscribed on verso, 'Advertisement of Mrs Parker's Death' and 'drawn up by Sir Joshua Reynolds.' Published in *The Public Advertiser*, 29 December 1775 and reprinted in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1 February 1776. Whilst she complained that her painting had opened her to public discussion, Reynolds in his tribute claimed that "she neither sought for, nor expected fame out of her own house - as she made no Ostentation of her Virtues, she excited no Envy;" The artist was here elevating the deceased woman through an appeal to contemporary abstract virtues, but these were virtues that his own visual inscription had problematised. The obituary also attempted to remove emphasis from Mrs Parker's physical appearance. It opened with a discussion of her disposition and manners, went on to praise her discreet fulfilment of domestic and private roles and ended with an acknowledgement of her accomplishments. In the midst of this, he briefly wrote: "Her person was eminently beautiful - but the expression of her Countenance, was far above all beauty that proceeds from regularity of features only." Thus, the one reference to her physical appearance is immediately underplayed and attention is quickly

being of her offspring and her seeming unawareness of the viewer. Indeed, in many portraits in which the sitter bends over her child, her own features are partially concealed, either through the downward angle of her head or the blocking presence of the figure of the infant. For example, in his portrait of *Mrs Cumberland teaching her Son, Charles*, Romney minimised the pictorial space devoted to the mother's face by obscuring the upper part with a large mobcap and the lower part with the attentively bowed head of her child. Similarly, in his *Mrs Carwardine and Child* of c.1775 (fig.69), the mother turns towards the huddled form of the infant in her lap so that a lost profile is presented to the viewer. Thus, the maternal role and the virtuous fulfilment of that role are emphasised at the partial expense of the mimetic function of the portrait.

Second, physiognomy could allow the construction of the face as the window to and expression of the mind.⁹⁵ This point is closely connected to the enhanced sense of privacy and enclosure described above as to acknowledge the act of display was to create the possibility that the features were being schooled into a suitable expression and that the pose was being deliberately adopted to stimulate approbation. Through seeming spontaneity and naturalness, physiognomy allowed the redefinition of the external features as a vehicle for the character, belied the nature of the portrait as a mere record of physical appearance and restored the correct emphasis in female representation to the sitter's mind and virtue. Even the physical beauty of the

shifted to the expression that reveals her character, recalling the way in which the reader's attention is directed to the characters of Mrs Villars and Lady Percival, away from their external attractions.

⁹⁵ See, J.K. Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, transl. T.Holcroft (London, n.d). For discussions of physiognomy, see J. Woodall, 'Introduction: Facing the Subject', in J. Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester and New York, 1997), especially pp.9-11. Also R. Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London, 1991), p.38.

individual could be reinterpreted as significant in terms of character. As Maria Edgeworth argued, “a set of features, however regular, inspire but little admiration or enthusiasm, unless they be irradiated by that sunshine of the soul which creates beauty.”⁹⁶

Indeed, the art of physiognomy was particularly relevant to women through the emphasis placed by the cult of sensibility on the female nervous system. The tears, sighs, blushes and faints of the eighteenth-century heroine conveniently bridged the gap between her feelings and her external appearance, rendering her emotional susceptibility evident for all to admire.⁹⁷ This construction of the female body in the novel bears many parallels to that in portraiture as the downward glances, the heightened spots of colour in each cheek and the pale complexions so prominent in visual imagery similarly reveal such qualities. These bodily signs were necessarily homogeneous and thus interpretable, a coherent system that could be applied to individuals for purposes of evaluation and assessment. F. Price has pointed out that the need for legibility promoted a remarkable similarity between the heroines of eighteenth-century sentimental novels, a collection of females who are, to some degree, interchangeable.⁹⁸

The sense of a direct relationship between the mind and body as most applicable to women is also evident in the claim of Francis Douglas in *Reflections on*

⁹⁶ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, p.35

⁹⁷ J. Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York, 1986), p.120; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, pp.xvii-xviii and chapter 1. J. Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1988), p.16 notes the physicality of sensibility.

⁹⁸ F. Price, ‘Imagining Faces: The Later Eighteenth-Century Sentimental Heroine and the Legible, Universal Language of Physiognomy’, *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 6, 1 (Spring 1983), p.9

Celibacy and Marriage that, whilst virtue in a man “is inferred but from conduct and action,” in women it is “visible in the sweetness and modesty of her exterior.”⁹⁹ However, for such visibility to be enabled in a portrait and for character to appear in the features, the sitter usually had to be depicted in response to some external stimulus. The valorisation of the sentimental mother rendered the child a particularly ideal prompt as the offspring on her lap could stimulate gestures of attentiveness, tenderness and affection, imbue her features with significant meaning and allow the expression of emotion justified by a proper object. Indeed, as one press review declared: “Beauty always appears most lovely when recommended by the affectionate ties of kindred.”¹⁰⁰

Third, the issues of display and extravagance in dress and personal ornamentation generated problems concerning the garb of sitters. On the one hand, clothing and jewellery were essential signifiers of class and status, particularly in an age when trends changed so rapidly and when the accessibility of fashion was so widespread that maintaining the appearance of a well-born lady was both time-consuming and expensive. On the other, an over-fondness for personal adornment suggested an employment of one’s husband’s money for frivolous ends, redirecting it from its proper utilisation within the household. The ‘historical’ garb, or “that bedgown” as the Duchess of Rutland disparagingly referred to it, popularly adopted by Reynolds and taken up by many other fashionable London portraitists, provided a

⁹⁹ F. Douglas, *Reflections on Celibacy and Marriage; in Four Letters to Friend* (London, 1771), p.11

¹⁰⁰ *The Morning Herald*, 14 April 1784. The critic was discussing Reynolds’s portrait, *Lady Harrington and two of her children* (1786/7, Private Collection), in which the main sitter is shown “in the amiable character of a mother, engaged in play with her offspring.”

useful solution.¹⁰¹ This is not to say that this was the main motivating force behind its adoption. Clearly, it connected the female sitter with the admired Roman Matrons of antiquity, it elevated the portrait by suggesting a certain timelessness and it bestowed a sculptural quality on the figure. However, it also removed the sitter from concerns of display, from the vagaries and whims of contemporary fashion and thus enabled the dignifying of the female form.

The removal of emphasis from the particularities of the individual sitter to the character or type was aided by the rarity of identified portraits on display at the Royal Academy. Such anonymity was somewhat futile as reviewers in the press frequently named sitters for the benefit of their curious readers. Equally, the limited size and intimacy of the *bon ton* meant that identities would probably be familiar to the elite element of the Royal Academy's visitors who, indeed, may well have already seen the paintings on their own visits to artists' studios. This said, the obscuring of the sitter's name went some way towards solving the problems of display incurred in the exhibition of female portraits. Not only were they thus dislocated from the individual represented, they could be elevated into subject paintings and, more specifically, into generalised icons of motherhood. For example, Reynolds's portrait of Lady Cockburn playing with her offspring was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1774 as *Portrait of a Lady and her Three Children*. This anonymity allowed the particularity of the portrait to be diffused, the dominant subjects to become the attentive mother and the playful children as opposed to the individuals portrayed, and rendered it of interest to people besides those concerned with the sitters. However, this process of generalisation and elevation was rendered still more explicit when an engraving of the

¹⁰¹ The Duchess of Rutland quoted in R. Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society* (London, 1996), p.131

image by Charles Wilkin, entitled *Cornelia*, was published in December 1791. The title was in part due to Lord Cockburn's reluctance to have his wife recognised, indicating the intimacy of the painting, but it also served to negate her individual identity still further, concealing it within that of the mother of the Gracchi who pronounced her children to be her most valuable jewels.¹⁰² Such translation of identity, metamorphosing portraiture into allegory, icon or subject painting, can also be seen in the case of Reynolds's depiction of Lady Melbourne embracing her son, Peniston of 1773 (fig.70). When engraved by Dickinson, this image was published under the heading, *Maternal Affection*.¹⁰³

The new emphasis on character over appearance, on the image of the mother lost in adoration of her child as more commendable than the purely aesthetically pleasing female portrait, was reinforced by late eighteenth-century exhibition reviews. These continued to emphasise the contribution of likeness to the success or failure of a portrait, but also began to comment on the sitter's apparent moral and, frequently, maternal qualities. *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons*, for example, was praised for the "tender" behaviour of the mother and for the "sprightly and natural" actions of the children, whilst a critic in *The London Chronicle* in 1784 wrote of another of Reynolds's portraits; "the maternal feelings of the Lady towards the object of her pride and tenderness are touched with the most sensible delicacy."¹⁰⁴ In the same paper four years later, a painting by John Russell of a mother with her offspring was praised in similar terms, her "countenance indicat(ing) all the tenderness of

¹⁰² N. Penny, *Reynolds* (London, 1986), pp.259-60

¹⁰³ M. Postle, 'The Golden Age 1760-1790', in R. Strong, ed., *The British Portrait 1660-1960* (Woodbridge, 1991), p.218

¹⁰⁴ *The Public Advertiser*, 28 April 1774; *The London Chronicle*, 29 April-1 May 1784

maternal affection.” Indeed, this latter reviewer even thought he could deduce that the depicted child was “the offspring of conscious virtue and innocence” from the “placidity” of its mother’s countenance.¹⁰⁵ Identity became less a question of the physical and more a question of the moral.

Physiognomy was thus exploited to enable the assessment of character as well as physical appearance and Reynolds’s portraits in particular were praised for capturing the innermost qualities of his sitters.¹⁰⁶ However, the possibility of the breakdown of physiognomic truth, the threat that the scene presented could be one solely formed in the mind and on the canvas of the painter, was occasionally acknowledged. For example, when Belinda and Clarence Hervey are marvelling at Westall’s depiction of Lady Anne Percival, the former eulogises; “how much more interesting this picture is to us, from our knowing that it is not a fancy-piece; that the happiness is real not imaginary.”¹⁰⁷ Some, however, exploited the possibility of falsification to pay further tribute to the domestic morality of the sitters. In his eulogy on Hickey’s portrait of the Ruspini family, ‘PATER FAMILIAS’ asserts: “Some fair original in LIFE, bestows/ Such animation as thy copy shews./ Too bright a subject in

¹⁰⁵ *The London Chronicle*, 1-3 May 1788

¹⁰⁶ Indeed, his supporters often employed such rhetoric to assert that his work was more than mere portraiture. It was claimed in *The General Evening Post*, 24-27 April 1784 that Reynolds “delineates the character as well as the features of the person,” *The Public Advertiser*, 28 April 1784 praised his portrait of Miss Kemble with the assertion that: “Thro’ every genuine feature pours the Mind” and T. Morrison in *A Pindarick Ode on Painting addressed to Joshua Reynolds, esq.* (1767), ed.F.W. Hilles and J.T. Kirkwood (Los Angeles, 1952), p.11 claimed: “For we not see the outward form alone/ In thy judicious strokes defin’d,/ But in them too---distinctly shown---/ The strong-mark’d features of the mind.”

¹⁰⁷ Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p.223

the draught to fade;/ Too rich to need imagination's aid."¹⁰⁸ The expression of domestic bliss and harmonious familial relations is here claimed to be of such a quality that it is clearly real, rather than a product of the painter's imagination.

Thus, a new system of categorisation was formed. Portraitists identified their female sitters according to their conjugal fidelity, their affiliation with nature or their maternal tenderness. However, this not only reflected well on the individuals who could lay claim to such virtues, but also on the artist who was sensitive enough to capture and portray them. One writer in 1783, eulogising over Reynolds's ability to capture the characteristics of infancy, claimed; "we are always pleased to see this eminent artist descend to the amiable subjects of infant innocence, as he is sure of treating them in such a style as to suggest to the mind the agreeable persuasion, that his heart is as much entitled to esteem as his genius is to admiration."¹⁰⁹ Such praise was even more pertinent when subject and artist became closely intertwined as in Benjamin West's depiction of his family, c.1772 (fig.71). The Madonna-like pose adopted by the artist's wife and the harmony, calm and domesticity of the scene prompted the comment that it "does the artist credit on the score of his feelings."¹¹⁰ It demonstrated his possession and enjoyment of familial bliss, his capacity to appreciate it and his desire and ability to record it.

However, the third figure in the equation was the viewer. Discussion increasingly focussed on the sensations aroused in the breast of the spectator involved in an interactive relationship with the image, enjoying his or her appreciation of the

¹⁰⁸ Courtauld Institute Press Cuttings, Vol.I, 1731-1811, p.24. The newspaper is unidentified but dated to 20 June 1775

¹⁰⁹ Courtauld Institute Press Cuttings, Vol.I, 1731-1811, p.38. The newspaper is unidentified but dated to May 1783

¹¹⁰ *The Morning Chronicle*, 25 April 1777

touching scene according to dictates of sensibility. In his *Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting* of 1760, Daniel Webb argued that art should “melt the soul into a tender participation of human miseries...give a turn to the mind advantageous to society...and quicken us to acts of humanity and benevolence.”¹¹¹ Such precepts lay behind *The Morning Chronicle’s* claim in 1777 that Reynolds was able to give “all his figures such force of expression, that scarce a person looks at them without entering into a kind of colloquy with the picture.”¹¹² The exemplars of domestic bliss as depicted in portraits could thus stimulate noble and lofty feelings in their observers and the Ladies Waldegrave as represented by Reynolds could be hailed as “three lovely Graces! who have deign’d to visit the Earth, in order to set an amiable Example of domestic Employment, to an idle, frivolous, dissipated age.”¹¹³ Similarly, a reviewer of a portrait by Nathaniel Hone, portraying a lady surrounded by her children, was able to assert that this and “every Attempt towards diffusing the Charm of Domestick Affection should be favourably received.”¹¹⁴

The new emphasis on the viewer was partly related to the metamorphosis of portraits into subject paintings, for it was claimed that the process of translation enabled them to be enjoyed by a more general audience than simply the friends, family and acquaintances of the sitter portrayed. One reviewer thus argued that Reynolds’s capacity to capture a character and to convey more than mere physical particularities “dignifies portrait painting, and makes it interesting to the stranger,” whilst another declared the artist’s “*éclat*” to be “his particular taste in the character and disposition

¹¹¹ Quoted in E.D.H. Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene from Hogarth to Sickert* (London, 1986), p.87

¹¹² *The Morning Chronicle*, 25 April 1777

¹¹³ *The Public Advertiser*, 1 May 1781

¹¹⁴ *St James’s Chronicle*, 4 May 1782

of his portraits, which become pictures of themselves, independent of their likeness".¹¹⁵ This focus on image over individual, on the general sentiments portrayed over the specific qualities of the sitter, enabled reviewers to deal with the likeness captured and the quality of the painting as a work of art as distinct and separate phenomena. This was particularly fortunate for Reynolds. *Mrs Billington* could be reckoned to "fail(s) in point of likeness" whilst being praised as "a charming picture" and his portrait of the Waldegraves could be deemed by Fanny Burney, "not a bad picture, but a bad likeness of the ladies."¹¹⁶ *A Poetical Epistle to Sir Joshua Reynolds Knt.* dwelt on this point in depth in its introduction. It claimed that, whilst in the old manner of painting, portraits would be considered "mere Trash and Lumber" by those ignorant of the individuals represented, the modern "Addition of Character" made them interesting to the stranger, and even to the stranger who cared nothing for the original:

Of the different sources of Character to which Painters apply to give animation and consequence to their Pictures, Domestic and Professional Life seems to be the most proper, because it is the most natural and best understood. Some of Zoffanij's Family Scenes are delightful; and, in the higher style of Family Portraiture, what an august scene is displayed in Vandyke's Picture of the Pembroke Family at Wilton! No historic or

¹¹⁵ *General Evening Post*, 24-27 April 1784; Courtauld Institute Press Cuttings, Vol.I, 1731-1811, p.38. The newspaper is unidentified but dated to May 1783.

¹¹⁶ *The Public Advertiser*, 20 April 1790, quoted in Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, p.15; Fanny Burney quoted in *The Whitley Papers*, British Museum, Vol.II, f.194

allegorical allusion could add to the splendour which attracts the Eye, and the interest it finds in the Heart of every beholder of Taste and Sentiment.¹¹⁷

“Taste” and “Sentiment” were now deemed the subjects of paintings. Individual women were subsumed into elevated motherhood and their portrayed virtues received more comment than their appearances. Such devices thus reflected well on the sitter, on the artist who could perceive and record such virtues and on the viewer who could respond appropriately and with empathy.

* * * * *

This chapter has outlined various developments that occurred in the visual representation of maternity in the mid decades of the eighteenth century. Whilst historians have increasingly moved towards models of continuity and variety, the more traditional pattern of change as suggested by Ariès and Stone is echoed in the portraiture of the period. From the 1740s onwards, the relationship between mothers and children began to receive increasing attention from artists. Viewpoints became more intimate and brought the spectator into closer proximity with the subjects as the sitters themselves began to demonstrate increased physical and psychological closeness. Portraitists inscribed their sitters within pictorial lexicons derived from Renaissance traditions of portraying the Madonna and Child, not only reflecting well upon the sitter but also upon themselves, demonstrating their artistic credentials and capacity to rival the ancients.

¹¹⁷ *A Poetical Epistle to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Knt. and President of the Royal Academy* (London, 1777), introduction

It is once again the flattering nature of portraiture that indicates the primary stimulus for these developments. Whilst the actual practices of childbearing and childrearing may well have been homogeneously heterogeneous, there were clear developments within prescriptive and fictional writings. And, whether these were ignored, adopted wholesale or treated in a partial and selective fashion in reality, their uniformity and moral authority dictated approbation and praise as due to their adherents. Whilst motherhood had always been a central role and its virtuous fulfilment important in defining the exemplary woman, eighteenth-century writers created new, fashionable and popular notions of maternity. The exemplar became increasingly asexual, secularised, idealised and sentimentalised as cloying eulogies to maternal instinct and affection became common. The literature in itself became more popular, more widespread and more accessible, helping to disseminate such notions. However, not only was the mother a key figure in her own right, the mainstay of affection, harmony and tranquillity at the heart of the household, but she also came to be hailed as the primary teacher of her children. Thus, her virtues or vices had serious implications for society as a whole.

Female virtue and the ideal woman's capacity to fulfil domestic, familial and household tasks were polarised with idle, luxurious and vain concerns. The prescriptive and fictional writers' antipathy towards personal adornment, fashionable dress and the beauties of the body and face, towards the woman as an aesthetic object, had serious implications for portraiture. Representing the external attributes of an individual and placing those attributes on display for all and sundry to witness, stare at and scrutinise in the Royal Academy exhibitions conflicted with dominant ideas. However, artists such as Reynolds formulated mediating devices. The privacy and intimacy of his portraits suggested female sitters to be fulfilling correct, private roles

and to be seemingly ignorant of their audience. The pseudo-science of physiognomy permitted the face represented on canvas to be perceived as expressing inner virtues, rendered explicit in acts of love and attention towards children. Generalised dress further removed the sitter from accusations of show and display. Women were thus universalised into icons of motherhood, into subject paintings that were designed to express the virtues of the sitter, the sensibility of the painter and the capacity of the viewer to act in appropriate and sensitive ways. Indeed, not only did the mother herself influence social standards by succeeding or failing in inculcating manners and morals in her offspring, but her representation could inspire domestic affection as a beneficent example to its spectatorship.

CHAPTER FOUR

FATHERHOOD AND THE STATE OF THE CHILD

The previous chapter presented a developmental model for the representation of maternity. As the eighteenth century progressed and prescriptive and fictional writers came to elevate and adulate the duties of motherhood, portraits of women with their children became increasingly sentimental, intimate and focussed on the relationship between the attentive, caring parent and the childlike, responsive offspring. Thus, as seen in the context of marital portraiture, the models of change advocated by historians such as Stone do accord with mainstream pictorial and textual ideologies. However, the new affective ethos did not render abiding, seemingly more 'traditional' concerns obsolete. Just as the eighteenth-century companionate marriage did not preclude the persistence of restrictive gendered 'spheres', so the impact of sensibility on parenting did not destroy hierarchical constructions of the family. As Naomi Tadmor has amply demonstrated, whilst texts such as *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* testify to burgeoning sentiment, they also clearly evince the sex, seniority and marital status of each character, fixing each individual in a highly structured network of authority, responsibility and subordination.¹

¹ N. Tadmor, 'Concepts of the Family in five Eighteenth-Century Texts', (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, (1992), especially chapters 6 and 7; N. Tadmor, 'Dimensions of Inequality among Siblings in Eighteenth-Century English Novels: The Cases of *Clarissa* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*', *Continuity and Change* 7, 3 (1992), especially pp.304-18; N. Tadmor, "'Family' and 'Friend' in *Pamela*: A Case-Study in the History of the Family in Eighteenth-Century England', *Social History* 14 (1989), p.305

This chapter will firstly argue that, whilst the father was increasingly depicted as involved and concerned with his dependants, his essentially supervisory and authoritative role as head of the household remained undiminished. Second, it will show that hierarchical structures similarly persisted in the representation of offspring. Whilst eighteenth-century artists did demonstrate an increasing concern to indicate the peculiarly juvenile characteristics of children, they continued to categorise them according to age and sex. Thus, masculinity was privileged over femininity and maturity took precedence over infancy. Finally, it will be argued that a sense of the child's future adulthood remained paramount in such images, whether in terms of potential maternity, landownership or, more generally, as a useful and virtuous member of society. Toys, games, clothes and books were not merely designed to indulge the child's infantile state, but were also aimed at preparing him or her for such destined duties.

* * * * *

The relationship between the father and the larger family unit has received a fraction of the attention devoted to the role of motherhood. Feminist historians have discussed and debated the position of women within the family, together with its implications for wider social constructions of gender, whilst that of men has been largely neglected.² The conventional view of fatherhood, developed over the last few decades, has been, to a degree, constructed out of the remnants of debates over 'separate spheres'. It has been argued that, as women were increasingly restricted to

² R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London and New York, 1998), p.13

domestic duties and barred from the workplace, so men were increasingly removed from the household. Thus, as Davidoff and Hall have argued, their involvement within the family progressively dwindled to the extent that, by the 1830s, writers were encouraging fathers to spend a mere hour or so a day with their children.³ Similarly, Judith Lewis has proposed that, from the 1760s onwards, wives bore the brunt of responsibility for children, resulting in increasing criticism of the indifferent father.⁴ Revisions of this dominant thesis are similarly patchy, but once again counter developmental models with theories of continuity. For example, Linda Pollock has argued that fathers had always been involved, anxious and caring. Despite taking a less active part in day-to-day childrearing than mothers, they were prepared to pull their weight when children were sick and were always concerned with the educative process.⁵ Similarly, Amanda Vickery has argued that fathers' involvement with and emotional attachment to children was far from negligible, although the main responsibility for babies and young children always lay with women.⁶

Writers of the later eighteenth century certainly began to attack the absentee father, supporting claims of increasing paternal indifference. In 1774, Hugh Downman

³ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), p.333. For a similar thesis on developments in France, see E. Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct* (London, 1981), pp.3-4, 118, 246, 251-3 in which she claims that the ideological spotlight moved from the father figure and authority to that of the mother and love, so that the father "gradually retired to the sidelines." He became increasingly absorbed in his public duties and, from an elevated position as God's lieutenant and a substitute for the King, was relegated to the status of an ordinary being.

⁴ J.S. Lewis, *In the Family Way: Childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1986), p.67

⁵ L.A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.103, 261

⁶ A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London, 1998), p.123. See also Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.128

demanded: “Come then Ye Sires/ Whom love of Offspring, or of Country sways,/ Think not these strains, think not the Nursery’s care/ Beneath your notice”, whilst William Buchan, writing at the same time, rendered the implication behind the poet’s statement explicit.⁷ He bemoaned the fact that fathers paid “so little regard” to the business of managing children and claimed that this neglect led to female ignorance of such matters, women tending to concentrate on “such accomplishments as recommend them to the other sex”;

men generally keep at such a distance from even the smallest acquaintance with the affairs of the nursery, that many would esteem it an affront, were they supposed to know anything of them. Not so, however, with the kennel or the stables: A gentleman of the first rank is not ashamed to give directions concerning the management of his dog or horses, yet would blush were he surprised in performing the same office for that being who derived its existence from himself, who is the heir of his fortunes, and the future hope of his country.⁸

However, pictorial representations of fatherhood followed an antipathetic path of development to this model of increasing paternal indifference. As the eighteenth century progressed, the dominance of the *pater familias* in the larger family group became muted and he came to be pictured as increasingly absorbed and engrossed in the wellbeing of his dependants. As a result, early compositional models such as the

⁷ H. Downman, *Infancy, a Poem* (London, 1774), p.3

⁸ W. Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; or, A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines* (1769) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1774), p.4

pictorially pre-eminent patriarch gesturing to his wife and children, clearly presenting them for approval and mediating the gaze of the spectator through his defining presence, were displaced. This motif can be seen in an anonymous portrait of Cornelius Lyde motioning to his wife and to the daughter who is seated on her lap (fig.72). This infant, in turn, looks back and thus redirects the viewer's attention towards her father. Similarly, in Bartholomew Dandridge's portrayal of the d'Albiac family in Hungerford Park (fig.1), the father figure is entirely separate from the wife and children towards whom he again gesticulates. His sons are grouped nearest to him, emphasising the importance of male children for the continuation of the family line. His daughter, posed on the opposite side of the picture, returns his hand motion, thus again diverting the spectator's gaze back to the patriarch and returning the emphasis of the image to the source of familial authority, status and identity.

Such poses became infrequent as the century progressed and "painters began to dramatize the paternal role...depicting the father of the family in his own home actively nurturing and protecting his children."⁹ In the later eighteenth century, the father was shown in greater interaction with the family group, engaging in activities with his offspring, reacting to their childish antics and regarding them with pride. Desmond Shawe-Taylor has pointed to portraits such as Copley's *Sir William Pepperrell and his Family* of 1777 (fig.67) as evidence for such increased paternal involvement in family life.¹⁰ Pepperrell leans in towards his dependants, gazing attentively down at the baby who stretches one arm up towards him in response. This

⁹ K. Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood 1600-1900* (Boston, 1992), p.90

¹⁰ D. Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London, 1990), p.193

integration is enhanced by the compositional structure. A diagonal line, demarcated by the curtain, leads the eye from the patriarch to his wife and thence to the siblings who are engrossed in their board game. When Johann Zoffany painted *Lord Willoughby de Broke and his Family* in 1766 (fig.73), he similarly integrated the figure of the patriarch into the larger group. De Broke once again rests on his wife's chair and is compositionally united with the family. He raises an admonishing finger towards the child who attempts to steal a piece of toast from the breakfast table whilst another pulls a wooden horse along the ground at his feet.

Whilst many writers did chastise the absent head of the household, the newly sentimental ideal of the tender and concerned patriarch pictured by such artists was increasingly apparent in eighteenth-century prescriptive and fictional texts. Indeed, such writings sometimes defined the father in terms that echo those literary vistas of adoring and admirable motherhood outlined in the previous chapter.¹¹ *The Spectator* pictured a patriarch “with a Large Family of Children about him...in his Countenance different Motions of Delight, as he turned his Eye towards the one and the other of them.”¹² Similarly, the exemplary Mr Wilson in *Joseph Andrews* invites Parson Adams and, by implication, the reader, to imagine him “stretched on the ground...my children playing round me”, whilst Hugh Downman asked, “dost thou wish/ The Name of Father, amiable, humane?/ To view thy little Progeny around/ Happy, well-form'd, and strong.”¹³ The emphasis on the visual, the sense of the approving gaze of both author and reader and the imaging of a central parental figure surrounded by an

¹¹ Chapter 3, pp.144-6

¹² *The Spectator* no.192 (10 October 1711), in *The Spectator* (1711-12, 1714), ed. D.F. Bond, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1965) II, pp.252-3

¹³ H. Fielding, ‘The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews’ (1742), in A. Humphreys, ed., *Henry Fielding: Joseph Andrews and Shamela* (London, 1993), p.253; Downman, *Infancy*, p.3

amiable progeny, a worthy circle of response, are all familiar from constructions of motherhood. Once again, the structures of sensibility, seeking a sentient response through the visual display of virtue and emotion, are called into play. Whilst such literary views of fathers in the domestic sphere are few and far between in comparison to those of mothers, their existence does suggest some sentimentalisation of paternity to accompany that of maternity.

The seeming conflict between the increasingly removed patriarch emphasised by historians and described by writers such as William Buchan and the increasingly involved father depicted in the family portrait and described in texts such as *Joseph Andrews* can, however, be resolved. Exhortations against the father who deemed the education and welfare of his children unworthy of his attention antithetically constructed the caring and attentive father as worthy of praise and approval. It is uncertain whether criticisms of the detached man of business were, to any degree, representative of reality or functioned on a purely rhetorical plane, but they certainly served to delineate the positive virtues with which men would wish to associate themselves in their portraits. Thus, sitters such as Lord Willoughby de Broke and Sir William Pepperrell are depicted in the midst of the family group, casting their benign gazes about them and thereby revealing themselves to be men of refinement, sensibility and compassion. Indeed, they can be seen as all the more morally laudable for their rejection of such feared masculine disinterest in the household.

However, in contrast to the cloying idealisation of the maternal role, the investment of fatherhood with sentimental value was necessarily limited. Whilst portraits did come to depict a heightened sense of interaction between the patriarch and the family group, his role remained restrained and largely supervisory. For example, Sir William Pepperrell's relationship with his family is clearly more intimate

and informal than that of Cornelius Lyde, but he is excluded from the physically united group of Lady Pepperrell and two of their children who are described in a pictorial language developed from the imagery of the Madonna, Christ Child and St. John.¹⁴ The sense of separation is enhanced by his dark and sombre garb which makes a striking contrast with the gold, pink and cream hues of the costumes of the females. Critics at the time observed this disjunction. A writer in *The Morning Chronicle* noted; “the figure of the gentleman, leaning behind with some plans in his hand, seems...to be oddly placed, and not properly one of the family.”¹⁵ Lord Willoughby de Broke is similarly depicted at a slight remove, supervising the scene of the family at breakfast and assuming ultimate authority for their behaviour. Like Pepperrell, he dominates the family at the apex of a triangular group, the remaining family members arranged around in hierarchical order. Such compositional formats were dominant throughout the tradition of the conversation piece.¹⁶ For example, in Devis’s *A Family Group on a Terrace in a Garden* (fig.53) painted some years before, the standing figure of the father is similarly placed above the group of the mother with her younger children. An infant on the right of the painting attempts to join its siblings, grouped on the opposite side of the canvas, eagerly anticipating their relative maturity.

Thus, whilst Stone claimed that the patriarchal family was a thing of the past by the eighteenth century, the authority of the eldest male within the household clearly

¹⁴ See, for example, Raffaello Sanzio, *Madonna of the Meadow* (1505, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum)

¹⁵ *The Morning Chronicle*, 26 April 1777. This piece also appeared in *The London Packet; or, New Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 25-28 April 1777

¹⁶ R. Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1975), pp.122-3

remained paramount.¹⁷ His dominion was described by the same writers who constructed the vistas of affectionate and involved paternity outlined above, indicating that no conflict was perceived between increased sentimental investment in the paternal role and continuing patriarchy. Whilst these authors recommended that mothers should assume responsibility for the majority of day-to-day childrearing tasks, they advised that fathers should oversee the process. This hierarchy, in which “women acted under the supervision of men” and in which power and labour were distinguished, is apparent in Hugh Downman’s exhortation that fathers should;

aid the toil

of a fond Mother, with your reason guide

Her gentler faculties; invigorate

Her virtuous weakness; to your well-known voice

She will, she cannot but with pleasure yield,

And follow Precepts sanctified by YOU.¹⁸

Such writers argued that men should provide economic support for the family unit, looking both to the present and the future as it was thought that “the task of making a reasonable provision for the future wants of children belongs, in common cases, to the

¹⁷ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), passim.

¹⁸ P. Brown and L. Jordanova, ‘Oppressive Dichotomies: The Nature/Culture Debate’, in *Women in Society: Interdisciplinary Essays* (Cambridge, 1981), p.235; P. Crawford, ‘“The Sucking Child”: Adult Attitudes to Child Care in the First Year of Life in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Continuity and Change* 1, 1 (1986), p.43; Downman, *Infancy*, pp.3-4

father.”¹⁹ They were hailed as the civil and religious representatives of the family unit and were held to be responsible for discipline within it, complementing the role of their wives as the daily trainers and socialisers of children. Finally, it was believed that fathers should retain control over major decisions affecting their children’s lives, whether it be their education, their choice of apprenticeship or their selection of a marital partner.²⁰ The patriarch was therefore defined as the ultimate decision-making authority and the overseer of processes of civilisation and education.

The one area in which it seems that the father’s authority did become tempered as the century progressed was that of feeding regimes. As the issue became increasingly caught up in the cult of sensibility and as breastfeeding became one of the central tropes of increasingly sentimentalised constructions of motherhood, the use of male authority to demand that a child be wet-nursed became more questionable. Whilst in 1714, Richard Steele was prepared to accept “*Disability, Sickness, or the Evident Danger of the Mother, or the Interposition of the Father’s Authority, or some very Extraordinary and publick Necessity*” as reasons for having recourse to a nurse, James Nelson later despaired that; “many a sensible Woman, many a tender Mother, has her Heart yearning to suckle her Child, and is prevented by the misplac’d Authority of a Husband.”²¹ Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft complained at the end of the century; “there are many husbands so devoid of sense and parental affection that

¹⁹ T. Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797) (London, 9th edition, 1810), p.376

²⁰ Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, especially p.124; P. Crawford, ‘The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England’, in V. Fildes, ed., *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London and New York, 1990), p.13; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp.329, 335; Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p.120

²¹ R. Steele, *The Ladies Library* 3 Vols. (London, 1714), II, pp.221-2; J. Nelson, *An Essay on the Management of Children* (1753) (London, 3rd edition, 1763), pp.46-7

during the first effervescence of voluptuous fondness, they refuse to let their wives suckle their children.”²²

* * * * *

Hierarchy was also evident throughout eighteenth-century portraiture in the constant differentiation of children within the family group according to age and sex. Ludmilla Jordanova has encouraged the analysis of such distinctions, pointing out that traditional histories of infancy (as exemplified by the work of J.H. Plumb) ignore sex and thus erroneously treat children as a universal entity.²³ Indeed, the fallaciousness of this older approach becomes even more apparent in the light of recent research which demonstrates that the eighteenth century saw more advocacy of gender discrimination in childrearing than ever before.²⁴ Such preoccupations inevitably affected portraits of children which, as a consequence, expressed “social expectations about the nature and appearance of, for example, girls, or older children, or younger brothers.”²⁵

²² Wollstonecraft, referring to the popular taboo on sexual intercourse during lactation, quoted in V.A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986), p.104. The clash between a father’s authority in this matter and the mother’s wishes was illustrated in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela: Volume II* (1741), ed. M. Kinkead-Weekes (London and Melbourne, 1984), pp.228-31 when Mr B forbids his wife to nurse. She argues her case but in the end capitulates in deference to his wish to maintain her services and body as entirely at his own disposal.

²³ L. Jordanova, ‘New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century: Problems of Historical Interpretation’, *History of the Human Sciences* 3, 1 (Feb 1990), p.73. Marcia Pointon in *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), p.200 has similarly emphasised the importance of sexual difference in the history of childhood.

²⁴ A.J. Stewart, D.G. Winter and A.D. Jones, ‘Coding Categories for the Study of Child-rearing from Historical Sources’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, 4 (Spring 1975), p.701

²⁵ Calvert, *Children in the House*, p.41

Throughout the eighteenth century, age and sex were visually identified through costume. Infants wearing coats with broad sashes around their waists were recognisable as either girls or boys under the age of six, before breeching had taken place. From the 1750s onwards, older male children were distinguished from infants on the one hand and from men on the other by their skeleton suits, which consisted of long trousers buttoned to a short jacket. Girls, however, went straight from 'coats to wearing the same styles and fashions as their mothers. Second, represented behaviour helped to denote the status of a child. Two of the younger offspring in Reynolds's *The Marlborough Family* of 1777/9 (fig.8) play boisterously, the action of the girl with the grotesque mask and the alarmed response of her sister evincing their immaturity. In contrast, the Marquess of Blandford, the eldest son, adopts a sober demeanour that is suitable to his future role as the next Duke. In addition, games and toys played a significant role in the process of categorisation. Girls were often depicted with dolls and needlework baskets whilst boys were shown with toy canons, drums, bows and arrows, revealing clearly gendered notions of socialisation. Finally, typical pictorial arrangements of family members, the younger children and daughters arrayed around their mother in a group overseen by the father and eldest son, were also significant in defining the relative place of each individual within the household.²⁶

For such categorisation to be effective, these schemata had to be uniform and widely accepted. For example, in 1750, an aspiring artist urged his brother to generate numerous children to give him the opportunity to practice his painterly expertise in constructing a conversation piece. He hopefully envisaged a principal group consisting of his sibling and sister-in-law, surrounded by their offspring on either side who

²⁶ See, for example, Johann Zoffany, *Lord Willoughby de Broke and his Family* of 1766 (fig.73) and John Singleton Copley's *Sir William Pepperrell and his Family* of 1777 (fig.67)

would be “represented at employments or diversions proper to their age and sex.”²⁷ Later, one of the press reviews eulogising Reynolds’s ability to capture the innocence and charm of his juvenile sitters, significantly praised him for having “given them sports conformable to their ages, and simplicity conformable to their sports.”²⁸ A concern for nicety in pictorial discrimination (and its widespread acceptance) is also revealed in portraits such as Johann Zoffany’s depiction of the family of the 3rd Duke of Atholl of 1767 (fig.2). The eldest son, John, wears a costume that replicates that of the Duke. He proudly displays the fish that he has caught for the perusal of the rest of the family and thereby demonstrates the fruits of the practical education he has received from his father. Two of the younger boys have been breeched and are engaged in similarly masculine, but more juvenile activities. James has climbed an apple tree in chase of the family’s pet whilst his sibling, George, remains at the bottom, having been entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the family’s coats. The fourth and youngest son, William, is seated next to his mother and sisters with whom he is visually connected by his infant’s skirts. This group, in turn, is united by the suitably feminine attributes of flowers. The eldest daughter holds a full garland of roses whilst her younger sister proffers a single bloom to her mother and to the baby on her lap.

Such standard differentiation was even more apparent when siblings were divided into distinct pictorial spaces in the pendant tradition. In 1763/4, Johann Zoffany painted the children of the 3rd Earl of Bute on two separate canvases (figs.76

²⁷ J. Russel, ‘Letters from a Young Painter abroad to his Friends in England’ (1750), quoted in Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, p.159

²⁸ Courtauld Institute Press Cuttings, Vol.I, 1731-1811, p.38. The name of the newspaper is unidentified but the date is given as May 1783.

and 77). Three daughters display their properly feminine affection for the animal world together with their innate maternal tendencies by playing with squirrels. One sister attempts to lure her pet down from the tree with the aid of a nut whilst her sibling restrains another with a string. The third and oldest sister adopts a more supervisory role in the absence of a mother, raising one hand towards her youngest sister as she glances back towards the other. In the second picture, their brothers are similarly ranged around the base of a tree, creating a compositional affinity between the pendants. Whilst one child brandishes a bow and proudly gestures towards the bullseye he has just hit, the youngest passes some eggs he has stolen from a bird's nest down to Frederick who holds his hat up to receive them.²⁹ In 1791, Joseph Wright of Derby similarly pictorially divided the children of Richard Arkwright (figs.74 and 75). In one portrait, the three eldest sons are grouped around a kite whilst, in the other, their younger brothers are depicted with their sister. This segregation, like the positioning of William in Zoffany's portrait, once again demonstrates the equation between subordinate age and subordinate gender. In contrast to the masculine pastime enjoyed by the older boys, the latter siblings are shown attempting to ride a goat, an activity that hints at a lesser degree of maturity.

In 1779, Josiah Wedgwood was planning to commission George Stubbs for pendants of his offspring and clearly had a very similar conceit in mind. He wrote to

²⁹ This is a curiously ambiguous compositional device, depicting an activity that was condemned by numerous children's writers in the later eighteenth century. See, for example, John Newbery's range of books on various birds including E.A. Kendall, *The Crested Wren* (London, 1799), p.152 which ends: "Will you guard my golden head from harm? At least, will you refrain from harming it yourself, if we should happen to meet?" However, its popularity as a narrative device for portraits of young boys may be explicable as revealing a natural masculine hunter-gatherer urge. Whilst not entirely condonable, it could thus be seen as a proper tendency that could later be indulged in the more

Thomas Bentley, his friend and colleague, with a lengthy description of his favoured compositions:

Sukey playing upon her harpsichord, with Kitty singing to her which she often does, and Sally and Mary Ann upon the carpet in some employment suitable to their ages. This to be one picture. The pendant to be Jack standing at a table making fixable air with the glass apparatus &c; and his two brothers accompanying him. Tom jumping up and clapping his hands in joy and surprise at seeing the stream of bubbles rise up just as Jack has put a little chalk to the acid. Joss with the chemical dictionary before him in a thoughtful mood, which actions will be exactly descriptive of their respective characters.³⁰

Once again, there is an evident concern to represent children in activities appropriate to their position within the family. Whilst the depiction of Sukey and Kitty is intended to demonstrate their feminine musical accomplishments, their brothers were to be shown as interested and educated in science and the phenomena of the natural world. Such a narrative would not only be properly masculine, but would suggest that the boys were going to follow in the professional (and profitable) footsteps of their father.

Such hierarchical ranking of siblings was continued in the numerous portraits of brothers and sisters which replicated the compositional structures of marital

acceptable activity of hunting. The concern with infant cruelty towards the animal world will be dealt with in more depth later in the chapter, see pp.199-201

³⁰ *Letters of Josiah Wedgwood* ed. K.E. Farrer, 3 Vols. (Manchester, 1903-6), II, pp.492-3, Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 30 May 1779

imagery throughout the century. These images inscribed the male and female sibling within relationships of protector and protected, supervisor and supervised, instructor and instructed, similar to those of their parents.³¹ For example, Bartholomew Dandridge portrayed Frederick, 3rd Duke of Somerset and his sister, Mary (fig.78), in stances that very much recall those of Cornelius Lyde and his wife. Once again, the male gestures towards the female sitter, mediating the gaze of the viewer, instigating himself as the primary recipient of that gaze and presenting his dependant for approval. Similarly, the standing position of the young Duke replicates the familiar placing of the husband and father at the apex of a triangular composition, symbolically overseeing the depicted space. However, whilst Mrs Lyde supports her daughter on her lap, Mary caresses a lapdog. This both evinces a suitably sensible attachment to the natural world and anticipates her future role as a mother, key to the continuation of some other elite family and strengthening the suggestion that her brother is adopting a husbandly role. Another good example of such structures can be found in Dandridge's *Edward Harley, 4th Earl of Oxford with his Sister, Sarah* of c.1737 (fig.79). Edward stands in the pose of the polite gentleman, one hand on his hip and the other clasping his removed hat. The angle of this leads the eye towards the seated figure of his sister who holds up the corners of her apron to contain the flowers in her lap. These are suitable emblems of femininity and fertility as well as indicative of the blossoming and inevitable decay of youth.

³¹ Indeed, the family was dominated by such binary structures and the view that order was enabled by the obedience, submission and respect of one party meriting the care and protection of the other is revealed by the titles of conduct books, including William Fleetwood, *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants* (1705) (London, 3rd edition, 1722). Margaret Hunt in *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London, 1996), pp.14-15 has noted the prevalence of such power relations within the household and within the state at large.

As the formal marital relationship depicted in the portrait of Lyde and his family was replaced by the representation of increasingly intimate and integrated couples, so too was explicit dominance supplanted in paintings of siblings. George Romney's *The Clavering Children* of 1777 (fig.80) reveals a considerable shift away from the dynamics of earlier portraits. Whilst the brother maintains the active role of a husband substitute, he no longer gestures towards his sister for the benefit of the viewer but instead leads her and two dogs in a companionate stroll. Like Mary in Dandridge's portrait, that sister supports a puppy in her arms and thus reveals her womanly sensibility and potential maternal prowess. However, the sensibility of this action is here heightened as Miss Clavering cradles the animal closely to her bosom and casts her eyes down towards it, seemingly unaware of the observer's gaze. Her balletic pose and flowing neo-classical garb together with her brother's loose hair and skeleton suit also distinguish this portrait from earlier representations.

Some of these later portraits of brothers and sisters reproduce the familiar format of the married couple strolling in the landscape, the male gesturing to some point of interest as his companion follows his directive. Johann Zoffany painted Sir Bellingham Graham with his son and two daughters under a tree, the landscape opening off to the right (fig.81). The patriarch is seated on a chair to one side, looking towards his offspring and thus allowing his heir to adopt the dominant role. With his hat removed, this son gestures off towards the horizon for the benefit of the sister who leans companionably on his shoulder. Similarly, Thomas Gainsborough anticipated his portrait of *Mr and Mrs Hallett* (fig.4) in his depiction of the Charleton children (fig.82). Whilst still in 'coats, Robert once again has his hat politely removed and gesticulates towards the open landscape. However, his sister fails to look at the object of interest being presented to her and gazes out towards the viewer, playing with some

flowers in her apron. This possibly indicates her immaturity, suggesting that she lacks the suitable attentiveness to masculine knowledge and intellect displayed by older female sitters.³²

The duplication of the conventions of marital portraiture in depictions of brothers with their sisters signified more than a fundamental familial dynamic of dominance and submission. It also inferred that those children would, in turn, become caring but authoritative husbands and virtuous, attentive wives. This closely echoed those prescriptive and fictional writers who advised the unmarried male reader to seek a wife within her home, arguing that a woman who demonstrated virtue in her role as a daughter would transfer that probity to her wifely duties. *The Tatler*, for example, complained of the excessive and overblown language commonly employed by men in courtship and recommended that a suitor should simply let his intended know that “her Piety to her Parents, her Gentleness of Behaviour, her prudent Oeconomy with respect to her own little Affairs in a Virgin Condition, had improved the Passion which her Beauty had inspired him with.”³³ The Reverend Fordyce similarly deemed the female “distinguished by her attention and sweetness to her parents” to be a promising potential spouse. Such duty and consideration as displayed in the role of a daughter were ‘transferable skills,’ certain to render that woman “a mild and obliging

³² It seems that the importance of gender overtook that of age as the eldest son became an adult and inherited his father’s title and estate. Thus, when Reynolds depicted Sir Watkin Williams Wynn with his mother in 1768/9 (The Tate Gallery, London), he again employed the conventions of the strolling couple and the gesturing male figure. Whilst young boys could be represented in the company of their mothers in much the same way as girls, some concessions being made to their superior status, their masculinity enabled them to adopt the same instructive and protective role as that of a husband in maturity.

³³ *The Tatler* no.139 (28 February 1710), in *The Tatler* (1709-10), ed. D.F. Bond, 3 Vols. (Oxford, 1987), II, p.298

companion” to a fortunate husband.³⁴ Conversely, of course, it was implicit that a woman who showed disobedience to her mother and father would become a troublesome spouse. When Pamela announces her determination not to spoil her anticipated offspring, she thus reasons that “undutiful and perverse children...generally make bad husbands and wives.”³⁵

* * * * *

This pictorial emphasis on the future roles of children as husbands and wives jars with the model of change presented by Phillipe Ariès and consolidated by Lawrence Stone. In *Centuries of Childhood*, it was argued that no concept of childhood *per se* existed in the Middle Ages, that children were dressed as adults, treated as adults and operated in the same spheres of work and play as adults. Then, in the seventeenth century, a flourishing of parental affection and recognition of the developmental processes of childhood within the educational system contributed to a new awareness of juveniles as possessing distinct experiences.³⁶ As a central source for this argument, Ariès examined an astonishing array of visual evidence. He traced a development from medieval art, in which children were depicted as diminutive adults with mature musculature, to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when they came

³⁴ J. Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* 2 Vols. (1766) (Dublin, 4th edition, 1766), II, p.108

³⁵ S. Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), ed. M.A. Doody (Harmondsworth, 1985) p.468. However, the parallels between these familial roles went deeper than rhetorical exhortations to the unmarried. As Davidoff and Hall have argued in *Family Fortunes*, pp.348-50, sisters were supposed to care for and support their unmarried or widowed brothers, taking on the responsibilities of a wife and possibly those of a mother in the absence of such a figure.

³⁶ P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (1960), transl. R. Baldick (Harmondsworth, 1962)

to assume such a central importance as to be depicted on their own. However, his notion of a socio-historical discovery of the juvenile condition as evident in art has been heavily criticised. A number of scholars have attempted to relocate the transition as purely artistic, focussing on formal and practical developments. For example, Adrian Wilson has concluded that the depiction of increasingly infantile children was a product of the Renaissance re-discovery of naturalism by way of classical antiquity whilst Peter Fuller has looked to developments in means of artistic production as contributing to change. In particular, he noted that many early portraits of children were employed as bargaining tools in the negotiation of political marriages and were thus concerned with emphasising what the child would become, rather than what the child was.³⁷

Despite such criticism, many art historians have accepted the central tenets of Ariès's model of development. Desmond Shawe-Taylor argued that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's semi-educational treatise, *Emile*, translated into English in 1763, prompted a new appreciation of the distinctive characteristics of childhood whilst, in a discussion of Allan Ramsay's *The Hope Children* (1746/7, Private Collection), Alistair Smart asserted that: "The increasingly sympathetic understanding of childhood that is observable in the eighteenth century finds sensitive expression. Instead of being regarded as immature adults, children are now treated much more on their own terms and with a new awareness of their special needs and their vulnerability."³⁸ Most recently, J.C. Steward has reinforced the claim that artists

³⁷ A. Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Phillippe Ariès', *History and Theory* 19 (1980), pp.140, 145, 146; P. Fuller, 'Uncovering Childhood', in M. Hoyles, ed., *Changing Childhood* (London, 1979), pp.71-108

³⁸ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, pp.186-91; A. Smart, *Allan Ramsay 1713-1784* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp.18-9

became increasingly concerned with and attentive to the “observed ‘childlike’ nature of children.”³⁹

Comparisons of portraits such as that of the Lydes and Zoffany’s *Lord Willoughby de Broke and his Family* certainly substantiate the Ariès thesis. The daughter of Cornelius Lyde sits in a rigid, upright posture on her mother’s lap, stretching one hand out towards her father in a pose that anticipates her dutiful regard for his authority. Her dress, with its stiffly structured bodice, reveals no concessions to the infancy of its wearer and her features and physical build fail to differentiate her from her parents. In contrast, the posture of the youngest child in Zoffany’s portrait clearly indicates its youth as it lolls against its mother’s shoulder and nearly places one foot in a teacup; more interested in the viewer than in its parents. Its simple white outfit contrasts with their ornate and formal costumes and its rounded features lack the maturity of their more refined visages. Critics in the later eighteenth century began to censure pictures of infants that continued to encode them within adult postures and demeanours. One reviewer of the 1783 Royal Academy exhibition complained of exhibit number 122, a portrait of a young boy and girl, that “the features of the boy seem drawn up into a formality unsuitable to his age, and the playful sprightliness of his situation.”⁴⁰ Such writers instead began to write admiringly of pictures of infants that emphasised childlike qualities. They praised “prattling innocence,” “that wild

³⁹ J.C. Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood 1730-1830* (Berkeley, 1995), especially pp.11, 16-21

⁴⁰ Courtauld Institute Press Cuttings, Vol.I (1731-1811), p.38. The name and exact date of the newspaper are unidentified.

flow of spirits which usually belongs to such a time of life," "infant fear," "infantine expression of countenance" and "childish amusement."⁴¹

A central problem with much analysis of the pictorial representation of childhood is that it has been isolated from the traditions of the larger family group. As Ludmilla Jordanova has emphasised, "there is no autonomous, authentic voice of children...their testimony is inevitably bound in with the world of adults."⁴² Portraits of children were usually commissioned by their parents and thus, transformations in the ways in which children were depicted arguably reveal transformations in the ways and means by which children reflected on their mothers and fathers. That it was about more than a straightforward development of concern with the particularities of infancy is indicated in one of the few art historical texts to deviate from the standard whiggish model. Patricia Crown noted that the 'new child' was not the only child present in eighteenth-century art and contrasted portraits by Reynolds and Gainsborough with their Fancy Pictures. Whilst the children in the former are located within the specific environs of the homes and gardens of their parents, named, carefully dressed and engaged with toys, games and books, infants portrayed in Fancy Pictures are placeless and nameless. They are mere "objects in the environment, suitable for incorporation into a picture like trees, hovels and animals."⁴³ Developments in juvenile literature have similarly been related to developments in concepts of parenting and, in

⁴¹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 29 May 1772; *The Morning Chronicle*, 4 May 1774; *The General Advertiser*, 27 April 1778; *The Whitehall Evening Post*, 22-24 May 1787; *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 30 April 1782

⁴² Jordanova, 'New Worlds for Children', pp.78-80. See also Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, pp. 178, 184, 206

⁴³ P. Crown, 'Portraits and Fancy Pictures by Gainsborough and Reynolds: Contrasting Images of Childhood', *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (Autumn 1984), p.160

particular, motherhood. For example, Beth Kowaleski-Wallace has argued that, whilst Maria Edgeworth's children's story, *The Purple Jar*, "addresses its young readers about the necessity for a series of virtues, it speaks with equal clarity to their mothers about the important role they are to assume in the instruction of those virtues."⁴⁴ It is thus the specificity of children as offspring that is key to both literary and pictorial developments.

Therefore, to argue that the transition from miniature adults to childlike children evidences the actual historical development of an awareness of infancy is problematic. Equally, however, it is hard to believe that artists acquired new technical ability and found new sources on which to draw in the few decades that elapsed between the portrait of the Lydes and that of the de Broke family. It is more probable that, as writers came to emphasise the delights and quirks of childhood, prompted by a new appreciation for nature and influenced by writers such as Rousseau, so artists acquired a new stimulus to recreate those particularities on canvas. And, as prescriptive authors recommended that children be allowed to move and play freely, so representations of offspring that adhered to such edicts reflected well upon their parents. Female sitters such as Lady Cockburn (fig.6), portrayed with loosely draped infants on their laps, showed that they heeded the widespread rejection of the practice of swaddling to allow the juvenile form to develop naturally. Similarly, the way in which her sons gambol and play around her chair demonstrates her awareness of

⁴⁴ B. Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Home Economics: Domestic Ideology in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*', *The Eighteenth Century* 29, 3 (1988), p.244. See also M. Myers, 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books', in F. Butler, M. Higonnet and B. Rosen, eds., *Children's Literature* 14 (New Haven and London, 1986), p.33

exercise and uninhibited movement as imperative to the child's physical and, by association, mental health.

However, because these portraits arguably reveal more about parenting than about the state of infancy as an abstract entity, this new concern for its particularities was inevitably limited, as suggested by the anticipation of spousal roles in poses and compositional devices. Such portraits envision the future maturity of the sitters. Artists may have increasingly depicted children with rounded faces and childlike physiques, engaged in play and infantile pastimes, but that play and those pastimes were critical in suggesting future adult roles. Girls clasped flowers, pets or dolls, clear references to their future motherhood, whilst boys played with toys that implied forthcoming masculine roles and characteristics. Bows and arrows suggested military prowess, the casting of a proprietorial arm over a surrounding landscape referred to potential landownership and portraits of fathers instructing their sons in the ways of the aristocratic collector, such as the Duke of Marlborough in Reynolds's portrait of 1777/9, promised a future connoisseur.⁴⁵ This emphasis, co-existent with the new attention to infantile physiognomy and behaviour, was prompted by the position of children within the context of the family. Their achievements as future adults were important both for the wider domestic unit and for establishing the success of their parents as educators and socialisers.

Such ideas of 'futuraity' were prominent in literature throughout the eighteenth century. For example, one fictional correspondent of *The Spectator* describes how he amuses himself with "finding out a General, an Admiral, or an Alderman of *London*, a Divine, a Physician, or a Lawyer" amongst his sons.⁴⁶ Later in the period, James

⁴⁵ For a more detailed discussion of such pictures, see chapter 5, pp.220-3

⁴⁶ *The Spectator* no.500 (3 October 1712), in *The Spectator*, IV, p.275

Nelson recommended that boys be educated “to fill some certain Post, some certain Station in life”, whilst William Buchan advocated early military training, providing the child with necessary skills when later called upon to defend his country.⁴⁷ Similarly, it was advised that girls be inculcated with skills and characteristics that would enable them to fulfil mature feminine roles. The same character in *The Spectator* follows his hopeful vision of the future of his sons with the statement; “when I see the Motherly Airs of my little Daughters when they are playing with their Puppets, I cannot but flatter my self that their Husbands and Children will be happy, in the possession of such Wives and Mothers.”⁴⁸ Hugh Smith later invited his readers similarly to envisage a young girl “caressing a waxen image, dressing and undressing it with all the pomp and importance of a tender mother.” Such an imagined scene was not merely proposed as endearing and amusing, but as revealing an inherent maternal instinct, “justly remarked to grow up with the sex into life.”⁴⁹

As well as children being trained and encouraged to display traits that anticipated adult roles, ideas of ‘futuraity’ extended to the creation of the social man. This is most apparent in the frequent representation of boyish cruelty to animals, epitomised in the first plate of William Hogarth’s *Four Stages of Cruelty* of 1751 (fig.83). In this image, one dog has been impaled on a poker, the leg of another has been tied to its body and two cats have been suspended by their tails. Whilst Hogarth’s painting of Lord Grey dangling a puppy by its hind legs is reasonably explicit (1740s, Washington Gallery of Art), the theme was usually more muted in portraiture. It was

⁴⁷ Nelson, *Essay on the Management of Children*, p.268; Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, p.21

⁴⁸ *The Spectator* no.500 (3 October 1712), in *The Spectator*, IV, p.275

⁴⁹ H. Smith, *Letters to Married Women on Nursing and the Management of Children* (1767) (London, 6th edition, 1792), p.42

often restricted to the stealing of eggs as in Zoffany's depiction of the sons of the Earl of Bute. The core of this concern with such cruelty, prompted by the cult of sensibility, was that it could (unless tempered and channelled into proper adult activities) lead to barbaric treatment of fellow humans when the child was grown. Indeed, the first plate of the *Four Stages of Cruelty*, foreshadowing Tom Nero's subsequent cruelty to larger animals and then to humans, is inscribed:

While various Scenes of sportive Ware,

The Infant Race employ:

And tortured Victims bleeding shew

The Tyrant in the Boy.

Novels such as *The History of Sandford and Merton* adopted this idea and the torment that Lovelace inflicts on Clarissa is anticipated by that which he foists on dogs and birds whilst still a boy.⁵⁰ The same message appeared in conduct literature, from Richard Steele who warned parents that "barbarous usage of Creatures" could harden the hearts of their children against future charity, to Thomas Gisborne who wrote; "they who are inured in their childhood to persecute the bird or torture the insect, will have hearts, in maturer years, prepared for barbarity to their fellow-creatures."⁵¹ The notion dominated numerous books intended for children themselves. In *Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*, Dorothy Kilner warns her juvenile audience that the man

⁵⁰ T. Day, *The History of Sandford and Merton* (London, 1783-9), passim.; S. Richardson, *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1747-8), ed. A. Ross (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp.557, 610

⁵¹ Steele, *The Ladies Library*, II, p.236; Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, p.398. See also M. Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women', in J. Todd, ed., *Mary Wollstonecraft: Political Writings* (Oxford, 1994), p.258

who is “cruel to animals” is rarely “kind and compassionate towards his fellow-creatures.”⁵² Similarly, when *Pity’s Gift: A Collection of Interesting Tales, to Excite the Compassion of Youth for the Animal Creation* was published in 1798, it was advertised in the *Lady’s Monthly Museum* with the comment: “Those who cultivate habits of mercy to dumb creatures, can hardly be cruel to one another.”⁵³

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Scholars such as Desmond Shawe-Taylor have argued that the dominant view of the child in the eighteenth century was the Rousseauian notion of infancy as an inherently innocent condition, only corrupted by the evils of society.⁵⁴ However, to argue that Rousseau single-handedly prompted a revolution in childcare, simultaneously expressed in art, is hardly plausible. To present such a dramatic development as occurring within the space of a decade and at the prompting of the theories of one author is highly problematic. This is not to downplay Rousseau’s involvement. He did much to popularise certain ideas concerning the rearing of children, and his notoriety and prominence clearly endeared him to some members of the English aristocracy. However, ideas of the kind he articulated had a lengthy

⁵² Kilner quoted in Steward, *The New Child*, p.169

⁵³ *The Lady’s Monthly Museum; or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction*, 1798. See K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London, 1983), pp.34, 125, 147, 151

⁵⁴ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.189. See also P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London, 1989), p.232; R. Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), pp.284-5; J.H. Plumb, ‘The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Past and Present* 67 (1975), pp.68-70; Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, p.200; Steward, *The New Child*, pp.16, 144, 192

lineage. The main predecessor to *Emile* and, I would argue, the most influential text for eighteenth-century constructions of childhood, was John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, first published in 1693. M.J.M. Ezell has convincingly shown that the view of childhood propagated by Locke was the most frequently employed throughout the period. Indeed, his treatise went through more than twelve editions before 1750, heavily influenced a large number of tracts and treatises and was debated by authors ranging from William Cadogan to Samuel Richardson, from Joseph Addison to James Thomson.⁵⁵

Locke's key contribution to the development of concepts of childhood was the notion of 'futuraity' as an educational principle, of concern with childrearing as a process of socialising the potential adult. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* was based on sensational psychology, posited on notion of the human mind in infancy as being peculiarly ductile and sensitive to sensory experience. Locke held that external influences and contact with the outside world formed the character and, as the child matured and became less susceptible, these characteristics became embedded and increasingly difficult to alter or remove.⁵⁶ Such ideas were extremely influential and examples of their repetition from early and late in the century will suffice to demonstrate their persistence. In the 1710s, Steele emphasised the importance of instruction whilst the mind was as yet unformed, comparable to "the Body in Embrio" and still "pliable and susceptible of impressions." He believed that early influences had "very important and lasting Consequences" and argued that future eradication was

⁵⁵ M.J.M. Ezell, 'John Locke's Images of Childhood: Early Eighteenth-Century Response to 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education'', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17 (1983-4), pp.139-55

⁵⁶ J. Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), ed. J.W. and J.S. Yolton (Oxford, 1989), *passim*.

either impossible or, at best, extremely difficult: “The Will of a tender Infant is, like its Limbs, supple and pliant, but Time confirms it, and Custom hardens it, and it is a cruel Indulgence to the poor Creature, to let it contract such Habits which must cost him so dear the breaking, or dearer is never broken.”⁵⁷ Such ideas were still prominent when Thomas Gisborne was writing his *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* in the 1790s. He emphasised the importance of the maternal role by hailing women’s power to model the human mind at a young age, “fixing, while it is yet ductile, its growing principles of action.” Again, like Steele, he recommended exploitation of this susceptibility, early signs of vice easily fought whilst “the twig” is still “young and tender.”⁵⁸

Such analogies, derived from the writings of Locke, were used so frequently as to point to his protracted influence. The garden in need of cultivation was perhaps the most commonly employed.⁵⁹ James Forrester warned that the infant mind should be closely attended to “else it either soon dwindles into a Shrub, or spends itself in luxuriant Weeds,” Hannah More wished for appreciation of the individual characters of children as “the cultivator of the human mind must, like the gardener, study diversities of soil” and Mary Wollstonecraft employed it to recommend gentle persuasion as the aim of education, “only to conduct the shooting tendrils to a proper pole.”⁶⁰ Indeed, those drawing on such imagery even began to refer to each other.

⁵⁷ *The Tatler* no.181 (6 June 1710), in *The Tatler*, II, p.484; Steele, *Ladies Library*, pp.92, 195-6, 271

⁵⁸ Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, pp.12-13, 380

⁵⁹ Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, e.g. pp.122-3, 162

⁶⁰ J. Forrester, *Dialogues on the Passions, Habits, and Affections peculiar to Children* (London, 1748), p.9; H. More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, with a view of the Principles and Conduct prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune* 2 Vols. (London, 1799), I, pp.147-8; Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication’, p.190

When the Reverend Fordyce advised mothers to study and watch the first formations of a child's mind so that they could "teach the young idea how to shoot," he was quoting from James Thomson's highly popular poem, *The Seasons*.⁶¹

Others adopted the Lockean image of the mouldable substance.⁶² Daniel Defoe wrote, "the genius, like a piece of soft wax, may be moulded" and James Nelson later claimed: "Children, if moulded while young, readily yield, like Wax, to the Impression."⁶³ Finally the inscribable piece of blank paper, "void of all characters, without any ideas," "ready indifferently for any Impression" was equally popular.⁶⁴ Hugh Smith claimed the comparison to be just, deducing that "children receive their prejudices and inclinations from the dispositions of those persons to whose care they are entrusted," whilst Thomas Gisborne complained that the analogy had its limitations. whilst a piece of paper remains blank if neglected, the child who is ignored by his parents will inevitably obtain potentially harmful sentiments and ideas from elsewhere.⁶⁵

The popularity of these conceits had some impact on the accoutrements and attributes featured in family portraits. An anonymous painting of c.1754 in the Tate Gallery depicts a father instructing his two sons, one of whom writes on some white

⁶¹ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, I p.25; J. Thomson, 'The Seasons' (1730), in J. Sambrook, ed., *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence* (Oxford, 1991), p.34

⁶² Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, e.g. pp.232, 265

⁶³ D. Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, quoted in Ezell, 'John Locke's Images of Childhood', p.150; Nelson, *Essay on the Management of Children*, p.300. They were paraphrased by John Theobald who wrote in *The Young Wife's Guide, in the Management of her Children* (London, 1764) in the dedication 'To the READER': "Children, like dough, are susceptible of all impressions."

⁶⁴ Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, e.g. pp.222, 265; *The English Theophrastus*, possibly by John Gay, quoted in Ezell, 'John Locke's Images of Childhood', p.150

⁶⁵ Smith, *Letters to Married Women*, pp.169-70; Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, p.46

paper, whilst his wife is seated in a classic Madonna pose, a baby on her lap, with an accompanying daughter clasping a flower. In *The Clavey Family in their Garden at Hampstead* of 1754 (fig.84), Arthur Devis similarly posed the father with his son, the latter holding up the familiar sheet of paper and gesturing to it as he casts an inquiring look towards his parent.⁶⁶ Similarly, children were very often portrayed within nature; picking flowers, wandering on hillsides and playing with toys and games under the protective shade of trees. More specifically, infants were sometimes depicted in the act of gardening, an activity employed as a metaphor throughout *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.⁶⁷ Johann Zoffany painted *The Blunt Children* in 1768/70 (fig.85) struggling with large, unwieldy gardening implements. One child supports a rake in the crook of his arm whilst the other drags a cart laden with hay towards him. Alexander Nasymth painted the eldest son of the 3rd Earl of Rosebery in c.1787, similarly burdened with a rake and barrow as his father raises one hand in a gesture of instruction, recalling that of the companionate husband (Dalmeny House, Edinburgh). Finally, Master Henry Hoare was portrayed by Reynolds in 1788 as ‘The Young Gardener’ (fig.86), digging his spade into the ground with a laden barrow to one side, suggesting the fruitfulness of his labour.⁶⁸ The motif would have brought to mind the Lockean metaphor as well as indicating the future role of the child as a landowner, as the manager of the family estate. However, it could also have recalled the

⁶⁶ Also, see the portrait of the Buckley-Boar family, dated to c.1760, often attributed to Arthur Devis (Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art). Whilst two daughters play with a captive bird, their brother is seated at a table garbed in a sombre suit, his pen poised on a blank sheet of white paper. His father advances on the left of the image, also holding a writing implement and paper.

⁶⁷ See p.203, n.59

⁶⁸ However, one critic in *The Morning Herald*, 8 October 1788 suggested that “a Banker’s shovel would have been a truer emblem, unless like *Timon* he can dig for *gold* under a tree,” wryly referring to the profession of Henry Hoare senior.

recommendation of Rousseau in 1762 that a child should be given a small patch of ground to cultivate in order to teach the value of obtaining the fruits of one's own endeavours and labour.⁶⁹

In *Emile*, Rousseau echoed many of the tenets of "that wise man, Locke." Sensational psychology remained paramount in his own work and he wrote: "In the dawn of life, when memory and imagination have not begun to function, the child only attends to what affects its senses. The sense experiences are the raw material of thought." He similarly employed images adopted from gardening and the notion of the *tabula rasa*, claiming, "we are born capable of learning, but knowing nothing, perceiving nothing."⁷⁰ He repeated Locke's emphasis on the value of exercise and on the benefits of fresh air, cold bathing and loose clothing to the constitution and physical development of an infant. He re-emphasised the role of the parents or of the parent substitutes as one of guidance, shielding the child from certain formative influences and deliberately exposing it to others. Such parallels reinforce the argument that Rousseau's edicts did not supplant those of his predecessor but rather consolidated and popularised the principles espoused in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.

Thus, in part thanks to Locke's dictums on childrearing, the eighteenth century witnessed an increased concern with the child's upbringing. As argued by Karin Calvert: "Where parents of earlier times had looked at their new infants and seen the terrifying physical and moral perils to be overcome, parents of the late eighteenth

⁶⁹ Noted in Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.195

⁷⁰ J.J Rousseau, *Emile* (1762), transl. B. Foxley, ed. P.D. Jimack (London and Melbourne, 1984), pp.22, 28, 31

century saw in their children infinite possibilities to be channelled and nurtured.”⁷¹ Once external influences were held to be paramount, parents had to concern themselves with the control and manipulation of those influences and wished to have themselves depicted as such. Discussions and depictions of the training and forming of the infant mind proliferated, whilst anxieties over adequate fulfilment of the educational role increased.⁷² Mothers and fathers were not merely supposed to humour and indulge infantile capacities but to instruct their malleable offspring in such skills and moral codes as to create potentially virtuous and useful adults. Portraits such as Romney’s *Mrs Cumberland teaching her Son, Charles* (fig.68) or Zoffany’s depiction of the family of the 3rd Duke of Atholl showed parents educating their progeny. Books conveyed “those virtues which parents wished to inculcate in their offspring” and schools increasingly advertised provision of useful and modern subjects, thereby equipping the child with knowledge that could lead to a suitable career or fit a predestined role.⁷³ Indeed, the education of a child according to its future rank in society was the topic of much discussion and it was commonly warned that ambition should take second place to likelihood. From Bishop Fleetwood and Richard Steele through to James Nelson and Priscilla Wakefield, the message was repeated: “What can be a greater Misfortune than to educate a Boy like a fine

⁷¹ Calvert, *Children in the House*, p.58. See also R. Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England’, in J.C. Fout, ed., *Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago and London, 1992), p.108

⁷² Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, pp.116, 120, 123, 140

⁷³ Plumb, ‘The New World of Children’, pp.69, 79, 81

Gentleman, and not be able to support it? or to train a Girl with the expectation of keeping her Coach, and have little or nothing to give her.”⁷⁴

The sentimentalised discourse of motherhood was redolent with the issue of ‘futuraity’. Bearing and raising a child was deemed to be not so much a question of dealing with “what he is, but what he should be” and it was complained that “mankind are too apt to value things according to their present, not their future usefulness.”⁷⁵ Women were advised that the nation depended on them to create citizens that would be both healthy and virtuous. They were counselled that their successful fulfilment or neglect of the maternal role had serious implications for society at large. Many warned that the resumption of widespread maternal breastfeeding was critical if the future generation of Britons was not to be “*a puny, valetudinary race.*”⁷⁶ Such concerns over the responsibilities of mothers increased as the century drew to its conclusion. Hannah More, writing in the context of the evangelical revival, delineated the instillation of “the principles of the whole rising generation” as the responsibility of women. This, she advised, gave them “a power wide in its extent, indefinite in its effects, and inestimable in its importance.”⁷⁷ Her opponent, Mary Wollstonecraft, expressed much the same view, in particular emphasising the control of mothers over the physical health and well-being of the young. In this, she echoed William Buchan

⁷⁴ Nelson, *Essay on the Management of Children*, p.322. Also see pp.267-70. Fleetwood, *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children*, p.100; Steele, *The Ladies Library*, II, p.145; P. Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (London, 1798), pp.57-9

⁷⁵ Smith, *Letters to Married Women*, p.107; Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, p.5

⁷⁶ Quoting both T. Mantell, *Short Directions for the Management of Infants* (London, 1787), p.12 and W. Cadogan, *An Essay upon Nursing, and the Management of Children* (1748) (London, 5th edition, 1752), p.6

⁷⁷ More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, I, pp.59-60

who argued that if parents helped to create constitutionally healthy children, they would thereby lay “a foundation for their being useful and happy in life.”⁷⁸ Others followed Rousseau in claiming that proper fulfilment of maternal duties was critical in creating individuals who could bond with others and promote social affection.⁷⁹

Such dictums meant that mothers and fathers depicted instructing and caring for their children, the family pictured as centred on its healthful and virtuous progeny, could enjoy a degree of national pride. The Vicar of Wakefield saw Britain as his debtor for the “valuable present” of his children, whilst a character in *The Spectator* had earlier stated: “When I see my little Troop before me, I rejoyce in the Additions which I have made to my Species, to my Country, and to my Religion, in having produced such a number of reasonable Creatures, Citizens, and Christians.”⁸⁰ Equally and inevitably, individuals might be attacked with the accusation of neglecting parental duties, a neglect that could impair the national stock and limit the child’s potential as a useful member of society. For example, Wetenhall Wilkes believed that “great numbers” had been undone by corrupt education, by the bad example of parents and by lack of religion, leading them into “Vice and Irregularity in their greatest Years.”⁸¹

A particularly common complaint of poor education was that it emasculated those who should mature into the future defenders of the nation, into public and political leaders or into potential sustainers of Britain’s economic and commercial

78 Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication’, p.278; Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, p.20

79 Rousseau, *Emile*, p.13. For example, see Downman, *Infancy*, p.25

80 O. Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), ed. S. Coote (Harmondsworth, 1986), p.38; *The Spectator* no.500 (3 October 1712), in *The Spectator*, IV, p.274

81 W. Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1744) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1751), p.14

prosperity. William Buchan referred to contemporary concerns over population when he wrote that the good education and management of children was not only critical for “their health and usefulness in life,” but also for “the safety and prosperity of the state to which they belong.” A generation that was emasculated in its early years would, in contrast, “prove the ruin” of any country.⁸² In his critique of the manners and morals of contemporary society, John Brown expressed a similar view in his claim that effeminacy in contemporary society could be traced back “to the unwholesome Warmth of a Nursery.”⁸³

Such fears raised a critical problem with the elevation of and emphasis on the importance of the maternal role in the early years of life. As the female character was popularly perceived to be emotional and irrational, it was feared that women would spoil and indulge their sons, thus creating such epicene individuals.⁸⁴ Indeed, writers often argued that the lower-class woman, practically and economically unable to spoil her infant, was likely to be a better parent, as the rich child often died “a Victim to the

⁸² Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, p.28

⁸³ J. Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* 2 Vols. (1757) (London, 6th edition, 1757/8) I, p.29

⁸⁴ For example, Bernard de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714), ed. P. Harth (Harmondsworth, 1970), p.109 argued that maternal indulgence, if extended beyond the first few years of life, “brought (many) to the Gallows” whilst Hugh Smith, *Letters to Married Women*, p.64 later criticised “those mothers who by a foolish indulgence spoil their children’s tempers and dispositions. G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Chicago and London, 1992), pp.xxv-xxvi has argued that this increased concern with the potentially damaging effects of maternal indulgence signified the increased power of women in eighteenth-century childrearing. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.322 note the tension inherent in the power of adult women over small boys and John Tosh, ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-class Fatherhood: The Case of Early and Mid-Victorian England’, *Gender and History* 8, 1 (April 1996), p.55 contends that the combination of enhanced influence and fear of indulgence led to the increasingly common solution of the boarding school.

mistaken Care and Tenderness of his fond Mother.”⁸⁵ Authors personified the effects of such behaviour. Oliver Goldsmith created the character of Tony Hardcastle, “reared up, and spoiled at his mother’s apron string,” Richardson’s Mr B “cannot bear the least thing that crosses his violent will” thanks to his indulged childhood and when Tristram Shandy’s father suggests to his wife that their son be breeched, signifying the end of her reign over the boy, Mrs Shandy is horrified.⁸⁶ As a result, many writers advocated an improved educational system that would furnish women with the knowledge and rationality necessary to form a moral and useful younger generation, rejecting mere superficial and fashionable accomplishments.⁸⁷ Such concerns were clearly reflected in portraits such as Reynolds’s *Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke with her Son, George, Lord Herbert* of 1764/5 (fig.5) which emphasise the rational mother. Lord Herbert reveals no sign of effeminacy in his sober suit and demeanour whilst Lady Pembroke is not only concerned with supervising the education of her child, but is capable of doing so.

⁸⁵ Cadogan, *An Essay upon Nursing*, p.8.

⁸⁶ O. Goldsmith, ‘She Stoops to Conquer, or, The Mistakes of a Night’, (1773), in A. Friedman, ed., *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith Vol.V: Plays, Prefaces and Introductions* (Oxford, 1966), p.121. Also see pp.153-4, 208; Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, p.278; Tristram Shandy cited in Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p.170

⁸⁷ E.Haywood, *The Female Spectator* (1744-6), ed. G.M. Firmager (London, 1993), p.101; Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, II, p.22; Steele, *The Ladies Library*, II, pp.215-7; Wakefield, *Reflections on the...Female Sex*, p.34. Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, I, pp.106-7 even drew an analogy between the role of the mother and masculine professions, arguing that as men received training to fulfil their various roles and functions, so should women. Of all these writers, however, Mary Wollstonecraft explored the issue in most depth in ‘A Vindication’, passim. especially pp.71, 101, 134, 143-4, 218, 231-4. She complained that, due to men’s desire to hinder the development of feminine minds and bodies and to create “alluring mistresses,” women were incapable of being good mothers. She argued that they should rather be encouraged to be rational, independent and strong of character, enabling them to create moral citizens and firm patriots for the future benefit of the nation.

* * * * *

Thus, certain continuities ran parallel to new developments. The impact of the cult of sensibility on prescriptive and fictional literature certainly invested familial relations with a newly heightened worth and sentimental value, but this did not mean that individualism came to dominate the family. Whilst Ariès and those following his model of change have argued that children became increasingly appreciated in their own right, valued for their specific qualities as childhood ceased to be an ante-room to maturity, depictions of infancy were critical in evincing parental morality. The loosely garbed, caressed and playful child indicated a virtuous mother and a properly attentive father. However, the new desire to represent the distinctiveness of infancy was mitigated by continued concern with hoped for or predicted adult roles, whether future maternity, masculine prowess or the capacity to socialise with and show compassion towards fellow humans. As the socialisation of the child became the object of increased attention, so parents wished to show that they were educating their children with a view to creating useful and responsible future adults.

Similarly, the new emphasis on intimacy and privacy did not herald a new equality amongst family members. The structures of later eighteenth-century portraits reveal the continuation of basic organisational principles, merely obfuscated by increased sentimentality. The father may have become more pictorially united with the family group at large, communicating with his wife and children rather than presenting them to the viewer, but his dominant and authoritative role over them remained constant. Often at the pinnacle of a triangular composition, engaged with his eldest son and heir and distanced from his wife, younger children and daughters, the father figure retained the fundamentals of his supervisory and patriarchal role.

Similarly, children were firmly categorised according to age and sex, revealed in their clothing, their toys and games, their depicted relationships, their stances and their displayed behaviour. Thus, the family continued to be underlain by rigid and essentially dichotomous structures, exemplified in the replication of the defining characteristics of marital portraits in those of brothers and sisters.

CHAPTER FIVE

DYNASTIES

As previously argued, whilst burgeoning ideals of intimacy, affection and privacy had a great impact on the narrative forms and compositional devices employed in eighteenth-century family portraiture, more 'traditional' concerns remained evident throughout the period. The companionate marriage may have emphasised the reciprocal relationship between husband and wife, but that reciprocity was founded on defined masculine and feminine characteristics and duties that were inherently unequal. Similarly, whilst representations of mothers became increasingly sentimentalised, the role of the father remained supervisory and authoritative and offspring were consistently categorised according to age and sex. Moreover, concerns of family dynasty and lineage continued to dominate the portraits commissioned by gentry and aristocratic families. John Singleton Copley's *Sir William Pepperrell and his Family* of 1777 (fig.67) may show the father gazing affectionately at the infant on his wife's lap, but that child is significantly a boy and clearly, since all his siblings are female, a welcome addition to the household. The offspring in closest proximity to the patriarch in Johann Zoffany's *Lord Willoughby de Broke and his Family* of 1766 (fig.73), echoing the slant of his father's body, is once again the heir, the key to the continuation of the family's name, wealth and property.

This chapter will firstly argue that a concern with the production of sons and potential heirs persisted throughout the eighteenth century and that artists continued to emphasise the father's relationship with his intended successor. It will then discuss the demographic crisis of the early eighteenth-century landed elite, a sudden decline in birth rates that threatened the provision of male children and rendered pictorial

statements of familial continuity particularly critical. However, it will also show that such statements remained necessary when the crisis had ebbed due to a continued preoccupation with the mortality and fragility of infants. Finally, family portraits will be discussed within the wider context of the domestic environment through close analysis of three case studies; the collections at Belton House in Lincolnshire, at Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire and at Wilton House in Wiltshire. Whilst many of the eighteenth-century portraits on display in these houses accord with newly sentimental ideals of prescriptive and fictional literature, contextualisation reveals that the hanging and cross-referencing of images within the ancestral home emphasised lineage. In such locations, portraits came into contact with actual issues of family power and functioned accordingly.

* * * * *

Many scholars have suggested that, during the eighteenth century, concern with the relevance of children to genealogy, dynasty and the continuation of the family line ebbed in favour of a new preoccupation with their individual and endearing traits. Edward Shorter, for example, saw the decline of lineage as inherent in the development of 'The Modern Family' and Judith Lewis has argued that "children came to be desired as more than 'walking-sperm banks'": "The public function of heirs came to be superseded - though by no means obliterated - by the private function of children as their parents' darlings, loved for themselves as much as for the

contributions they could make to the family's power and influence."¹ A central issue in this argument has been the development of strict settlement, the legal device that originated in the seventeenth century and under which, by the 1750s, approximately 50% of landed property was held. It essentially limited the owner's control over his estate to that of a life-tenant, ensuring its descent to his eldest son (or, failing the existence of a direct heir, his nearest male relative) and simultaneously made provision for his wife, daughters and younger sons.² Both Lawrence Stone and Lloyd Bonfield argued that this new legal institution revealed the birth of affective individualism within the family. By establishing the rights of the individual, concerning itself with the welfare of female family members and younger sons and by limiting the powers of the patriarch to disinherit his offspring, they hailed strict settlement as paving the way to the Companionate Nuclear Family.³

Art historians have formulated similar developmental patterns. For example, Marcia Pointon has contended that, as children were increasingly depicted as relaxed, engaged in play and as infantile, genealogical preoccupations were supplanted by a new bourgeois, child-centred ideology.⁴ J.C. Steward expanded on the theme as an

¹ E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1976), p.8; J.S. Lewis, *In the Family Way: Childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1986), p.58

² H.J. Habakkuk, 'Marriage Settlements in the Eighteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 4th Series* 32 (1950), pp.15-20; G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London and Toronto, 1993), pp.32-5; L. Stone and J.C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), pp.73-5

³ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp.242-4; L. Bonfield, *Marriage Settlements, 1601-1740: The Adoption of the Strict Settlement* (Cambridge, 1983), especially p.121

⁴ M. Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), p.177

element of his argument that a 'New Child' was 'born' in the 1700s. He claimed that children as portrayed from the early Renaissance onwards demonstrated the continuation of family names. Minimal attention was paid to their individual traits and artistic focus was firmly on dynastic considerations. Then, whilst such concerns persisted in the eighteenth-century portrait, painters such as Reynolds displayed increasing attention to the infantile and individual characteristics of children who were no longer portrayed as mere vehicles for the transmission of wealth and power.⁵

It is this model of the displacement of 'traditional' concerns of lineage and familial continuity by 'affective individualism' that I wish to modify. It has been a persistent and illogical tenet in family history that these notions were polarised, that an increasing attention to and emphasis on the one necessarily and inexorably meant a decreased focus on the other.⁶ Naomi Tadmor has shown that eighteenth-century novels such as Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, whilst thematically supporting claims of a new affectiveness within the family, maintained a concern with dynasty. The practice of primogeniture underlies the novel, dictating both the plot and the characterisation of the Thoughtless siblings. Similarly, its disruption at the beginning of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, when the eponymous heroine's grandfather leaves her part of his estate despite having three sons and a

⁵ J.C. Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood 1730-1830* (Berkeley, 1995), pp.19- 21

⁶ This trend recalls the traditional connection between the supposed rise of the affectionate, companionate marriage and an increased sense of equality between spouses. Revisionists have, however, argued that patriarchy and love were by no means incompatible. See E. Spring, 'Law and the Theory of the Affective Family', *Albion* 16 (1984), p.17; M. Hunt, 'Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-century London', *Gender and History* 4, 1 (Spring 1992), p.16

grandson, is responsible for the narrative of disorder that follows.⁷ Other scholars have similarly argued that the importance of primogeniture and the consequential hierarchical ranking of family members persisted in the eighteenth century. Both Susan Moller Okin and Eileen Spring have demonstrated that strict settlement did not assist a heightened awareness of the rights of the individual but rather reinforced established principles, emphasising the patrilineal descent of the family estate which it aimed at keeping intact by specifying “one child as the arrowhead of future power and fortune.” Indeed, the only offspring that the institution barred the father from adversely affecting in his will was the already privileged eldest son.⁸

* * * * *

The persistence of concerns of genealogy can be seen the pictorial emphasis on the birth of sons and heirs that continued throughout the eighteenth century. Whilst Amanda Vickery has noted that the birth of girls was not deemed a disappointment in the case studies under examination in *The Gentleman's Daughter*, and Alan Macfarlane has argued for only a slight preference for sons amongst families with large estates at stake, considerable evidence suggests an emphasis on prospective

⁷ N. Tadmor, ‘Concepts of the Family in five Eighteenth-Century Texts’, (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1992), especially chapters 6 and 7; N. Tadmor, ‘Dimensions of Inequality among Siblings in Eighteenth-Century English Novels: The Cases of *Clarissa* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*’, *Continuity and Change* 7, 3 (1992), especially pp.304-18; N. Tadmor, ‘‘Family’ and ‘Friend’ in *Pamela*: A Case-Study in the History of the Family in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Social History* 14 (1989), p.305

⁸ S.M. Okin, ‘Patriarchy and Married Women’s Property in England: Questions on Some Current Views’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2 (Winter 1983/4), pp.121-38; Spring, ‘Law and the Theory of the Affective Family’, pp.1-20; N. Tadmor, ‘Dimensions of Inequality among Siblings’, p.317

heirs.⁹ Girls at least demonstrated a wife's fertility, but she could not rest until she had produced a son to inherit the family name and estate and, preferably, at least one more male child as an insurance policy. Lady Mary Coke remarked when the Duchess of Hamilton had been "brought to Bed...of a Son" that "she has certainly hitherto been a favourite of fortune's" and commented after Lady Gower had given birth to a girl that her husband "certainly did not desire" yet another female offspring.¹⁰ Pitt wrote to Lord Gower to offer tempered congratulations on his new daughter: "Tho I can't possibly wish you joy of your hundreth girl, I do very sincerely of Lady Gower's recovery and hope she will bring better luck nine months hence."¹¹ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire's failure to produce a son for the first sixteen years of marriage caused her serious anxiety and prompted her to promise in 1789 that she would dedicate her time to being "quiet of body and mind, that I may not lose the advantage of giving the Duke a son." When she eventually did, her husband promptly deposited £13,000 into her bank account, seemingly as a reward for having done her duty.¹² Finally, Theresa Parker's brother received the news of the birth of his nephew in 1772 with significant approbation: "A boy too! It adds to the Happiness...A blessing in a family certain it is, a Son extends our worldly Views and Prospects, tying

⁹ A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London, 1998), p.105; A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840* (Oxford, 1986), pp.53-4

¹⁰ *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke* ed. J.A. Home, 4 Vols. (Bath, 1970), II, p.367, 22 September 1768; IV, p.108, 2 September 1772

¹¹ Lewis, *In the Family Way*, p.214

¹² Lewis, *In the Family Way*, pp.60-1. The desire to bear an heir could well have been a reason for upper-class women employing the services of a wet-nurse as lactation was believed to delay future conception and, therefore, the chances of securing the line. Thus, the relatives of the Duke of Devonshire attempted to deter Georgiana when she became determined to nurse her daughter herself.

thus the Bond of domestic dependence.”¹³ With the pressure to give birth to an heir, it is not surprising that much female lore focussed on possible ways of ascertaining a foetus’s sex and that texts such as *Aristotle’s Book of Problems* and Dr. John Moubray’s *Female Physician* provided recipes that would supposedly enable a woman to choose the sex of her unborn child.¹⁴

Eighteenth-century representations of the family group - from portraits such as Arthur Devis’s *John Bacon and his Family* of 1742/3 (fig.87) in which the patriarch gestures to his son’s flute and sheet music, the pair separated from the rest of the family, to later works such as Johann Zoffany’s *John, 3rd Third Duke of Atholl and his Family* (fig.2) in which he instructs his son in the art of fishing whilst his wife dominates the opposing group of their daughters and younger sons - thus reveal a persistent emphasis on the father’s relationship with his male offspring. Such paintings of fathers instructing boys in some activity are very common throughout the period. Sometimes, as in the two examples cited above, that activity is a general accomplishment. Thus, the Duke of Marlborough discusses a cameo with his heir in Reynolds’s portrait of 1777/9 (fig.8), introducing him into the masculine and elite world of collecting and connoisseurship. The father and son depicted in a painting by John Hamilton Mortimer of 1765/70 (Yale Center for British Art) are similarly inscribed into this domain. On other occasions, fathers are depicted preparing their successors for more abstract roles. In c.1770, Thomas Gainsborough painted Sir

See L.A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge, 1983), p.50

¹³ BL Add MSS 48218, Morley Papers Vol.I, f.113, Lord Grantham to Theresa Parker, 25 May 1772

¹⁴ See P. Boucé, ‘Some Sexual Beliefs and Myths in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, in P. Boucé, ed., *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, 1982), p.40

Thomas Rumbold M.P in a landscape, accompanied by his son (fig.88). Rumbold stands in the archetypal pose of the polite gentleman; hat removed, one hand lodged in his waistcoat, the other resting on a cane and his feet splayed at right angles. The gesture that he makes out over the countryside, familiar from portraits of the companionate marriage, is particularly significant. His son stands at his side and echoes this motion, the positioning of his legs and feet mirroring that of his father. Thus, he demonstrates that he is destined to be a similarly polite gentleman and companionate husband. However, Rumbold is also introducing William to the virtues of being a man of sensibility, capable of appreciating the landscape with which, in a manner typical of Gainsborough portraits, the father and son colouristically harmonise. The rose-coloured suit worn by the boy brings out the hue of the painted sunset whilst the grey-green fabric of his father's suit echoes the tone of the distant hills.

One of the most popular ways of representing the relationship between a father and his son is suggested by *The Public Advertiser's* claim in 1774 that "the common Wish of a Parent is to educate his Son in his own Profession."¹⁵ For example, Nathaniel Hone painted James Kirkpatrick, an ensign in the East India Company Troops, with his sons, James and George in 1756 (fig.89). The father's military duties are emphasised by his ornately detailed regimentals and are mirrored in the uniform of his eldest son to whom he pays most attention, leaning backwards to grasp his hand. His younger son similarly echoes his professional identity but in a more light-hearted fashion, wearing his father's hat as he struggles with an equally oversized sword, clearly delighted with his role-playing. In the same year, Reynolds painted a similar

¹⁵ *The Public Advertiser*, 9 May 1774

portrait of Admiral Francis Holburne in full military garb, one arm around the shoulders of his son who again wears a miniature version of his father's official dress (The National Maritime Museum, London).

The pictorial conceit of the son following in his father's footsteps, learning and adopting the patriarch's public and professional role, reflected a large body of literature that held men to be mainly responsible for organising their son's future career.¹⁶ As Thomas Gisborne advised at the end of the century;

the superior intimacy which the husband possesses with the habits and pursuits of active life, and his superior insight into those attainments which will be necessary or desirable for his sons in the stations which they are to fill, and the professions which they are to practise, will entitle his judgement to...preponderance in determining the scheme of their education.¹⁷

A common fear, however, was that the paternal ambition inevitable if the moulding of a worthy son was to proffer a sense of continuation and future glory might be taken to excess.¹⁸ It was thus warned that this instinct should be moderated, that a child's learning should be suitable to his future status and fortune.¹⁹ *The Spectator* praised a

¹⁶ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), pp.331-2; R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London and New York, 1998), p.132. See chapter 4, pp.184

¹⁷ T. Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797) (London, 9th edition, 1810), p.385

¹⁸ See, for example, *The Spectator* no.192 (10 October 1711), in *The Spectator* (1711-12, 1714), ed. D.F. Bond, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1965), II, p.253; *The Spectator* no.449 (5 August 1712), in *The Spectator*, IV, p.79

¹⁹ See J. Nelson, *An Essay on the Management of Children* (1753) (London, 3rd edition, 1763), p.29

friend whom he believed to be more concerned with “the Virtue and Disposition of his Children, than their Advancement or Wealth” whilst John Brown conversely condemned the father who failed to respond to the individual inclinations and talents of his child. As a result of such behaviour, he believed large numbers to be “misplaced in the World...rendered obscure or hurtful, when they might have shone and been beneficial to the Public, if fixed in their proper sphere.”²⁰ In *The London Tradesman* in 1747, R. Campbell similarly complained that fathers were frequently swayed by desire for social advancement in the rearing of sons, ignoring the particular views, qualifications and qualities of the individuals as a result.²¹

Conversely, daughters or younger children were more likely to be pictorially grouped with their mother. This segregation of family members complied with much contemporary literature on the respective responsibilities of each parent. Fathers were seen to be less involved with female offspring and, as a result, portraits such as William Hoare’s *Christopher Anstey with his daughter, Mary* of c.1779 (The National Portrait Gallery, London) and Reynolds’s *Florentius Vassall with his Daughter, later Mrs Russell* (fig.90) are extremely rare. From the Marquess of Halifax in the 1680s who recommended to his female readers, “if you have a divided number, leave the boys to the father’s more peculiar care” to Gisborne’s belief that fathers should attend to the education of their sons whilst placing “the mode of bringing up...daughters”

²⁰ *The Spectator* no.192 (10 October 1711), in *The Spectator*, II, p.253; J. Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* 2 Vols. (1757) (London, 6th edition, 1757/8), II, pp.62-4

²¹ Campbell quoted in Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p. 125. John Tosh has argued in ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood: The Case of Early and Mid-Victorian England’, *Gender and History* 8, 1 (April 1996), pp.54, 59 that this focus of the father’s responsibilities ebbed in the Victorian period. Rather than being involved in a son’s future career, he became more generally

under the prime jurisdiction of their wives, the message was constant.²² It was deemed a female responsibility to pass on the virtues and accomplishments that enabled proper fulfilment of the roles of wife, mother and supervisory housekeeper to their daughters. As Wetenhall Wilkes recommended: “By taking the trouble of the keys, and part of the Management of her Mother’s House, a young Lady may learn how to go through her domestic Offices, when she comes to one of her own.”²³

As a result of this gendering of parental jurisdiction, pendant portraits in which the father is represented in one pictorial space with his eldest son and the mother is depicted in another with their daughters, younger children, or both, are fairly common. A particularly interesting case is that of Reynolds’s portraits of the Paine family, dating from 1764/5. In one pendant, James Paine gestures with his spectacles to some architectural plans for the benefit of his eldest son who studies them over his shoulder and thus learns his father’s profession (fig.91). In the accompanying portrait, Reynolds depicted Paine’s daughters seated at a harpsichord, thereby demonstrating their attainment of suitably feminine and genteel accomplishments (fig.92). However, recent restoration has revealed a third figure of an older woman in this latter painting, resting one elbow on the top of the instrument and gazing tenderly towards the two girls (fig.93). Presumably intended to represent Mrs Paine, it would seem more likely that the painting originally represented only the two sisters as both its composition and

responsible for forming him into a respectable and stoical man, meliorating the increasingly overbearing influence of the mother.

²² George Savile, Marquess of Halifax, ‘The Lady’s New Year’s Gift; or, Advice to a Daughter’ (1688), in J.P. Kenyon, ed., *Halifax: Complete Works* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.291; Gisborne, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, p.385

²³ W. Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1744) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1751), p.132

its formal relationship with the pendant are more satisfactory without the additional figure. However, with or without the matriarch, these portraits clearly reveal what was deemed to be the correct pictorial organisation of family members.

* * * * *

The persistent concern with lineage, revealed through the close pictorial association between the father and his eldest son and heir, was rendered particularly acute as a result of the high infant mortality rates that dominated eighteenth-century demographics and consciousness. Lawrence Stone proposed that in London in 1764, 49% of all recorded children were dead by the age of two and 60% by the age of five, whilst Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt presented numbers that were even more pessimistic.²⁴ Whilst Linda Pollock has criticised such statistics as exaggerated, countering that mortality rates rarely exceeded 150 for every 1000 children born, contemporaries were certainly extremely gloomy about the fate of the young.²⁵ In his *Essay upon Nursing, and the Management of Children* of 1748, Dr. Cadogan reckoned that almost 50% of children died under the age of five so that “half the People that come into the World, go out of it again before they become of the least Use to it, or themselves.”²⁶ Such pessimism clearly affected the representation of

²⁴ Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p.68; I. Pinchbeck and M. Hewitt, *Children in English Society* 2 Vols. (Toronto and London, 1969), II, p.300. The latter declared that, according to the London bills of mortality, 526,973 of the 1,178,346 deaths recorded between 1730 and 1779 were of children under the age of five. They also stated that it was claimed in the mid century that 75% of all children christened in London were dead by that age and many before they were one.

²⁵ Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, p.51

²⁶ W. Cadogan, *An Essay upon Nursing, and the Management of Children* (1748) (London, 5th edition, 1752), p.6

children. Many have noted the prominent use of *vanitas* motifs in William Hogarth's *The Graham Children* of 1742 (fig.94). Cupid stands on a clock bearing the scythe and hourglass of Father Time, fruit and flowers refer to the evanescence of life and the goldfinch watched greedily by the cat anticipates doom.²⁷ Indeed, the baby in the cart died before the picture was complete and it may well be that the positioning of the sculpted Cupid over its head is a naturalisation of the putti who fly over the mother in the artist's earlier portrait of the Cholmondeley family to signify that she had passed away (fig.7).²⁸ Similar if less overt themes have been observed in one of Thomas Gainsborough's portraits of his daughters, dating from c.1756 (fig.95). This shows the girls running through a landscape after a butterfly, the darkening sky enhancing the symbolism of transience.²⁹ The motif of the butterfly, an insect in the last stages of its life cycle, had earlier been employed by Hogarth in *The Mackinen Children* of 1742 (fig.96). Once again, it eludes the grasp of a child and its significance is enhanced both by the sunflower, evocative of bloom and decay, and the fragile shells that Elizabeth Mackinen supports in her skirts.³⁰

²⁷ S. West, 'The Public Nature of Private Life: The Conversation Piece and the Fragmented Family', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18, 2 (Autumn 1995), especially pp.157, 163-4. See also Steward, *The New Child*, p.85; R. Wendorf, *The Elements of Life: Biography and Portrait-Painting in Stuart and Georgian England* (Oxford, 1990), p.181; D. Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London, 1990), p.209-11; E.D.H. Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene from Hogarth to Sickert* (London, 1986), p.52; Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, p.213; E. Einberg, *Hogarth, the Painter* (London, 1997), p.41

²⁸ M. Webster, 'An Eighteenth-Century Family: Hogarth's Portrait of the Graham Children', *Apollo* 130 (September 1989), p.172

²⁹ Steward, *The New Child*, p.20; Wendorf, *The Elements of Life*, p.297; M. Levey, 'Gainsborough: The Painter's Daughters Chasing a Butterfly', *Painting in Focus No.4* (London, 1975), p.1

³⁰ Steward, *The New Child*, p.87; Wendorf, *The Elements of Life*, p.182; Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.208; Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene*, p.52

High infant mortality rates fed the contemporary fear that the British population was dwindling, that the demographic health of the nation was feeble in comparison to that of the ancient world. Writers were concerned that Britain might lack sufficient manpower to protect her shores in the event of a French invasion and that her booming economic, commercial and industrial power would be adversely affected by a dearth of labourers.³¹ As Jonas Hanway wrote in a tract of 1762: “Increase alone can make our *natural* Strength in *Men* correspond with our *artificial* Power in *Riches*, and both with the Grandeur and Extent of the *British Empire*.”³² Indeed, the glorification of motherhood discussed in chapter three, has been interpreted by Ruth Perry as an attempt to encourage women to produce a healthy, strong and numerous progeny, redefining the maternal role as “a colonial form - the domestic, familial counterpart to land enclosure at home and imperialism abroad.”³³ This is a valid proposition as medical writers certainly promised that women’s

³¹ See Boucé, ‘Some Sexual Beliefs and Myths’, pp.29, 37; L. Schiebinger, ‘Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy’, in C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur, eds., *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1987), p.53; L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp.239-40

³² J. Hanway, ‘Serious Considerations on the Salutary Design of the Act of Parliament for a Regular, Uniform Register of the Parish-Poor’ (1762), quoted in R. Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England’, in J.C. Fout, ed., *Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago and London, 1992), p.110

³³ Perry, ‘Colonizing the Breast’, p.109. A. Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’, *History Workshop* 5 (Spring 1978), pp.9-65 has suggested a similar preoccupation in the early twentieth century with a healthy and numerous population as a national resource and with the figure of the mother. She argues; “if the survival of infants and the health of children was in question, it must be the fault of the mothers, and if the nation needed healthy future citizens (and soldiers and workers) then mothers must improve. (p.12)”

attention to the needs of children and their virtuous fulfilment of childrearing duties would have “good and great Effects” for the public.³⁴

Issues of mortality and the belief that the population was failing adequately to reproduce itself were particularly critical for the upper classes. As landed aristocratic and gentry families could not ignore the fact that the transmission of their name, estate and property from generation to generation was dependent on the provision of eldest sons, they equally could not ignore the threat posed by the crisis in birth rates amongst their class, acute between 1650 and 1740.³⁵ Childlessness peaked at a rate of almost 19%, the number of bachelors boomed, marital fertility dwindled and infant mortality was highest amongst male children. Indeed, Lawrence Stone estimated that, whilst property passed through direct inheritance in over 80% of cases in the counties of Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire and Northumberland in the years up to 1700, that proportion slid to 60% between 1700 and 1779.³⁶

Shearer West has related this demographic crisis amongst the landed elite and its effects on inheritance to the early conversation piece, a genre which she presents as preoccupied with asserting familial continuity in the face of such threats. Portraits such as *Thomas Hill of Tern and his Family* by Charles Phillips (1730, Attingham Park) show sitters clustered together in tightly welded groups in denial of actual

³⁴ Cadogan, *Essay upon Nursing*, p.3

³⁵ West, ‘The Public Nature of Private Life’, p.157

³⁶ Stone, *An Open Elite?*, especially pp.75-100. See also T.H. Hollingsworth, ‘The Demography of the British Peerage’, supplement to *Population Studies* 18, 2 (1964); L.A. Pollock, ‘Embarking on a Rough Passage: The Experience of Pregnancy in Early-Modern Society’, in V. Fildes, ed., *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London and New York, 1990), p.39; R.B. Outhwaite, ‘Marriage as a Business: Opinions on the Rise of Aristocratic Bridal Portions in Early Modern England’, in N. McKendrick and R.B. Outhwaite, eds., *Business Life and Public Policy: Essays in Honour of D.C. Coleman* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.30-32

fragmentation, whilst others emphasise a large number of healthy offspring to demonstrate the security of the family line. Thus, “the conversation piece...became a form of family tree, denying fractures which are visually unavoidable in true genealogical mapping.” Her argument concludes with the claim that, as the crisis in birth rates came to an end and the landed family felt more secure in dynastic succession, portraiture was used less to assert familial continuity than to valorise the relationship of the mother and child for the enjoyment of its spectators.³⁷ Whilst her position regarding the early eighteenth-century conversation piece is entirely convincing, the developmental proposition is more problematic.

First, the sentimentalisation of the mother as described in the previous chapter did not mean that her role in continuing the family line was any less apparent. Certainly, Mr B, in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*, is concerned to add to the heroine’s list of wifely responsibilities, “such an employment, as will give me a view of perpetuating my happy prospects, and my family at the same time; of which I am almost the only one in a direct line.”³⁸ However, the Reverend Fordyce later similarly emphasised the role of the mother in securing dynasty, envisaging his female reader’s children “spreading from house to house, from family to family, with a rich increase of fruit.”³⁹ Portraits from the 1750s onwards maintained such agendas whilst simultaneously revealing the impact of the cult of sensibility. For example, as we have seen, Reynolds’s *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons* of 1773 (fig.6) certainly

³⁷ West, ‘The Public Nature of Private Life’, passim, especially p.166

³⁸ S.Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), ed. M.A. Doody (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.301. Mr B reveals that he had decided against organising a sham wedding in order to fulfil his lustful desires as he realised that any offspring of their union would be unable to inherit the family estate (p.305).

³⁹ J. Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* 2 Vols. (1766) (Dublin, 4th edition, 1766), I, p.26

reveals a new intimacy between the female sitter and her offspring, but the child towards whom she directs her gaze and who thus receives most emphasis is the eldest of the three, the heir to the family name and estate. Equally, many of the later portraits that focus on the relationship between the affectionate mother and responsive child still define those sitters with reference to the absent patriarch. As a consequence, the woman's evident fertility and the health and vigour of the child demonstrate the continuation of the name and estate of the *pater familias*. Such an absent masculine, controlling presence is rendered explicit in Philip Reinagle's *Mrs Congreve with her Children* of 1782 (fig.97). The sitters are grouped in front of a portrait of Mr Congreve with his eldest son and the remnants of his presence are apparent in the empty chair, the hat and the sword. As Marcia Pointon has argued: "The painting is not in any serious sense about her [Mrs Congreve] and her daughters, it is about the continuation of the male line and the maintenance of the estate and property within which she is posed and to which she is a decorative accretion."⁴⁰

Second, it is wrong to suggest that dynastic anxiety ceased as the crisis in birth rates waned in the later eighteenth century. Not only was such anxiety inevitable when so much depended on the birth of a son but, whilst birth rates did improve considerably and replacement began to exceed unity, infant mortality remained a prominent issue throughout the century.⁴¹ In 1767, Hugh Smith echoed the earlier estimate of Dr. Cadogan that half the children born were dead before the age of five and William Buchan gave only a slightly improved picture in 1769, citing the same

⁴⁰ Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, chapter VI, quoting p.172

⁴¹ Hollingsworth, 'The Demography of the British Peerage', p.32 argued that from 1660 to 1730 there was almost exact replacement and then a generation of decided decline before rates rose again.

statistic of 50% for all children under twelve.⁴² However, more specifically, later eighteenth-century writers continued to discuss poor birth rates amongst the aristocracy. This suggests that contemporaries were either not aware of or were not convinced by demographic improvement. Their discussions usually took the form of diatribes against the licentious lifestyles regarded as characteristic of this class. Buchan condemned the libertine who not only passed his property, but also his diseases to future generations. He recommended that aristocrats adopt the lifestyle of “the better sort of peasants” as only then would they cease to “have cause to envy their poor vassals and dependants the blessing of a numerous and healthy offspring, while they pine in sorrow for the want of even a single heir to their extensive domains.”⁴³ Equally, Smith claimed in a gloating passage on the pernicious habits of the patrician ranks: “What numbers of debauchees, in different climes and ages, worn out by guilty intemperance, mournfully lament their cursed fate, in not being blest with an heir to succeed to their half-ruined fortunes!”⁴⁴

Finally, pictorial references to infant mortality continued well into the later 1700s, changing subtly as the elevation of domesticity became increasingly apparent. Early eighteenth-century portraits incorporated significant attributes such as flowers, fruit, clocks, butterflies, mirrors and cards to infer potential death and decay. However, such exterior symbols were increasingly replaced by references inherent within the depicted narrative, by a new emotional ethos. Rather than depicting children on their own, surrounded by token emblems, artists came to incorporate the

⁴² H. Smith, *Letters to Married Women on Nursing and the Management of Children* (1767) (London, 6th edition, 1792), p.66; W. Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; or, A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines* (1769) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1774), p.1

⁴³ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, pp.6-7, 434-5

⁴⁴ Smith, *Letters to Married Women*, p.169

transient child into the imagery of the mother in pictures such as Reynolds's *Recovery from Sickness, an Allegory* of 1768/9 (fig.98) or Philip Hoare's *Mother and Dead Child*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1781 (location unknown). In the former, a woman embraces her child as its guardian angel wards off the retreating figure of death. It is now the mother's concern with the actual or threatened loss of her offspring that is featured and her reaction dominates the picture, demonstrating the sensibility of the artist and calling that of the viewer into evidence in his or her suitably moved and emotional response.

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A third way in which it is possible to demonstrate the continuation of 'traditional' concerns of familial lineage throughout the eighteenth century is by reconstructing, as far as is possible, those original contexts for which portraits were commissioned and in which they would have been hung and viewed. Such contextualisation is a fairly recent development in British art historical thought, promoted by scholars such as Marcia Pointon and Shearer West.⁴⁵ The latter, in particular, has pointed to the boom in country house building in the early decades of the eighteenth century as critical for the meaning of family portraits. Together with its surrounding grounds, the family seat was key in establishing membership of the elite classes. It enabled a certain lifestyle; providing land, lakes and woodland for a variety of noble sports, a well run estate to show virtuous and competent administration and a

⁴⁵ Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, p.17; S. West, 'Patronage and Power: The Role of the Portrait in Eighteenth-Century England', in J. Black and J. Gregory, eds., *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester and New York, 1991), pp.132, 135

house in which to entertain and provide hospitality. It demonstrated history and familial continuity, signified by the convention of referring to families by titles such as ‘The Spencers of Althorp.’ Most of all, however, it demonstrated power, wealth and the fruitful dissemination of that wealth through the mediating quality of taste. Whilst this element of display had always been inherent in the country house, the new wave of and enthusiasm for touring round such dwellings in the summer months highlighted its importance. Most of the great houses allowed some sort of access, whether by request, referral or ticket, and the absenteeism prompted by the burgeoning passion for spa and seaside resorts in the summer months meant that servants could develop thriving trades in showing visitors the family home and heirlooms in their owners’ absence. Guidebooks were written and, in the case of Henry Hoare’s house and grounds at Stourhead, accommodation was provided.⁴⁶

Collections of family portraits within those houses were intended to reinforce such messages of wealth, power and continuity. Visitors were supposed to admire paintings of the contemporary generation as well as images of that family’s ancestors. For example, when John Loveday visited Belvoir in 1735, he admiringly asked, “what family can show so fine a series of portraits belonging to it?”⁴⁷ A coherent set of successive portraits was clearly a source of pride. In *The Art of Painting*, published in English in 1738 and reissued in 1778, Gérard de Lairesse deemed it right and proper that noblemen should commission portraits as “being descended from great families,

⁴⁶ Stone, *An Open Elite?*, pp.11, 69 and Part III: Houses; West, ‘Patronage and Power’, p.135; J.H. Plumb, E.J. Nygren and N.L. Pressly, *The Pursuit of Happiness: A View of Life in Georgian England* (New Haven, 1977), p.10

⁴⁷ Quoted in O.Millar, ‘Portraiture and the Country House’, in G. Jackson-Stops, ed., *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting* (New Haven and London, 1985), p.34

the lustre of these ought to shine, to encourage their successors to keep up their glory, and to prevent sullyng it by unworthy actions.”⁴⁸ The reaction intended by the display of family portraits is further suggested by conversation pieces in which depictions of progenitors are featured behind the posed sitters. Reinagle’s portrait incorporates paintings of previous members of the Congreve family, rendering the genealogical message of the picture even more explicit. Equally, Johann Zoffany’s *George, Prince of Wales and Frederick, later Duke of York* of c.1765 (fig.99), supposedly depicting “children enjoying their own imaginative space” and “a new sensibility towards childhood,” defines those children through the portraits that adorn the walls.⁴⁹ Images of George III and Charlotte contextualise the children as the offspring of the King and Queen and thus emphasise their relevance as the heirs to the royal dynasty. The sense of genealogical continuity is reinforced by the Van Dyck portraits of *The Eldest Children of Charles I* and *The Villiers Brothers* and thus, “lineage and parentage (are) melted into one set of harmonious associations.” Indeed, developing the impression of inexorable succession still further, a picture of the infant Christ by a follower of Maratti completes the collection, an ideal prototype for the portraits of the children and a reference back to older notions of the monarch as in a direct line to God. The significance of these paintings is clearly deliberate as none of them appear to have been hung in the room in Buckingham Palace in which the Princes play, and so have been either invented or deliberately painted in to convey these messages.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ G. de Lairese, *The Art of Painting, in all its Branches* (1738, first Dutch edition 1709) (London, 1778), p.265

⁴⁹ C. Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration: Design and the Domestic Interior in England* (London, 1993), p.221

⁵⁰ S. Schama, ‘The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture 1500-1850’, in R.I. Rotberg and T.K. Rabb, eds., *Art and History: Images and their Meaning* (Cambridge, 1986), p.171;

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When seen within such contexts, collections of family portraits thus demonstrate underlying meanings that are often not immediately apparent in their iconography. A particularly interesting case is the collection at Belton House in Lincolnshire (fig.100). The family portraits reveal formal affiliations and thus emphasise dynastic continuity. For example, in 1783, George Romney depicted Frances, wife of Sir Brownlow Cust, in a whole-length format, seated with her son resting against her lap (fig.101). Whilst this painting, on display in the breakfast room, immediately locates itself within the depictions of sentimental and idealised motherhood for which Romney was particularly known and thus is very much a product of the second half of the century, it partners this contemporaneous meaning with a more traditional function. In the boudoir hangs a portrait attributed to Thomas Hudson, probably painted some thirty years earlier, which depicts Sir Brownlow Cust as boy, leaning against the knees of his mother in much the same manner as his son was later to be shown by Romney (fig.102). This pictorial reference emphasises the succession of eldest sons and thus replicates, to some degree, the patrilinear progression of a family tree.

Second, a large and remarkable portrait of Anne Cust (Sir Brownlow's grandmother) with her children, painted by Enoch Seeman in 1743/4 (fig.103), hangs

R. Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1975), pp.140-1. Another example of sitters as defined by friends, relations, ancestors or exemplars is *The Reverend Streynsham Master and his Wife* by Arthur Devis (1742/4, Paul Mellon Collection) in which Master's brother and sister-in-law are incorporated in two prominent pendant portraits behind the sitters. Mrs Master gestures up towards the female portrait whilst the sitter in its pendant reaches an outstretched hand down towards the cleric.

at the bottom of the west staircase. The familiar emphasis on the eldest son is once again apparent as the widowed matriarch is seated next to the successor to the family name and estate, Sir John Cust. The future passage of Belton through him to the next generation is implied by the miniature in his hand, which depicts his new wife and prospective mother of the subsequent heir. However, not only did this union proffer the possibility of direct inheritance, but it also brought considerable lucre and prestige into the family as Miss Etheldred Payne, the erstwhile fiancée, was a wealthy heiress. Not inconsiderable difficulties had been overcome in order to secure her hand and fortune for the Custs, for the Paynes deemed themselves a superior family. It did not bode well when her Uncle wrote a blunt letter in order to point out that he did not think Sir John's fortune equal to the £60,000 of his niece.⁵¹ However, her wealth and person were eventually secured, confirmed and proudly advertised in the Seeman portrait.

Above a group of three daughters, appropriately seated with their mother at the tea table, hangs an oval head and shoulders portrait of a young boy. This image is notable in its isolation against the sparse background of the portrait and chroniclers of the Belton House collection have thus persistently attempted to identify its sitter. Whilst the guidebook merely refers to it as "a portrait of an unidentified (deceased?) boy," Lady Cust's records of the family suggest that it is likely to be of Sir Richard Cust, the deceased patriarch of this family group.⁵² This theory is certainly validated by analogy with a slightly later portrait by George Knapton of the family of Frederick,

⁵¹ Lady E. Cust, *Records of the Cust Family, Series II: The Brownlows of Belton 1550-1779* (London, 1909), p.201, Mr Folkes to Lord Tyrconnel, 11 January 1742/3

⁵² A. Tinniswood, *Belton House, Lincolnshire* (London, 1996), p.75; Cust, *Records of the Cust Family*, p.302

Prince of Wales (1751, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle) in which Frederick, although dead by that time, is included in the form of a large portrait, clad in full robes of state with one hand on his hip and the other directing the viewer's attention down to the scene of his widow with their brood.⁵³ However, the problem highlighted by this comparison is the fact that Sir Richard, if the identification is correct, has been depicted as a boy and not as he was at the time of his death.

The explanation for this appears to lie in a whole-length portrait, by an anonymous artist and dated to the end of the previous century, that also hangs on the west staircase (fig.104). This is known to represent Sir Richard in his infancy and bears a striking resemblance to the child depicted at the back of the Seeman. Whilst truncated in the later painting, the arrangement of the hair, the features and even the garb are so similar as to suggest that the artist drew on this portrait in order to portray the absent patriarch. Such a practice was not uncommon and, indeed, had been done earlier in the history of Belton when a portrait of Richard Brownlow had been used as a model for the effigy on his tomb in the church. On the one hand, the fact that the sitter is incongruously depicted as younger than all his nine children may simply have been an insurmountable problem if then, as now, the portrait of him as a boy was the only one in the house. However, it could well be argued that the transposition should be viewed in a more positive light. It effectively integrates the Seeman portrait into the collection of portraits as a whole and thus, once again, emphasises familial continuity.⁵⁴

⁵³ C. Lloyd, *The Quest for Albion: Monarchy and the Patronage of British Painting* (London, 1998), pp.14-5

⁵⁴ Many thanks to Shelley Fielder and Rosalie Grice at Belton house for their help in analysing this picture.

However, whilst this group of portraits thus commemorates a traditional view of a family dominated by patrilineal structures for posterity, the historical reality was somewhat different. The Custs had inherited Belton House through a process of default from the Brownlows who had been seriously affected by the crisis in the birth rate of sons and had thus experienced insurmountable difficulties in attaining longevity (fig.105). ‘Young’ Sir John Brownlow and his wife, Alice, had only succeeded in producing five daughters, one of whom died just as she was about to be married. Not to be daunted by the lack of a son, Dame Alice succeeded, as her tomb commemorates, in disposing of three of her daughters “in Marriage to three Noble Peers of this Realm.”⁵⁵ These unions with the future Earls of Exeter and Guildford and with the future Duke of Ancaster meant that the Brownlow sisters formed “an extensive social network, a sort of submerged female structure.”⁵⁶ Many of the family’s portraits commemorate these sisters and their illustrious husbands, the marriages having secured title, wealth and influence for the family. The line continued to be dominated by females when the fourth daughter, married off to Alice’s nephew in an attempt to keep the estate in the family, failed to produce any children and the estate had to pass to that nephew’s sister, Anne Cust. Thus, the Seeman portrait in which the male line is emphasised masks the process of default by which Lady Cust had inherited the house and land.

Such passages of property through female family members were far from uncommon. Indeed, Lawrence Stone estimated that, between 1760 and 1769, nearly a

⁵⁵ The tomb of Dame Alice Brownlow by Edward Stanton and Christopher Horsnaile is situated on the south wall of the nave of the parish church of St.Peter and St.Paul, Belton.

⁵⁶ T. Lummis and J. Marsh, *The Woman’s Domain: Women and the English Country House* (Harmondsworth, 1993), p.45

third of all inheritances passed to or through women, a fact of the kind concealed in portraits such as that of the Cust family.⁵⁷ Thus, whilst Richard Leppert has emphasised the compositional segregation of masculine and feminine domains in Arthur Devis's *Sir Edward Rookes-Leeds and his Family, of Royds Hall, Low Moor, York* of 1763/5 (fig.106), claiming it establishes the patriarch's importance and power through the lavish gowns and feminine accomplishments of his womenfolk, this organisational structure belies the fact that Edward Rookes had to adopt his wife's surname of Leeds in order to qualify for her inheritance.⁵⁸ Desmond Shawe-Taylor has similarly analysed Devis's *Robert Gwilym of Atherton with his Family* of 1745/7 (fig.107) as depicting a patriarch gesturing to his property; including his house, his estate, his servant, his children and his wife. However, the image fails to reveal that the house and estate had actually been obtained through his marriage to that wife.⁵⁹ Such visual concealment replicates the legal concealment that was developed in the period in the form of what Lawrence Stone referred to as "heroic measures of name-changing." These measures, including hyphenating the surname of the inheritor with that of the heiress's family (as in the case of Edward Rookes-Leeds), using the heiress's surname as her son's first name and simply substituting the latter name for the former, were similarly designed "to perpetuate through surrogate heirs the impression of an unbroken descent in the male line."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p.119

⁵⁸ R. Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.178-9; S.H. Pavière, *The Devis Family of Painters* (Leigh-on-Sea, 1950), pp.49-50

⁵⁹ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.128; Plumb, Nygren and Pressly, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, catalogue entry

⁶⁰ Stone, *An Open Elite?*, pp.105-47, quoting p.105

However, this is not to suggest that women's role in continuing family lines was enforceably concealed by patriarchal discourse. As Amanda Vickery has shown, eighteenth-century women were largely deferential, at least in appearance, to the male-dominated structures of their society.⁶¹ Anne Cust was an able woman who looked after her sons and daughters in the absence of her husband and maintained the family accounts with meticulous attention. It was she who was behind the commissioning of the portrait of her family, instructing her son to secure Seeman once it transpired that the prices of Hogarth, her first choice, were too high.⁶² However, in that portrait, she elected to present her deceased husband as the defining patriarch and to contain herself within the male-dominated line, to be continued by her son. And, when that son came of age, she ceased to address him in letters as 'Dear Jacky' and began to refer to him as 'Sir John'.⁶³

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A second example of the persistence of patriarchal and genealogical concerns as revealed through such contextualisation can be found in the display of portraits in the state rooms at Kedleston Hall, near Derby (fig.108). A large, full-length portrait of Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Baron Scarsdale with his wife, Caroline Colyear has hung over the fireplace in the dressing room since it was commissioned from Nathaniel Hone in

⁶¹ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, pp.8, 81, 285

⁶² Cust, *Records of the Cust Family*, pp.247, 250, 260, 261

⁶³ Cust, *Records of the Cust Family*, p. 239

1761 (figs.109 and 110).⁶⁴ It epitomises the companionate marital portrait. The couple stroll from their landscape garden into a portico, she tucks her hand under his arm and smiles out of the image as he gazes fondly towards her. Indeed, Shawe-Taylor has referred to this painting as a “carrying over the threshold portrait,” arguing that the columns, whilst bearing little relation to the actual architectural structure of Kedleston, are designed to represent that house and to suggest that Scarsdale is escorting his wife into the newly rebuilt home of which she is to be mistress. Whilst the concept of the ‘honeymoon’ couple is less than entirely apt, for the couple had married at least a decade before Hone executed the painting, its association with the revamping of Kedleston is worth exploring.⁶⁵

When Nathaniel Curzon inherited Kedleston in 1758, he promptly set to work to modernise the family home, calling on the assistance of Robert Adam and a considerable income.⁶⁶ The state rooms clearly reveal Adam’s hallmark stylistic features and exemplify the integrity and unity of components that is typical of the architect and often commented on by scholars: the correlation of the ceiling designs with those on the carpets below them, the similitude between the picture frames and the gilt surrounds of the mirrors, and the colour co-ordination.⁶⁷ In many ways, the Hone portrait should be seen as another element in this homogeneous, decorative

⁶⁴ This is evident from the catalogues of the collection, the eighteenth-century editions of which date from 1769, c.1771, c.1778 and c.1796. I would like to thank Jill Banks, the archives researcher at Kedleston, for allowing me to see these texts.

⁶⁵ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.130

⁶⁶ See L. Harris, *Robert Adam and Kedleston: The Making of a Neoclassical Masterpiece* (London, 1987), pp.9-12 and the National Trust Guidebook, *Kedleston Hall* (London, 1998), pp.7-11

⁶⁷ See, for example, Michael Rosenthal’s discussion of Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs Hale as Euphrosyne* (1764/6, Harewood House) in M. Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough: ‘A Little Business for the Eye’* (New Haven and London, 1999), p.274

scheme. The unusual colour used by the artist for Lady Scarsdale's dress emphasises the tawny hue of the marble featured in the fireplace below whilst the sombre garb of her husband similarly reflects the black and white of the other marbles used. The colonnade through which they are about to walk is certainly reminiscent of a portico but, when the image is seen in context, it also bears a remarkable resemblance to the screen of columns designed by Adam to divide the dressing room from its ante-room.

The connection between the design of this portrait and that of its location runs deeper than this. Lord Scarsdale had initially commissioned some designs by James 'Athenian' Stuart. These sketches are not only unusual in their painterly style but also in their inclusion of suggested arrangements for the patron's furniture and paintings.⁶⁸ Whilst the unfortunate Stuart was ousted shortly after completing them and they were never used, one is of particular interest. His *Design for an End Wall with Sideboard*, dated to 1757/8 (fig.111), incorporates a large and carefully described double marital portrait, depicting a couple engaged in a stroll through a landscape. This imaginary painting bears many compositional similarities to the portrait commissioned from Hone a few years later, a resemblance that suggests interesting conclusions. First, it is reasonable to argue that Scarsdale was exploring ideas for such a portrait of himself and his wife to hang in the new state rooms, to complement the decorative scheme and to demonstrate proper moral and familial sentiments as well as taste and wealth. It is extremely unlikely that Stuart fabricated this image without any due cause, particularly as his other sketches include paintings that were certainly extant in the

⁶⁸ For these drawings see Saumarez-Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration*, pp.146-9; Harris, *Robert Adam and Kedleston*, pp.27-8 and D. Watkin, *Athenian Stuart: Pioneer of the Greek Revival* (London, 1982), pp.33-4

peer's collection.⁶⁹ Second, it emphasises the extent to which family portraits were ornamental, objects of luxury that not only demonstrated the wealth and taste of the family, but were also designed to complement their stucco ornament, their furniture and their sculptures.

Thus, the Hone portrait was clearly conceived in terms of the set of rooms in which it was designed to hang and it is within this context that it reveals themes of dynasty and familial succession. Large numbers of surviving catalogues at Kedleston reveal that many of the older portraits also on display in the State Rooms have similarly been there since the Adam renovation.⁷⁰ Among these are copies of Van Dyck's *Charles I*, his *Catherine Howard*, *Lady d'Aubigny* and a portrait of *Mary Modena as Duchess of York* from the studio of Lely; paintings which clearly emphasise the links between the Curzons and the Stuart dynasty which had been conspicuous during the time of Sir John Curzon (1598-1686).⁷¹ To locate the contemporary Scarsdales within this context and thus to emphasise the inferred political and ideological allegiances of the family, Hone painted Lady Caroline in a dress with a Van Dyckian lace collar. While such costumes are common in eighteenth-century portraits, this one acquires particular significance if seen in the context of a preparatory sketch for the painting (fig.112). In this, her outfit features a loosely ruffled neckline. The alteration was probably suggested to allow the Hone to hang alongside the earlier paintings in aesthetic and metaphorical harmony, emphasising the connection with the Stuarts.⁷² Such unifying techniques can similarly be seen in

⁶⁹ See James Stuart, *Design for an End Wall* (Kedleston Hall, 1757/8) and *Design for the Chimney-Piece Wall* (Kedleston, 1757/8)

⁷⁰ See this chapter, p.241, n.64

⁷¹ For the links between the Curzons and the Stuarts, see *Kedleston Hall*, pp.38, 73

⁷² West, 'Patronage and Power', p.138

Gainsborough's portraits of the 11th and 12th Dukes of Norfolk in the drawing room at Arundel Castle, both depicted in Van Dyckian garb and thus in tune with the style of the earlier, accompanying pictures.⁷³ Similarly, after a visit to Knole Park in Kent in 1779, Fanny Burney observed:

There are several pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and though mixed with those of the best old painters, they are so bewitching, and finished in a style of taste, colouring, and expression, so like their companions, that it is not, at first view, easy to distinguish the new from the old.⁷⁴

At Kedleston, one of the portraits that has remained in the state rooms since it was first placed there by the 1st Lord Scarsdale is by Jonathan Richardson the elder and depicts the peer as an infant with his parents (fig.113). Hanging in a room adjacent to that in which the Hone portrait is so prominent, it again suggests the depiction of successive generations, demonstrating the successful and direct descent of land and wealth from father to son. That emphasis is here rendered even more significant by the draped infant that is featured in the top left hand corner of the Richardson painting, stretching his hand up towards three putti heads. This figure is presumably intended to represent Nathaniel's elder brother, John, who died when about a year old. The portrait affirms that the family line will continue with Nathaniel despite the loss of the first born son and thus is "designed to celebrate the revived hopes in a healthy male heir."⁷⁵ These hopes are fulfilled in the Hone portrait of that

⁷³ Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, pp.13-36; Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough*, p.158

⁷⁴ *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*, ed. C. Barrett, 6 Vols. (London, 1904), I, p.272

⁷⁵ *Kedleston Hall*, p.42

heir with his wife in the adjoining room, a portrait thus redolent with statements of dynasty and lineage as well as epitomising the companionate marriage.

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The importance of contextualisation is confirmed by the collection of eighteenth-century portraits in the colonnade room at Wilton House.⁷⁶ Reynolds's portrait of *Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke and her Son George, Lord Herbert of 1764/5* (fig.5) hangs in the centre of one wall. The Countess places one arm protectively around her son's shoulders and grasps his hand with the other, indicating the physical intimacy that so dominated the imagery of mothers with their offspring. This intimacy has, however, been tempered in respect to the age and sex of the child. His suit reveals that he is out of maternal jurisdiction and the book in which he holds his place evidences the learning that will render him a suitable heir to the Pembroke dynasty and a worthy member of the elite classes of England. The muted colouring of Elizabeth's mauve dress and the subtle shade of grey that the artist has used for the suit of the child serve to draw attention to the deep red curtain swathed around a pillar behind them. This background, as well as relating the portrait to seventeenth-century aristocratic conventions, also links it with the pillars that give the room its current name.

Shawe-Taylor's claim that this portrait demonstrates "a deliberate moving aside to let the heir take the stage," emphasising lineage and the mother's provision of

⁷⁶ Many thanks to Sue Watkins and Alun Williams at Wilton House for their assistance with this case study.

an heir, is supported by the paintings (also by Reynolds) that hang on either side.⁷⁷ To the left is the portrait of *Henry, 10th Earl of Pembroke* (fig.114), commissioned at about the same time and clearly designed to relate to that of his wife through size, the direction of the sitter's gaze and the three-quarter length format. Indeed, the spatial and inferred relationship between the pictures was rendered explicit when they were engraved together as one image in 1773.⁷⁸ To the right hangs a Reynolds portrait of the Countess's brother, the 4th Duke of Marlborough. Together with that of her husband, this serves to inscribe the representation of Lady Pembroke within patrilinear lines; the line into which she was born and whose influence and standing she united with that of the Pembrokes, and the line into which she married and was subsumed.⁷⁹

The narrative that is evident from the portrait itself and from its immediate context, becomes even more powerful when it is seen within the larger spatial dynamic of the sequence of rooms in which it is contained (fig.115). On the other side of the anteroom lies the Double Cube Room, the focus of the house and the location of the family's collection of Van Dycks, centred on the immense portrait of the family of the 4th Earl of Pembroke. An account of the visit of George III and Charlotte in 1778 by the chaplain, Dr. Thomas Eyre, reveals the order in which these rooms were ideally to be viewed. Progressing from the welcome of their host and hostess at the main porch, the King and Queen were led on a tour of the upstairs rooms and eventually to the Single Cube and, from there, the Double Cube room. After this, they

⁷⁷ Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians*, p.188

⁷⁸ F. o'Donoghue, *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* 5 Vols. (London, 1922), V, p.50; J. Chaloner Smith, *British Mezzotinto Portraits* 4 Vols. (London, 1883), IV, p.1530

⁷⁹ For details of the pictures, see Sidney, 16th Earl of Pembroke, *A Catalogue of the Paintings and Drawings in the Collection at Wilton House* (London and New York, 1968)

encountered the Colonnade Room (then the state bedroom) and the corner room, the spaces allocated for their sleeping and dressing arrangements.⁸⁰ Thus, they would have been greeted by the display of lineage and allegiance represented by the Van Dycks and then moved on to the more subtle portraits of that generation's successors; portraits that, through devices such as the column and drapes, would recall the images recently seen.

However, this linear narrative masks a number of events and disruptions that become evident from a study of the family's history. In this, the case study of Wilton recalls Karen Stanworth's work on the portraits of George Onslow, 4th Baron Cranley, at Clandon Park. Progressive images depict Onslow as a child, as a young man playing chess, in pendant format with his wife and in a larger painting with both his wife and his son. This succession of portraits presents an "ordered life," "a standard visual history" and a "sense of inevitability" that masks the fact that Edward was nearly charged with making homosexual advances whilst at an exhibition at the Royal Academy. His father had to pay his accuser off and send his son abroad until the scandal had ebbed and he could be reintroduced into London society, respectably married and thus clearly able to continue the family line. As Stanworth observes, the "visual narrative at Clandon Park...was intended to erase any suggestion of deviancy and to confirm the normative passage of time."⁸¹

⁸⁰ T. Lever, *The Herberts of Wilton* (London, 1967), pp.177-8

⁸¹ K. Stanworth, 'Historical Relations: Representing Collective Identities. Small Group Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England, British India, and America', (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester, 1994), chapter 3, especially pp.84-5, 119-122

At Wilton, the disruption masked by the coherent visual narrative relates to the 10th Earl's adulterous affairs.⁸² In 1762, Henry met Kitty Hunter, described by Walpole as "a handsome girl with a fine person, but silly and in no degree lovely as his wife," and promptly eloped with her on a packet boat to the Continent.⁸³ A privateer eventually brought them back, but Kitty's father refused to receive her and they were thus able to abscond a second time. Despite the fact that his mistress gave birth to a son, anagrammatically named Augustus Retnuh Reebkomp, the Earl was eventually reconciled with his wife. Nevertheless, he continued to enjoy adulterous liaisons. Her patience and indulgence eventually wore out, hastened by her husband's suggestion that Augustus should be "Herberted, and unReebkompfed" and his engagement in numerous wrangles with her own son, George.⁸⁴ She left Wilton for London and then moved into Pembroke Lodge at Richmond, a dwelling given to her by the doting George III some years before. This was a bold move as, as Amanda Vickery has argued, "the social prohibitions against informal separation were powerful, and the penalties faced by an estranged wife could be grim."⁸⁵

This history in itself reveals a more complex story than the straightforward image of a woman subsumed within a family line. However, its most interesting aspect is that a copy of the Reynolds portrait of the Countess with her son was

⁸² See Lever, *The Herberts of Wilton*, especially chapters 8, 9 and 10; *Henry, Elizabeth and George (1734-80): Letters and Diaries of Henry, 10th Earl of Pembroke and his Circle* ed. Lord Herbert (London, 1939), p.162, Lord Pembroke to his son, George, 9 April 1779

⁸³ *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, eds. W.S. Lewis, W.H. Smith and G.L. Lam, 48 Vols. (London and New Haven, 1960), XXII, pp.9-10, Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 25 February 1762

⁸⁴ *Henry, Elizabeth and George*, p.162, Lord Pembroke to his son, George, 9 April 1779

⁸⁵ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.73

commissioned for Pembroke Lodge.⁸⁶ The copy is almost exact apart from the sitter's hair which, instead of being swathed in a scarf, is piled high and adorned with pearls. An entry in Reynolds's sitters' book in May 1772 may well have been for this replica and the receipted bill at Wilton for £76 is dated 29 May 1773.⁸⁷ Its evidencing the Countess's fondness for the picture undermines the commonly promoted view of female representation as constricted by the combination of the male gaze and the usually masculine gender of the artist, indicating its limitations. However, most importantly, the existence of a copy and the location of that copy at the dwelling to which Elizabeth retired when she finally left Lord Pembroke, contradicts the narrative established at Wilton. The fact that *Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke and her Son George, Lord Herbert* remained at the family home disclaimed both her absence and her independence of the patriarchal line. The copy, hung in a different space and demonstrative of Lady Pembroke's transgressive act, was dislocated from that narrative and from the accompanying portrait of her husband, becoming more simply a portrait of a mother with her son.

* * * * *

In conclusion, traditional values were resistant to the new sentimentality that came to dominate later eighteenth-century portraiture and prescriptive and fictional literature. Whilst exhortations of the companionate marriage or the sentimental mother may have greatly appealed in an age dominated by the cult of sensibility,

⁸⁶ This painting was brought back to Wilton by George and now hangs in the Colonnade room with the original.

⁸⁷ A photocopy of Reynolds's sitters book is in the Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery.

marriage remained central to attaining wealth, power and influence and sons were necessary to secure familial continuity. Portraitists thus frequently emphasised the eldest son, showing him as more sober and responsible than his younger siblings and indicating his educational progress. His instruction is frequently shown as supervised by his father, taking care over the moulding of the successor to both name and estate. The focus on this relationship is equally evident through absence as fathers are rarely depicted with either daughters or younger children.

Second, as Shearer West has convincingly argued, the demographic crisis amongst the landed classes in the early eighteenth century invested the conversation piece with narratives of continuity, fertility and healthful progeny. However, whilst she has proposed that such messages ebbed in the face of the newly sentimentalised visions of the mother and child, I would argue that such concerns persisted. Statistics may reveal that the worst of the crisis was over by the 1770s, but there was no dwindling in the concern expressed by contemporary writers. Thus, overtones of death and decay persisted in child portraiture, merely becoming less reliant upon the symbolic and more focussed on the emotional and the relative. The elevation of the mother was not a simple move towards affective individualism but, placed in the context of such demographic fears, indicated the importance of her reproductive capacities.

Further evidence for the persistence of more traditional concerns can be found in the contextualisation of portraits within their original environs on the walls of the country house. When located within these bastions of landed power, surrounded by earlier pictures of ancestors, the underlying genealogical significance of these images becomes apparent. In some cases, artists specifically referred to earlier works in their own compositions, creating an impression of linear pictorial and familial descent.

Such devices served to belie actual rifts, whether caused by the passage of the family estate through a female member or by disruptions of the ideal, patriarchal family unit. This argument provides an interesting parallel to the central thesis of the work of Naomi Tadmor. She has claimed that, whilst the novel did espouse new sentimental ideals, it had to relate to its audience's comprehension of what being the eldest son or the youngest sister meant in terms of real experience. Similarly, whilst portraits, as isolated entities, do appear to belong unequivocally to Stone's companionate family, they came into contact with real issues of lineage when on display in the country house. When brought into context, hung next to pictures of prior generations, displayed in the rooms in which the families lived and into which visitors, friends, relatives and acquaintances were introduced, they had to contain practical messages beyond popular sentimental ideals.

CHAPTER SIX

TRANSGRESSIONS

As has been demonstrated, the sentimentalised domestic 'norms' which rose to prominence in the mid eighteenth century developed alongside, whilst partially masking, more 'traditional' concerns of hierarchy, patriarchy and lineage. These new ideals, translated into portraiture, masked the diversities of actual lives with the delimited and clearly defined categories requisite for an apprehending, appropriate and approving audience response. This final chapter will examine the antithetical definition of the same burgeoning ideology of affective domesticity. The companionate marriage was not only evident in portraits of affectionate, strolling couples, but also in visual attacks on members of the *bon ton* embroiled in highly publicised divorce and criminal conversation trials. The sentimentalised mother was pictorially defined by images of women caressing and attending to their offspring, but also through attacks on elite ladies thought to be neglecting such important duties for the whirl of society life.

A suitable starting point is with the criminal conversation cases of the Ladies Worsley and Grosvenor and the bigamy trial of the Duchess of Kingston. All three women were publicly condemned for disrupting sentimentalised feminine ideals of obedience and chastity, as well as newly elevated standards of affectionate and reciprocal wedlock. Graphic satire was central to the censure of these individuals and, by association, the aristocracy in general. However, it will be shown that some members of the *ton* countered such attacks, attempting to invert widespread condemnation by asserting their familial, social and public probity through the medium of portraiture. The chapter will finally examine satires of the negligent

patrician mother which similarly reveal popularly espoused stereotypes of an immoral and frivolous upper class. The Duchess of Devonshire, in particular, suffered severely from such attacks for her involvement in the Westminster Election of 1784. However, once again, she countered such criticism with a display of domestic virtue on the walls of the Royal Academy.

* * * * *

Criminal conversation trials, in which a husband sued his wife's lover for damages, usually as a preliminary in the Doctors' Commons before extracting a full divorce in the House of Lords, were, for financial reasons, largely restricted to the aristocracy.¹ Many of the pamphleteers who lampooned such cases hailed an elite triumvirate of noble and adulterous wives: Lady Ligonier, Lady Worsley and Lady Grosvenor.² Lady Ligonier and her illicit liaisons with Alfieri and her husband's head

¹ Criminal conversation cases could be brought until the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857. Amanda Vickery in *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London, 1998), p.73 notes that full Divorces by Act of Parliament were very expensive and thus infrequent, numbering only 325 between 1670 and 1857. However, as observed by T.H. Hollingsworth in 'The Demography of the British Peerage', supplement to *Population Studies* 18, 2 (1964), p.24, table 16, the percentage rate of divorces peaked in the mid and later decades of the eighteenth century, the period in which the cases under consideration were brought to trial. For divorce generally, see L. Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1990). Unfortunately, Professor Stone does not deal with any of the cases under consideration in this chapter in depth.

² The anonymous author of *Memoirs of Sir Finical Whimsy and his Lady* (London, 1782), satirising the Worsley trial, dedicated his work to Lady Grosvenor. *An Epistle from L---y W---y to S-r R---d W---y, Bart.* (London, 1782), pp.3,4 claimed that Lady Worsley reigned over other "knowing, well-experienc'd Dame(s)," such as "G---r" and "L---r." Finally, *The Whore: a Poem, written by a Whore of Quality* (London, 1782), p.7 discussed the Ladies Ligonier and Grosvenor along with its main focus of attack, Lady Worsley, condemning all three as: "High fed, high bred, high marry'd too, indeed."

groom have been discussed in some detail in chapter two and thus this section will focus on her “sisters in high life.”³ In 1782, Sir Richard Worsley attempted to sue George Bisset for £20,000 for having “debauched, deflowered, lay with, and carnally (known)” his wife, Seymour.⁴ His case was, however, spectacularly overturned. Mr Bearcroft for the defence succeeded in demonstrating, not only that Mr Bissett was but one of many with whom Lady Worsley had enjoyed extra-marital relations, but that her husband had actively connived at their activities.⁵ The most salacious example provided was that Lord Worsley had hoisted Bissett onto his shoulders to enable him to spy on Seymour taking a bath. Consequently, a mere one shilling in damages was awarded.⁶ The earlier case of Lady Grosvenor in 1770 was equally notorious, especially as her lover was none other than the Duke of Cumberland, the King’s brother. Their illicit relationship was brought to a sudden end when her husband’s servants burst in on them in an inn in St. Albans: “Upon breaking down the door at the inn, (they) found the Lady with her Dresden unbuttoned, and her breasts wholly exposed...on their entering, her Ladyship made towards the door of communication with the next room, but in the attempt fell.”⁷ The jury took just over two hours to find

³ *The Whore: a Poem*, p.7. See chapter 2, pp.116-8

⁴ *Trial between the Rt. Hon. Sir RICHARD WORSLEY, Bt., Plaintiff, and GEORGE MAURICE BISSETT, Esq., Defendant* (London, 1782), p.1

⁵ See Horace Walpole’s account, *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, eds. W.S. Lewis, W.H. Smith and G.L. Lam, 48 Vols. (London and New Haven, 1960), XXV, pp.245-6, Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 25 February 1782

⁶ As reported in *The Life and Amours of Lady Ann F-L-Y: Developing the Whole of her Intrigues from the Time of her Marriage with the Hon. Edward Foley, in October 1778, till the Present Time* (London, 1782), p.12, the council for the defence in the later trial of Lady Ann Foley attempted to reproduce this spectacular result. He thus attempted to prove that Lord Foley had connived at the adultery and willingly “*pocket(ted) his horns.*”

⁷ *The Trial of His R.H. the D.of C., July 5th 1770 for Criminal Conversation with Lady Harriet G----R* (London, 1770), p.11

the Duke of Cumberland guilty of criminal conversation, whereupon they ordered him to pay £10,000 in damages. Elizabeth Chudleigh's adultery was somewhat more serious as a jury at Westminster Hall in 1776 concluded that she had bigamously married both the Hon. Augustus John Hervey and Evelyn Pierrepont, 2nd Duke of Kingston, the latter by this time deceased. The case had been instigated by Kingston's nephew, aggrieved that she had inherited his uncle's entire estate and fortune. However, despite being found guilty, her peerage exempted her from the corporeal punishment legally due and no other action could be taken against her. She was released with instructions to pay the court fees and a recommendation that she look long and hard into her conscience.

Such trials were widely attended. Hannah More estimated the presence of some five thousand spectators at that of the Duchess of Kingston, noting the Duke of Newcastle, Lady Derby and the Duchess of Devonshire as amongst their numbers.⁸ Mrs Harris, after her visit to Westminster, observed the presence of the Queen with her four eldest sons, the Princess Royal, Lord and Lady Holderness, General Fitzroy, Lady Charlotte Finch and Lord Lincoln.⁹ The case dominated all polite conversation. Mrs Harris claimed that "nobody talks of anything but the Duchess of Kingston," James Northcote informed his brother that "the Duchess of Kingston is now trying and

⁸ *Memoirs of the life of Mrs Hannah More: Abridged*, ed. W. Roberts (London, 1839), pp.39-41, Hannah More to a member of her family, 1776. This fulfilled the prophecy of the anonymous author of *The Trial of Robert Feilding Esq...for Felony in Marrying her Grace the Duchess of Cleveland; his First Wife being then Alive;...to which is added an Appendix relating to the Indictment instituted against Elizabeth, Duchess of Kingston, Pointing to Circumstances Somewhat Similar* (London, 1776), p.42: "The case of a Peeress, thus charged with bigamy, is so extraordinary, that doubtless the hall will be crowded."

⁹ *Letters of the First Earl of Malmesbury, his Family and Friends* ed. the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Malmesbury, 2 Vols. (London, 1870), I, p.344, Mrs Harris to her son, 16 April 1776

everybody is talking about it” whilst Bessy Ramsden wrote, “there is nothing talk[ed] of now but the preparations for the Trial of the Duchess of Kingston.”¹⁰ The comments of Mrs Ramsden demonstrate the combination of “fascinated admiration, deferential respect, scandalised horror, amused condescension and lofty disregard” that characterised the reactions of the genteel. This schoolmaster’s wife was clearly enthralled with the details of the trial but simultaneously proud of her self-possession in refusing no less than three offers to attend.¹¹ The widespread interest in such cases created an extensive audience for the proliferation of associated literature and memorabilia. Accounts appeared in magazines, newspapers and periodicals and numerous pamphlets were published, many going into several editions within the year. These ephemeral tracts were both reasonably financially accessible at an average price of one or two shillings and physically attainable through shops, newspaper advertisements and street hawkers. Indeed, as shown by the frequent publication of anthologies of trial reports, often featuring cases some ten years in the past, the widespread fascination with the adulterous liaisons of the elite was remarkably protracted.¹²

¹⁰ *Letters of the First Earl of Malmesbury*, I, p.344, Mrs Harris to her son, 16 April 1776; The Whitley Papers, Vol.IX, f.1098, James Northcote to his brother, 18 April 1776; Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p.238, Bessy Ramsden to Elizabeth Shackleton, 1776

¹¹ Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, pp.37, 238

¹² For example, the anonymous *Trials for Adultery: or, The History of Divorces. Being select trials at Doctors Commons, for Adultery, Fornication, Cruelty, Impotence &c. from the Year 1760, to the present Time. Including the Whole of the Evidence on Each Case...Taken in Short hand by a Civilian* 7 Vols. (London, 1779-80), V, pp.1-304 and VI, pp.3-202 provided an account of the Cumberland case of more than five hundred pages, some ten years after the events had taken place. The trial was also recalled to public attention by F. Plowden, *Criminal Conversation Biography; or, Celebrated Trials in the Ecclesiastical and Civil Courts for Adultery* (1789), 2 Vols. (London, 1830), I, pp.240-93

Advertisements for these pamphlets frequently emphasised their inclusion of one or more prints. In 1786, *The Daily Universal Register* announced the publication of an account of a criminal conversation trial in which Lord Foley had sued the Earl of Peterborough for adultery with his wife, most famously in the environs of a shrubbery. This tract was a lavish affair at two shillings and sixpence, a price justified by its three engravings which were described by the advert in some detail.¹³ Similarly, in July 1770, *The Public Advertiser* informed its readers of a new account of the Grosvenor trial, “illustrated with two beautiful Copper Plates, being very striking Likenesses of his R- H- and her Ladyship.”¹⁴ Prints were clearly a major selling point of such texts. They could be cut out, sometimes to be stuck into scrapbooks or bound volumes of famous people, but also to be pasted or framed and hung on walls.¹⁵ As revealed by a comparison with one of the cheaper editions of William Hogarth’s series, *The Four Times of the Day*, published in 1751 at the price of one shilling, buying images in this way was financially attractive.

As well as enhancing their popularity, illustrations helped to justify the motivations behind these tracts. Many authors argued that, by disclosing adulterous

¹³ *The Daily Universal Register*, 2 June 1786. The engravings were cited as, “1. The Driving Scene; or, a new Method of moving in a Post-Chaise. 2. The Oak-Tree Scene; or, the Erect Lovers. 3. Love in a Furze-Bush; or, the Elastic Touch.”

¹⁴ *The Public Advertiser*, 13 July 1770

¹⁵ C. McGreery, ‘Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*: The *Tête-à-Tête* Series in the *Town and Country Magazine*’, in H. Barker and E. Chalus, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London and New York, 1997), p.216. Inventories demonstrate the remarkable depth of the market for pictures, ranging from gentry families through the vagaries of the middling ranks down to the labouring class. See L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London and New York, 1988), especially p.168, Table 8:1 ‘A Social-Status Hierarchy: Frequencies of Ownership of Goods in a Sample of Inventories in England, 1675-1725.’ Similarly, Timothy Clayton in *The English Print 1688-1802* (New Haven and London, 1997), p.23 observes that the suitability of prints as ornaments was a constant refrain of advertisers.

affairs, they were embarrassing the perpetrators of such crimes and exposing them to “judgement from public opinion.”¹⁶ For example, the author of *The Devil Divorced; or, The Diabo-Whore*, a pamphlet following close on the heels of the Worsley case, hoped that one of its “salutary effects” would be “to put vice to the blush.”¹⁷ Second, the hacks claimed that they were both deterring others from succumbing to such temptations and spurring those who had already done so to recant their evil ways. The seven volumes of *Trials for Adultery: or, The History of Divorces* were justified “To the PUBLIC” with the argument: “The transactions of the adulterer and adulteress will, by being thus publicly circulated, preserve others from the like crime, from the fear of shame, when the fear of punishment may have but little force.”¹⁸ Such rationales were entirely conventional. As Kathryn Shevelow has noted with reference to the periodical, cautionary portraits of “the unfit mother, the uncompanionable wife, the uneducated, ignorant and thus fallible female” provided standard anti-models against which to regulate conduct.¹⁹

Visual satires could be argued to assist in the reformation and embarrassment of the debauched. The author of an instruction manual for drawing caricature analogised satiric painting and poetry, contending that both

¹⁶ *The Life and Memoirs of Elizabeth Chudleigh, afterwards Mrs Hervey and Countess of Bristol commonly called Duchess of Kingston* (London, 1788), p.5

¹⁷ *The Devil Divorced; or, The Diabo-Whore* (London, 1782), p.iv

¹⁸ *Trials for Adultery*, I, p.iii

¹⁹ K. Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London and New York, 1989) p.53. Cindy McGreery in ‘Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*’, pp.222-3 notes how the accounts accompanying Tête-à-Tête satires in *The Town and Country Magazine*, engravings that paired oval portraits of a man and a woman rumoured to be illicitly involved, often recommended that such behaviour be either copied or condemned. She similarly observes how frequently the editors of the periodical claimed their aim to be moral instruction.

may be most efficaciously employed in the cause of virtue and decorum, by holding up to public notice, many offenders against both, who are not amenable to any other tribunal, and who, though they contemptuously defy all serious reproof, tremble at the thoughts of seeing their vices or follies attacked by the keen shafts of ridicule.²⁰

Pictorial descriptions of highly personal and usually sexual incidents could thus be seen to function as both deterrent and punishment. The alarm that they could (or, rather, that the satirists hoped that they could) create amongst the vitiated elite, is expressed in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*. Lady Delacour is concerned that her retreat from the world of dissipated fashion will be perceived as other than a conscious moral choice. She fears "witticism, epigrams, caricatures without end" and anticipates, "we should have 'Lord and Lady D--, or The Domestic Tête-à-Tête, or The Reformed Amazon,' stuck up in a print-shop window!"²¹

Imagery was also called on to support these authors' claims that they sought simply to reveal the 'truth,' to relay facts that had either been falsified or only partially conveyed by their competitors. One account of the lives of Lord and Lady Ligonier strongly drew on such rhetoric. It asserted that, whilst many similar publications were "repugnant to truth, decency, and sound morality," its own sources were "genuine and

²⁰ *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas; with an Essay on Comic Painting* (London, 1788), p.4. This was a traditional argument. See also, H. Fielding, 'The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews' (1742), in A. Humphreys, ed., *Henry Fielding: Joseph Andrews and Shamela* (London, 1993), preface, pp.47-53

²¹ M. Edgeworth, *Belinda* (1801), ed. E. Ni Chuilleanain (London, 1994), p.276

authentic” and thus entirely laudable.²² The authors of an article on the Duchess of Kingston, published in the *British Magazine and Review*, similarly claimed; “our business is only to relate facts, and to found our opinions upon incontrovertible truths,” whilst *The Life and Memoirs of Elizabeth Chudleigh* was significantly subtitled *Written from Authentic Information and Original Documents*. The text reiterated the point made in the title, reassuring its readers that every detail of the case was related “with fairness and candour” and that nothing was either extenuated or told in malice. The result, it proudly claimed, was “a true tale...unbiassed by prejudice, unvarnished by partiality, and supported by the evidence of facts.”²³

Prints helped to consolidate this desired impression of authenticity, anticipating the still potent power of the photograph to imply an unbiased and unfalsified testimony. *The Trial of Robert Feilding*, published in 1776, contained an appendix which discussed the Duchess of Kingston’s case and was supported by a remarkably detailed engraving (fig.116). It describes the hall at Westminster where she was tried and depicts both the protagonists of the case and its audience. The scene is elucidated with the assistance of a large and complicated reference system. For

²² *The Generous Husband; or, the History of Lord Lelius and the Fair Emilia: containing likewise the genuine memoirs of Asmodei, the pretended Piedmontese count, from the time of his birth, to his late ignominious fall in Hyde Park* (London, 1771), pp.v, vii. The author further claimed his intention to be “exposing vice, promoting virtue, innocently entertaining the reader, conveying instruction by example...”

²³ *The British Magazine and Review*, 1782, p.91; *The Life and Memoirs of Elizabeth Chudleigh*, p.5. Also, McGreery in ‘Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*’, pp.212-3 remarks that the editors of *The Town and Country Magazine* were often keen to deny that their accounts of illicit affairs were fabricated. To aid in this, they often complained that readers were submitting unsubstantiated or purely fictional articles for inclusion. She contends that they were only partially accurate, often exaggerated and sometimes completely falsified. H. Bleackley, on the other hand, in ‘Tête-à-Tête Portraits in ‘The Town and Country Magazine’, *Notes and Queries*, 10th Series 4 (23 September 1905), p.242, denied that they were either “spurious or inaccurate.”

example, the viewer is informed that '4' designates the Lord High Steward's chair whilst '5' locates the "Lord High Steward removed from his chair, nearer the bar for conveniency of hearing." The textual accompaniment also informs the viewer of particulars of colour and material not easily conveyed through a graphic medium, noting, "all the seats are covered, and scaffolding hung with red baize."²⁴ Such prints conveyed a sense of veracity, suggesting personal acquaintance with events that were, for most, both spatially and socially distant.

Despite these high-flown moral assertions, the real motives behind both literary and visual satire were probably far removed from the realm of social conscience. Rather, it was the entertaining and scandalous nature of the behaviour of these aristocrats that stimulated the avaricious public demand for informative publications.²⁵ Titillation was probably also a prime moving force.²⁶ Indeed, in numerous satires of Lady Worsley taking her infamous bath, she ironically has her back turned to the official voyeur, Mr Bissett, in order to display her physical attractions to the viewer (figs.117, 118 and 122). The highly revealing costume worn by Elizabeth Chudleigh to the Venetian Ambassadors ball in 1749, attending in the character of Iphigenia, was also remarkably popular with graphic artists.²⁷ Occasionally, contemporaries did question the superficial moralising of the

²⁴ *The Trial of Robert Feilding Esq.*, opening illustration

²⁵ McGreery, 'Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*', p.223

²⁶ P. Wagner, 'The Pornographer in the Court-room: Trial Reports about Cases of Sexual Crimes and Delinquencies as a Genre of Eighteenth-Century Erotica', in P. Boucé, ed., *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, 1982), p.124

²⁷ See, for example, Anon., *Miss CHUDLEIGH, in the CHARACTER of IPHIGENIA, at the Venetian Ambassador's Masquerade* (c.1749) and F. Chesham, *DUCHESS of KINGSTON as she appeared at the Venetian Ambassador's Ball in Somerset House* (c.1749), both in the National Portrait Gallery's engravings collection. An inscription on the latter claims, very dubiously, that the print is taken from a portrait by Thomas Gainsborough.

pamphleteers. A character in *Reflections on Celibacy and Marriage*, published in 1771, argued that such accounts of licentious behaviour were merely entertaining. Indeed, rather than deterring their readers from similarly sinful activities, they were more likely to provide encouragement by acquainting them with the particulars of vice.²⁸

Public curiosity concerning the physical appearance of these notorious celebrities enhanced the popularity of such images. Satirists often drew on extant portraits of the protagonists in order to fulfil this demand. For example, in 1775, *The Matrimonial Magazine* published a satire on the Duchess of Kingston by W. Nicolls (fig.119). Entitled *The Married Maid of Honour, or, The Widow's Wife and her two Husbands*, it depicts Elizabeth Chudleigh in a head and shoulders oval, surmounting similar portraits of her two husbands in profile.²⁹ This representation of the Duchess was probably derived from an early portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, executed in the mid 1740s (fig.120). The pictures share the same tilt of the head, the same sideways glance, the same features, a similar costume and an identical hairstyle.³⁰ Thus, imagery from the more elevated genre of portraiture has been de-contextualised and

²⁸ F. Douglas, *Reflections on Celibacy and Marriage; in Four Letters to a Friend; In which the ADVANTAGES and DISADVANTAGES of the two STATES are compared* (London, 1771), p.60

²⁹ Printed to accompany 'Memoirs of the Married Maid of Honour; or, The Widow'd Wife' in *The Matrimonial Magazine; or, Monthly Anecdotes of love and Marriage for the Court, the City and the Country* January 1775, pp.9-13

³⁰ A. Graves and W.V. Cronin, *A History of the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds PRA* 4 Vols. (London, 1899), I, pp.174-5 record this painting and date it to c.1747. I have only been able to trace the image in its mezzotinted form, a reproduction of which is in the Chudleigh file in the Heinz Archive at the National Portrait Gallery, London. It may be the portrait referred to by James Northcote in a letter to his brother, 18 April 1776, quoted in *The Whitley Papers*, Vol.IX, f.1098: "Sir Joshua has a head of her done by him more than thirty years since, at Saltram, before he went to Italy." McGreery in 'Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*', pp.210, 213 has noted a similar use of portraits and miniatures by the creators of the *Tête-à-Têtes*.

redefined to suit the narrative wishes of the satirist. The print not only infers the duality of the Duchess's married life through the arrangement of its components, but also suggests the perversity of her activities through the perversion of several pictorial 'types.' The positioning of Captain Hervey and the Duke of Kingston in horizontally aligned, oval portraits, reproduced alongside a chronicle of their lives, instantly recalls the Tête-à-Tête engravings that were a popular feature of *The Town and Country Magazine*. These typically consisted of twin pictures of a (normally famous) man and a (less often famous) woman, preceding an account of the (usually illicit) affair between them (fig.121). By replacing the lovers with the two husbands of one woman, the familiar model is humorously ruptured and the narrative of a romantic union destroyed. *The Married Maid of Honour* similarly echoes and overthrows the format of the pendant tradition. The mutually complementary and harmonious *concordia discors* and division of marital relations into masculine and feminine spheres are denied in the eradication of the dualised format. Similarly, the supposed equality of the companionate marriage, expressed in the presentation of spouses in equally prominent pictorial and spatial terms, is here nullified by the Duchess's dominant position.

Thus, the likeness as painted by Reynolds has become subservient to the chronicle and the positive portrait, intended to flatter and enhance, is inverted and incorporated into the negative genre of printed satire, designed to criticise and lampoon. However, it can be argued that such portraits and satires functioned in similar ways, albeit to different ends. First, a central feature of the workings of both genres is what Richard Brilliant has referred to as the act of 'naming'. He emphasises that 'likeness' only comes into play once the subject has been identified, either through the provision of necessary information, or through the process of recognition.

This enables the viewer to compare subject and representation.³¹ In portraits, such as that by Reynolds, the connection established by such identification enables the generic qualities of beauty, modesty and youth to be associated with the individual sitter and the flattering agenda of the genre to be fulfilled. In satires, such as that in *The Matrimonial Magazine*, naming enables the details of the image to be understood through recollection of the associated narrative (in this case, the bigamy trial). Indeed, the importance of this process helps to explain the eighteenth-century *penchant* for referring to subjects as ‘L--y W--y’ or ‘L--y G-’. Far from obscuring identification, the quantity and popularity of texts and images relating to such characters’ activities filled in the gaps as effectively as the printer, simultaneously preventing any repercussions in terms of prosecution for libel. Indeed, the application of externally gathered knowledge to the individual work under scrutiny must have enhanced its attractiveness as a consumer object, facilitating a sensation of knowledge, recognition and fulfilment of curiosity.³²

Thus, ‘naming’ functioned in both negative and positive terms. As Jonathan Richardson had argued early in the century:

Upon the sight of a portrait, the character, and master-strokes of the history of the person it represents are apt to flow in upon the mind, and to be the subject of conversation: so that to sit for one’s picture, is to have an abstract

³¹ R. Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London, 1991), p.30

³² McGreery, ‘Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*’, p.214

of one's life written, and published, and ourselves thus consigned over to *honour or infamy*.³³

The idea of the portrait as more than a record of an individual's features, as also conveying character and history, was central to Richardson's thought and was subsequently adopted and developed by Reynolds. In his *Discourses*, the President of the Royal Academy denigrated detailed physical description and recommended that his students reduce sitters to "classes and general descriptions." Whilst this argument may have read as an apologia for his own problems in capturing an accurate likeness, it did suggest that portraiture was more elevated than permitted by traditional academic precept, and let him claim; "there are therefore large ideas to be found even in this contracted subject."³⁴ However, Reynolds's theoretical attempts to distil character were ironically parallel to the satirical process. The largely anonymous artists of the prints under discussion similarly reduced individuals to generalised types, categorising them as aristocratic whores or as profligate and amoral noblemen.

H. Berger's criticism of art historians who assume an unproblematic link between pictorial and biographical representation, regarding the image as the window to the archive, raises an important discrepancy between portraiture and satire. He argues that the sitting should be understood as a process of mutual interaction between painter and sitter, one that is thus inherently fashioned and artificial.³⁵ Whilst this is,

³³ J. Richardson, 'An Essay on The Theory of Painting' (1715), in *The Works of Mr. Jonathon Richardson* (London, 1773), p.7. My italics

³⁴ Discourses IV and XI, in Sir J. Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (1769-1790), ed. R.R. Wark (1966) (London, 4th edition, 1969), pp.67, 177

³⁵ H. Berger, 'Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture', *Representations* 46 (Spring 1994), especially p.89. The reciprocity of portraiture has also been noted

arguably, an accurate analysis of the construction of a portrait, the role of biography in satire is very different. First, the creation of the satirical print is essentially independent from and does not involve the subject of the work. Simultaneously, the representation and the archive are juxtaposed, the latter inspiring the image which, in turn, illustrates that 'history'. Distortion between subject and representation occurs in the artist's selection of elements from the archive and as a result of the light in which she or he chooses to view them. Thus, whilst the disjuncture between the sitter's life and the portrait is created by a dialogue between the painter and the sitter, the gap between the sitter's life and the satire is the product of a much more extensive process. And, as distortions of reality in portraiture enhance our knowledge of socially approved 'norms', so distortions in satire provide biographical information through the filter of popular opinion.

The mutual reliance of pictorial satires and pamphlets, supposedly of moral intent but rather concerned with the provision of information, entertainment and titillation, can be reinforced by analysis of the images prompted by the Worsley trial. The central features of the archetypal print of Mr Bissett gazing on the attractions of his mistress through the window of the bathing house at Maidstone were all taken from textual accounts. The alarm of the maid, the peering visage of Bissett, the husband distinguished by his horns and the crude puns on military jargon were repeated again and again (figs.117, 118, 122 and 124). Similarly, mythological references proliferated throughout both literary and visual material. *Lady Worsley dressing in the Bathing House* (fig.122) includes a painting of Susanna bathing in her

by Richard Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society* (London, 1996), especially chapter 4 and Michael Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough: 'A Little Business for the Eye'* (New

garden, the two elders peering at her over the wall. The witticism of this conceit relies on the discrepancy between the events following the respectively contemporary and historical incidents of voyeurism. Whilst Lady Worsley left the baths in the company of her husband and lover, amused by the escapade, the virtuous Susanna spurned the attempts of her would-be seducers and was consequently put on trial.³⁶ Meanwhile, *A Peep into LADY W!!!!Y'S Seraglio* (fig.123) contrasted the main protagonist with Lucretia. A picture of the virtuous Roman Matron, on the verge of stabbing herself rather than face dishonour, ironically hangs above Lady Worsley's bedroom door and its lengthy queue of her paramours. Seymour's promiscuity is thus emphasised through contrast and the poignancy of the satirical intent is enhanced. Once again, such references added to pictorial complexity, necessitating the application of knowledge and thereby enhancing interest. They also implied a schism between ancient morality and contemporary society and thus located such images within the popular discourse of the corruption of the modern age.

The notion of the harem was similarly exploited by the author of *The Whim!!! or, The Maidstone Bath*. He ironically praised Lady Worsley's desire for a "Male seraglio" as boosting the naval trade "in supplying those *Male Seraglios* with youths." This pamphlet also referred to Venus in its dedication, echoing images in which Lady Worsley is depicted in the traditional pose of the *Venus Pudica* (figs.117 and 118). However, whilst one hand covers the pubic area according to the classical model, the fact that she fails to bring her other arm across her breasts enhances the impression

Haven and London, 1999), p.136. The latter notes that Gérard de Lairesse wrote at length on the subject, suggesting that a good rapport between artist and sitter was conducive to a successful painting.

³⁶ The same analogy between Lady Worsley and Susanna was employed in a print entitled *The Maidstone Bath, or the modern Susanna*, published in March 1782 (fig.118).

that such images functioned as pornography. Finally, *The Whim!!!* explored an extended comparison between Lady Worsley and Diana and, consequently, between Mr. Bisset and Actaeon, thus evoking the archetypal cuckold who features in many of the pictorial satires.³⁷ For example, *The SHILLING or the Value of A P...Y*, published in February 1782 (fig.124), depicts Lord Worsley recoiling in horror at the outcome of the trial whilst horns sprout from his head.³⁸

* * * * *

Such literary and visual accounts of aristocratic adultery and lewd behaviour helped to promote the already popular and established stereotype of the elite ranks as licentious, idle, extravagant and irresponsible. One narrative of the Worsley case was announced with the following assertion:

THOSE who are not conversant with the affairs and transactions of what is called the Beau Monde, and who are unacquainted with the vices and dissipation that at present so generally prevail among those to whose lot it hath fallen to move in the higher and more exalted ranks and stations, will probably think the characters of many of the great personages drawn in the

³⁷ *The Whim!!! Or, The Maidstone Bath, a Kentish Poetic dedicated to Lady Worsley* (London, 1782), pp.ii, iv, especially stanza XIX. See also *An Epistle from L---y W---*: "Without a blush I gave him time to gaze;/ And set his youthful Spirits in a blaze;/ Not so chaste Dian by Actaeon seen,/ What I exposed, *she* most contrived to screen."

³⁸ Also, see Anon., *Maidstone Whim* (8 Mar 1782, The British Museum)

following sheets, grossly overcharged. This, however, the author is sorry to say, is by no means the case.³⁹

The association between high rank and high levels of uncontrolled and illicit sexual activity was insistently repeated. *The Morning Post* in 1776, the year of the trial of the Duchess of Kingston, claimed that “the excess to which pleasure and dissipation are now carried amongst the *ton* exceeds all bounds, particularly among women of quality.”⁴⁰ Assertions such as “CONJUGAL Infidelity is become so general that it is hardly considered as criminal; especially in the fashionable world,” or “ADULTERY is become so fashionable, and divorces so frequent, that it may admit of some debate in the polite world whether the first is criminal or the latter dishonourable” were standard.⁴¹ Indeed, the first edition of *The Town and Country Magazine*, a publication that made a great feature of scandal and intrigue, argued that “the gallantry” of its times would “make a greater *éclat* in the annals of the polite world” than any preceding “histories of court intrigues.”⁴²

The reasons suggested for the perceived iniquities of the great-but-not-so-good were various. Many, including Eliza Haywood and the editors of *The Town and*

39 *The Devil Divorced*, p.i

40 *The Morning Post*, 11 March 1776

41 *Trials for Adultery*, I, p.iii; *The Trial of His R.H. the D.of C.*, p.iii

42 *The Town and Country Magazine; or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction and Entertainment* January 1769, p.13. The same conventions appeared in other genres. In Henry Fielding’s novel *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), ed. R.P.C. Mutter (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.542, Mrs Fitzpatrick ironically asserts that her noble ‘friend’ (by inference her keeper) is “almost the only person of high rank, who was entirely constant to the marriage bed.” Richard Steele conveyed a similar message in his play, ‘The Conscious Lovers, a Comedy’ (1722) in *The Dramatick Works of the Late Sir Richard Steele* (London, 1732), p.63. Sir John Bevil retorts to aspersions on his son’s morals: “I can’t help saying that what might injure a Citizen’s Credit, may be no stain to a Gentleman’s honour.”

Country Magazine, believed that female education in polite circles was superficial, largely concerned with attaining idle graces and accomplishments and thus incapable of inculcating moral standards.⁴³ This trope was significantly evoked at the beginning of an account of the Duchess of Kingston's infamous life as a possible explanation for her behaviour.⁴⁴ Second, "high living", at least in the view of Wetenhall Wilkes, was an inevitable cause of "high Passions" as "luxury is always attended by Lust."⁴⁵ Third on the list of evils was idleness. The author of *The Life and Amours of Lady Ann F-L-Y* argued that, whilst the poorer sorts spent their lives engrossed in domestic duties and thus had neither the time nor the inclination to seek alternative pleasures, women such as Lady Foley were able to delegate such duties and thus to indulge in amorous diversions.⁴⁶ Similarly, Priscilla Wakefield suggested that "some of the unhappy deviations from conjugal fidelity, which of later years have so often given employment to the gentlemen of Doctors Commons" might well have been avoided had the women concerned busied themselves in fulfilling "the tender duties of the maternal character."⁴⁷

More specific allegations were made against elite marriages themselves. The supposedly frequent breakdown of conjugal relations within such circles was ascribed to perversion of the power structures of choice and motivation.⁴⁸ *The Trial of His R.H.*

⁴³ E. Haywood, *The Female Spectator* (1744-6), ed. G.M. Firmager (London, 1993), p.109; *The Town and Country Magazine* June 1771, p.294

⁴⁴ *The Life and Memoirs of Elizabeth Chudleigh*, p.6

⁴⁵ W. Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1744) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1751), p.87

⁴⁶ *The Life and Amours of Lady Ann F-L-Y...*, p.21

⁴⁷ P. Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (London, 1798), p.44

⁴⁸ See chapter one, *passim*.

the D. of C. proposed that Lady Grosvenor had been driven to adultery as “her marriage was not a match of her own choice, but strongly recommended to her by her parents.”⁴⁹ However, more commonly, neglect of affection was considered to be the prime reason for such marital debacles. Aristocratic unions were, it was frequently argued, “rather Leagues and Treaties of Alliances and Confederacy than Weddings” and thus naturally productive of “disloyalty, breach of Faith and Honour, and the worst sort of Perjury on both Sides.”⁵⁰ Mr B in *Pamela* echoed such views, describing a ‘typical’ marriage between two people of fortune as between two spoilt individuals, in whose decision to wed, “birth, and fortune, are the first motives, affection the last.” The product of such a union was inevitably “separate beds...perhaps elopements, guilty ones sometimes; if not, an unconquerable indifference, possibly aversion.”⁵¹ These theories informed both the pamphlet and the trial report. The author of the *Memoirs of Sir Finical Whimsy* justified Lady Worsley’s adultery by the lack of affection in her marriage. He claimed that Sir Richard had merely proposed to her in order to pay his debts with her dowry.⁵² A similar excuse was made on behalf of Lady Grosvenor. *The Town and Country* explained to its readers that her husband had only

⁴⁹ *The Trial of His R.H. the D.of C.*, p.iv

⁵⁰ D. Defoe, *Conjugal Lewdness; or, Matrimonial Whoredom* (London, 1727), pp.98, 99

⁵¹ S. Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740/1), ed. M.A. Doody (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp.463-4

⁵² *Memoirs of Sir Finical Whimsy*, pp.5-6 explained that Worsley’s fortune had been bequeathed to distant relatives until he turned twenty-one, by which time he had run up debts to the tune of some £60,000: “To remove it, a match with a wealthy heiress was recommended, as the most speedy and effectual method.” Having made unsuccessful advances to Seymour’s elder sister, he turned his attentions to her sibling.

married on account of the deteriorating health consequent upon a life of sexual irregularity.⁵³

The views of the pamphleteers and the prominence they gave to aristocratic cases thus pertained more to social ideals, 'norms' and concerns than to the realities of the domestic and sexual lives of the aristocracy. Conduct writers and preachers often evoked the antithesis to the values they were seeking to promote; lauding love and loyalty in wedlock and thereby condemning disharmony and infidelity. The pamphleteers took this antithetical model, employed in these genres as an abstract notion, and applied it to the individuals under consideration. Thus, the prescriptive provided conventions for assessing and criticising actual events. In many ways, the location of particular cases within this generalised body of discourse was inevitable. First, pamphlets had to appeal to mainstream discourse in order to highlight transgression. They could thereby evoke what appeared to be 'public opinion' in order to condemn the aberrant individual. Second, the pamphlet genre had much in common with that of advice literature. Both provided entertainment and diversion whilst propounding moralising and didactic agendas, claiming to deter vice and to propagate virtue throughout society. Pamphlets thus brought real domestic events into the same discursive space as prescriptive writings, the disjuncture was apparent and the result was condemnation.⁵⁴

A central feature of this process of vilification was a constant emphasis on the extent to which the corrupt manners and morals of the elite influenced those of the

⁵³ *The Town and Country Magazine* December 1769, p.632

⁵⁴ *Free Thoughts on Seduction, Adultery and Divorce...by a Civilian* (London, 1771), prompted by the trial of Lady Grosvenor of the same year, reads very much like a conduct book, commenting on the nature of adultery and prescribing remedies for the immoral condition of contemporary society.

nation at large. First, the question of emulation was constantly raised. The author of the poem, *Hymen*, articulated the wider fear that the lower echelons would copy the iniquitous behaviour of their social superiors. Having described a corrupt and adulterous senator, he imagines: “Upward to him the low Plebeian looks;/ (Examples plead more strongly far than books.)” The ultimate result is that “the thoughtless wretch now copies what he sees” and corruption is diffused downwards through society.⁵⁵ Similarly, a letter published in *The Town and Country Magazine* as supposedly from the Duke of Cumberland’s tutor to his royal pupil, ironically praised the latter’s profligate behaviour in significant terms:

By detaching wives from their husbands, and loosening domestic ties, you will increase your celebrity; and as your example will be, probably, followed, as this age is, happily, an age of emulation, it is to be devoutly hoped that in a few years matrimony will be entirely abolished in the three Kingdoms.⁵⁶

These concerns, however, were expressed alongside wishes that evidence of elite immorality might function as a deterrent and the pattern of emulation inverted. The author of *Trials for Adultery*, for example, hoped that the numerous incidences of female profligacy and adultery outlined in the numerous volumes of his anthology might “deter the wavering wanton from the completion of her wishes.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Hymen; a Poem* (London, 1794), p.28

⁵⁶ *The Town and Country Magazine* July 1770, p.344

⁵⁷ *Trials for Adultery*, I, p.v. Much of the literature dealing with Lady Grosvenor followed the same didactic lines. *A Full and Complete History of His R--l H-- The D-- of C--d and Lady G--r, the Fair Adulteress* 2 Vols. (1770) (London, 3rd edition, 1770), II p.1 recommended: “Oh! ye fair, consider well the impropriety of her conduct, whom neither birth, nor exalted rank could shield...Think of this,

Thus, the Duke of Cumberland was described by pamphletists as a public figure who had abused his prominent position in society by setting a bad example to his subordinates. *A Circumstantial Narrative* recorded the views of Mr. Wedderburn, council for the plaintiff; “no given sum could be punishment sufficient, as the elevated rank, and situation of life he sustained, should the more deter him from setting a bad example to the subordinate classes of society.”⁵⁸ This sentiment was echoed by another anonymous author, claiming the conduct of princes to be of national concern due to the influence inherent in “their titular and elevated station.”⁵⁹ The poignancy of Cumberland’s betrayal of public responsibility was highlighted by comparison with his brother, George III. The dissolute Duke was constantly contrasted with the virtuous and domestic King, a worthy role model for his subjects. Wedderburn was quoted as recommending that the Duke should “copy from a very near relation of his...whose conjugal attachments, abstracted from his other virtues, not only ornamented the throne he filled, but shed a bright example to his subjects in general.”⁶⁰ Similarly, the author of *Free Thoughts on Seduction* praised George III as “the most shining example of conjugal virtue that ever graced the annals of ancient or modern times.”⁶¹

oh! ye fair and let the indelible blot of infamy she has entailed on herself, be a constant check on your own conduct.”

⁵⁸ *A Circumstantial Narrative of a Late Remarkable Trial, to which are added the Letters that were produced on the occasion* (London, 1770), p.5

⁵⁹ *Free Thoughts on Seduction*, p.4

⁶⁰ *A Circumstantial Narrative*, p.6. Also cited in *The Town and Country Magazine* July 1770, p.366. Plowden in his *Criminal Conversation Biography*, I, p.241 records council remarking “that it would have been happy if his Majesty’s regular conduct had been diffused into his Royal Highness and his subjects, to make them as pure as he is; that his Royal Highness saw in his own family the greatest example of piety and conjugal fidelity.”

⁶¹ *Free Thoughts on Seduction*, p.276

This rhetoric found a correspondence in the pictorial representation of the royal brothers. Whilst Cumberland was depicted in numerous satires as a rake and an adulterer (figs.125 and 126), George III was represented in numerous portraits as an affectionate husband and a concerned father. Much has been written on the newly prevalent image of a happy and domestic royal household at this time. Simon Schama, in particular, has traced a linear development from “the clan of deities” represented in seventeenth-century images to the “domestic parlor group” as painted by Johann Zoffany in the 1760s and 1770s.⁶² Portraits such as *George III, Queen Charlotte and their Six Eldest Children* of 1770 (fig.127) depict a vista of loving familial relationships, supervised by the dominant figure of the King. His offspring play at his feet whilst the Queen is shown to be both a companionate wife by the miniature portrait of her husband over her heart and a kind and attentive mother by the baby on her lap.⁶³ This image was engraved and widely circulated, thus entering the print market at the same time as satires attacking the sexual mores of the King’s brother were being circulated.

Second, aristocratic immorality was held to be disruptive of public morality through the model of the nation as an agglomerate of its constituent families. The

⁶² S. Schama, ‘The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture 1500-1850’, in R.I. Rotberg and T.K. Rabb, eds., *Art and History: Images and their Meaning* (Cambridge, 1986), especially pp.155, 169-174. See also L. Colley, ‘The Apotheosis of George III’, *Past and Present* 102 (1984), pp.94-129

⁶³ However, the notion of a linear development to a purely private and domestic iconography should not, as noted by Eirwen Nicolson in a research seminar at the University of Warwick in 1996, be taken too far. Such images retain the traditional symbols of columns, crowns and drapes. Indeed, Schama himself notes in ‘The Domestication of Majesty’, p.171 that the Van Dyckian garb worn by the royal family in Zoffany’s portrait was one of those “ostentatious historical trappings which the king favored to identify himself with his ancestors.” Nevertheless, the domestic iconography of this image and its emphasis on familial relationships is still noticeable.

notion of the health and well-being of the family as critical to the health and well-being of the state was well established by this time and often employed by writers on the marital institution. Some regarded the nation as composed from the physical units of individual families. Henry Gally, author of the most prominent attack on clandestine marriages, argued that: "PRIVATE families ought to be, and have always been considered, as constituent Parts of larger Communities." Thus, he claimed, "the Peace and good Order of Society depend upon the Peace and good Order of private Families".⁶⁴ Maria Edgeworth expressed a similar sentiment in her paraphrase of Bernard de Mandeville: "Private *virtues* are public benefits: if each bee were content in his cell, there could be no grumbling hive; and if each cell were complete, the whole fabric must be perfect."⁶⁵ Some, however, rather presented families as microcosms of the wider society, as "little communities" or as "so many miniatures" of the state."⁶⁶ Both conceits were exploited by conduct and periodical writers who viewed marriage as "the sacred cement," as "the chief Bond of Society," as "the Foundation of Community" without which cities and republics would "run to ruin, and be entirely forsaken."⁶⁷

Thus, as well as providing a bad example to the plebeian, aristocratic adulterers and bigamists were viewed as inherently detrimental to national moral

⁶⁴ H. Gally, *Some Considerations upon Clandestine Marriages* (London, 1750), pp.5, 25-6

⁶⁵ M. Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), ed. C. Connolly (London, 1993), p.37

⁶⁶ S. Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and Reflections Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1755), p.326

⁶⁷ B. Franklin, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage: in Two Letters to a Friend* (1750) (London, 1759), p.iv; Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice*, p.125; *The Spectator* no.522 (29 October 1712), in *The Spectator* (1711-12, 1714), ed. D.F. Bond, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1965), IV, p.357; N. Venette, *Conjugal Love; or, The Pleasures of the Marriage Bed Considered in Several Lectures on Human Generation* (1703, first Dutch edition, 1687) (London, 20th edition, 1750), p.73

health. Such rhetoric was heavily exploited during the trial of the Duchess of Kingston. The Lord High Steward represented the crime of bigamy to the attendant masses as “destructive of the Peace and Happiness of Private Families, and...injurious in its Consequences to the Welfare and good Order of Society.”⁶⁸ Trial reporters adopted this view, quoting and paraphrasing the Steward’s words.⁶⁹ However, the pamphlet, *Free Thoughts on Seduction*, prompted by the Cumberland trial, was to explore such notions most fully. The defence had claimed that the Duke’s actions were of little relevance to the public, presenting his seduction of Lady Grosvenor as an entirely private matter. The council for the plaintiff had retorted that, on the contrary, it was a matter of concern to every peer and every married man in the country. The pamphlet’s author clearly sided with the latter, regarding the affairs of the Duke as critical “to the domestic happiness of every protestant husband” and even “to the manners and principles of the world at large.” Whilst he allowed that the crime of adultery was a private issue, he believed its punishment to be “an interesting object of *national* and *publick* concern” and advised that the Duke should be severely punished as “a salutary example to debauchees.” Indeed, he even went so far as to claim that any man not in favour of huge damages being awarded to Lord Grosvenor was either unmarried “or deserves to be made a most egregious dupe, by the first gallant that is inclined to seduce his wife.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Quoted in *The Trial of Elizabeth, Duchess Dowager of Kingston for Bigamy before the Right Honourable the House of Peers, in Westminster-Hall, in Full Parliament* (London, 1776), p.7; *Life and Memoirs of Elizabeth Chudleigh*, p.22 and noted by Mrs Harris in a letter to her son, 16 April 1776, cited in *Letters of the First Earl of Malmesbury*, I, p.343

⁶⁹ *The Trial of Robert Feilding Esq.*, p.42

⁷⁰ *Free Thoughts on Seduction*, advertisement and pp.22-4

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The activities of these elite adulterers, adulteresses and bigamists not only prompted a large quantity of engraved satirical material, but also affected the commissioning, appearance and public reception of their portraits. In some cases, representations of the individuals concerned were either sold or mutilated as a result of their misbehaviour. One example is Reynolds's portrait of Lady Worsley (fig.128), exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1780, a mere two years before her relationship with Mr Bissett came to (very) public attention. It seems that, prompted by the events preceding the criminal conversation trial, Sir Richard rejected this image of his perfidious wife and, as a result, it was given to her mother's husband.⁷¹ Likewise, George Stubbs's painting of John and Sophia Musters of 1777 (fig.129), depicting the couple embarking on a horseride from the newly rebuilt Colwick Hall, appeared, until earlier last century, to be simply a painting of two horses. Only after cleaning did the riders emerge and the conclusion was drawn that Sophia's figure had been painted over first. Her husband was removed only subsequently, presumably because the picture looked unbalanced with the lone Musters accompanied by a riderless horse. Its companion portrait suffered a similar fate. *John Musters and the Rev. Philip Story riding out from the Stable-Block at Colwick Hall* (fig.130) was, originally, also a painting of the Squire and his wife. Her figure was replaced with his clerical friend, apparently because of her passion for court society (antipathetic to her husband's more rural interests) and associated rumours of adulterous activities. Indeed, gossip columns popularly linked her name with that of the Prince Regent. In

⁷¹ M. Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800* (Oxford, 1997), p.202; N. Penny, *Reynolds* (London, 1986), pp.289-90

1786, the Squire confronted his wife and evicted her from Colwick Hall, relegating most of her portraits to the attic but recalling Stubbs to repaint these two. Thus, her pictorial presence was eradicated to mirror her physical absence.⁷²

Marcia Pointon has equated the material object of a portrait with the body of the female sitter, examining the way in which portraits were purchased, owned, sold, discarded and donated to alternative owners in the context of the legal ownership of women by men. Proposing the Worsley portrait to be “a body analogous to the physical body of the woman re-presented upon it,” she contends that Sir Richard “made the sight of that body available to a third party; in the ritualized world of commodity ownership and exchange, he gave away the symbolic body of his wife at the moment she ceased to be his property.”⁷³ The transfer and alteration of the portraits of Sophia Musters and Lady Worsley certainly reflects the transfer of their persons and alterations in the status quo of their marriages. These processes of relocation and eradication also evoke the portrait as a means of commemoration, as a pictorial record of an individual designed to express familial and affective ties and to provide a substitute in the event of the absence of the original.⁷⁴ Such motivations were effectively rendered null and void by the actions of these women. Familial and affective ties were terminated and the urge to provide a substitute for the original was lost when the absence of that original became, in effect, desired. Thus, the loss of the

⁷² H. Wilberforce Bell, ‘The Vicissitudes of a Picture by George Stubbs’, *Country Life*, 26 September 1936; B. Sewell, ‘The Strange Case of an Absent Wife’, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 8 December 1974; J. Egerton, *George Stubbs 1724-1806* (London, 1984), pp.157-8

⁷³ Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, pp.179, 205

⁷⁴ See S. Scholl, *Death and the Humanities* (Lewisbury, P.A., 1984), pp.42-3; J. Woodall, ‘Introduction: Facing the Subject’, in J. Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester and New York, 1997), p.8; R. Wendorf, *The Elements of Life: Biography and Portrait-Painting in Stuart and Georgian England* (Oxford, 1990), pp.9-10

relationship, affect and commemorative impulse led to the voluntary loss of the pictorial representation, whether in totality or through the process of repainting.

The events of sitters' lives also affected the history of their portraits in terms of the reaction and response of critics and of the viewing public at large. As discussed in chapter three, whilst most portraits were exhibited unidentified, many reviewers made a point of revealing the names of sitters for the benefit of their readers.⁷⁵ Thus, they enabled comparison between their representations and known aspects of their biographies. For example, Reynolds exhibited his large historical portrait of the three Montgomery sisters in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1774 as *Three ladies adorning a Term of Hymen; whole length* (fig.131). Whilst E.H. Gombrich argued that “the emblematical conception” behind the image, namely that each sister’s relationship to the statue of the god of marriage is dictated by her marital or non-marital status, “could only appeal to the intimate circle of the family,” this is contradicted by that year’s exhibition reviews.⁷⁶ A critic in *The Public Advertiser* identified the sisters and *The Morning Chronicle* went further and elucidated the conceit in full.⁷⁷ Indeed, it was hardly likely that so able a self-publicist as Reynolds would wish to confine the wit of his invention to his patrons alone.

⁷⁵ See chapter 3, pp.166-7

⁷⁶ E.H. Gombrich, ‘Reynolds’s Power and Practice of Imitation’, *The Burlington Magazine* 80 (1942), p.43. Anne, Lady Townshend, the only one of the sisters to have achieved the illustrious state of wedlock, is depicted as having already passed the statue of the God of Marriage and is adorning it with wreaths. Elizabeth, the sister who was soon to be married to the Rt. Hon. Luke Gardiner, the commissioner of the image, is centrally placed and engaged in passing flowers to Anne. Barbara, who was not to be married for another year, is furthest from the term and is merely collecting flowers in preparation for the rite. See also Penny, *Reynolds*, pp.262-3; Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, chapter 2, especially p.61

⁷⁷ *The Public Advertiser*, 1774, quoted Pointon, *Strategies for Showing*, p.61; *The Morning Chronicle*, 28 April 1774

Thanks to such identifications, the public could mentally applaud or deride the merits of sitters. One critic ironically commented that Reynolds's depiction of the Duke of Marlborough discussing a cameo with his son was not entirely apt, for the Duke was "by no means a virtuoso except in *coins*." He thus suggested to the artist: "If you had placed a *new guinea* it would be more *apropos*."⁷⁸ Indeed, the anonymity of Royal Academy catalogue entries was criticised by one 'DA.VINCI' in significant terms;

to me it would be greatly more interesting to know that No.- is the portrait of Lord A or his Grace the Duke of B than simply to be told, "Portrait of a nobleman." By this means the sentiments of their public conduct might be compared with those written in their countenances, and it would contribute to fix the attentive regard of the spectator upon a piece which otherwise, though ever so well executed, he might pass unnoticed.⁷⁹

Not only does this emphasise both the desire to compare representation and subject and widespread interest in physiognomy, in the face as the index to the mind, but it also confirms that such comparisons were of interest to the spectator. Indeed, A. Pasquin's critical guide to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1796 clearly exploited the fact that it "correctly named" all the portraits as a selling point.⁸⁰ Canvases such as Thomas Gainsborough's portraits of Lord and Lady Ligonier (figs.46 and 47), on

⁷⁸ *The General Advertiser*, 29 April 1778, discussing Sir Joshua Reynolds's *The Marlborough Family* of 1777/9 (fig.8)

⁷⁹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 22 May 1783

⁸⁰ A. Pasquin (J. Williams), *A Critical Guide to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, for 1796* (London, 1796), title page

display in the exhibition of 1771, could have been viewed as merely aesthetic objects by anyone (somehow) ignorant of the fact, that at that moment, the former was divorcing the latter on grounds of adultery. Most, however, must have taken an added interest in their likenesses for this very reason. It is likely that the contrast between the Duke's passive appearance and the alertness of his wife together with the dominating figure of Lord Ligonier's horse (particularly in light of his groom having enjoyed sexual relations with his wife) would have taken on enhanced significance.⁸¹

The publicised transgressions of aristocrats also influenced the commissioning of portraits. On occasion, an image proclaiming the status and moral virtue of a sitter seems to have been a direct response to public derision. As noted above, the character of the Duke of Cumberland, already damaged by numerous affairs, was further besmirched during the notorious criminal conversation case of 1770.⁸² Lady Mary Coke remarked on the extent to which he was "abused and ridiculed in every publick paper."⁸³ Trial reports abounded, the lovers' correspondence was published and re-published and satires proliferated. To make matters worse, just one year later, Cumberland married Anne Horton in a secret ceremony at her house. *The Town and Country Magazine* claimed that Horton's brother, concerned for the honour of his family, had instigated this union. It thus questioned which the marriage signified

⁸¹ R.R. Wark, *Meet the Ladies: Personalities in Huntington Portraits* (San Marino, California, 1972), p.17; M. Rosenthal, 'Thomas Gainsborough's *Ann Ford*', *Art Bulletin* 80, 4 (December 1998), pp.657-8

⁸² *The Town and Country Magazine* April 1769, pp.449-50 pointed out that the Duke had "rendered himself so celebrated in the annals of gallantry, that we have had occasion already to mention him more than once in this work."

⁸³ *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke* ed. J.A. Home, 4 Vols. (Bath, 1970), III, p.261, 22 July 1770

most; “the D. of C.’s...C--dice or his folly?”⁸⁴ Apparently, the first news that reached George III of this union was a letter sent from a hotel in Calais, the first stop on the newly-weds’ continental tour. The King was furious, society was deterred from receiving the couple in the knowledge that it would prohibit their own reception at court, the Duke of Cumberland was the only Knight not present at the Chapter of the Garter in June 1771 and the Royal Marriage Act of 1772 publicly condemned the union.⁸⁵

In light of such events, which sustained the scandal and gossip surrounding this peer, the display of Reynolds’s portraits of the Duke and his new wife at the Royal Academy in 1773 (figs.132 and 133) was highly significant, particularly as they were exhibited under their names.⁸⁶ For these paintings, the Duke and Duchess not only selected the more ceremonious pendant format, but also had Reynolds employ almost every traditional convention of royal portraiture. The dominating drapes, columns and full monarchical regalia suggest a re-assertion of status, a public presentation of a marriage that positions itself in a lengthy tradition and smoothes over aberrance. Then, a mere four years after these paintings had been on display for the benefit of London society, remarkably similar pendants of the couple by Gainsborough were exhibited at the summer exhibition (figs.134 and 135). Once

⁸⁴ *The Town and Country Magazine* November 1771, pp.580-2. It illustrated this account with a woodcut depicting “A Dialogue” between the Duke, the ambitious Mrs Horton and her irate brother, Colonel Luttrell.

⁸⁵ L. Lewis, ‘Elizabeth, Countess of Home, and her house in Portman Square’, *Burlington Magazine* 109 (August 1967), especially p.449. Lady Mary Coke, having received conflicting reports of the King’s reaction to the marriage, believed that castigation was the only possibility. *Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, III, p.488, 12 December 1771; “reason must dictate that if he does not mark his displeasure and keep steady in it, that many more of the same events will happen in his Family. Everybody ought to consider the consequences of their actions, and Kings more than others.”

⁸⁶ A. Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts* 4 Vols. (London, 1906), III, p.271

again, classical architectural backgrounds and the accoutrements of royal status feature heavily.⁸⁷ The Duke of Cumberland grasps his crown in one hand and fingers his garter chain with the other, possibly in memory of his slight at the Chapter several years before.⁸⁸ The impression that these paintings were designed to assert legitimate claim to status is validated by comments made in the newspapers. For example, *The Morning Post* observed that the couple were “pourtrayed (in complement to their Royal Highnesses no doubt) in rather more state, than is consistent with the free and elegant designs of this artist.”⁸⁹

These pictures were attempts to refute scandal, allowing the Cumberlands to assert both their royal pedigree and adherence to conventional marital norms in contradiction to the actualities of their lives and the popular perception of their characters. However, this exploitation of public imagery to negate public slander was not entirely successful.⁹⁰ On 28 May 1777, *The Morning Post* published a poem addressed to Reynolds, alluding to Gainsborough’s portraits of the Cumberlands:

⁸⁷ It has been suggested by Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough*, p.90 that Gainsborough was deliberately referring to the earlier portraits. This is confirmed by a review in *The Morning Chronicle*, 25 April 1777 that compares the two: “Sir Joshua’s portrait of the Duke was somewhat superior. Mr Gainsborough’s Duchess for striking resemblance, graceful attitude, finished drapery and richness of colouring is equal to any picture of the kind heretofore exhibited.”

⁸⁸ Lewis, ‘Elizabeth, Countess of Home’, pp.449-50

⁸⁹ *The Morning Post*, 25 April 1777. The couple sat again to Gainsborough in the 1780s for a portrait that now hangs at Windsor Castle and for which a drawing exists in the Royal Collection. It depicts the Cumberlands in the promenade format so popular in this period and discussed at length in chapter two, pp.100-2 accompanied by the Duchess’s sister who commemorates their walk in a drawing. Thus, once again, conventional lexicons of marriage are employed to suggest a conventional history, recorded for posterity. See D. Mannings, ‘Gainsborough’s *Duke and Duchess of Cumberland with Lady Luttrell*’, *Connoisseur* 183 (1973), pp.85-93; C. Lloyd, *Gainsborough and Reynolds: Contrasts in Royal Patronage* (London, 1994), pp.26-7

⁹⁰ This is partly suggested by the fact that Cumberland commissioned portraits from Thomas Gainsborough so soon after sitting for Reynolds. Indeed, his choice of second artist may have been

The pleasant witty Duke goes smiling on;

'Nobody with him but himself alone;'

the Duchess too as much alone as he

'Nobody with her but herself and she!'

On first inspection, this verse may be taken as pertaining to the ostensible lack of intimacy, the formality and the somewhat abstract and impersonal view of marriage implied by the pendant format.⁹¹ However, the rather cryptic passage actually refers to one of the more notably unpunctuated letters written by the Duke to Lady Grosvenor, read out at the 1770 trial and included in the numerous published accounts:

I then prayed for you *my dearest love kissed your dearest little Hair* and laye down and dreamt of you had you on the dear little *couch* ten thousand times in my arms kissing you and telling you how much I loved and adored you and you seemed pleased but alas when I woke I found it all dillusion *no body by me but myself at Sea.*⁹²

The Morning Post was thus satirically evoking the criminal conversation case, now seven years past, but still vivid enough in people's minds for this jibe to hit its mark. Copies of the letters sold in 1770 were presumably still to be found in homes around

influenced by the fact that Gainsborough was highly favoured at court, as opposed to Reynolds who are largely disliked. See Rosenthal, *The Art of Thomas Gainsborough*, pp.103-4

⁹¹ D.R. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marriage Portraiture* (Epping, 1982), p.27

⁹² *The Genuine Copies of Letters which passed between his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Grosvenor* (1770 (London, 5th edition, 1770), p.3

the country and anthologies such as *Trials for Adultery*, published in 1780, repeated the details of the case.⁹³ It also seems that this missive had particularly gripped the public imagination. When *The Town and Country Magazine* printed the correspondence in July 1770, it quoted this letter first.⁹⁴ Also in that month, *The Oxford Magazine* included an engraving entitled *A certain great Personage learning to Spell* (fig.126) alongside a letter headed ‘To hiz Ryyal hynes they Dook of Cumburrland’. This depicts Cumberland attempting to improve his inadequate education. He peruses a book, on the pages of which is inscribed, ‘ab eb ib ob ub/ ba be bi bo bu/ Boo-by’, as his tutor despairs, “I fear I shall make nothing of your R--l H--n--ss.” A horned figure places a jester’s cap on the Duke’s head and questions if he “cast Anchor in Grosvenors Straits.” However, most prominent in the image in terms of its positioning, size and legibility, is a scroll inscribed: “Specimens of R--l Spelling. Lett mee Kiss your sweet little Hare. noboddy with mee butt myself.” Thus, once again, public cognisance of this letter was assumed.⁹⁵ *A certain great Personage learning to Spell* was one of very many graphic satires that Cumberland sought to counter with grandiose oil portraits, but with questionable success.

Johann Zoffany’s *Lord Cowper and the Gore Family* of 1775 (fig.136) supplies a second example of a portrait designed to counter defamation. This painting, executed in Florence, was commissioned by George Nassau Clavering-Cowper to commemorate his marriage with Hannah Gore in June of that year.⁹⁶ The couple are pictorially emphasised through their erect poses and are attended by other members of

⁹³ *Trials for Adultery*, V, pp.1-304 and continued, VI, pp.3-202

⁹⁴ *The Town and Country Magazine* July 1770, p.364

⁹⁵ *The Oxford Magazine* V, 1770, p.88

⁹⁶ E.D.H. Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene from Hogarth to Sickert* (London, 1986), p.66

the Gore family. Hannah's sister, Emily, plays the square piano, accompanied by her father on the violoncello, whilst her other sister sits with their mother. However, the most notable feature of this image is the large and intricately described painting that hangs on the wall behind Hannah, counterpoising the vista of the Tuscan countryside on the right (fig.137). It depicts an allegorical scene in the temple of Hymen, god of marriage, an apt conceit considering the commemorative function of this portrait.⁹⁷

However, the seemingly straightforward symbolism is complicated by the presence of two figures to the left of the mythical painting. Balancing the main narrative of the wedding before the altar, the figure of Hercules drags a woman along the ground by her hair. She holds a flaming torch aloft as two Cupids, flying above, unmask her to reveal ghastly features. The identification of this allegorical figure has caused some confusion but it would seem most likely that it is intended to represent Calumny. Zoffany was in Italy to paint *The Tribune of the Uffizi* for Queen Charlotte and presumably had seen Sandro Botticelli's *Calumny* there (fig.138). Botticelli was the first Renaissance artist to accept the artistic challenge to recreate Apelles's original, lost and only known through a description in Lucian. As did most of his successors, Botticelli portrayed the female figure dragging a praying man by his hair with one hand, holding a flaming torch aloft with the other. She advances, accompanied by sundry other mythical characters, towards a judge who is likely to be swayed by her beauty and who is listening to the whispers of Ignorance and Suspicion. Zoffany's version is thus significantly altered from this definitive model. Calumny has been unmasked to reveal her true nature. Instead of hauling a falsely accused victim to

⁹⁷ S. Sitwell in *Conversation Pieces: A Survey of English Domestic Portraits and their Painters* (London and New York, 1969), p.30 proposed that this records an actual painting which he suggested

be judged, she is herself dragged away by Hercules who has presumably thwarted her evil machinations. These deliberate modifications are significant in their intentionality and seem to suggest that malicious accusation and “unkind gossip had been successfully repelled.”⁹⁸ The most probable source of such defamation was the Earl’s prior involvement with one Princess Corsi. It seems that his crime, whether in actuality or in rumour only, was fourfold. The Princess was already married, the Earl had “kept household with her,” their “connection” had issue and, finally, he was so besotted as to refuse to return to his dying father in England.⁹⁹ Such scandalous events, particularly considering the Earl’s prominent position in Florentine society, provoked much gossip.¹⁰⁰ It would seem likely that he perceived his union with the young, virginal Hannah Gore, a lady of eminently respectable family, as putting an end to such scandal. The portrait thus serves to advertise and assert this closure.¹⁰¹

That such measures were not unique is substantiated by a similar set of events that occurred in England at about the same date. The tête-à-tête engravings in *The*

to be Venetian, and possibly a Pittoni. However, in the light of the following discussion, this would seem unlikely.

⁹⁸ M. Webster, *Johann Zoffany* (London, 1977), pp.62-3, quoting p.63; R. Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1975), p.141; E.G. d’Oench, *The Conversation Piece: Arthur Devis and his Contemporaries* (New Haven, 1980), pp.74-5

⁹⁹ D. Sutton, ‘Paintings at Firle Place: Home of Viscount and Viscountess Gage’, *Connoisseur* 137 (June 1956), p.81; M.L. Boyle, *Biographical Catalogue of the Portraits at Pitshanger, the Seat of Earl Cowper, K.G.* (London, 1885), p.148; Dr. Doran, *Mann and Manners at the Court of Florence 1740-1786* 2 Vols. (London, 1876), II, p.113; *The English Chronicle, and Universal Evening Post*, 16-18 February 1790; *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, VI, p.363, Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 15 November 1765

¹⁰⁰ O. Millar, *Zoffany and his Tribuna* (London, 1966), p.10

¹⁰¹ Not all, however, were convinced at this turning of a new leaf in the Earl’s life. Walpole caustically remarked to Mann in a letter dated 18 September 1774 in *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* (1967), XXIV, p.38, that he considered the union “so odd, that I think it no proof of his being grown reasonable.”

Town and Country Magazine for September 1775 targeted Charles Manners, Marquis of Granby and his alleged affair with Miss Smith, the daughter of a Windsor shopkeeper (fig.121). However, the accompanying narrative predicted that;

this will prove only a temporary alliance, as we entertain so high an opinion of his lordship's sentiments and morals, as to believe no such connection will continue, in case that a match, which is much talked of between him and a very beautiful and accomplished young lady, of a very noble family, should take place.¹⁰²

This was, apparently, reliable information for, on 1 April 1776, *The London Magazine* published an allegorical print of his wedding to such a preferable lady (fig.139). This print is striking in its similarity to the allegorical painting featured in the Zoffany portrait. Once again, it depicts a couple standing before the altar of Hymen, attended by the three graces. Hercules is now the groom rather than the champion of innocence and it is left to Minerva, defender of just causes, to remove the figure of a hideous female. The writhing snakes that adorn this character's head would suggest that it is intended to represent Medusa and, indeed, mythological tradition often associated Minerva with the Gorgon. However, once again, the flaming torch of Calumny is held aloft by a rejected and unsightly female figure.

The similarities between these two cases are extremely pronounced. Whilst it is most unlikely that they were in any way directly connected, both demonstrate a recognition of the power of imagery to counteract detraction and both rely on the

¹⁰² *Town and Country Magazine* September 1775, pp.457-9

viewer's ability to identify certain signs and symbols. Indeed, the emblematic figures of Hymen and Cupid and the narrative of the procession to the altar of the god of marriage appear to have been common visual (and literary) currency in this period. Reynolds certainly depended on familiarity with the figure and attributes of the god of marriage in his painting of the Montgomery sisters. In this, the mythological reference is exploited for positive ends, complementing the compliment inherent in the portrait. More frequently, however, satirists exploited public familiarity with such conceits for comic and damning effect. In 1775, *An Emblem of a Modern Marriage* (The British Museum, London), possibly by James Gillray, depicted a young bride being escorted by a skeletal husband to his Palladian mansion, Cupid flying above them but averting his face. A few years later, Catherine Macaulay's marriage to a man thirty-six years her junior was satirised in an image in which Cupid lies either asleep or dead (fig.140). Meanwhile, Hymen attempts to cover his face with a cloak in denial of the aberration taking place before him, his burning torch pointing downwards. Finally, the conventionality of such imagery is confirmed by one of the many satires on the Duchess of Kingston. In *Iphigenia's Late Procession from Kingston to Bristol*. --by *Chudleigh Meadows* (fig.141), she is attended by three maids of honour, recalling the three Graces depicted in the Granby engraving and the Cowper portrait. However, this group processes, not towards the temple of Hymen, but towards the court at Westminster.¹⁰³

The Duchess of Kingston was a third who exploited visual culture to negate public disapprobation of improper marital and sexual conduct. During the trial of

¹⁰³ Published in *The Morning Post*, 16 May 1776. It is worth noting that all these images were produced in the 1770s, a concentration that may contain a significance I have not yet been able to

1776, she garbed herself in extravagant widow's weeds, possibly out of a genuine sense of loss at the Duke's death, probably to try and assuage his disinherited heirs and certainly as a tactic to stimulate sympathy and to suggest a heartfelt grief at the passing of her husband. Prints published in May that year depicted her entirely garbed in black with only her face protruding from the enveloping guise (figs.142 and 143). Most were dubious about the sincerity of this display and many commented scathingly on her appearance. Hannah More noted the Duchess's "deep mourning" and declared; "there was nothing white but her face, and had it not been for that, she would have looked like a bale of bombazeen."¹⁰⁴ Horace Walpole was similarly unimpressed: "What think you of that pompous piece of effrontery and imposture, the Duchess of Kingston? Is there common sense in her ostentation and grief, and train of black crêpe and band of music?"¹⁰⁵ The Duchess herself, however, clearly believed that her weeds and displays of mourning would convince the world at large of her genuine sentiments towards the Duke. As a result, she commissioned a portrait designed to emphasise her sense of profound bereavement. Shortly after Kingston's death, William Whitehead wrote to Lord Nuneham:

The Duchess of Kingston is determined Bath shall not leave off talking of her; she is gone abroad, but has just sent hither to Hoare the painter to draw a full-length picture of her in weeds, with her dear Duke standing by her. There

discover. However, the frequency of the symbolism of Cupid and Hymen in this period would have certainly facilitated recognition.

¹⁰⁴ *Memoirs of the life of Mrs Hannah More*, pp.39-41, quoting pp.40-1, Hannah More to a member of her family, 1776

¹⁰⁵ *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, XXIII, p.556, Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 23 February 1774

is already at Hoare's a full-length picture of her Grace in coronation-ropes, with the Duke, in miniature, in one corner of it.¹⁰⁶

Although I have not succeeded in tracing this image, it would appear that William Hoare did indeed execute such a portrait. A year after Whitehead's letter, Elizabeth Noel wrote of a visit to the houses of Gainsborough and Hoare in Bath:

I saw nothing very capital at the two Painters, excepting a portrait of the Dss of Kingston in her weeds, looking at a picture of the Duke, her robes carelessly behind her on a Chair, and an Hour glass and Scull on the Table, all her own device - she wd have had some bones at her feet, but Hoare would not comply with *that*.¹⁰⁷

This letter reveals the extent of the Duchess's determination to convey her grief publicly (somewhat over-using *vanitas* motifs). A useful comparison may be drawn with Pompeo Batoni's earlier portrait of *Wills Hill, Earl of Hillsborough and later 1st Marquess of Downshire* of 1766 (Private Collection). Like the Duchess, he is shown in contemplation of a portrait of a deceased spouse. The oval picture of his wife is supported by the winged figure of Hymen, extinguishing his torch to signify the end to their union. Hoare's portrait of the Duchess was probably alike in design and certainly similarly concerned with projecting loyalty and sorrow.

¹⁰⁶ *The Harcourt Papers*, ed. E.W. Harcourt, 14 Vols. (Oxford, 1880-1905), VII, pp.303-4, William Whitehead to Lord Nuneham, 6 December 1773

¹⁰⁷ J. Lindsay, *Thomas Gainsborough: His Life and Art* (London, Toronto, Sydney, New York, 1982), pp.115-6. I am grateful to Michael Rosenthal for bringing this to my attention.

Moreover, it seems that a year after commissioning Hoare to paint her portrait, the Duchess approached Joseph Nollekens with the idea of erecting a grandiose monument to her late husband in St. Pauls Cathedral. According to a caustic letter written by Mrs Theresa Parker, the widow visualised a prominent role for herself in the design of the tomb:

It was to represent the Duke rising from a sarcophagus and the figure of a Woman handing him out for which the Dutchess was to sit and was to express the Virgin Mary. Above was to be supposed God the Father receiving him, pointing to a vacant seat left for him. Upon Sir Joshua and others explaining to Nollikins the impropriety of the latter part in particular he spoke to the Dutchess and with great difficulty prevail'd upon her to give that up, but she still insisted upon being the Virgin Mary.¹⁰⁸

Thus, she clearly intended to extend her programme of self-justification beyond portraiture to the medium of funerary sculpture, once again conflicting with the artist in her demands. Such a tomb would have provided the most highly public statement of her loss possible, as well as signifying her considerable wealth. However, as is obvious from the affronted reactions of Mrs Parker and Sir Joshua Reynolds, together with those of Miss Noel and William Hoare, the Duchess both failed to attune her attempts to engender sympathy to the public mood, breaching decorum rather than arousing pity, and implied catholic tendencies. Whilst women were depicted with their dead husbands, they did not usually resort to skulls and bones. Equally, whilst wives

¹⁰⁸ BL Add MSS 48218, Morley Papers, Vol.I, ff.141-2, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham, 3 February 1774

did quite frequently appear on the tombs of their deceased spouses, it was usually in the role of mourner, inviting sympathy and compassion, rather than as the mother of Christ.¹⁰⁹

As well as publicising her fulfilment of the duties of a virtuous widow through the commissioning of artworks, the Duchess exploited the language of the cult of womanhood in the course of her trial. Thus, she attempted to locate herself within the very ideals that she was supposed to have transgressed. The House was promised that “my Words will flow freely from my Heart, adorned simply with Innocence and Truth. My Lords, I have suffered unheard of Persecutions; my Honour and Fame have been severely attacked.” She repeated the message that she had tried to enlist Hoare and Nollekens to enforce, referring to “the Loss I sustain in my most kind Companion and affectionate Husband.”¹¹⁰ These claims to emotionality, to sensibility, to a concern with reputation (and implied chastity) and to the loss of an idyllic companionate marriage evoked the rhetoric of the conduct book and the novel. In this way, she attempted to counter the image an unfeeling, calculating, immoral and ambitious harlot that had been created by the press.

* * * * *

So far, this chapter has shown that prints played a crucial role in condemning a supposedly debauched and immoral aristocracy. This class, perverting marital and

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Louis François Roubiliac, *The Tomb of the Duke of Montagu* (commissioned 1749, erected 1754, St Edmund’s, Warkton, Northamptonshire) and *The Tomb of Viscount Shannon* (commissioned 1756, erected 1759, St Mary’s, Walton-on-Thames, Middlesex)

¹¹⁰ *The Trial of Elizabeth, Duchess Dowager of Kingston*, pp.139-40

sexual norms, were accused of causing rot at the head of the nation and of setting a bad example to impressionable social inferiors. However, as discussed above, the individuals accused of such depravity could themselves exploit visual imagery, refuting attacks with counter-claims of moral and domestic probity. As this section will argue, such themes can also be seen in the representation of motherhood. Whilst widespread delineation of the companionate marriage enabled condemnation of adulterous and bigamous acts, the elevation of ideal maternity entailed the construction of the deficient, negligent and uncaring mother. To proclaim the attentive, nursing matriarch as natural was to define the inattentive mother who resorted to the assistance of wet-nurses and boarding school as unnatural. To elevate the role of motherhood as expressing quintessential femininity was to define the deviant as transgressing the proper boundaries of her sex. And, perhaps most significantly, to assert the role of women as the educators of the young, as responsible for forming the manners and morals of the future generation, was to widen the repercussions of bad mothering far beyond the boundaries of the family unit. As Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto have argued; “idealisation and blaming the mother are two side of the same belief in the all-powerful mother.”¹¹¹

¹¹¹ N. Chodorow and S. Contratto, ‘The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother’, in B. Thorne and M. Yalom, eds., *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions* (London and New York, 1982), p.65. Similarly, to quote E. Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct* (London, 1981), p.159: “If nature was defined as the norm, the unnatural woman was abnormal, that is, sick or a freak. If nature was equated with virtue, the unnatural woman was corrupted or depraved, immoral and a bad mother.” B. Kowaleski-Wallace, ‘Home Economics: Domestic Ideology in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*’, *The Eighteenth Century* 29, 3 (1988), pp.242-62 focuses on the supposed ‘naturalness’ of Lady Anne Percival’s exemplary maternity in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda* and the concealment of its ideological nature. This allows castigation of the antithetically constructed figure of Lady Delacour as an unnatural mother rather than as a woman who has merely chosen an alternative lifestyle.

Once again, the contravention of such domestic norms was believed to be most prominent amongst the upper classes. It was typically the patrician woman who neglected her child and abandoned it at the hovel of the wet-nurse rather than feed and care for it herself. Richard Steele, in particular, thought that such behaviour was typical of the woman of 'Quality,' likely to see the nursing of her child as beneath her, as a task from which she was exempt due to her elevated status. Such a view, he warned, demonstrated "senseless...Pride, and...want of the Affection and Compassion natural" to women.¹¹² George Morland later provided a pictorial equivalent to such condemnation in his *A Visit to the Child at Nurse* of c.1788 (fig.144). A well-dressed mother enters the dwelling of the lower-class woman she has hired to feed her infant and is met with apparent reluctance on the part of the baby. The child retreats and places its arms around the neck of its nurse in a pose that recalls those of children such as Masters Hoare and Wilmot.¹¹³ Frequently, if an aristocratic woman claimed to engage in the act of breastfeeding, then it was scorned as a mere concession to fashion. The nursing mother in Gillray's *The Fashionable Mamma; or, The Convenience of Modern Dress* of 1796 (fig.145) does not even look at (let alone support) her child, and so it has to be held to her breast by a serving maid.¹¹⁴ This indifference is reinforced both by the painting that hangs on the wall, ironically entitled *Maternal Affection*, and by the contrast between the icy *hauteur* of the mother and the demeanour of the maid who is clearly inscribed within contemporary

¹¹² R. Steele, *The Ladies Library* 3 Vols. (London, 1714), II, pp.157, 187, 207

¹¹³ See chapter three, pp.126, 137

¹¹⁴ Her outfit probably satirises the modish *chemises de couches* that were open in front to allow ease of suckling. See E. Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1984), p.57

stereotypes of buxom, contented, country wenches.¹¹⁵ The waiting coach outside the window clearly reveals that this is a hurried duty, fitted in between more frivolous pleasures, whilst the coronets on its door and on the chair emphasise the elite status of the mother.

As suggested by this satire, the most common reason proffered for such maternal neglect was that patrician women were engaging in social pursuits rather than attending to the needs and education of their children, that “the influence of *dissipation*, and the charms of fashion” were “subverting that instinctive affection which nature implanted in the female breast.”¹¹⁶ Such abnormal and deviant prioritisation was feared to begin even before birth. Priscilla Wakefield warned that the constitution, mind and disposition of an infant was largely dictated by that of its mother, especially during pregnancy. Thus, “crowded rooms, late hours, luxurious tables, and slothful inactivity, must contribute to the production of a puny offspring.”¹¹⁷ Hugh Smith had earlier been even more alarmist, fearing that “revelling in midnight assemblies” during the time when a woman has “the pleasing prospect of becoming a mother” could result in miscarriage.¹¹⁸ Most frequently, however, prescriptive writers focussed on the neglect of the child’s upbringing and education. William Buchan was prepared to accept that some women were forced to use a wet-

115 This latter dichotomy recalls William Buchan’s discussion in *Domestic Medicine; or, A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines* (1769) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1774), p.419 of the need for healthy mothers. He set off “the fresh and ruddy looks of a milk-maid” against “the pale complexion of those females whose whole business lies within doors.”

116 *The Lady’s Monthly Museum; or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction* 1798, p.52

117 Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex*, pp.15-16

118 H. Smith, *Letters to Married Women on Nursing and the Management of Children* (1767) (London, 6th edition, 1792), p.48

nurse, but refused to believe that there was any excuse for handing over the care of offspring to hirelings.¹¹⁹

The concern was not only that such women were likely to alienate their children and husbands and thus corrupt the family unit, but that they were behaving in a fashion liable to influence their social inferiors and thereby perpetrate widespread neglect of and disdain towards infants. Thus, once again, issues of emulation were evoked. One author, complaining of mothers who reckoned they had no time to devote to their children, sarcastically explained, “’tis vulgar - My Lady *Banton* does not do it” and bemoaned “Fatal influence of example.”¹²⁰ Hugh Downman similarly believed that “faults of higher Station still will gain/ Followers in humbler Life” and James Nelson expounded this point at great length. He despaired that his injunctions to breastfeed would be adopted by “Persons in high life” as women from such ranks would not be prepared to curb their indulgence of “the vainer Pleasures of Life, in order to stoop to this Part of domestic Care.” Through the inexorable process of emulation, such behaviour would become “a national Evil” and “hence it happens, that because a Woman of the first Rank does not deign to suckle her Child, the Neglect descends to almost the lowest Rank.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, pp.2-3. Similarly, Hannah More in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, with a view of the Principles and Conduct prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune* 2 Vols. (London, 1799), II, p.142 argued that “the moral nurture of a tall daughter” could not be undertaken by a woman “whose time is absorbed by crowds abroad” and even argued that mothering was analogous to a male profession. Logically therefore, proper maternal duties should be undertaken “with the same spirit and perseverance at home, which the father thinks it necessary to be exerting abroad in his public duty or professional engagements.”

¹²⁰ B. Lara, *An Essay on the Injurious Custom of Mothers not Suckling their Own Children* (London, 1791), p.21

¹²¹ H. Downman, *Infancy, a Poem* (London, 1774), p.10; J. Nelson, *An Essay on the Management of Children* (1753) (London, 3rd edition, 1763), pp. 47-8, 49

However, as emphasised above, emulation could be positive and the worthy noblewoman could set a good example, retrieving social inferiors from deviant paths of conduct.¹²² Thomas Mantell praised the mother who started and promoted fashions of attentive childcare, noting “several of the first female characters in the kingdom have set an example to the world in nursing their own infants.”¹²³ Even James Nelson, who attacked and despaired of upper-class women throughout his essay, dedicated the text to “The Countess of---,” a woman he thought could provide a good example in her rejection of “the Assemblies of the Great,” “the Splendor of a Court” and the allurements of the world in favour of “the Office of a tender Mother.” Not only was such laudable behaviour pleasurable and charming for his readers, but it would hopefully cause them to “be powerfully animated to pursue the same Measures.”¹²⁴ However, the public figure to whom William Moss dedicated his *Essay on the Management and Nursing of Children* was a far more commonly lauded emblem of maternity. Queen Charlotte produced no less than thirteen surviving children and her perceived devotion and attention to her offspring received the constant admiration of writers, both in its own right and as a stimulus to emulation:

Your Majesty’s solicitous attention to the maternal duties of your own royal family, has long obtained the grateful acknowledgements of an admiring public; and has been the happy means of inducing general emulation: -

¹²² As noted by Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996), p.204

¹²³ T. Mantell, *Short Directions for the Management of Infants* (London, 1787), pp.10-12

¹²⁴ Nelson, *Essay on the Management of Children*, dedication

duties, that, although fraught with powerful, intrinsic allurements, become yet more captivating under the influence of so bright and example.¹²⁵

As well as such literary tributes to Charlotte's "nuptial sanctity, parental affection and domestic joy," numerous portraits emphasised her maternal role.¹²⁶ Allan Ramsay portrayed her in close physical contact with her two eldest sons, aided by toys that both indulge their infancy and promote proper gendered characteristics (fig.66).¹²⁷ Examples such as Johann Zoffany's 1764 portrait of the Queen accompanied by her sons in her dressing room (fig.9) indicate the degree of intimacy that characterises such works. As with the other domestic portraits described above, such images attracted suitably emotional and laudatory responses from reviewers. When Francis Cotes portrayed the Queen with her daughter in 1767 (fig.146), raising one finger towards the viewer to beg for silence in deference to the sleeping form of her child, *The London Chronicle* hailed: "The tend'rest Mother, and the mildest Queen" and went on to proclaim: "The joy of Britain in her bosom lies,/ What inexpressive sweetness in her eyes!/ Maternal fondness and maternal grace,/ Breathe in her air, and beam upon her face."¹²⁸

However, attacks on the negligent mother and her pernicious influence were much more common and can be exemplified in the publicity surrounding the Duchess

125 W. Moss, *An Essay on the Management and Nursing of Children in the Earlier Periods of Infancy* (London, 1781), p.ii

126 J. Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* 2 Vols. (1766) (Dublin, 4th edition, 1766), II, p.173

127 See chapter three, p.141

128 *The London Chronicle*, 5-7 May 1767

of Devonshire's involvement in the Westminster Election of 1784.¹²⁹ Her support of Charles Fox on the streets and on the hustings attracted an almost unprecedented volume of criticism in both literary and pictorial form.¹³⁰ *The Morning Post* headed the campaign against the Duchess, to the extent that a satirist was moved to depict her supported in the clouds by 'Truth' and 'Virtue,' the prostrate and naked male form of 'scandal,' clasping a copy of the paper, crushed beneath her feet (fig.147). The paper related amorous engagements with "greasy butchers," reported profligate and liberal application of the Duke of Devonshire's money to the process of campaigning, claimed that she used bribes to encourage potential voters in the Whig cause and even outlined the quantity and types of alcohol she supposedly devoured in the course of her canvassing.¹³¹ Such allegations were closely echoed in satirical images. She was depicted kissing and bribing tradesmen, drunk, involved in brawls and often in contexts that suggested that her attachment to Fox was adulterous.¹³² However, the graphic images on which I wish to concentrate are those that damned her involvement with the campaigners on grounds of inferred neglect of her maternal and domestic duties.

129 For the most recent account of the election and the Duchess's involvement, see A. Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1998), chapter 9. Also see B. Masters, *Georgiana* (1981), (London, 1997), chapter 6

130 N.K. Robinson in *Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature* (New Haven and London, 1996), p.194 cites the Duchess as the twelfth most caricatured person between 1778 and 1797.

131 *The Morning Post*, 13 April 1784; 8 April 1784; 20 April 1784; 7 May 1784; 14 April 1784

132 See, for example, Anon., *A Certain Dutchess Kissing Old Swelter-in-Grease the Butcher for his Vote* (April 1784, The British Museum, London); T. Rowlandson, *The Two Patriotic Dutchesses on their Canvass* (3 April 1784, The British Museum, London); 'Aitken', *The Tipling Dutchess Returning from Canvassing* (29 April 1784, The British Museum, London); Anon., *A New Way to Deside the Scrutany* (14 June 1784, The British Museum, London); Anon., *The Matter Reversed; or, One Good Turn deserves Another* (24 May 1784, The British Museum, London); Anon., *The D-ss and the Man of the Peo- in Buff, Tho' not in Blue* (1 September 1784, The British Museum, London)

Historians have disagreed over why the Duchess's campaigning was so controversial, particularly as aristocratic women had an established (if largely informal) role in politics. Amanda Foreman has disagreed with Linda Colley's theory that the tirades were caused by the fact that Fox was not a relation and, therefore, that her actions could not be justified through proper domestic affection and family loyalty. Foreman has instead argued that Georgiana's treatment of the "greasy butchers" as equals was seen as inflammatory and that, in her autonomy, her celebrity status, her independence and her strident public persona, the Duchess clashed with contemporary notions of femininity.¹³³ Whilst aristocratic women certainly had more of a public role than many men of lower social standing, there were limits and *The Morning Post* thus suggested that: "Ladies who interest themselves *so much* in the case of elections, are perhaps too ignorant to know that they meddle with what does not concern them."¹³⁴

Thomas Rowlandson exploited the Duchess's alleged neglect of her domestic duties in a satire, *Political Affection*, published in April 1784 (fig.148). She is represented as seated, breastfeeding an oversized fox who is dressed in an infant's 'coats. Her daughter, Georgiana, is abandoned on the floor and attempts to attract her mother's attention with her cries, raising her hands in the air in a plea for affection. On the left of the engraving, a cat licks the face of a dog and similarly neglects its offspring, a sight implied to be as unnatural as the Duchess's abnormal priorities. Despite Georgiana's ardent advocacy of breastfeeding, Rowlandson thus suggests

¹³³ Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp.157-9; A. Foreman, 'A Politician's Politician: Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and the Whig Party', in H. Barker and E. Chalus, eds., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp.185-7; L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p.244

¹³⁴ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p.292; *The Morning Post*, 8 April 1784. My italics

disregard of such proper tasks in favour of political activity as well as neglect of her husband whose portrait by Reynolds is sketched out on the back wall of the scene. This painting is not, however, flanked by a pendant of the Duchess, pairing suitable masculine and feminine activities, attributes and settings, but is partnered by one of a second male sitter, suggested to be Fox by the squatness of the figure.¹³⁵

An anonymous satire entitled *The Devonshire Amusement*, published the following month (fig.149), picked up on the conceit of perverting the pendant portrait tradition as seen in *The Matrimonial Magazine's* satire on the Duchess of Kingston. The engraving is divided into two halves. To the left, the Duchess is depicted in the act of campaigning, her hair and skirts flying in the wind. In one hand, she clasps a staff topped by the head of Fox and crossed with the inscription "Liberty" and, in the other, holds a print after the Reynolds portrait of her husband. At her feet lies a second engraving, a copy of *The Devonshire, or the Most Approved Method of Securing Votes* which was published on 12 April. Her spouse duly occupies the other half of the print but, as his wife is trespassing onto male territory in her posture, demeanour and activities, so he is forced to take up those domestic duties that she has laid aside. Their child is prostrate across his lap as he changes its nappy and bemoans: "Ah William every one must be cursed that like thee takes a Politic Mad Wife." His horns once again suggest that the Duchess's liaison with Fox was more sexual than political. The visual rhetoric employed here recalls the claim made by *The Morning Post* in April that, "while her Grace is busied in canvassing the constituents, her domestic husband

¹³⁵ Thus, once again, claims of adultery were levelled at the Duchess. This print was echoed in a later satire by James Gillray entitled *The Injured COUNT..S* of 1786/8 (The British Museum, London). Lady Strathmore is shown similarly ignoring her child in order to drink with her servants and suckle the cats of which she was reported to be inordinately fond. Her abandoned son cries "I wish I was a cat my Mama would love me then."

is employed in the nursery, sighing, 'Hey my kitten! my kitten!' and comfortably *rocking the Cradle*."¹³⁶

Some of the Duchess's supporters attempted a pictorial counterattack. On 1 April 1784, *The Rambler's Magazine* published a print entitled *The Duchess of D--- in the Character of a Mother* (fig.150). In this, the Duke and his wife are not divided in separate pictorial spaces but are united in a scene of harmonious domesticity. He has not been abandoned to fulfil the responsibilities of childrearing on his own but assists in the process, proffering a small saucepan as his wife holds their baby to her breast. References to virtuous parenting abound. A small statuette of the Madonna and Child adorns the mantelpiece, a large picture of a pelican with its offspring hangs on the wall and a *Treatise on getting and nursing of Children by the Duke of D* lies at the author's feet. The opposing sides of the pamphlet, print and newspaper war over the Duchess's activities thus employed the same devices, whether to criticise the Duchess as a bad wife and mother, or to assert her virtue by representing her in the midst of domestic bliss.

I would argue that the Reynolds portrait of Georgiana with her daughter, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1786 (fig.10), was meant to drive home her domestic worth and probity as much as this print. Georgiana was clearly highly distressed by the ire she engendered. She wrote to her mother during the election: "I would give the world to be with you, for I am unhappy beyond measure here & abus'd for nothing...I am really so vex'd (tho' I don't say so) at the abuse in the newspapers that I have no heart left" and claimed "I repent as I often do the part I have taken..."¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *The Morning Post*, 14 April 1784

¹³⁷ Chatsworth MSS 610.1, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire to Lady Spencer, March or April 1784

Indeed, she attempted to abdicate from her role and seek solace with Lady Spencer in St. Albans but was persuaded to return by the Duke and Duchess of Portland, promising success in the election and emphasising her critical role in attaining it.¹³⁸ By June, however, she was still “cross miserable and unhappy.” She lamented: “I should have lead a much quieter life... and...I should have recovered more dignity and good opinion in the eyes of ye world” and attributed feelings of depression to the events of the election.¹³⁹

It is thus extremely significant that, in July 1784, a few months after the election, the Duchess and her daughter sat to Reynolds for their portrait.¹⁴⁰ It depicts the Duchess turned away from the viewer, attentive to the child seated on her lap whom she humours with a game of ride-a-cock horse. The likelihood that this portrait was devised to reassert her domestic worth, her love for her child and her fulfilment of maternal duties, that it was designed to regain that “dignity and good opinion,” is strengthened by the clear compositional reference to Rowlandson’s *Political Affection*. The pose of the child, dressed in ‘coats with a sash around its waist, raising its hands in the air and looking up towards its mother, is adopted almost wholesale in the Reynolds portrait. However, the changed context translates the pose from one of attention-seeking and distress to one of playful enjoyment and interaction with the parent. This direct response to the pictorial attacks on the Duchess’s maternal

¹³⁸ Chatsworth MSS 610.4, Duchess of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, April 1784; Chatsworth MSS 611, Duchess of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 13 April 1784; Chatsworth MSS 612, Duke of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 14 April 1784

¹³⁹ Chatsworth MSS 620, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire to Lady Spencer, 16-18 June 1784; Chatsworth MSS 624, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire to Lady Spencer, 23-26 June 1784

¹⁴⁰ Reynolds’s sitters’ book for 1784 records appointments for the Duchess on 3, 5, 6 and 8 July and for her daughter on 8, 13 and 31 July and on 3 August. Copy in the Heinz Archive, The National Portrait Gallery, London.

character was rendered even more direct when the portrait was mezzotinted by George Keating the following year. This allowed it to compete directly with the satirical prints, both in printsellers' windows and in individual collections.

Press reactions to the portrait contrasted favourably with previous comments on her involvement in the election. It was proclaimed: "IN smiling DEVON and her *infant Dove!* We view fair *Virtue* and the Cherub *Love!*", and *The London Chronicle* claimed that Reynolds had succeeded in uniting all three Graces in the one figure of the Duchess.¹⁴¹ More than one paper commented on the prominence of the theme of motherhood. *The Morning Herald* informed its readers that "her Grace is in her maternal character" and *The Morning Post*, now sounding more benevolent, stated; "the maternal affection is charmingly pourtrayed in the Lady: and the attitude of playing with it [her daughter] happily conceived." This latter review then went on to eulogise the portrayal of the child and to argue that its angelical countenance was typical of Reynolds's work.¹⁴² Indeed, commissioning Reynolds was a calculated and astute move. Not only did his name convey status by association, he was also known and praised for his prolific representations of adoring maternity and endearing infancy. He was deemed to be "very successful in representing Children in all their playful Moods," praised for "the simplicity of every dimpled babe that sprung from his hands" and proclaimed as "never more successful than in his children."¹⁴³ He was thus an ideal artist to paint a sentimental, domestic portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire

¹⁴¹ *The Morning Herald*, 2 May 1786; *The London Chronicle*, 2-4 May 1786

¹⁴² *The Morning Herald*, 19 April 1786; *The Morning Post*, 3 May 1786

¹⁴³ *The Public Advertiser*, 1 May 1781; *The London Courant and the Westminster Chronicle*, 3 May 1781; *The Ear-Wig; or, An Old Woman's Remarks on the Present Exhibition of Pictures of the Royal Academy* (London, 1781), p.11

with her daughter, a portrait designed to reaffirm her maternal and domestic virtues in the public eye.

* * * * *

This chapter has examined various instances of the breakdown of the domestic and familial ideals so lauded by sentimental literature. The Ladies Worsley and Grosvenor and the Duchess of Kingston were attacked by numerous pamphlets for perverting the companionate ideal. Whilst the prints included in such tracts were exploited by authors to bolster claims of moral and social conscience, they rather assisted in the provision of entertainment and titillation and in fostering an impression of authenticity. These literary and visual attacks accused such women of contributing to the corruption of the nation, both by providing a poor example to the lower orders and by perverting the institution of the family, the base modular component of the community. However, the behaviour of the nobility not only prompted a wave of satirical publications, but also deeply affected the history of their official portraits. In some cases, these were either destroyed or altered by their spouses to reflect changed relations with the depicted.

Some attempted to exploit the power and popularity of portraiture to re-present themselves as virtuous characters. The Duke of Cumberland had himself and his wife imaged as traditionally regal in the face of the public mockery prompted by his adultery with Lady Grosvenor, the lewd circumstances surrounding it and his recorded illiteracy. Earl Cowper refuted gossip of illicit affairs by publicising his marriage to a young lady of impeccable character and family in a portrait laden with widely known and appreciated symbols of refuted calumny and marital virtue. Finally, the Duchess

of Kingston exploited both the public nature of portraiture and that of funerary sculpture in an attempt to convince society at large of her genuine sense of bereavement at the death of the second husband she had illegally married.

Such themes were also apparent in diatribes against upper-class mothers who were thought neglectful of their domestic duty. Whilst the virtuous noblewoman, able to inspire emulative behaviour in the lower ranks of society, was held up as an exemplar, writer after writer expressed fears that fashionable ladies were spending their time and energies in a round of visiting, entertaining and social amusements. Such neglect was a central focus of the attacks on the Duchess of Devonshire during the course of the Westminster election of 1784. Satirists depicted her husband as cuckolded, having to take on the domestic tasks that she had abandoned, and her child as distressed and neglected. However, Reynolds glorified her maternal prowess in a portrait begun that summer, directly answering such attacks and attempting to reassert her moral standing. Thus, dominant familial discourses came full circle. The promulgation of domestic ideals through the flattering and public medium of portraiture and the subsequent imaging of the inversion of those ideals for the purposes of public or individual condemnation were transposed. Public self-validation was thereby realised in the face of scandal.

CONCLUSION:

CHANGE, CONTINUITY AND CLASS IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FAMILY

This dissertation opened with an outline of the progression from codified, formal expressions of domestic virtue in early eighteenth-century conversation pieces, such as Bartholomew Dandridge's portrait of the d'Albiac family in Hungerford Park (fig.1), to newly direct formulations of that virtue in later images such as Zoffany's *John, 3rd Duke of Atholl and his Family* (fig.2). The various elements to this transition have been outlined. Family members came to be portrayed in close physical proximity. Wives began to be shown linking arms with their husbands and mothers as closely embracing the babies on their laps. Rather than posing formally for the benefit of the viewer, merely indicating familial relationships by a token wave of the hand, sitters came to ignore the existence of an external gaze. As early eighteenth-century codes of polite posture and gesture were increasingly modified, this apparent unawareness of the act of display redefined the portrait as an honest vista onto uncontrived and admirable affection. Second, family members were increasingly united in mutual narratives. The later eighteenth-century convention of picturing couples strolling through landscapes, the husband motioning towards some point of interest for the delight and enlightenment of his wife, dominated the genres of both provincial artists such as Devis and society portraitists such as Reynolds and Gainsborough. Finally, children were no longer pictured as diminutive adults but were increasingly characterised by their infantile physiognomies, physiques and costumes. Similarly, their play moved beyond the mere presentation of some toy or game and

came to define both their individual representations and their relationships with their parents.

This pictorial transition has to be conceived as flexible, subject to variables including class, social and cultural climate and geography. Progressive artists such as William Hogarth, working in the capital, produced portraits in the newly companionate milieu in the 1750s whilst provincial painters such as Arthur Devis, seemingly resistant to change, persisted in representing their sitters in formal and stiffly posed compositions. Members of the provincial gentry were less likely than the metropolitan bourgeoisie to abandon conventions that emphasised their material and moral standing. Equally, commissions were constrained by time, money, opportunity and available wall space.¹ However, despite these mitigating factors and inevitable vagaries, the pictorial shift, as outlined throughout the thesis, begs examination in the context of debates over continuity and change that have dominated the historiography of the family for some decades.

The pictorial has hardly entered into such discussions. Its inclusion in Phillippe Ariès's narrative of transition prompted such a wave of criticism that his successors have been inevitably reluctant to draw on such sources.² Together with novels, poems and plays, paintings and engravings have been viewed as "soft facts", as subordinate

¹ L. Jordanova, 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century: Problems of Historical Interpretation' *History of the Human Sciences* 3,1 (February 1990), pp.75-6. In Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), ed. C. Coote (Harmondsworth, 1986), p.99, the Vicar's family, when choosing a format for their portraits, select a single canvas as "this would be cheaper, since one frame would serve for all." However, the commission ends in social embarrassment when the family's vanity has swelled the image to such an extent that it cannot be hung anywhere in their humble abode.

² P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (1960), transl. R. Baldick (Harmondsworth, 1962); A. Burton, 'Looking forward from Ariès? Pictorial and Material Evidence for the History of Childhood and Family Life' *Continuity and Change* 4, 2 (1989), pp.203-229; A. Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès' *History and Theory* 19 (1980), pp.132-53

to more properly 'historical' sources to be found in the archive. However, as Naomi Tadmor has shown in her work on eighteenth-century fiction, such material constitutes an untapped body of evidence that, with a properly rigorous methodological underpinning, can contribute to such discussions.³ 'New art history' has emphasised that the pictorial must be reconnected with its social, cultural, economic and political context. However, much recent writing on family portraiture has failed to take proper account of other sources available from the period, to theorise their relationship with the paintings under discussion and thus to engage with the debates of the historians. This dissertation has attempted to do that, and the necessary next step would be to test and modify its conclusions within the terms of eighteenth-century aesthetic debates, the developing market for art, technological advances and institutional changes.

Pictorial evidence has suggested that Lawrence Stone's developmental thesis has been too swiftly rejected by those keen to smooth out all change in the course of domestic history.⁴ Whilst his seminal text, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, was rightly criticised for compounding various sources, ranging from personal letters and diaries on the one hand to prescriptive, fictional and pictorial

³ N. Tadmor, 'Family' and 'Friend' in *Pamela: A Case-Study in the History of the Family in Eighteenth-Century England* *Social History* 14 (1989), p.289; N. Tadmor, 'Concepts of the Family in five Eighteenth-Century Texts' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1992), especially chapters 6 and 7; N. Tadmor, 'Dimensions of Inequality among Siblings in Eighteenth-Century English Novels: The Cases of *Clarissa* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*' *Continuity and Change* 7, 3 (1992), pp.303-333

⁴ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977); A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840* (Oxford, 1986); A. Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a seventeenth-century clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1970); A. Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978)

material on the other, it is precisely this elision that indicates the degree of validity in his argument.⁵ Historians such as Keith Wrightson have shown that actual lives and relationships were infinitely varied, governed by a host of factors.⁶ In contrast, the prescriptive and fictional literature that discussed the ways in which such lives and relationships should ideally be lived was dominated by a coherent discourse. This concord was noted by Mary Wollstonecraft at the end of the period: "I do not mean to allude to all the writers who have written on the subject of female manners - it would, in fact, be only beating over the old ground, for they have, in general, written in the same strain."⁷ This is not to deny that there were other messages available in printed form or to ignore the fact that certain issues were highly contentious. For example, whilst the problem of inadequate provision for female education was widely acknowledged, solutions ranged from an improved system that would provide women with the skills and knowledge required to fulfil adequately the duties of wives and mothers to a school curriculum that included Latin, hardly necessary for such roles.⁸ However, many of these texts were linked by a coherent rhetorical strain, a strain of considerable persistence. Certain arguments can be traced from the Marquess of Halifax in the later seventeenth century, through writers such as Richard Steele and

⁵ For criticism of Stone, see A. Macfarlane, "'The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800' by Lawrence Stone" *History and Theory* 18 (1979), pp.103-26; E.P. Thompson, 'Happy Families: Lawrence Stone "The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800"' *New Society* 41 (8 September 1977), pp.499-501; J.W. Scott 'The History of the Family as an Affective Unit' *Social History* 4, 3 (1979), pp.509-16

⁶ K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1993)

⁷ M. Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' (1792), in J. Todd, ed., *Mary Wollstonecraft: Political Writings* (Oxford, 1994), p.175

⁸ See chapter 1, pp.64-5, chapter 2, p.92

Joseph Addison in the early 1700s, to later eighteenth-century texts by authors including Thomas Gisborne and Hannah More.

Thus, whilst *The Family, Sex and Marriage*'s model of change is of limited value in analysing actual familial relationships, I would argue that it is useful in discussions of shifts in literary ideals. Similarly, whilst historians have rightly criticised the concept of 'separate spheres' as privileging the ideal over the real, as obscuring the details of particular lives, it remains useful in analyses of that ideal and changes within it. Developments in the area of the prescriptive and fictional should be formulated circumspectly, particularly as Kathleen M. Davies's work on advice literature of the early modern period has emphasised the apparent continuities.⁹ For example, seventeenth-century authors, like their successors, attacked marriages purely aimed at material gain and rarely condoned parents who forced their children into unions designed to advance their own social standing. Similarly, the doctrine of mutuality, advising women to obey and follow their husbands' commands in return for loving and kind treatment, was pervasive throughout the prescriptive tradition.

However, this acknowledged, certain developments did occur in the ideological realm in the eighteenth century. The chief stimulus to change came from a cultural phenomenon that was wider than the family, but critical for the re-evaluation of domestic ideals. The cult of sensibility gripped the imagination of the nation from the 1740s onwards and the public pored over novels in which heroines were overcome with emotion, men communed with nature, both wept copiously and empathy and compassion were all. This movement emphasised and developed extant ideals of marriage and parenthood. Exhortations of patriarchy became muted and rationalised

⁹ K.M. Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage' in R.B. Outhwaite, ed., *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981), pp.58-80

with recourse to custom, Nature and God. Many came to laud and applaud the female character and some even came to present the virtues of women as superior to those of men. Mutuality was regarded in a new light. The husband's affection for and tender treatment of his spouse was emphasised and authors began to posit his public and professional reputation as reliant upon his behaviour within the home. Equally, whilst the wife's duty to obey and respect her husband was still central to such texts, it was redefined as voluntary and as a pleasure. It came to be claimed that a woman could soften, mollify and even possibly govern her husband through her sentient, emotional and natural character. It was argued that the couple's views and ambitions were ideally united towards the same goals and that the patriarch would therefore rarely have to exert his authority.

The role of the mother was similarly sentimentalised and elevated. Writers composed lyrical passages on the pleasures of maternity, both for the woman herself and for those privilege to witness scenes of breastfeeding and maternal care. As with discourses of marriage, religious models and exhortations became less frequent and standards derived from nature were instituted, both with reference to the birds and the beasts as well as to 'primitive' societies, either temporally or spatially removed. Significant developments also occurred in conceptions of the nature of childhood, the processes of educational development and the role of the parent. Lockean thought dominated the eighteenth century and, whilst many scholars have emphasised the work of Rousseau in the 1760s as new and radical, he rather popularised and rendered fashionable the ideals established by his predecessor.¹⁰ Both emphasised indulgence of the unique characteristics of infants and the elevated standard of Nature. Both

¹⁰ See chapter 4, pp.201-6

argued that, with only limited guidance and gentle steering, children would develop naturally into mentally and physically healthy individuals. However, Locke's emphasis on sensational psychology and the impressionable nature of the juvenile mind rendered both parents and writers of child literature acutely conscious of the importance of socialisation and thus of their roles in the maturing process.

Domestic ideals were also more widely disseminated in the mid and later decades of the eighteenth century than ever before. New literary genres developed, notably the periodical and the novel, which advocated the ideals of the companionate marriage and sentimental parenthood in a variety of ways. The dictums of the conduct writers were translated into the characters of fictional heroes and heroines whilst the publication of 'readers' letters in the periodical suggested their diffusion throughout society. Such texts were increasingly accessible in both financial and physical terms. The publication of novels in parts, the loaning of books through circulating libraries and the proliferation of cheap copies were critical developments in the mid eighteenth century. Similarly, a dramatic increase in literacy rates meant that more were capable of being influenced by the written word and the development of polite society in the coffee houses and clubs facilitated its discussion. Even those outside the main body of the devoted reading public would have been privy to such conversation and read to by others.

It is these developments that were, to a considerable degree, responsible for the formulation of new narrative devices and compositional forms in portraiture. The relationship between the actual, the ideal and the pictorial is highly complex and can, at best, be formulated schematically. The effect that such texts had on people's lives is hard to define. Diaries and letters suggest a partial response. Individuals selected texts that accorded with their own previously held convictions, that were recommended to

them by family or friends or that, like Rousseau's *Emile*, dominated polite conversation and attained fashionable status.¹¹ Similarly, critical faculties would have been exercised in the reading of those texts. Some ideas would have been embraced wholeheartedly, others rejected out of hand. And, even when ideas and theories appealed, it is difficult to ascertain whether that appeal was purely cerebral or whether it affected daily domestic behaviour.

However, it would be reasonable to suggest that the newly sentimental ideals in the newly available literature gradually filtered through contemporary consciousness and had at least some bearing on readers' lives. Such notions could not have been entirely alien. Authors were informed by debates and discussions in contemporary society and could only present arguments that were likely to have some appeal to some section of the market. The tracts that went into so many editions throughout the century simply could not have been so popular if they did not strike a chord somewhere. It is equally reasonable to argue that such texts possessed a certain moral and social authority. Whilst individuals experienced a variety of familial relationships, the discourse of the prescriptive and fictional writers was compelling in its presentation of the ideal. This argument is supported by cases such as that of Thomas Gainsborough and his discomfort when his wife's control over his finances induced her to assume the role of "the head" of the household.¹² Whilst such blurring of gendered boundaries, mutual negotiation of household roles and responsibilities and shifts in power relations were probably far from unusual, the authority of

¹¹ S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1994), p.101

¹² *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, ed. M. Woodall (London, 1963), p.83. See chapter 2, p.123

patriarchal discourse rendered such dynamics a source of unease.

It was the ethical authority of mainstream discourse that forged the connection with the realm of the visual. The very act of commissioning a portrait was predicated on the desire for display and commemoration, dominated by a need for both private and public approbation in the present and the future. This connection was heightened by the common structures of sensibility. Sensibility was founded on the idea of suitably sentient reactions to external stimuli, on the excitement of compassion and emotion through displays of virtue and piety. Thus, portraits that embodied new domestic norms reflected well upon the sitters, the artists who were perceptive enough to record them and those spectators who were suitably moved by them. The importance of such reactions is reflected in newspaper reviews. These frequently judged portraits according to standards derived from the discourse of affective domesticity. Images of mothers tenderly caressing their children were thought moving and admirable, displays of female virtue were deemed capable of inspiring similar piety in those who beheld them and representations of childlike children in endearing and loveable poses were widely praised.

Sensibility additionally supplied the moral parameters within which the activities of elite figures embroiled in criminal conversation, divorce and bigamy trials might be condemned. Prints, both those featured in the associated pamphlets and published independently, reviled sexual infidelity, unchastity and marriages entered into under constraint and without ties of affection. Thus, they reinforced the glorification of loyalty, sexual honesty and loving and freely elected wedlock in prescriptive and fictional literature. The activities of the Worsleys, the Cumberlands, the Grosvenors and the Kingstons and the grip they had on the public imagination also had a 'knock on' effect with regard to the reception and commissioning of their

portraits. People who had purchased or at least been aware of the publications prompted by the adultery of Lady Ligonier could have seen Gainsborough's portraits of her and her husband in the Royal Academy at the very moment that marital relations were being legally severed (figs.46 and 47).¹³ However, the iconic power of portraiture and the dominance of social norms and stereotypes could also be exploited by individuals vilified for their transgressions. They could commission artists to portray them as individuals of social and moral probity and as worthy of accordant respect. Men accused of illicit sexual relations could thus advertise their subsequent marriages to virtuous young women of good families and women such as the Duchess of Devonshire, condemned for neglect of domestic responsibilities, could exploit the popularity of Reynolds's portraits of maternal affection and engaging infancy to counter such attacks.¹⁴

Social norms and ideals thus constituted a negotiable body of values, brought into play if and when required and capable of manipulation and exploitation. However, as shown throughout the dissertation, the sentimentalisation of the domestic sphere itself had to negotiate more practical and persistent concerns. The cult of sensibility may have aided the elevation of the domestic roles of women and suggested a new position of autonomy for the child, but those developments had to be accommodated to a continuous and overarching patriarchy. The father may have gained a new role within the household and come to be portrayed as engaged with and interested in the wider family unit, but artists still had to emphasise his control of that unit. Private virtues became central to the definition of ideal masculinity, but they were never intended to threaten ultimate male authority. The patriarch still governed

¹³ See chapter 2, pp.116-8

¹⁴ See chapter 6, pp.282-90, 300-7

the household and his gaze, whilst increasingly directed towards his dependants and away from the viewer, remained essentially supervisory.

The constancy of the patriarch's position at the summit of the household inevitably produced a hierarchy amongst the remaining family members, conforming to their various relationships with him. Children were persistently identified by their age and sex, masculinity was ranked above femininity and maturity held sway over infancy. Moreover, although writers came to recommend indulgence of childhood and emphasised its joys, the relevance of offspring to the family and society as a whole could not be ignored. Certainly, the representation of infants in loose clothing, indulged and cosseted, engaged with a selection of the new toys, games and books on offer, was critical in defining parents as both modern and virtuous. However, the implicit identities of those children as future wives and mothers, as prospective patriarchs, professionals and public men, meant that references to their anticipated adulthood were both constant and inevitable.

Such anticipation also produced a continuing emphasis on dynasty. The male heir was and would remain key in landed families and, threatened by the high mortality rates that peaked in the early decades of the eighteenth century, was brought more sharply into focus. This resulted in a persistent pictorial emphasis both on the eldest son and on his relationship with his father. Equally, portraits, and the affective ideals of family relations portrayed within them, came into contact with real concerns of genealogy when situated within the country house. Seen as purely iconographical and divorced from the intended site of display, a later eighteenth-century portrait of a mother closely attending to the needs of her son is most easily located within new, sentimental ideals of motherhood and childhood. However, when viewed alongside portraits of previous generations, of male ancestors with their mothers, the underlying

emphasis on dynastic succession is apparent. Similarly, portraits of mothers such as Lady Cockburn (fig.6), hung anonymously at the Royal Academy and engraved under mythological titles, conveyed reified and abstracted virtues.¹⁵ However, once within the family home, such images regained their specificity and functioned accordingly, conveying successful continuation of a particular family line.

However, I do not want to suggest that the traditional and the modern were in tension, that their co-existence was uncomfortable or that the two came into explicit conflict. Scholars have recently emphasised that the development of new ideals of love and privacy did not mean that older values were immanently swept aside. Developmental models do not have to be constructed on the precept that one constellation of values has to be eradicated before a new body of beliefs can take its place. Rather, older traditions persisted as the new took a tentative hold. Indeed, it can be argued that continuity is inherently bound up with change. Development entails the mutation of ideals rather than their replacement by entirely new belief systems. The transformation of domestic values in the eighteenth century was an incremental process. The sentimentalisation of cultural attitudes became progressively predominant in a mounting body of literature read and discussed by an increasingly wide audience. However, change was also culturally stratified and dominated by flux as different social groups in different areas were influenced at different rates and to different degrees. Thus, patrons such as David Garrick were at the forefront of the adoption of new pictorial modes of self representation whilst sitters from the provincial gentry were necessarily more loathe to depart from traditional conventions for emphasising possession of land, wealth and status.¹⁶ Thus, Naomi Tadmor has

¹⁵ See chapter 3, p.166-7

¹⁶ See chapter 1, pp.73-8

emphasised that issues of hierarchy and dynasty were redolent throughout later eighteenth-century novels, despite their ostensible narratives of familial affection and intimacy.¹⁷ And, equally, Eileen Spring and Margaret Hunt have shown that the eighteenth-century concern with love and affection in wedlock was not incompatible with the insistent focus upon the existence and maintenance of patriarchy.¹⁸

This harmony can be illustrated by analysing critical responses to Sir Joshua Reynolds's large and famous portrait of *The Marlborough Family* of 1777/9 (fig.8). J.C. Steward sees this painting as undermining patriarchal and dynastic concerns through its new emphasis on the child, familial interaction and affection. The conventions of grand style historical portraiture and the formality of the Duke's pose (which recalls that commonly used for seventeenth-century dignitaries and noblemen) are subverted by the compositional dominance of the Duchess and by the playful and mischievous behaviour of the children.¹⁹ However, as the press reviews show, no such tension was felt at the time. Indeed, it can be argued that these potentially disruptive elements are successfully incorporated within the overriding traditional structures of the painting.

Its basic composition is essentially formal. Critics commented on the elaborate and grand architecture, on the swirling drapes and accoutrements of nobility that form the backdrop to the figures. They noted the dominant presence of the statue of John,

¹⁷ Tadmor, 'Family' and 'Friend' in *Pamela*, p.305; Tadmor, 'Concepts of the Family,' especially chapters 6 and 7; Tadmor, 'Dimensions of Inequality among Siblings,' especially pp.304-18

¹⁸ E. Spring, 'Law and the Theory of the Affective Family' *Albion* 16 (1984), p.17; M. Hunt, 'Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-Century London' *Gender and History* 4, 1 (Spring 1992), p.16

¹⁹ J.C. Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood 1730-1830* (Berkeley, 1995), pp.21-3

Duke of Marlborough.²⁰ They observed the way in which the Marlboroughs are organised into distinct groupings. On the left, the Duke (wearing the collar of the garter) presents a cameo of the Emperor Augustus to his eldest son and heir, a gesture which unites them in masculine connoisseurship and dynastic progression.²¹ On the right, the Duchess carefully watches over their daughters and younger son who are thus segregated according to age, sex and consequent ranking within the familial hierarchy. However, such dynastic concerns are not incompatible with an indulgent view of private life. As well as showing his son the cameo, the Duke also gestures across to the scene of play on the right, to invite his perusal. The patriarch is thus at once aware of the importance of his heir and a tender father who can indulge the antics of his younger offspring. The mother's role in the sentimental aspect to this portrait is particularly important. As a softening influence on her husband and the supervisor of his domestic affairs, it is she who, as one paper noted, touches the Duke gently on the arm "as if to draw his attention towards a beautiful group of children."²² Conversely, the inclusion of the younger son within the antics of his sisters may be typical but is here countered by that boy's gesture towards the cameo, already revealing a sense of the masculine world to which he is to belong.

Critics praised both elements without perceiving a conflict between them. *The General Evening Post* noted the "great dignity" of the Duke and, together with *The*

²⁰ *The General Evening Post*, 25-29 April 1778

²¹ N. Penny, *Reynolds* (London, 1986), p.279

²² *The General Evening Post*, 25-28 April 1778. Even though in the sketch dated to c.1777 (The Tate Gallery, London), the Duchess is seated in her central position between her husband and her children and does not touch his arm, she still fulfils this uniting role. The slope of her body draws the eye from the Duke down towards the younger son who plays at her feet.

General Advertiser, his absorption in his eldest son.²³ *The Public Advertiser* proclaimed it to be “a Picture for a Palace; and...a considerable Ornament to the Duke’s princely Seat at Blenheim,” even suggesting that the Royal Family should commission a similar portrait. However, this paper closely allied the financial wealth and social power of the family with the domestic worth and private virtue of its members: “Few fortunes...can afford to purchase such Pictures as the one above-mentioned; and few Families possess so many excellent Subjects for a Portrait Painter as the Marlborough.”²⁴ Thus, reviews not only noted the rank of the sitters but also the characteristics of the sitters themselves. *The General Evening Post* continued its critique of the picture by praising the “truth” and “nature” evident in the depiction of the children, in particular eulogising over the “arch” and “pretty” countenance of the child who grasps the mask.²⁵ Critics acclaimed the painting’s lack of artifice and proclaimed its emotionally stirring quality, appealing to contemporary sensibilities with statements such as; “we never have been struck, pleased and affected, in the same Manner, by any other Family Picture of the greatest Artists.”²⁶ Thus, affection and hierarchy, intimacy and genealogy, segregation and unity were all compatible, compounded in a portrait form in which Reynolds specialised. Paintings such as *The Marlborough Family* clearly appealed to a society in transition, a society characterised by the complex interplay between the traditional and the novel.

23 *The General Evening Post*, 25-28 April 1778; *The General Advertiser*, 27 April 1778

24 *The Public Advertiser*, 25 April 1778

25 *The General Evening Post*, 25-28 April 1778

26 *St. James’s Chronicle*, 21-23 April 1778

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For reasons of time and space, there are many issues inherent in the representation of the family that have been, perforce, neglected. One, which may be dealt with briefly here, is that of class. Indeed, the discussions of marital portraiture, of representations of mothers with their children and of the larger family group have only passingly mentioned the social status of the sitters depicted. However, this is precisely because, despite the rural gentry being slower in adopting the narratives and compositions of the newly companionate family, there seems to be little, if any, class orientation in that ideal by the later eighteenth century. From the work of scholars such as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, who argue that the middle rank coalesced and formed a coherent social body from the 1780s onwards through the assertion of their domestic morality, it could be inferred that the desire to project affectionate familial values in art was most characteristic of that class.²⁷ Consequently, it may seem logical to suppose that the pendant format, more formal and schematic in its construction of marital relations, was more typical of the aristocracy, whilst the greater degree of intimacy conveyed by the double portrait was more commonly sought by the middling sorts.

However, as noted in chapter two, it is almost impossible to trace a class emphasis in these different conventions.²⁸ Joseph Wright of Derby, whose portrayal of *Mr and Mrs Coltman* (fig.31), members of the provincial bourgeoisie, has been hailed as epitomising the companionate ideal, executed a large number of pendant portraits

²⁷ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987)

²⁸ See chapter 2, pp.89, 100

of comparable sitters.²⁹ For example, he depicted Mr. Abney seated with a letter inscribed: “Ed.wd Abney Esq,r/ King Newton/ Derby.e” in one canvas whilst portraying his wife in another, engaged in the act of spinning wool (figs.151 and 152). Similarly, the pendant pastel portraits so characteristic of the work of William Hoare of Bath were sought by members of all ranks who visited the watering-place in the summer months. His depictions of Sir Matthew and Lady Sarah Fetherstonhaugh (1746-9, Uppark) and of the less illustrious Richard Laurence, a watch and clock maker of Bath, and his wife Elizabeth (c.1754, Private Collection) can scarcely be differentiated in terms of pictorial vocabulary. Equally, the language of the companionate marriage, as epitomised in Gainsborough’s *The Morning Walk* (fig.4), was not restricted to sitters such as Mr Hallett, whose father was a cabinet maker. Of the portraits in which a husband gestures to some point of interest for the benefit of his wife, a large number depict noble sitters. Indeed, Henry Loftus, Earl of Ely utilised the narrative of the companionate gesture in no less than two commissions. In 1771, Angelica Kauffman depicted the Earl with his wife at his side, glancing back towards her fondly and motioning to their niece at the harpsichord (fig.153). Four years later, his first wife having died, the same Earl commemorated his marriage to Anne Bonfoy in an almost identical pictorial idiom, this time even closer to the ethos of the portrait of the Halletts (fig.154). On display in the Bearsted Collection in Upton House, he again gestures, this time towards his property as signified by the colonnade, whilst looking back affectionately towards his new bride.

²⁹ J. Egerton, *Wright of Derby* (London, 1990), p.71; A. Braham, *Wright of Derby: ‘Mr and Mrs Coltman’* (London, 1986), p.16; E.D.H. Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene from Hogarth to Sickert* (London, 1986), p.76

However, whilst any attempts at clear discrimination between the social standing of these sitters would appear to be futile, graphic satires on domestic and sexual issues clearly did mark class distinctions.³⁰ Thus, whilst the universality of the companionate portrait seems to negate Davidoff and Hall's thesis, their claim that the domestic probity of the middling ranks was rhetorically contrasted with the debauchery of the upper classes *is* inferred in print culture. The stereotype of aristocratic licentiousness, evident in satires on criminal conversation, divorce and bigamy trials, was often set off against the apparent virtue of the middle class. For example, in 1739, one conduct book writer proudly claimed that, "the middling People are certainly more happy in the Married State, than persons of a more elevated dignity."³¹ The penchant for such statements was so pronounced by the 1790s that Hannah More was able to refer to "the heretofore *common* saying 'that most worth and virtue are to be found in the middle station.'"³² Even if the middling classes were not specifically cited as enjoying more virtuous domestic lives, they were often antithetically defined as such. Whilst the aristocracy was frequently attacked for libertinism, marriages amongst the poor were popularly believed to be the last bastions of domestic violence. William Blackstone, in his discussion of the laws of England, informed his readers that, whilst moderate correction could still legally be administered to wives, the policy had become increasingly unpopular in the "politer reign" of Charles II. However, "the lower rank of people, who were always fond of the

³⁰ See chapter 6, pp. 268-77, 296-300

³¹ 'Philogamus,' *The Present State of Matrimony: or, The Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages in a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1739), p.32

³² H. More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune* 2 Vols (London, 1799), I, p.70. My italics

old common law, still claim and exert their antient privilege.”³³ Similarly, in *Tom Jones*, Henry Fielding referred to physical reproof as “a kind of horse-medicine, which requires a very robust constitution to digest, and is therefore only proper for the vulgar.”³⁴ This stereotype was reflected in the work of satirists who frequently depicted violent proletarian husbands and harridan wives.³⁵

These two tendencies, of a companionate portraiture that spanned the wealthier social orders and of a satirical convention that accused the upper classes of sexual libertinism and constructed the bourgeoisie as of greater domestic and moral probity, were, to some extent, in tension. One solution to this paradox would be to suggest that a middling discourse of companionate values possessed sufficient authority to become a universal standard, that it was so successful in achieving ethical supremacy that upper-class sitters eagerly adopted its values in their portraits in denial of their illicit sexual and marital proclivities. This process has already been seen in the case of those elite adulterers and adulteresses who countered satirical attacks with pictorial displays of virtue. Such acts can be argued to reverse the model of emulation, of a middling class acutely aware of the position of those above and intensely preoccupied with the attainment of social position.³⁶ Instead, they posit cultural forms as having radiated

33 W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 Vols. (1765) (Oxford, 3rd edition, 1768), I, p.445

34 H. Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), ed. R.P.C. Mutter (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.179

35 See, for example, James Gillray, *Judge Thumb; or, Patent Sticks for Family Correction: Warranted Lawful!* (1782, The British Museum, London); Anon., *The Hen Peckt Husband* (1768, The British Museum, London)

36 H. Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society* (1969) (London and New York, 1991), chapter 2; P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989), p.653: “It was united in nothing more than in its members’ determination to make themselves gentlemen and ladies, thereby identifying themselves with the upper classes.”

through the upper classes from influences socially below, from a 'middle-class consciousness' that was initially formulated in opposition to upper-class mores and principles, but that became so powerful as to be adopted by them.³⁷ As Michael McKeon has argued with reference to the novel: "Not yet (if ever) embodied within a delimited social class, middle-class ideology slowly suffused different segments of the reigning status groups".³⁸

However, as Dror Wahrman has pointed out, the notion of 'middle-class values' that "percolated down or up as the case may be" is rather unconvincing and seems an inadequate explanation for the similarity of ideals evident in middle and upper-class portraiture.³⁹ Equally, attacks on the domestic and sexual mores of characters such as Lady Worsley, the Duke of Cumberland and the Duchess of Kingston were not specifically from the middling classes, but were more or less universal. It thus seems unlikely that aristocrats were dissuaded from traditionally patrician habits by an alien but forceful discourse stemming from those below. They remained in a highly influential position throughout the century. Land was still the key to power and, as Margaret Hunt has cautioned, aristocratic patronage was still eagerly sought and politics were ultimately dependent upon birth.⁴⁰ The answer rather seems to lie in the *nature* of the widely known and expounded discourse that has been outlined in this thesis; the discourse that based masculine public virtue on domestic morality, that hailed the virtuous woman as a domestic creature of sentiment and

³⁷ M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996), chapter 8

³⁸ M. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 1987), pp.174-5

³⁹ D. Wahrman, "Middle-Class" Domesticity Goes Public: Gender, Class, and Politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria' *Journal of British Studies* 32 (October 1993), pp.402-3

⁴⁰ Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, pp.203-4

rectitude and the child as a loving and nurtured individual. This discourse was not a solid, non-negotiable body of thought indelibly associated with the middle classes. It was rather an empty rhetorical vehicle that could be employed in a number of ways, as will now be explored.

This discourse subtly but critically altered the criteria of social value. Instead of station, wealth and land as the sole prerequisites of authority (the abiding principles of Civic Humanism as expounded by thinkers such as Shaftesbury), new values were promoted. Domestic virtue was seen as equal to or more worthy than title, righteousness was valued along with rank and qualities of mind were elevated together with qualities of status. These meritocratic principles inform novels such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. This resounds with assertions of personal virtue as more important than the privilege attached to birth and wealth. Pamela repeatedly affirms the superiority of poverty-stricken innocence over guilt with its associated riches. Her dictum that "VIRTUE is the only nobility" is finally accepted by Mr B as an element of his reformation.⁴¹ Conduct writers propounded similar messages. Richardson elsewhere reiterated that "a young lady should be told, that it is no honour to be better born than servants, if she is not better behaved too" and Wetenhall Wilkes warned that if a high-born lady "is proud of her birth, it is not a blessing of her own purchasing/deserving."⁴² Such notions were essential for the enfranchisement of the middling sorts into the realms of literary and artistic patronage. Lack of elite status

⁴¹ S. Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740/1), ed. M.A. Doody (Harmondsworth, 1985), pp.67, 83, 204

⁴² S. Richardson, *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflections Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1755), p.28; W. Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1744) (Dublin, 3rd edition, 1751), p.78

and title meant that new virtues had to be displayed that were theoretically accessible to all. However, this is not to suggest that the middle classes were uninterested in more traditional indicators of worth. Mr Hallett, whilst displaying his character as that of a genteel and civilised man, demonstrating proper and loving attention towards his wife, still implies his propertied status by gesturing towards open land.

However, the new emphasis on domestic probity was not a solely middle-class phenomenon. Its pictorial language could be employed, not only by middling families lacking elite status and title, but also by aristocrats to accompany and reinforce their elite status and title. As Margaret Hunt has observed; “the last few decades of work on English family history has shown clearly that the eighteenth-century aristocracy, too, was drawn to the ideal of domesticity.”⁴³ Dror Wahrman has seconded this realisation, citing texts such as Linda Colley’s *Britons* as evidencing the presence of values such as “domestic morality”, “sobriety”, “earnestness” and “serious religiosity” amongst elite groups.⁴⁴ Thus, Sir Rowland Winn, whilst inviting our admiration of his possessions and a newly renovated library (designed by one of the most fashionable architects of the day), also reveals his kind and tender nature through solicitous attention to his wife (fig.41). The portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland by Reynolds and Gainsborough not only emphasise their marriage, but also their status through sundry attributes of royalty (figs.132, 133, 134, 135). The result of such images is a yoking of the display of wealth and property with new moral values.

Whilst both middling and upper-class sitters thus employed such meritocratic

⁴³ Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, p.212

⁴⁴ Wahrman, “‘Middle-Class’ Domesticity Goes Public,’ pp.401-2; D. Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.379-80; L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992)

concepts to qualify their presence or their asserted status through portraiture, satirical thinkers utilised exactly the same notions to attack members of the regnant class. As private morality and public authority became closely allied in the new discourse, those traditionally qualified to rule by parentage alone could potentially be undermined by accusations of immorality, sexual deviance, profligacy and indolence, recreating “social superiors” as “moral inferiors”.⁴⁵ By emphasising legitimate sexual behaviour and monogamous marriage together with a strong work ethic, honesty and frugality, middling writers could question particular aristocrats’ moral and, by association, political authority.⁴⁶ The public and the private thus became ideologically interdependent and these authors’ elevation of the private sphere enabled them to query the right of characters such as Cumberland to the public domain.

However, even this ideological strand should not be perceived as a uniquely middle-class device for assisting in the acquisition of power. Its core was not the eradication of aristocratic dominion, but rather the notion that privilege should be partnered with equable ethical dominion. Social hierarchies should not be undermined, but be brought into line with moral hierarchies. Rather than attempting to negate the aristocracy’s influence, they emphasised that that influence should not be abused. Thus, in *Pamela*, Mr B’s elevated position is eventually justified by his electing to follow the path of domestic probity whilst the heroine’s virtue is rewarded by attendant status. Pamela is told that the “experienced truth...well-trying virtue...understanding and genteel behaviour” that she brings to the marriage “will do

⁴⁵ I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London, 1987), p.166

⁴⁶ As Stella Tillyard noted in *Aristocrats*, p. 271; “many ... were openly hostile both to the idea of aristocratic government and to the idea of aristocratic licence and saw the corruption of one reflected in the corruption of the other”. See Hunt, ‘Middling Sort’, chapter 8 for a detailed analysis of this issue.

credit” to her new “station”.⁴⁷ Later, Priscilla Wakefield, whilst stressing the universality of women’s roles, simultaneously recommended that upper-class ladies should improve their minds “to capacitate them for the proper application of that influence, which is conferred on them by their station, for the purpose of promoting the public welfare”, and referred to this influence as “the undisputed prerogative of our female nobility.”⁴⁸ Hannah More, the following year, decried “the ill effects” produced by the “mere levity, carelessness, and inattention (to say no worse)” of fashionable ladies. However, rather than demanding the removal of their influence, she asked that these “women of rank” should employ that leverage to “bear their decided testimony against every thing which is notoriously contributing to the public corruption.”⁴⁹ Although negative formulations of the influence of the aristocracy were most common, examples of the virtuous and atypically moral aristocrat, singled out and praised for adherence to the doctrines of domesticity, did appear in public discourse. Most notably, George III and Queen Charlotte were repeatedly hailed for their parental and marital probity and thus as proper examples for all of society, not excepting the King’s brother.⁵⁰

In sum, the impact of newly elevated domestic values on constructions of class took various forms. Individuals from all sectors of society were drawn to these behavioural ideals and commissioned portraits that would suggest their adherence to them. The middling classes demonstrated their private virtue and were thus deemed

⁴⁷ Richardson, *Pamela*, p.368

⁴⁸ P. Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (London, 1798), pp. 80-1, 96. Wakefield was quoted by *The Lady's Monthly Museum; or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction*, 1 December 1798

⁴⁹ More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, I, pp.10, 31

⁵⁰ See chapter 6, pp.274-5

worthy of respect despite their lack of more traditional signs of status. Meanwhile, the upper classes demonstrated their private virtue to complement and to bolster their established social position, dependent on birth and inherited property. However, the need for such an equation between moral and social authority simultaneously enabled fervent attacks upon aristocrats seen to neglect the responsibilities of status and thus as undeserving of their position.

* * * * *

The pictorial occupies a particular place in historical debate, one that has been largely overlooked, but one that needs careful qualification. Art historians have largely employed history as background for pictures. Historians, meanwhile, have referred to the visual in a cursory fashion, rigorously qualifying the use of various literary and personal sources whilst including illustrations with limited definition of their place in the wider picture. This dissertation has attempted to theorise that place and, rather than using history as a foil or paintings and engravings as illustrative, it has used pictures as a source material in the same way as diaries, letters and other artefacts can be used, each with their own particular problems. It has thereby demonstrated the power of the ascendant cult of sensibility, the resultant sentimentalisation of familial relationships, the ways in which such relationships and their virtuous enactment came to signify moral authority and the elevation of that authority to parallel that attained through status, property and wealth.

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